



UNIVERSITY OF WEST ATTICA
ERASMUS+/ICM INTERNATIONAL WEEK
“Applied practices of inclusion and equity in education”
18 – 22 November 2024



Students with Disabilities –
Students with Special Educational Needs

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Strategies – Policies – Legislation



- at the Global / International level:
 - UNITED NATIONS Convention
- at the European Union level:
 - EUROPEAN COMMISSION Directives
- at the Greek national level:
 - Law 4074/2012 (Gov. Gazette 88/A/2012)
- at the UNIWA level:
 - UNIWA Internal Regulation
 - UNIWA Committee on Equitable Access of Students with Disabilities / Special Educational Needs (SD/SN)
 - UNIWA Office on Equitable Access of Students with Disabilities / Special Educational Needs (SD/SN)
 - Project “PROSVASI” (“ACCESS” in Greek) – phase 1 (2020-2023), phase 2 (to be defined)

at the Global / International / E.U. level



❖ **UNITED NATIONS (2008) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)***

Adopted by the 61/611 UN General Assembly in New York, USA, on Dec. 13, 2006; put in effect as of May 4, 2008).

<https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-articles>

❖ **UNITED NATIONS (2015) *The Sustainable Development Agenda 2030***

Includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG 4 “QUALITY EDUCATION” includes goals on equitable access to Education for the disabled and the under-privileged

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

❖ **EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2021) *Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030***

Constitutes a development out of the previous “European Disability Strategy (2010-2020)”

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Aem0047>

Prompts EU countries to align national legislation to the 2008 U.N. Convention

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_810

at the Greek national level



❖ Greek National Legislation

2012: Ratification of the UNITED NATIONS Convention of 2008 by law nr. 4074 (Gov. Gazette 88/A/2012)

2020: National Action Plan for the Rights of People with Disabilities (Roadmap 2020-2023)
Target 12: EDUCATION and TRAINING

2021: National Authority on Accessibility

<https://www.amea.gov.gr/accessibility/education>

2024: "A Greece with All for All" National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2024-2030

<https://ypergasias-gov-gr.translate.goog/ethniki-stratigiki-gia-ta-dikaionomata-ton-atomon-me-anapiria-2024-2030-mia-ellada-me-olous-gia-olous/? x tr sl=el& x tr tl=en& x tr hl=en& x tr pt=se>

❖ Greek Education

2022: Law nr. 4957 (Gov. Gazette 141/A/2022)

❖ Greek Institutions / Bodies on Disability

Observatory on Disability Issues - Annual reports (E.S.A.meA. - NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES)

<https://www.paratiritirioanapirias.gr/storage/app/uploads/public/632/9c1/739/6329c1739d9dc741766847.pdf>

at the UNIWA level



❖ **UNIWA Internal Regulation** (Gov. Gazette 4621/B/2020)

Provisions for access of the disabled students to teaching and learning, examinations, student life.

❖ **Project “PROSVASI” (Greek word for “ACCESS”)**

2020-2023: Funded in UNIWA as well as in all other Greek Universities by the European Social Fund (ESF) and Greek National Funds (O.P. “Human Resources Development, Education and LifeLong Learning” 2014-2020, extended to 2023).

❖ **As per Greek National Law nr. 4957** (Gov. Gazette 141/A/2022)

UNIWA **Committee** for Equitable Access of Students with Disabilities / Special Educational Needs (SD/SN) – 12/2022, 12/2023

UNIWA **Unit** for Equitable Access of Students with Disabilities / Special Educational Needs (SD/SN) – 12/2022, gravely understaffed (1 employee)

UNIWA **Unit** for Psychologic Counseling and Support – gravely understaffed (2 employees)

❖ **The next phase of Project “PROSVASI”**

2025-2029: To be funded in UNIWA as well as in all other Greek Universities by the European Social Fund (ESF) and Greek National Funds (O.P. “Human Resources Development, Education and LifeLong Learning” 2021-2027; expected to begin in 2025, expected to run up to 2029).



European Union
European Social Fund

Operational Programme
Human Resources Development,
Education and Lifelong Learning
Co-financed by Greece and the European Union



UNIWA policy for the disabled



UNIWA declared policy:

- ❖ UNIWA adheres to the principle of providing equal opportunities to all students. Along that line, UNIWA is committed to creating and sustaining an accessible academic environment in terms of building and infrastructure, information and communication systems, administration, services and educational activities, as well as to the systematic provision of support services to students with disabilities, in order for them to complete their studies as autonomously as possible.
- ❖ The centerpiece of UNIWA policy towards disabilities is to secure the rights of persons with disabilities and to adopt and apply all measures necessary for equitable access to the academic environment of students with disabilities and/or special educational needs, as well as that of the academic, administrative and technical staff and of any third party in UNIWA, **such as visitors** with disabilities or any related constraint.

sub-groups in UNIWA academic community



	Students or Staff?	
Local or Foreign?	Local / Students	Local / Staff
	Foreign / Students	Foreign / Staff

- ❖ Priority is given to provisions and services for **Local Students**, because this is the majority group and resources are limited.
- ❖ Foreign (incoming) students constitute a considerable **challenge**!
- ❖ Local Staff is often **ignored**, because disabled cases are sparse among them.
- ❖ Foreign (incoming) Staff is often **ignored**, because disabled cases are sparse among them.

➤ However, we should keep in mind that ...

... any progress made in providing support for one sub-group is automatically gained for the other sub-groups, as well!

sub-groups in UNIWA academic community



UNIWA faces in fact two CHALLENGES:

1. How can provisions and services designed for **Local Students** (SD/SN) be completed and become fully functional?
2. How can provisions and services designed for **Local Students** (SD/SN) be extended to cover
 - (a) Foreign (incoming) Students?
 - (b) Local and Foreign (incoming) Staff?

Let us take a **Student-Centered approach** to that!

Issues and challenges - 1



- ❖ Can a **blind** undergraduate student come to study in UNIWA through ERASMUS+ for a short period of time?
- ☐ Tactile Paving Surface Indicators between any two buildings in all 4 UNIWA campuses
- ☐ Tactile Paving Surface Indicators in the interior spaces of all buildings in all 4 UNIWA campuses
- ☐ Braille door signs placed in all doors (including building entrances, elevator doors etc.) of all buildings in all 4 UNIWA campuses – IN GREEK
- ☐ Braille door signs placed in all doors (including building entrances, elevator doors etc.) of all buildings in all 4 UNIWA campuses – IN ENGLISH
- ☐ Class notes / slides / presentations in audio-transferable form (no text in images, no image without 'alt-text', etc.)
- ☐ Setting up of a 'buddy' system based on local students volunteering to accompany the blind student around the campus and possibly act as his/her writing assistant – in progress
- ✓ Study places – workstations, equipped with special software and hardware and a Braille printer, in the 3 UNIWA Libraries – already operating in 2 of the 3 Libraries

Issues and challenges - 2



❖ Can a **deaf** undergraduate student come to study in UNIWA through ERASMUS+ for a short period of time?

- ☐ Sign language interpreter in a lecture given by an English-speaking teacher/instructor
- ☐ Given that Sign Language is not universal, the interpreter should also be a translator?
- ☐ Can Sign Language interpretation be reliably accomplished online?
- ☐ Should the interpreter be incoming along with the student or locally available?
- ☐ Setting up of a 'buddy' system base on local students volunteering to accompany the deaf student around the campus – in progress
- ✓ Study places – workstations, equipped with special software and hardware for the deaf, in the 3 UNIWA Libraries – already operating in 2 of the 3 Libraries

Issues and challenges - 3



- ❖ Can a **mobility-impaired** undergraduate student, e.g., a student moving in a wheelchair come to study in UNIWA through ERASMUS+ for a short period of time?
 - ☐ Special type of school bus for transfer between UNIWA and accommodation location, given that UNIWA does not run student dormitories – to be obtained
 - ☐ Wheelchair access to all UNIWA buildings and outdoor spaces – in progress
 - ☐ WC for wheelchair access in all floors of all UNIWA buildings – in progress
 - ☐ Elevators and lifts for wheelchair access in all floors of all UNIWA buildings, amphitheatres and laboratories included – in progress
 - ☐ Setting up of a ‘buddy’ system base on local students volunteering to accompany the student in wheelchair around the campus – in progress
 - ✓ Parking places secured for wheelchair access – patrolling is necessary to keep them free
 - ✓ Study places – workstations, equipped with special software and hardware for wheelchair access, in the 3 UNIWA Libraries – already operating in 2 of the 3 Libraries

Furthermore – 1 ...



- ❖ **What about graduate students**, incoming to attend classes in UNIWA?
- ❖ **What about doctoral students / PhD candidates**, incoming to carry out research in UNIWA under the numerous MoUs signed with collaborating institutions in Greece and abroad?
- ❖ **What about Staff** of any category (academic, administrative, technical), either local or incoming?
- ☐ Transfer to and from UNIWA / accommodation location
- ☐ Parking places secured for wheelchair access – patrolling is necessary to keep them free
- ☐ Accessible offices and laboratories, equipped with H/W and S/W facilities as required per case (blind / deaf / mobility-impaired)
- ☐ Study places – workstations, equipped with H/W and S/W facilities as required per case (blind / deaf / mobility-impaired), in the 3 UNIWA Libraries – already operating in 2 of the 3 UNIWA Libraries, we would need more places and we should extend the facilities to the other 2 UNIWA Libraries as well

Furthermore – 2 ...



- ❖ **What about incoming students** who receive support services at home on a regular basis, such as
 - psychological support
 - social welfare support
 - occupational therapy support
 - physical therapy support
 - are members of special sports teams for the disabled

- ❖ **Should such services / activities be discontinued** while visiting UNIWA? And if NOT, HOW?

- ❖ **Project “PROSVASI” – phase 1** offered such services in UNIWA during 2020-2023. However,
 - planning of phase 2 is underway, yet, with a considerable gap (acad. year 2023-24)
 - ESF funding for phase 2 is not directed by the Greek State to include these services (!)
 - UNIWA along with all Greek Universities should ‘rely on their own resources’, in case they decide to meet these student needs

Furthermore – 3 ...



- ❖ **What about neuro-divergent persons (students or staff),**
such as
 - persons in the Autism Spectrum, including high-functioning autism and the former ‘Asperger syndrome’
 - persons with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
 - persons with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc.
- ❖ This group is described as having **‘Special Educational Needs’**
- ❖ This group is not homogeneous
- ❖ This group is increasing in numbers, as disorders are being increasingly identified, diagnosed, registered and addressed/supported; so, now-a-days, members of this group get to the university more often.
- ❖ Is the (Greek) University ready to receive them?

- **Legislation -> Regulations -> Training -> Application**
- **UNIVERSAL DESIGN for LEARNING (UDL)** is a framework meant for all, neuro-divergence included.

Thank you!



❖ **Thank you for your attention!**



❖ **Lets us continue in the round tables planned for Tuesday**