

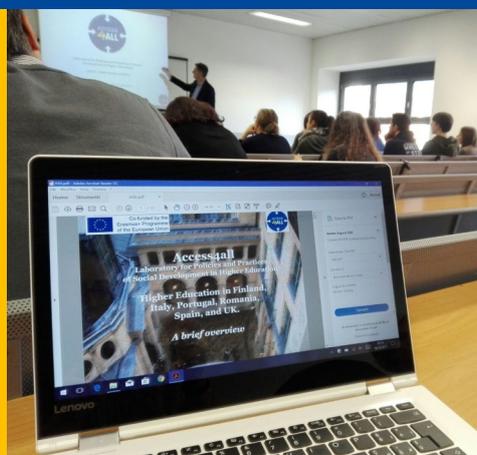
Fostering Social Dimension of Higher Education



Briefing Paper 2:

Fostering Inclusion in HE through interactive training

Inclusion of disadvantaged groups and “non-traditional” students in the academic environment can be achieved only as a result of a shared commitment of all university stakeholders. Therefore, training activity addressed to students, teachers, and administrative staff is an essential component of the Access4All project. Through the workshop held at the University of Bergamo, participants were able to elaborate on good practices and change models aimed to strengthen the inclusive dimension of the Unibg strategic plan.



Since the start of the Access4All project the University of Bergamo has been actively involved in promoting and achieving new levels of inclusion with regard to the academic experience of vulnerable students. A pivotal event on building this strategy has been the training activity held with students, teachers, and

The training was centred on an interactive style that prompted discussion and cooperative workgroup on the topics of A4A project, i.e. promoting the educational and social inclusion (with special attention to access, attendance, completion of studies) of disadvantaged groups and “non-traditional” students in the university.

fer from “best practices” as they are practices that work in an everyday, “normal” environment, while best practices refer to something excellent, but not be very common.

A training activity that proved to be especially relevant for the workshop was the exercise through which participants, drawing inspiration from the toolkit available on the A4A platform (<http://access4allproject.eu/bestpractices>) were invited to 1) identify what good practices should be developed in Unibg to improve students’ inclusion, and 2) rank the identified good practices in terms of feasibility, impact, and urgency. As showed in figure 2, this helped welcome and value all suggestions from participants about the good practices they highlighted ■

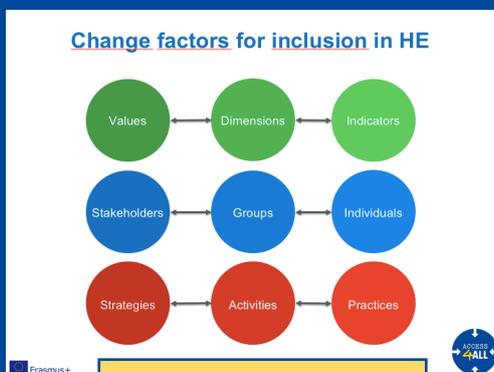


Figure 1

administrative staff from different university departments (as social sciences, foreign languages, economics, etc.).

Special attention was given to the definition of the concept of “good practices”, which plays a crucial role in ensuring the development of an “institutional portfolio” of initiatives related to the inclusion of students at risk of marginalisation. In fact, to be good, a practice must serve the desired purpose better than the average practice. Moreover, good practices dif-



as important to be achieved, but also enabled the team project to create a schedule of the initiatives to be implemented one at the time in order to reduce fragmentation and maximize the opportunity to reach all desired goal over the time.

In the second part of the training programme, participants were invited to compare and

tors, and 3) the level of detail they provide as for ensuring the allocation of resources and overall sustainability of the planned actions. Results of the analysis will help outline suggestions for improving the Unibg strategic plan in terms of expanding and innovating inclusive practices aimed to support the academic life of vulnerable students. At the end of the first workshop, after they have been working interactively on quite structured tasks, we invited participants to use their imagination to help outline further opportunities to increase inclusion in Unibg. To this aim, we asked participant to send us an email with their “dreams” of Unibg as a more inclusive place, i.e. a short description of the university as a more welcoming

and valuing environment. Taking as an example the famous children book “Little blue and little yellow”, a participant ended is letter by writing:

“I imagine an inclusive university just like the intersection of many colours and shapes, each one producing diversity, in a continuous movement of exchange and enrichment.”

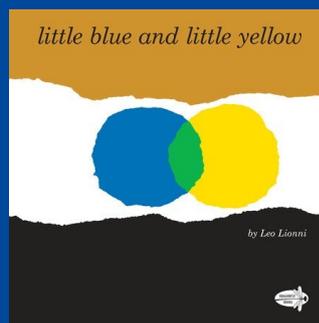
Identifying / ranking GP for inclusion in HE

GOOD PRACTICES	FEASIBILITY	IMPACT	URGENCY
SAS mobile app	3	4	2
Educational Counselling	2	3	3
Baby card (Parent students support)	3	4	4
Campus Itaca	3	3	2
Workshop for students	2	3	3
Learn to learn	2	2	2
Peer mentoring, pastoral support, advice, study support	3	3	2

1: Very low 2: Low 3: High 4: Very high

Figure 2

discuss the strategic plans developed by eight Italian HE institutions (Bergamo, Bologna, Milano, Padua, Urbino, Trento, Venice). The comparison helped to analyse the way the strategic plans were structured with regard to the inclusion of vulnerable students, and especially 1) what groups have been identified, 2) how specific are the strategic plans in defining targets, outcomes, and indica-



ACCESS4ALL enables the access and exchange of numerous policies and initiatives that seek to improve access to and continuation and success in Higher Education for under represented collectives and non-traditional learners. Higher Education Institutions interested in the inclusion of non-traditional learners and disadvantaged groups are invited to participate in the ACCESS4ALL open activities that each partner will hold in their campus.

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