

Key Action: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Action Type: Strategic Partnerships for higher education

Project Title

Including and Connecting in Higher Education: networking opportunities for independent lives



Project Coordinator

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Project Information

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EC Contribution 411,477 EUR
Partners Pais-em-Rede, Associação (PT) , Associação de Viseu de Portadores de Trissomia 21 (PT) , UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA (ES) , ASSOL Associação de Solidariedade Social de Lafões (PT) , HASKOLI ISLANDS (IS) , UNIVERSITEIT GENT (BE) , FORMEM - Federação Portuguesa da Formação Profissional e Emprego de Pessoas com Deficiência e Incapacidade (PT)
Topics Inclusion - equity ; Access for disadvantaged ; Disabilities - special needs

Project Summary

Background

This project was designed because: despite the progress of the last years, young people with disabilities still have the greatest difficulties in participating in social activities and accessing work. Faced with an educational system that, over the years, has been influenced by an ideology that favors classifications and competition among students, rather than cooperation and solidarity, equal opportunities in higher education (HE) are still in the process of being achieved. In the specific case of students with an intellectual and developmental disability (IDD), although their inclusion in regular schools is already implemented, the opportunity for these students to accede to HE is still in the process of being achieved. It is, therefore, time to foster the transition of young people with IDD to HE and to employment, guaranteeing the opportunity to continue their socialization process, actively participate in the community, developing socio-professional skills together with their peers. This population has the greatest difficulty in obtaining and maintaining a job, which has led to their social isolation.

Objectives

The most important impact of this project has been the creation of a new scenario to open up opportunities for people with IDD, both considering HE and the labor market. The project HiLives aimed, therefore, to create opportunities to share knowledge and practices in this field, towards the creation of a strategic partnership in the area of (i) inclusion of students with IDD in HE Institutions, and (ii) transition to an active and independent life, exploring the role that digital media can play in this process. HiLives - Including and Connecting in Higher Education: networking opportunities for independent lives - aims at developing the following Intellectual Outputs:

- a transnational / European framework for the development of an inclusive, flexible, and student-centered HE curriculum for young adults with IDD;
- a prototype of a digital tool to connect and network opportunities, tackling gaps and mismatches between the expectations, skills, and needs of young adults with IDD, and both the HE offer and the employment opportunities;
- a Transnational / European good practice guide for HE Institutions, Secondary Schools, and Employers, aiming to help young adults with IDD to access HE and start an independent life.

Implementation

The HiLives Team worked hard for 40 months, from 01/09/2019 to 31/12/2022 (with an extension of a 4 months period, allowing to complete some activities postponed due to the pandemic):

5 Learning-teaching training activities - U. Aveiro, 26/11-29/11/2019 (presential); U. Ghent, 22/11-26/11/2021 (online); U. Iceland, 27/06-01/07/2022 (presential); U. Salamanca, 12/12-14/12/2022 (presential); & one Blended Mobility Activity involving 7 HE students from U. Salamanca, who travel to U. Aveiro with 4 of their teachers (the members of HiLives) and spent a week there, working & sharing experiences & knowledge with the students from UAver, respective teachers & other staff.

12 Transnational Projects Meetings - the Kickoff (presential), at UAver, 25/11/2019 + 11 TPM online

3 Multiplier Events (presential): Nov. 2022 (U.Aveiro) & Dec. 2022 (U.Ghent & U.Salamanca); these events were postponed because of the pandemic, but it proved to be a good decision, as it allowed us to disseminate the 3 IOs on a face-to-face basis.

Developing 3 Intellectual Outputs:

- IO1 - The Foundations for the development of a HE-inclusive curriculum
- IO2 - Prototype of a digital tool to connect and network opportunities
- IO3 - Good practice guide for independent life

Achievements

The results of the project aren't only the Intellectual Outputs, but also the skills and personal experiences that all project partners, stakeholders, and participants in the activities have acquired. This important domain of knowledge and experience gained by the participants, learners, and staff will certainly remain, now that the project has arrived at an end. There are also increased skills in approaching the inclusion of IDD people and also in the development of a shared view on the European panorama regarding the inclusive nature of HE Institutions. We do believe (as the scientific literature reports, too, in other contexts), that HiLives' activities and results will have a large impact on both people (students with IDD, their Families, Caregivers, Staff of HE Institutions, Teachers, and Employers) and in organizations and systems (HE Institutions, Secondary schools, Associations and Institutions, Ministries of Education, and European policy-makers). Sharing practices and Innovating in the domain of the inclusion of citizens with IDD (in HE and in the labor market) can have, unquestionably, a high impact on society.

Link to project card: [Show project card](#)

* Results are available for this project. You can click on the link above, and go to "Results" section to view them