

## National Reports – Partner Country-Lithuania

### 1. National Legislation

According to the Greek Constitution (article 21), People with Disabilities have rights that ensure their autonomy, their professional integration and participation in social, economic and political life of the country.

According to the Greek Law (FEK 3557/B'/2019)<sup>1</sup>, there is a clear definition of how and under which conditions, People with Disabilities, can enroll in a university without taking exams. These conditions include is a list of about 80 disabilities and chronic health problems as well as how these medical conditions can be proved.

According to the national action plan for the rights of People with Disabilities, that was published in 2020, the equal treatment of all students with disabilities in higher education is guaranteed. The following steps are to be followed the sooner possible from all the universities in Greece.

Equal provision of quality in higher education for all students, through full participation of Students with Disabilities in the academic and social life of the relevant Institution (study, administration, health, welfare, culture, sports, etc.)

An annual evaluation for each university is conducted, regarding accessibility issues as well as the support provided to students and staff with disabilities.

Development of volunteering program for Students with Disabilities within universities.

Students with Disabilities get connected to the labor market.

In collaboration with the administration of each institution, the overall needs for improved accessibility (physical, digital, accessibility of educational material, academic textbooks, etc.) will be recorded, as well as the needs for intervention in infrastructure and services.

Creation (if there aren't any) of inclusive education structures as well as frameworks and programs of Student Support (e.g., Accessibility Units for Students with Disabilities, provision for forms of individualized student support, etc.).

### 2. Skills Gaps

Within the context of continuous Needs' Analysis and Satisfaction Surveys that we conduct in the Social Welfare of UoP since 2020, we have reached invaluable findings with regards to needs, problems, and gaps of students and their follow up and feedback on the provided services.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2019/%CE%A6%CE%95%CE%9A\\_3557\\_%CE%92\\_23-9-2019.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2yuJKDDeeZ39aq2I4dr3wShWqDsFKoT4Q4XCbhQoW1VwciJGNqq3JulG](https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2019/%CE%A6%CE%95%CE%9A_3557_%CE%92_23-9-2019.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2yuJKDDeeZ39aq2I4dr3wShWqDsFKoT4Q4XCbhQoW1VwciJGNqq3JulG)



Admittedly most participants admitted that they have adequate knowledge of generic ICT tools and technologies, but they practically lack knowledge on assistive technologies and assistive digital tools. A major gap in the learning process was identified to be the non-accessible learning material (digital and physical).

More specifically the finding of the research we run revealed that:

- The majority of students with physical disability (limited mobility) were restrained from attending most academic activities (educational and social)
- Students with visual impairments have limited access to accessible learning material and accessible technical means
- Students with visual impairments have limited access to accessible pedagogical and accessible technical means
- Students with chronic diseases restrained from over half of their classes
- Students with psychological problems are more likely to attend classes but do not easily integrate with their peers
- The greatest percentage of students with learning disabilities were not entirely aware of their problem or the severity of their problem and were not considering asking help from within university services.
- Trainers and teachers have not guidance, or they have minimal to none experience how to manage / advise their students with disabilities.

An early assessment of these findings has led to the employment of more tools that turn learning material (digital and hard copies) into accessible. Starting with indicated (from students) material that needs to become accessible, similar activities are employed for creating accessible websites and any type of information shared for students. Similarly, apps and web systems are provided to the disposal of the SwD, which however need to become familiar with these new technologies, irrespectively of the simplicity and easy of access. The majority of the students are familiar with basic ICT tools but do not have expert knowledge, and due to possible disabilities, they cannot often attend classes that provide that expert knowledge. Moreover, they cannot adopt the new provided technologies, unless they receive training.

This identified gap constraints students from attending all classes uninterrupted, from employing new technologies and being trained on the new skills required for the new digital era.

### 3. Missed opportunities

Since 2001 some universities in Greece have started establishing organized units and services for supporting SwD, however these activities are not horizontally implemented and not to all educational institutions. The last 5 years, additional funding has been provided for running such services and Social Welfare offices of each institution have been significantly enriched with people and resources. As this is a relatively new Action Plan. There are still many problems that not only have not been resolved but yet identified and analyzed.

- No skilling-up of ICT as most material is not accessible



- No post graduate studies – Masters
- Limited chances for practical studies e.g. engineering, medical school that require many labs, and practical work,

## National Reports – Hungary

### 4. National Legislation

The first act dealing specifically with people with disabilities is the Equal Opportunity for Persons with Disability Act (1998). This act has been modified since 1998 several times but the paragraphs on higher education have not changed. This act declares the equality of rights in all areas of social life and education of persons coming within the scope of the act and bans negative discrimination against them and, where it is absolutely necessary, to apply positive discrimination. It is the right of all students with disabilities to study in higher education institutes according to their abilities and conditions. Hungary signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) in 2007 and the Marrakesh Treaty (2013) in 2018. The Marrakesh Treaty facilitates access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled. The new Constitution/Fundamental Law of Hungary (2011) guarantees the fundamental rights to everyone without discrimination and in particular without discrimination on grounds of race, color, sex, disability, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or any other status.

There is a positive discrimination principle in the regulation of admission to universities in Hungary if someone has a disability. According to the Enactment of Higher Education Enrolment (2016), reasonable accommodation and additional services provided for the matriculation examination - longer preparation time, use of aids used during school studies, and, if necessary, replacing the written exam with an oral one or vice versa. In the Enactment of Higher Education Enrolment (2016) applicants with disabilities can get 40 extra credits because of their special needs if these are proven. Higher education institutes get 150.000,-HUF (around 380 Euro) after each registered student with a disability yearly. Students with disabilities can study almost any major, except for two: kindergarten and lower elementary school teaching.

#### Equal opportunities in higher educational institutes

The Higher Education act (2011) and its Enacting Clause (2015) give a framework for any university to elaborate its own regulations concerning the inclusion of students with disabilities. Basic regulations: providing equal opportunities and equal access; the lecturer/teacher has to take into consideration the students' special needs; there have to be institutional and faculty disability coordinators pointed out; student has right to receive provision according to his/her condition and disability; any student can get state-financed higher education on all levels maximum of 12 semesters – students with disability can get 4 extra semesters; students with disability have to be provided education and evaluation/examination procedure that is suitable for his/her special needs. If it is justified, he/she can be released from studying some subjects or parts of a subject. This release can only be provided if it is based on the special needs of the students and it cannot lead to the exemption of those subjects which are basic requirements for the



given field of study/profession; practical subjects can be fulfilled in different ways or can be substituted by theoretical subjects; oral exams can be fulfilled in written and vice versa; release from the obligatory state language examination (part or level); using assistive technology and special equipment during the study and exams; more preparation time during the exams; asking for personal assistants and note-takers

## 5. Skills Gaps

The educational level of people with disabilities is lower than that of the majority population: in Hungary, 20.1% of people with disabilities do not have a basic education either, 38.2% have only a basic education, 19% has a high school diploma and a college or university degree only 8.3% obtain it (KSH, 2011). Young people with special educational needs are a heterogeneous group since students with varying degrees of disability and mental retardation and to deal with these peculiarities, to these their degree of adaptation may also vary. The various obstacles students have different identities, motivations, interests, and expectations they can show a wide range of special learning needs. Viewing, evaluating, and managing this heterogeneity is a challenge for universities. It is an important experience that some disabled recruiters are not enough informed about study opportunities and their outcomes in the labor market, they did not encounter an adequate career choice service in secondary school, a selection of a major and the preparation for admission is a campaign-like, career decision unfounded. According to Török (2017) the choice of profession is often determined by:

- they saw that one intellectual profession in their environment, a specific person who is a member of that profession has had a major influence on them and/or their families;
- have no knowledge that the chosen profession

In the case of certain types of impairments or developmental disorders, the decision-making processes related to studies and employment may differ. due to different obstacles and the resulting differences in life experiences. For example, decision-making is more common in individuals with cognitive problems and difficulties for people with physical disabilities. Probably, in the case of physical disability, the strengths and barriers with higher confidence in decision-making skills may go together. While in the case of students with sensory and locomotor problems the routes of further study and employment are clearer, until then, in the case of behavioral, and emotional disorders that are impaired in learning the picture is not so clear. Among them, after the age of 16 is secondary the path from education to the labor market or to higher education is much less supported, which carries the risk of young people dropping out of the education system and becoming unemployed or low-status workers.

What are the major skill gaps among students with disabilities when entering into higher education? A survey (Kovács – Kollárszky, 2017) shows the following essential skills to study successfully in a university and in which there might be a gap in students with disabilities:

- knowledge on the university (electronic learning system; study affair department; sport; library; application on social grants, etc.)
- knowledge on the rights to reasonable accommodations
- understanding when and how to disclose disability for different persons at university
- self-determination and a strong self-concept and identity
- high level of IT skills, electronic communications, and Internet resources

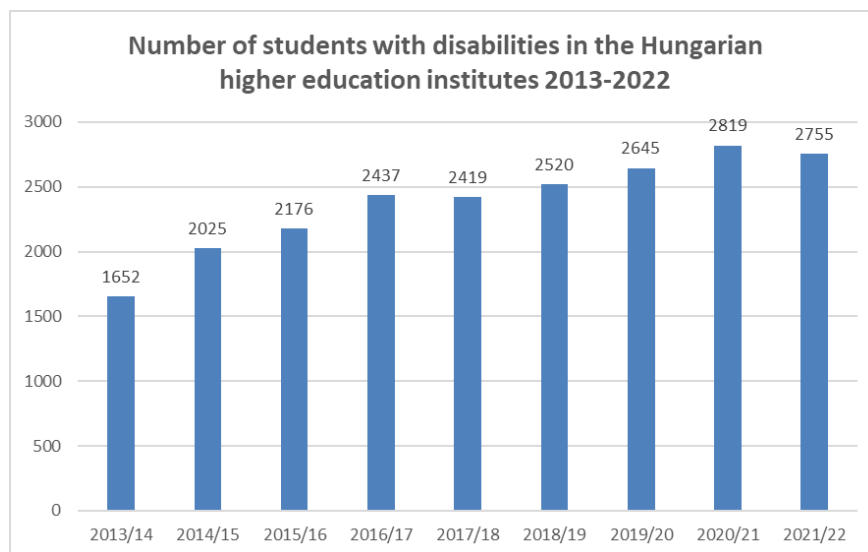


- access campus and community resources for academic support (e.g. disability center)
- self-advocacy and empowerment
- good social skills to be able to ask for help when needed and having a network of peer students with and without disabilities

## 6. Missed opportunities

The number of students with disabilities in the higher education system has significantly grown during the last years, in the perspective of nine years, it increased by a third.

Figure 1: The number of students with disabilities in the Hungarian higher education between 2013-2022 (based on the Hungarian Higher Education Register)



When we would like to get a reliable picture of the opportunities for students with disabilities to study in universities, we have to analyze the ratio as well. In 2013 the number of students with disabilities in higher education was 1652, which was 0,52% of the total university student population of 320.124. By the year 2021, this ratio has grown up to 0,94%. Both the number and proportion of students with disabilities have increased in higher education, but we cannot be satisfied. If we compare the Hungarian 0,94% with the 10-12% ratio in the United States or the United Kingdom, we know that we have to improve to raise the number of enrollment of students with disabilities in the Hungarian higher education institutes. The reason of the low proportion has two faces.

1. Institutional gaps: Supporting students with disability in secondary schools are far away from the needs despite of legal obligation ([https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/special-education-needs-provision-within-mainstream-education-29\\_hu](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/special-education-needs-provision-within-mainstream-education-29_hu)). There are not enough special ed. and itinerant teachers in mainstream secondary schools, which means that only those students can get professional help in skill development, who have severe disability. If there is any special ed. support, it is only once a week which isn't sufficient for more cases and implies that the limited time is only enough for improving



academic skills but not enough for strengthening social skill and other soft or extra-curricular skills.

2. Structural gaps: The other problem in the Hungarian education system is that students with disabilities are not prepared to choose the right majors and university study fields that suits best for their skills and opportunities. In other way, educational orientation service that would assess students' skills and advise them whether they are well prepared to study in higher education institutes or not and if yes, which fields are the most accessible for them is not sufficient in Hungary (Török, 2016, p.138.

[https://edit.elte.hu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10831/40638/T%C3%B6r%C3%B6k%20R%C3%A9ka\\_doktori\\_disszertacio.pdf](https://edit.elte.hu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10831/40638/T%C3%B6r%C3%B6k%20R%C3%A9ka_doktori_disszertacio.pdf)

## National Reports – Italy

### 1. National legislation

The “Integrazione Scolastica” policy developed in the 70’s has doubtlessly positively affected some aspects of the Italian educational system. *The Law n. 104/92 about the generalization of integration and enshrines the right education and education in the common sections and classes for all people in disability situation stating that the exercise of this right cannot be prevented by learning difficulties or other difficulties arising from disability related”. Although the contents of this law move in the direction of greater inclusiveness, it strongly lacks in the application phase. Then Law No. 18 of 3 March 2009, Ratification and Enforcement of the Convention of the United Nations on the rights of persons with disabilities, with the Optional Protocol, in New York on 13 December 2006 and the establishment of the National Observatory on condition of persons with disabilities. This law ratifies the UN Convention of 1959. Italy has undertaken to adopt all the necessary acts, actions and policies for a decisive change of strategy in addressing disability issues. Nevertheless, After the Gelmini reform (133/2008) and other legislative measures (e.g. law 244/2007) aimed at cutting the resources of the school reducing heavily the staff of the curricular and support teachers, there were heavy repercussions on the processes of inclusion and on the education-training of the weakest pupils and in difficulty. With the cuts in public spending caused by the stability pacts (fiscal compact and budget balance in Constitution 2012, spending review 2014), succeeding in making the model of a school able to include and value every diversity is real has become almost impossible. The recent legislation’s enlargement that aimed to support other categories of students by means of an IEP (Individualized Educational Plans) – first those with specific learning disabilities (law 170/2010) and later those with other Special Educational Needs (SENs) – seems to create a twofold meaning: if on one hand this choice seems to grant accommodations to all students who need them on an equity basis, on the other hand, making a difference in the classroom becomes “reserved” for students with SENs and risks labeling them. Furthermore, students belonging to the three main categories of SENs (disabilities, learning disabilities and other special educational needs) seem to be associated with a common negative cultural influence, pervasive and difficult to eradicate: the individual-medical modal and its deficit view of individual functioning, which recurs to categorization and is likely to produce social labeling and stigmatization of some pupils. Following the Italian individual model, provisions are allocated to entitled students and the amount of resources depends on the student’s type of SEN or the severity of*



their needs, almost always based on a diagnosis; the main risks of the model are thus well known: firstly, it locates the problem within the child (labeling), with the risk of promoting the segregation of students with SEN. In Italy many researches have shown how students with disabilities in mainstream classes sometimes experience the phenomenon of micro-exclusion. Lastly there is an economic issue, as the growing number of learners with disabilities or SEN requires additional funding, but since the 2009 economic crisis and due to the renovation of the Italian educational system, universities and schools have had lower budgets to support students' activities and services, in particular for inclusion. Consequently, student support systems, scholarships and student loans have been severely affected and this led to a severe economical discrimination among students, in particular for those with disadvantages and disabilities: only families that could bear the costs of educational assistance are able to keep their pupils onto a proper education. What's more, if admission to private schools is not free from economic barriers as in Italy, where the "public" nature of the education in private sector has been officially recognized by the Law 62 in 2000, the lack of funding penalizes disadvantaged families.

Another challenge is related to the presence of stereotypes on the Service accessibility. In particular, many students with learning difficulties (e.g Dyslexia) are aware of their challenges but do not want to be involved in a service that is explicitly for people with disabilities because of the stigma it can bring, not to mention the barriers created by traditional educational methods and system. In stratified societies, schools reproduce the mechanism of selection: part of the population is not allowed to enter education or it doesn't complete studies; the Italian school system has had undoubted results in improving basic schooling, but its centralistic and monopolistic nature has survived far beyond his historical aims.

New challenges and cases of exclusions have arisen recently due to the covid-19 pandemic: online remote learning due to the school closures was difficult for many children, but it has been especially challenging for students with disabilities who may particularly benefit from in-person education, nevertheless for disadvantaged students who may not have had the necessary technologic devices requested on purpose (during 2018-2019, 33.8% of families don't have a tablet at home, only 22,2% among families has a pc or a tablet; in the South 41% of households are without a computer, compared with an average of about 30% in other areas of the country; only 14% have at least one computer available for each member). In addition, online remote learning was often inaccessible for many students in Italy, as in other countries, risking their exclusion from education altogether.

## 2. Skills Gaps

Every choice related to the scholastic inclusion is in fact today heavily touched from budgetary needs, for example , as ISTAT report of 01/12/2021 reveals that only 1% of the italian schools have provide aids for the accessibility of pupils with blindness or low vision. ISTAT datas also report that the average skill gaps among students with disadvantages or disabilities are related to the so-called basic activities (read, write, draw, calculate, access teaching aids..), not to mention nonverbal skills, movement coordination, attention deficits and hyperactivity. Also the OECD-PISA project, which collected highly standardized data to compare the performance of students in three main areas (reading, mathematics and science), highlights that the gap between Italian students and their peers in the highest performing countries, is very significant.

With such multifaceted challenges facing students with disabilities, gaps are often seen in their academic outcomes; across most grade levels and content areas, students with disabilities consistently



have the lowest in achievement scores compared to the other demographic groups. This effect cascades further and creates longitudinal impacts, including having one of the lowest high school graduation rates, and this translates to an alarming unemployment rate that is roughly twice as high compared to people without disabilities.

Among students with disabilities, students with Learning Disorders have, in general, a lower initial reading achievement compared to other SEN students; for students with language impairments there are reported stable achievement gaps in reading comprehension, while there's an underachievement in reading, maths and science overall among all students with disadvantages. Another data source highlights that the largest percentage of pupils with support has an intellectual disability (46%); other health issues are about development (25%), language (20%), learning (19%), attention deficit (17%), behavioral and affective-relational problems (16%) and motor disability (11%).

### 3. Missed opportunities

Right to study, but still not for all: disabled students in Italian universities number 36 thousand, or two out of every hundred. It is even worse for the disabled who can do postgraduate research: they are only 94 are enrolled in a Ph.D course. Still too few, considering that according to official Inps (national institute) data disabled people in Italy number at least 3.380 million. But this is an underestimate: according to recent studies, people with various forms of disabilities would be at least 7 million.

After all, according to Anvur, the Agency for the Evaluation of the University System and Research, one-third of Italian families have ties with people suffering from various forms of disabilities. The road to guaranteeing access to university still remains a long one, although progress has been made.

This is the case with the first report, "Disability, Dsa and Access to University Education," by Anvur and Cnudd (National Conference of University Delegates for Disability). This is the first time that accessibility for people with disabilities has been mapped in universities, and this also gives insight into the gap that remains to be bridged in Italy on equal opportunities. The picture that emerges from the Anvur-Cnudd report is in some ways comforting, in others much less so: out of 90 Italian universities, at least 86 ensure access and services for people with disabilities.

77% offer specific orientation services before, during and after studies, while 69 percent provide support services such as specialized tutoring or digital learning materials. But then come the sour notes. Only 28 percent of Italian universities offer transportation services to and from home, and the same problems are found in access to housing for disabled students off-campus. These are the main aspects to be improved because out of 36,816 disabled students at least 17,000 have a disability greater than 66% and 16,000 suffer from forms of learning disorders such as dyslexia, autism, dysgraphia and neurological disorders.

On the other hand, there are 17,390 students with a disability greater than 66%: more than 50% choose faculties with a humanities focus, and the most serious barriers to study access are found in universities in southern Italy. In addition to transportation services, there is also a lack of accessible platforms even on sign language, textbooks accessible to all, and reception in student halls of residence: with an enrollment rate for people with disabilities stuck at 23 percent, Italy lags behind Europe, where the





average rate is 30 percent. "The right to study is fundamental and will be part of the agendas for the future because disability and inclusion are a cross-cutting issue," promised Minister Erika Stefani.

Professor Antonio Uricchio, president of Anvur: "Resources are needed not only for tutoring," "but we also need to invest in new support and communication technologies, new transportation and placement services, that is, job placement and access to postgraduate research. The journey is not yet finished."

The Italian education-to-work transition (STWT) is astonishingly slow and long in comparison to the other EU countries. In Italy 80.3% of people with disabilities of working age are unemployed; among the reasons, there is the low level of schooling of people with disabilities: for example in Piemonte only 2.9% of people with disabilities are graduates, while 7.5% has only the high school diploma and this situation is reality in all the country. Exclusion from the world of work is one of the main causes of disadvantage and marginality, it is one of the most evident demonstrations of how much stigma, prejudice, omissions, and delays still condition policies on disability, services, and the productive context and it does affect not only the recruitment in private companies, but also in the Public Administration.

The Italian labour problem seems to arise from the difficult relationship between the school system and the real needs of the Italian production system; This misalignment between human capital and current and prospective needs of the economic system would have the following causes, among others: 1) The quantitative imbalance between the demand for businesses and the choices of young people. In Italy, when choosing the school path, there is a tendency to put the "future employment" factor in second place, mainly following personal interests. From this, it follows that Italian companies struggle to find young workers suitable for the tasks to be performed, primarily due to the lack of young people trained in certain areas and with adequate skills. This is especially true for pupils with disabilities and disadvantages, who struggles to receive a proper education, in addition to being subject to a higher dropout rate.

## **National Reports – Partner Country-Lithuania**

### **7. National Legislation**

In Lithuania, social integration policy for people with disabilities has evolved in recent years from welfare and support as the only means of support, towards promoting the abilities of people with disabilities themselves, developing their independence, and integrating them into local communities and social life in general. Inclusion policies are based on legislation, the main one being the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The following link provides an overview of all the legislation in force in Lithuania in this area: <https://www.ndt.lt/teisine-informacija/teises-aktai/>. The legislation explicitly recognizes the right of people with disabilities to education, work, individual initiative in starting a business or other activity. The social integration system for persons with disabilities includes the provision of medical, vocational and social rehabilitation services, the provision of special needs with special assistance, the promotion of employment of persons with disabilities, the provision of social assistance, the granting and payment of pensions and benefits from the State Social Insurance Fund, the granting and payment of



benefits from the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund, the provision of educational services, and the provision of equal opportunities to participate in culture, sport and other areas of public life. The system of social integration of persons with disabilities is financed from the State budget, municipal budgets, the State Social Insurance Fund, the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund, the Employment Fund, the European Union Structural Funds and other legally acquired funds. Statistical dynamics are presented in Table 1. (2)

Table 1. Dynamics of the number of persons with disabilities by age group 2016-2021

	2016 m	2017 m	2018 m	2019 m	2020 m	2021 m
Retirement age	65984	64375	55277	62684	60668	58610
Working age	163885	162632	160340	157957	153651	147456
Children	14829	14854	14992	15359	15259	15266

Employment of people with disabilities is a key indicator of their integration into society. The employment of people with disabilities is not only determined by the legal framework guaranteeing employment. Every disabled person trying to compete on the labour market faces quite high requirements: education, acquired profession, work experience, age, level of work capacity, disability (1) According to the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, in the period 2021-2022, there will be 310 students with disabilities enrolled in higher education institutions, which is only 0.21% of all disabled people of working age. Data for previous years are presented in Table 2 (3).

Table 2. Pupils and students with a disability in educational institutions

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Vocational training	1359	1332	1283	1085	1034	1311
Colleges	242	181	141	108	120	109
Universities	362	314	279	244	295	201

According to 2021 data, 25% of vocational schools have a disabled-friendly environment, while 36% of vocational school buildings are completely inaccessible. By contrast, only about 20% of higher education institutions have a disabled-friendly environment. (5)

The quality of life of people with disabilities depends directly on their income. Since 2006, the Department of Disability Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour has been providing financial assistance to disabled people studying in higher education and monitoring the targeted use of funds. Financial aid is granted to disabled students with a level of 45% or less of working capacity or a severe or moderate level of disability to meet their special needs related to studies and/or to partially compensate for the costs of studies, who are studying for the first time in higher education after having been diagnosed as disabled:

- a first cycle study programme (pursuing a vocational bachelor's or bachelor's qualification degree) or a full-time study programme;
- a postgraduate (master's) study programme;
- a vocational study programme;
- a third cycle (doctoral) study programme;



- a short course programme.(4)

Table 3. Financial aid measures for students with disabilities (4)

Measure	Destripcion	Amount, from 2022-01-01
Special needs allowances	50% of the basic social security pension each month	107,55 Eur
Partial reimbursement of study costs	3,2 times the basic social allowance per semester	134,40 Eur

Students with disabilities can also benefit from a targeted grant from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport to increase accessibility to studies.

In 2020, the Department of Disability Affairs received applications for financial assistance from 30 higher education institutions. During this period, €438,000 was paid to students. (4)

### 8. Skills Gaps

The Lithuanian Students' Union 2020 conducted a survey of students with disabilities, in which 139 bachelor, master and full-time students who indicated that they have a disability took part and expressed their opinion. The aim was to look back at their individual needs and their unique experiences in higher education. Satisfaction with existing financial, psychological and academic support systems was assessed from the students' perspective.

The results showed that:

- Only a quarter of students with disabilities do not need assistance in their studies;
- A significant proportion of students with disabilities have a need for longer periods of study;
- Less than a third of students with disabilities had a settlement adapted to their needs;
- The assessment of mental health of students with disabilities does not differ significantly from that of all students;
- Students with disabilities are slightly more likely to seek help from professionals;
- Students with disabilities are more likely to experience difficulties with their study load;
- Less than half of the students would be able to cover unexpected expenses above €200;
- Most students receive financial support;
- Students with disabilities report being satisfied with their study programme;
- Students with disabilities generally have a good perception of the methods used by the lecturers.

Which schools are the friendliest for students with disabilities - this was the question addressed by the Lithuanian State Foundation for Studies in 2021.(9) Their study showed that Vilnius University and Vytautas Magnus University are the most open and accessible for students with disabilities - not only because they are the largest higher education institutions in Lithuania. Not only do they invest in adapting the physical environment, but they also provide full support to students with disabilities upon enrolment. They also have the highest number of recipients of targeted benefits paid by the Foundation to students with disabilities. A significant number of students with disabilities choose to

study at colleges. Kaunas College and Šiauliai State College stand out in terms of the number of recipients of targeted benefits.

The National Study Foundation regularly conducts surveys of students with disabilities. Students identify several groups of barriers:

- Difficulties in concentrating during studies as a direct result of health conditions and disabilities, difficulties in reading information due to visual impairment, difficulties in attending lectures due to hearing impairment, frequent health impairments leading to missed lectures, etc.
- financial difficulties, some students reported having to pay tuition fees.
- inadequate infrastructure and study process in higher education institutions. Students report not always being able to get the literature they need, or literature is only available in the HEI library, and due to their health condition they report not being able to sit for long periods of time in the library
- heavy workload, difficult access to learning materials, commuting to studies (9)

#### 9. Missed opportunities

After the survey, representatives of the Lithuanian Students' Union outlined the difficulties faced by students with disabilities during the study process.

There is a lack of academic support measures (assistants, adaptation of study resources to the needs of students with disabilities, preparation of lecturers to work with such students, etc.). Proposed solutions (academic support system measures). Inclusive higher education is at the heart of the higher education system. Inclusion needs to be recognised as a national policy priority. The concept of disability must be replaced by the concept of individual needs. Not only disabilities, but also other learning or health impairments create individual needs in the study process. A higher education institution must have an inclusion policy and a plan for its implementation. A database of students with individual needs enrolled and studying in higher education institutions should be created, reflecting the specificities and the need for assistance. Students with individual needs need to be involved in the processes that deal with students with such needs. Unique experiences cannot be replaced and need to be taken into account by the HEI when making decisions. It is important to ensure flexibility in the study process (the possibility for such students to attend lectures and to report remotely, even after the start of contact teaching), and for contact teaching to include scheduling, tutorials etc.;

Provision of the necessary services. For example, assistance from an assistant (personal assistants are currently not allowed to provide any services in the study process according to the current legislation), flexible forms of payment and lecture attendance, learning support (counselling), accessible and customised study materials, programmes, technical solutions. There is a need to upgrade the qualifications of lecturers, academic and non-academic staff and other educational professionals to support them in working with students with individual needs; Psychological preparation for working with students with individual needs (communication, accessibility, recognition, facilitation), adaptive and innovative thinking, computer literacy, adaptation of materials to students with individual needs, etc. Depending on the needs and capacities of the HEIs, the institution should have a person responsible for coordinating the affairs of students with special needs (system, body, department, coordinator). At present, there is a lack of financial and psychological support measures, their adaptability and



functionality. Revision of the structure of the price for students with individual needs (assessment of the basic amount of the standard tuition fee) - indexation. Support should be tailored to the specific disability or impairment and the resulting individual needs, rather than simply applying the 45% level of working capacity. The full decoupling of the grant from academic performance is also necessary. At institutional level, institutional input is important (in the form of concessions, discounts, incentives). Students with individual needs should be prevented from incurring unplanned costs. Psychological support system measures. Education about individual needs, how to respond to and accept them (disabilities, impairments), integration into the HEI community through events, information provision - there is a need to create an inclusive and emotionally supportive HEI environment in which every student can express themselves and fulfil their potential. Changing the perception of individual needs - these are not only due to disabilities, but also to impairments and long-term health problems. Advertising/education about what a higher education institution can offer a student with individual needs. Availability of psychological support - network of services available, etc. Help must be provided within one week of the student's referral (7).

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### **National Reports – Partner Country- Spain**

#### **Legal situation of the country**

Spain has ratified the most important international legislation related with Education and Disability developed by European Institutions and United Nations. The specific in our country mentioned that university students with disability have the right to education, without discrimination and with equal opportunities, to an inclusive education and free of charge. During their time in the university, they have the right to receive reasonable accommodation, methodological adaptation according to the needs of the student, promotion of positive actions to encourage inclusion and development Attention Offices for students with disabilities.



According to the normative hierarchy principle related to disability and high education, Spain has ratified International Agreements and the national legislation is:

The right to education is enshrined in the [Spanish Constitution](#) in the Article 27.1 and 27.2 in which is established the full development of the human personality according to the democratic principles of coexistence and fundamental rights and freedoms. In relation to university aspects, the Article 27.10 recognise the university autonomy, in the terms established by law.

The [Organic Law 4/2007 of 12 April](#), amending Organic Law 6/2001 of 21 December on Universities is an important legislation to develop specific actions to include people with disabilities in universities. This legislation promotes actions to integrate all the students with special needs related with disability, among them emphasize the accessibility to physical places and in the virtual areas.

In the [Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013 of 29 November](#), approved the Consolidated Text of the General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion, the Article 20.c take into account undergraduate students with severe disability. Universities must consider this condition to extent that they compensate for their difficulties without diminishing the level required. Moreover, the exams must be adapted to the characteristics of disability presented by the student.

Spain wants to develop inclusion in classrooms and universities, to accomplish that purpose the Universal Design for Learning is develop in the [Organic Law 3/2020 of 29 December](#), amending Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May of Education. This way of learning is based on a theoretical and practical model to implement and create an inclusive and quality Education.

In relation to [University Statutes and University Student Statutes](#), there are different regulations to describe the role of the academic centres and Students with Disabilities (SwD). In these basic institutional rules, there are systems and procedures that organisations must include guarantee the rights of this group of students according the specific educational needs and their condition of disability. Moreover, statutes establish units for the care of SwD or specific services for this student's group.

In the first semester of 2023, Spain is going to change the [Organic Law of University system](#). As well as, general modifications, related with disabilities the project law establishes that the Diversity Units must include a service to attend disability and develop an inclusion and no discrimination Plan for diversity reasons. Moreover, universities must provide tools to facilitate language signs and adapted studies for People with Intellectual Disability.

## Skills Gaps

Despite the legal development of the country, there are essential skill gaps to analyze and improve to create an effective university system for the Students with Disabilities. The lack of abilities is external and internal due to different factor considering the situation of this group of population and the conditions of educational politics in Spain.



The external conditions are related with politics, the situation of the educational system and sociocultural development. It is necessary consider these factors and the situation of the students to identify the skill gaps.

The real inclusion for students with disabilities in Spain is difficult due to the existence of Special Education Centers. The existence of this kind of schools' distances the SwD from an inclusive education, making difficult for the students to join society once they leave school. The school attendance in this kind of schools implies a categorization according their capacities and that is a difference for the rest of the life.

Besides the educational system is not adapted to the diversity due to it is identified by the component of rigidity that hinders inclusion. This characteristic is produced in different moments of the education process. One of the most relevant areas affected in this definition, is the creation of the curricula, when this tool needs significant adaptations and sometimes is difficult because it is necessary structural changes in the content of the subject. In the university studies, this problem is more relevant because courses in university are based essentially in curricula, for that reason changes are more difficult.

During the compulsory education period, supports and specific adaptations facilities are guaranteed to all students. When SwD arrive at university, this situation changes because the tools that they had already received in the secondary education are not assured in the non-compulsory studies. For that reason, the SwD that want to continue their studies in university, they cannot do it because their accessibility to the educational centre is not sure.

There is a lack of implication of the majority of educational community in different subjects related with disability. This situation has a negative impact through different channels of the training of Students with Disabilities (SwD).

Sometimes the management teams do not facilitate or are not aware of the diversity of the students. Teachers who try to respond satisfactorily to the special needs of their students, when they raise the needs to school board, they encounter a barrier to provide the facilities and tools that promote the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Regarding the characteristics of teachers, sometimes they are not committed with the diversity of their students, when there is a lack of flexibility in adapting subjects and content. Students are often forced to propose adjustments in order to be able to take courses without problems. This situation will increase even more in the university, because teachers in non-compulsory educational period are rigid and with low level of involvement, characteristics that make difficult for Students with Disabilities to ask for adaptations in the curricula to their needs and fight for their rights.

Educational guidance teams of schools require relevant information and specific formation because unconsciously they can impose implicit barriers to SwD when they offer orientation to that group of students in relation with their future. According to this situation, it is necessary offer more information to these educational agents to offer real perspectives regarding their capabilities promoting more inclusion for SwD in university studies.

Furthermore, it is necessary provide more information to the family due to fathers and mothers do not know the capabilities, possibilities and real opportunities of their children. The perception of the family is one of the factors that difficult the access to university studies.



There are different kinds of discriminations that SwD have to confront in the schools. Generally, this phenomenon is produced by classmates, although increasing age is a factor that reduces these discriminations.

The internal perception is another factor that can generate skill gaps. At time, students with Disabilities (SwD) have some doubts for their academic, labour and personal future. They have low expectations around their possibilities and it can generate invisible barriers perceiving them like insuperable. One of the factors that produce this situation is the absence of representative people with disabilities because they do not appear in the medias or institutions, extrapolating this situation to our daily life (labour, entertainment environment).

### **Lack of opportunities**

Education should not be perceived from a commercial perspective, but rather from the point of view of citizenship. In this area of social politics, there are the rights of students to an inclusive education in the society and which is adapted to their specific needs so that people know and respect those differences.

Sometimes, society discriminates people with disabilities, but according to the development of the educational system in Spain, Students with Disabilities must be considered according to the model purposed, adapted to the environment where he/ she lives. This situation reflects that information and awareness of the rights of SwD are a matter of citizenship. Moral commitments must be supported by equal opportunities regulations and measures. It is necessary the promotion of resources and support to SwD to promote the development of that social group in the schools and universities.

Adaptations are an essential tool to continue the development of the educational career of Students with Disabilities. During non- compulsory educational period is essential promote the access to resources and support tools to continue studying.

Although there are grants to facilitate the access to university studies to people with disabilities, it is necessary review the conditions and requirements of the regulation of scholarships adapting them to SwD to be more effective. Also, teachers with disabilities should be trained and it is essential share more sources for this group of students.

Provide the necessary human and technical resources will promote access to the university, as infrastructure and as a learning centre. Having available resources will facilitate access to university in person and depending on the disability will promote access to the online university. These specific support and sources have to be extended to different university stages, such as language learning and professional internships.

It is interesting to improve the public offer to university and adjust that to Students with Disabilities to improve their workplace. Also, it is necessary provide sufficient resources and adaptations to do the subjects and prepare for the exams.

According to the law, 7% of school places are reserved to SwD, so teachers and staff must know their needs. Furthermore, it is essential include this group of students in international programs of study.

Another important subject, to develop opportunities for SwD in the university is a greater presence of people with disabilities in governing bodies and political representation and the creation of specific law for this group. In this sense, SwD will have an improvement of building facilities and the best design for





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them, moreover the creation of study activities and their inclusion in I+D+I, promoted in universities. Also it will be included a training plan for all the staff on the university centre to improve the knowledge related with DUA- DUI.

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