ECIU university

A7.2, O1b: Strategy of inclusion and universal design

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Beneficiaries

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Abstract

This document presents the overall strategy of inclusion and universal design, for the pilot phase of the ECIU University. The purposes of the strategy is to define the overall objectives for strengthening the dimension of inclusion in all ECIU University activities in the pilot phase; to delineate those objectives, which in the pilot phase must be prioritized and to outline possible relevant activities and actions.

The strategy contains four main objectives to be realized in the pilot phase:
1) Universal design of learning opportunities
To introduce the area of universal design in ECIU University activities and to begin designing and realizing learning opportunities according to the principles of universal design

2) One inclusive learning community through online activity and collaboration
To enhance and strengthen widespread participation from all possible participants within the ECIU ecosystem, through online activity and collaboration

3) Inclusion through strengthening language skills
To enhance and strengthen widespread participation from all possible participants through the strengthening of language skills and language flexibility

4) Inclusion culture
To foster a strong inclusion culture in the ECIU ecosystem, building on the already existing local elements and initiatives supporting inclusion and diversification.

Finally, the strategy presents an appendix with principles of universal design and principles of universal design for learning.

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Symbols, abbreviations and acronyms

AAU	Aalborg University, Denmark
DCU	Dublin City University, Ireland
EC	European Commission
ECIU	European Consortium of Innovative Universities
EEA	European Education Area
KTU	Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania
LiU	Linköping University, Sweden
TAU	Tampereen Korkeakoulusäätiö sr, Finland
TUHH	Hamburg University of Technology, Germany
UA	Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal
UAB	Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona, Spain
UD	Universal Design
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UiS	University of Stavanger, Norway
UNITN	Universita degli Studi di Trento, Italy
UT	University of Twente, Netherlands
INSA	Institut National des Sciences Appliquées

1   Introduction

This strategy of inclusion of learners supports the overall ECIU vision of a European-wide ecosystem with open and inclusive collaboration between and among societal stakeholders, researchers and learners for the provision of European answers to current and future societal challenges.

This strategy builds on the European Education Area (EEA) initiative. In particular, the emphasis of the significance of inclusion and equality, including the underlining of educational attainment as decoupled from social, economic and cultural status, and the inclusion of learners in a lifelong learning perspective, inviting continuous updating of skills and competencies. This strategy is also in line with the focus on support for learners with disabilities, as well as on gender sensitivity and equality. It also ties in well with the emphasis on language learning and multilingualism, linguistic and cultural diversity, and the emphasis of education and learning arenas as safe environments free of violence, bullying, harmful speech, disinformation and discrimination.

In the same line of thought, this strategy also builds on the Erasmus+ programme guide on Equity and inclusion, which emphasizes strengthening inclusion by facilitating access to participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers whenever disadvantage limits or prevents participation.

This strategy focuses particularly on learners, and the realization of it will provide experiences to build upon in the future and to use in other areas of ECIU collaboration.

As inclusion also happens in interaction with many different types of participants, the dimension of inclusion rests upon the shoulders of, and must be realized by, all types of participants, including researchers, teamchers, teachers, administrators etc. and the learners themselves.

The dimension of inclusion permeates the whole ECIU ecosystem and must as such be integrated in the many way of doing all ECIU activities. For the learner, the dimension of inclusion will be clearly visible in core activities such as admission, welfare support systems and especially when participating in challenges and micro-modules.

2 Context of the strategy

The ECIU University offers multi-disciplinary challenges in entrepreneurial, innovative ways. This includes learners cooperating with teachers, researchers, cities and businesses. The ECIU University also offers a completely new educational pedagogy and an international, higher education and research ecosystem to operate within.

Hence, learners and other participants in ECIU University activities will learn and develop solutions to societal challenges from an academic starting point. Learners will have academic quality and an entrepreneurial mindset as well as a desire to learn and acquire completely new competencies and skills.

The strategy will also be implemented within an international context, where learners and other participants will meet across different cultures, languages and backgrounds, forming multidisciplinary and international teams.

Hence, the starting point for learners will also be an open-mindedness towards different academic disciplines, different cultural and social backgrounds and different ways of learning, thinking and working.

3 Purpose

The purpose of the strategy is to define the overall objectives for strengthening the dimension of inclusion in all ECIU University activities in the pilot phase. Closely related to this, the purpose is also to delineate those objectives, which in the pilot phase must be prioritized among the vast array of possible measures and dimensions within the area of inclusion.

The purpose of the strategy is finally to outline possible activities and actions that will ensure this strengthening of the dimension of inclusion in ECIU University.

Inclusion activities involves not only specific measures aimed at specific target groups or addressing specific problems; it also involves an overall way of designing and carrying out learning activities which

embraces all kinds and types of learners. Hence, inclusion activities are add-ons as well as a way of thinking that permeates the way activities are designed, planned and implemented.

4 Objectives

The following objectives are to some extent overlapping and mutually supporting objectives, as one action or initiative could realize more than one objective. For the sake of clarity, however, they are presented as separate objectives. These objectives do not exhaust all possible inclusion objectives, but state the focus of inclusion in the pilot period, where attention is also drawn to many other tasks and objectives.

As the partner institutions have different prerequisites in this area, they will also have different ways and means of contributing to the realization of the strategy. This precondition also implies the vast potential of cooperation and mutual learning, as an effective way of strengthening the dimension of inclusion.

1) Universal design of learning opportunities
The objective here is to *introduce* the area of universal design in the ECIU University activities and to begin designing and realizing learning opportunities according to the principles of universal design[1]. Introduction implies the explicit and purposeful work on universal design, as all institutions already more or less explicit work on universal design but denotes this work otherwise.

Introduction of universal design includes/involves:
- Enhancing the provision of information and learning materials in different ways
- Enhancing and supporting variation in ways of teaching, guidance, facilitation etc.
- Supporting the provision of multiple means of action and expression for the learners
- Supporting the provision of multiple means of engagement by the learners

In addition, at the organizational level:
- Supporting and developing the coordination to already existing practice of universal design at the partner institutions
- Supporting highlighting of the existing local practices,
- Increasing mutual sharing of knowledge of universal design among partners

2) One inclusive learning community through online activity and collaboration
The objective here is to enhance and strengthen widespread participation from all possible participants within the ECIU ecosystem. The objective is to establish one common challenge solving and learning community, which includes as many participants as possible across distances and different national, social and cultural contexts – with online and virtual activity and collaboration as the main driver.
It is important to tie this objective to the objective of universal design, to avoid the exclusion of learners, due to technical differences etc.
This implies:
- Enhancing and developing online and virtual technologies, systems/solutions and processes which support inclusion of participants with diverse backgrounds, i.e., easy-to-use-solutions and platforms (including already existing solutions)

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[1] The appendix contains definitions of the concept of universal design.

- Supporting training in and use of online/virtual tools, techniques, and solutions, including already existing solutions
- Planning, and designing activities for online participation
- Planning and designing activities for flexible, time-zone independent participation wherever possible

3) Inclusion through strengthening language skills

The objective here is to enhance and strengthen widespread participation from all possible participants through the strengthening of language skills and language flexibility across the ECIU ecosystem.

This implies:

- Supporting a vast and varied supply of different language courses and activities
- Supporting multi-language activities wherever possible
- Investigating the possibilities of easy-to-use and free/affordable translation systems/mechanisms
- Supporting the use of inclusive language, through teaching, providing modules of the subject matter, etc.

4) Inclusion culture

The objective here is to foster a strong inclusion culture in the ECIU ecosystem, building on the already existing local elements and initiatives supporting inclusion and diversification.

This implies:

- Defining, highlighting, and implementing explicit values of inclusion in the ECIU ecosystem
- Supplying learning activities (modules) on intercultural collaboration, diversity etc.
- Strengthening the awareness of local resources already available, i.e., resources supporting learners with different kinds of disabilities etc.
- Building and supporting structures, platforms, and processes, which enhance continuous exchange and sharing of experience and knowledge across different stakeholders and participants and thereby fostering and supporting mutual understanding across the ECIU ecosystem.

5   Appendix

Appendix
Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
Source: https://udlguidelines.cast.org/

Principle I. Provide multiple means of representation
- Present information and content in different ways -
- Provide options for perception
- Provide options for language and symbols
- Provide options for comprehension

Principle II. Provide multiple means of action and expression
- Differentiate the ways that students can express what they know -
- Provide options for physical action
- Provide options for expression and communication
- Provide options for executive functions

Principle III. Provide multiple means of engagement
- Stimulate interest and motivation for learning -
- Provide options for recruiting interest
- Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence
- Provide options for self-regulation

Principles of Universal Design (UD)
Source: https://www.washington.edu/doit/universal-design-education-principles-and-applications

1. Equitable use. The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities. Example: A makerspace that has equipment and furniture to make it usable by students with a wide range of characteristics, including disabilities.

2. Flexibility in use. The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities. Example: A design that allows a museum visitor to choose to read or listen to the description of the contents of display cases.

3. Simple and intuitive use. Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level. Example: Choosing a 3-D printer that is easy to use and includes clear instructions.

4. Perceptible information. The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities. Dormitory example: An emergency alarm system with visual, aural, and kinaesthetic characteristics.

5. Tolerance for error. The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions. Example: Software controls that provide guidance when the student makes an inappropriate selection.

6. Low physical effort. The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue. Example: Doors with sensors that automatically open for everyone.

7. Size and space for approach and use. Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility. Example: work area in a science lab that is usable by students who are right- or left-handed and have a wide range of physical characteristics.

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