Partnership Strategy Elaboration

Brief summary

The aim of the Project "Educational Empowerment and Social Inclusion of students with disabilities through Digital Solutions and Assistive Technologies" (EESI- DIGI), is to create an inclusive an educational environment to promote equity and equality in the use of digital and technological tools so that they become support assistants to complete educational studies and obtain more skills.

The entities that have executed this project have been the University of Patras (Panepitismo Patron), the University of Hungary (Eotvos Lorand Tudomanyegyetem), the University of Vilnius (Vilniaus Kolegija) and entities of the third sector of social action such as

Países
Proyecto
EESI-Digi

I.E.R.F.O.P. Onlus in Italy and COCEMFE in Spain.

Aims and needs of the Project

The EESI- DIGI project is part of the ERASMUS+ KA220 Programme, known as Higher Education Partnerships.
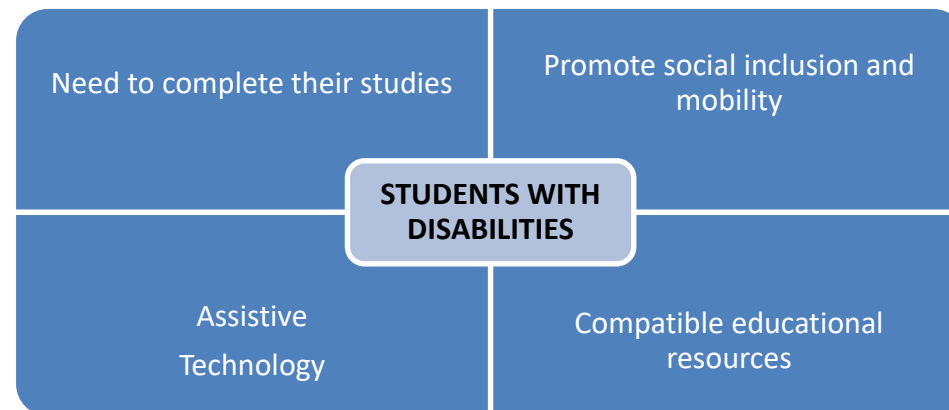
EESI-Digi

This project allows the universities and the entities that have implemented the project to create and develop an inclusive educational environment that promotes equity and equality by responding to the latest technological demands. The project aims to turn digital tools that can be barriers into aids and support that enable students to complete their studies and gain skills.

The **specific priorities** of the project are related to:

- Promoting **interconnected higher education systems** as emphasis is given on **strengthening strategic cooperation** between higher education institutions and associations / authorities towards developing various types of cooperation models, including virtual and blended cooperation and the use of different digital tools and online platform
- Building **inclusive higher education systems as the project will foster inclusive approaches for the mobility and cooperation activities** such as digital collaborative platform for exchanging training material, courses, policies and any research findings, custom to the accessibility specifications for people with disabilities
- **Supporting digital capabilities of the higher education sector** as the core foundation of the project lies in development of digital tools and the digital skilling up of trainers and trainees in completing studies and developing digital skills and competences for their employment future.

The **identified needs** that are aligned with the project objectives and are expected to benefit students with disabilities are:

Need to complete their studies	Promote social inclusion and mobility
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	
Assistive Technology	Compatible educational resources

In order to achieve the objectives set out in the project and address the identified needs of students with disabilities, **different types of collaboration** are required between different kind of entities present in the society.
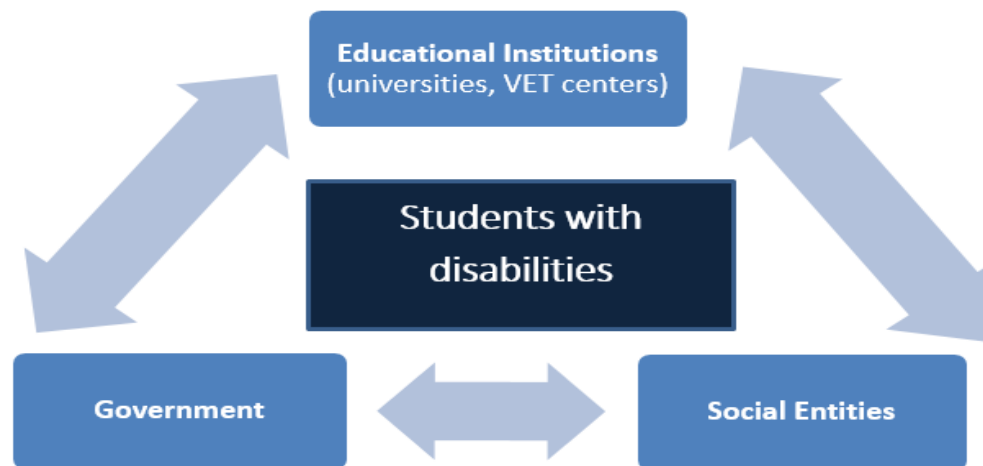
Identification of potential partnerships

During the implementation of the project regarding the needs of students with disabilities and the digital and technological development, the consortium have identified the needs for strategic partnerships.

The strategic partnerships aim to expand and improve the results obtained during the implementation with public authorities, civil society organizations and educational institutions of different types (universities, vocational training centres…). The develop of them will generate synergies of cooperation and exchange of experiences and good practices. They are called "strategic" because:

- they aim to contribute to achievement of policy priorities and have a wider impact,
- they break new grounds,
- they bring different areas together,
- they promote change for the better.

EESI-DIGI

Educational Empowerment and Social Inclusion of students
with disabilities through Digital Solutions and Assistive Technologies
KA220-HED-F06BEA8B

They are all about developing and applying innovative knowledge of students with disabilities and provide the to improve their knowledge to promote the social students to complete their studies.

approaches to raise the teachers practical information inclusion and make it easier for

Affinity and complementarity for the partnership

The objective for people with disabilities to complete their studies implies a collaborative and coordinated approach between social entities, educational institutions and government.

Role of educational institutions

Universities and vocational training centres have educational resources, infrastructure and trained personnel to provide academic support and relevant curricular adaptations. Moreover, depending on elements such as national legislation, they may offer inclusion programmes and access to assistive technologies.

Educational institutions have the capacity to create inclusive awareness throughout the educational community, which is an inclusion of persons with disabilities in education.

environments and raise essential factor in promoting the

One of the difficulties they may experience is a lack of disability skills, training to address the specific needs of students.

and they may need guidance and

Role of entities of the Third Sector of Social Action

Such entities have direct experience in the work of persons with disabilities and understand their specific needs. This role allows them to provide different types of support that can be counselling, proportion of resources or assistance. In addition, these entities have community networks and can offer opportunities and support to students with disabilities, so having such resources is considered essential to provide adequate support to them.

In addition to direct experience in working with people with disabilities, it is desirable that third sector social action organisations have the capacity for political advocacy and awareness- raising in order to mobilise other social actors to take action to promote a change in the trend towards full inclusion of people with disability in the field of higher education.
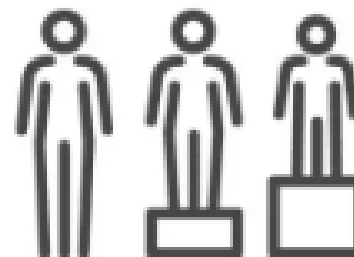
Role of Government

The different levels of government in the country can provide funding and policy support for inclusion and access to education programmes. These government bodies also have the authority to set standards and regulation that promote equal opportunities for students with disabilities.

In addition, they have the opportunity to provide specific scholarship and bursary programmes for students with disabilities that can enable them to obtain the tools and materials that will allow them to develop and complete their studies.

It is noted that they may lack the flexibility and adaptability to address individualised needs.

It is necessary to take advantage of the strengths and resources of all these actors effectively since it is possible to improve the educational experience and increase the rate of completion of studies of students with disabilities at the university level and in training professional.

How to stablish relations between different kind of entities?

Approaching to any, institution to present an Erasmus project and explaining how it can contribute to their goals is an important task that needs a clear and effective strategy. The following is a guide with the essential steps that could be taken:

| Preliminary research | Presentation Plan | Points of contact | Project Presentation | Follow-up |
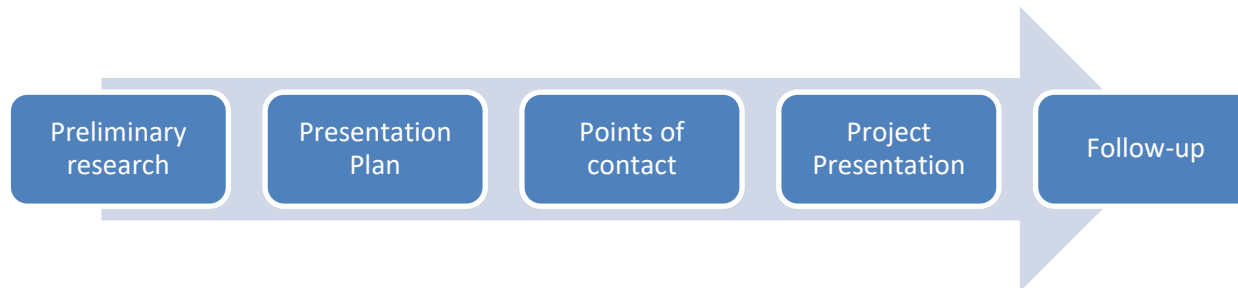
- *Preliminary research*: Conduct preliminary research on potential interested entities. This includes finding out about their areas of interest, the existence of existing programmes and policies related to inclusive education. By doing the step, you will be able to tailor your presentation so that the information conveyed is relevant and interesting.

- *Develop a presentation plan:* prepare a detailed presentation, highlighting the objectives, working structure, benefits and expected outcomes.

- *Identify points of contact:* find the right people to communicate with. In different agencies these could be: programme managers, project coordinators or policy makers related to education and inclusion.

- *Project presentation:* Establish a connection; request a meeting to present the project in detail. During the presentation, align and emphasise how the project can be aligned with the priorities and objectives of the agency and how it could contribute to the agency's purpose.

- *Follow-up:* After the presentation, stay in touch with the entities to maintain interest in the project and answer any additional questions they may have. If required, provide additional material such as impact reports or case studies.

Following these steps and tailoring the interlocutor's approach to your needs and priorities will help increase the chances of success to increase the collaborative network.

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In the event that the entity you have met is interested in the project it is necessary to develop a **joint work plan.** It must contain the specific activities to be carried out by each part, the **deadlines, milestones and resources requir**ed. All these stages may have a different approach depending on the type of institutions that make up this specific alliance.

For the partnership to bear fruit, coordination and communication mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure effective collaboration and proper project management.

How to identify ways to work with them?

According to the topics developed in the EESI-Digi project, we can start working with these kind of entities trying to implement **different perspectives depending on the actor who will carry it out**.

Educational institutions

In the long term, it is desirable that the goals and sources created in this project are accessible to **secondary schools** so that students with disabilities who develop the modules have a **prior knowledge of technological tools** that will allow them to **reach higher education with this learning already done.** Therefore, in order to work with these organisations, it would be convenient to carry out a small research on the degree of development of similar programmes and students with disabilities.

The Consortium may obtain this knowledge from the research they carry out, as well as from **possible contacts with other educational institutions**. There are different methods to identify this kind of partners:

- Identification of **possible interested centres by locality if the number of disabled people in the territory is known.** Knowing this data will allow entities working with people with disabilities to offer the results of the project focused on their interests.
- Another way of linking higher education institutions and secondary schools is when students move from school to university or vocational training centre. This channel should make it possible to know the **characteristics of the students and offer them this tool so that they can finish their secondary studies with the proposed supportive tools and be prepared with all the knowledge they have previously acquired.**

- Raising awareness and communicating with possible interested schools and social welfare units (universities and VET centres)… Sometimes **these actors turn to third sector organisations because they do not know how to deal with the situation of students with disabilities.**

Depending on the legislation of the country, the Consortium can offer the developed material to the **governmental institution regulating the operation of public educational institutions** with the aim of **reaching a greater number of educational entities that are not covered due to the consortium's territorial capacity at national level.**

Table 1. Characteristics of possible future partners
SECONDARY SCHOOLS • Students with disabilities reach higher education using the learning outputs of the project. • Identification of **possible interested centres when the students go to the university or VET centres.** • **Knowing the population with disability to focus places of interest.**
SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS • To reach a **greater number of educational entities that are not covered due to the consortium's territorial capacity** at national level.
OTHER UNIVERSITIES AND VET CENTERS • These actors **turn to third sector organisations (related to disability)** due to they do not know how to deal with the situation of students with disabilities.

Entities of Third Sector

Providing access to the results obtained in this project can offer the possibility of establishing relationships with **third sector entities, NGOs, foundations and other institutions dedicated to social and community welfare.**

In order to do so, it is necessary to **identify possible disability organisations in each country** that are aligned with the development of **educational inclusion projects for people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.**

By establishing relationships with third sector entities, educational institutions can play an **important role in social and community development,** while providing meaningful learning and participation opportunities for their students, teachers and staff.

Educational centres should approach third sector entities linked to the area of disability, youth and educational and professional development. Identifying this type of actors will allow the members of the educational consortium to offer the results generated by the project to these entities, thus increasing the number of beneficiaries.
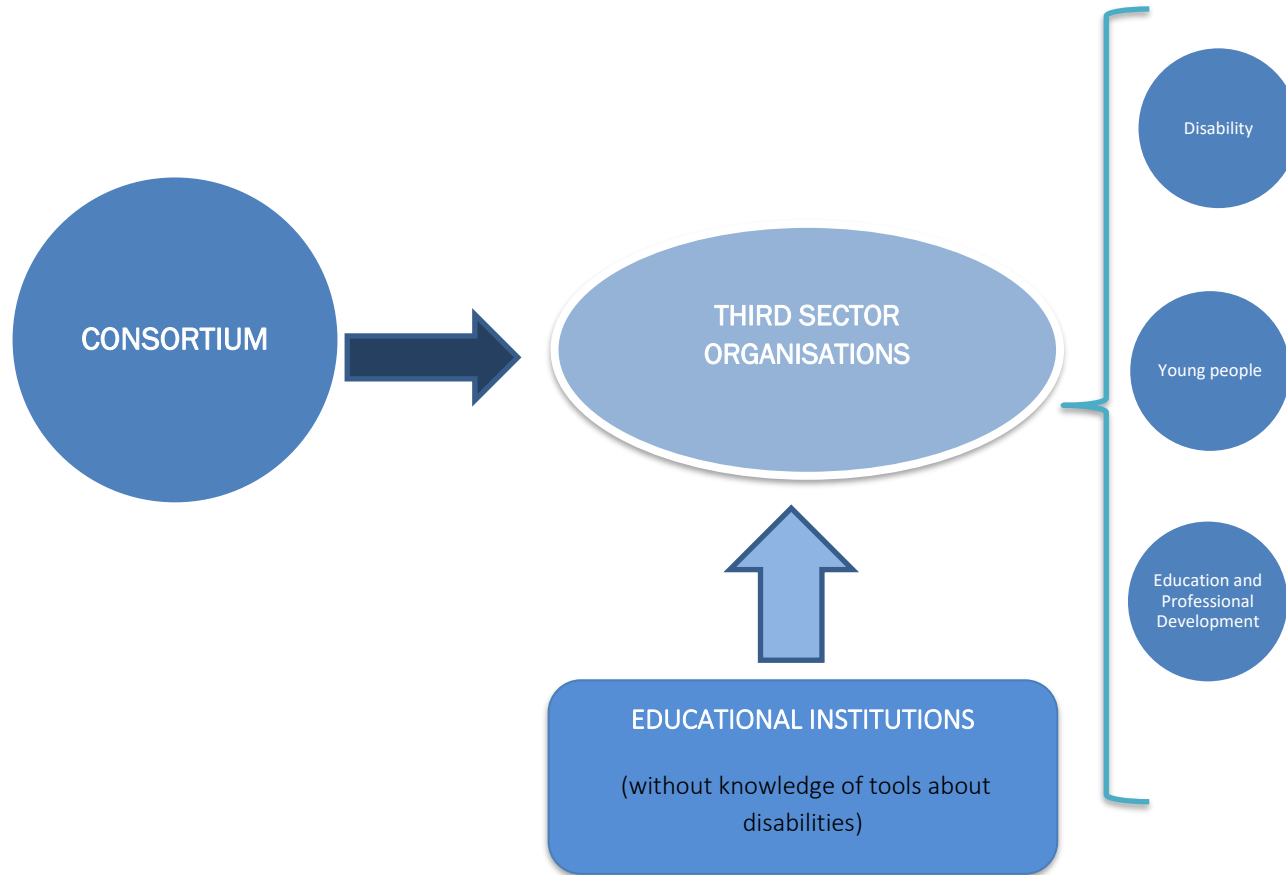
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The entities of the third sector can provide different type of information to the entities of the consortium because they have more knowledge of their own beneficiaries. This way to establish relations can be useful to increase the number of beneficiaries and to work together with different kind of actors.

CONSORTIUM

THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

(without knowledge of tools about disabilities)

Disability

Young people

Education and Professional Development

<u>Government</u>

In addition to establishing relations with the body regulating the operation of schools and other educational centres, consortium members should be able to show to the Ministry of Education or the counterpart body the results obtained.

Developing this type of relationship will enable consortium members:

- To **ensure and ratify the need to promote and improve the various initiatives** that guarantee the right to education for people with disabilities.

- Point out that the **tools and policies that have been put in place in most countries are not enough to improve the schooling rates** of people with disabilities.

- Show the **low rates of students with disabilities in higher education**.

All the results shown, are intended to be an incentive for the development of legislative changes that promote the development of more and better initiatives to ensure the right to universal education for persons with disabilities.