

**Site visit to ELTE University
24-25 March 2011**

REPORT

Attended: See list of participants in attachment

Reporting: Eva Reina, UNICA Project Manager

Thursday, 24 March

The event starts with a workshop on disability and exchangeability matters at the Faculty Special Education of the hosting university. The group is welcomed by the Vice-rector for International Affairs, Prof. Zoltan Horvath, who introduces the university, its history and its main successes.

The different speakers provide with an overview about the situation of disabled people in both countries and at European level.

- ▶ **Eva Reina**, UNICA project manager, presents ExchangeAbility and highlights the importance of mobility for employability, especially for groups at risk of social exclusion.
- ▶ **Marco La Rosa**, ESN coordinator of ExchangeAbility, shows the online communication tools available for the project partners to facilitate the exchange of best practices and experiences. He also explains the dissemination actions that the partnership will implement to multiply the effect of the project outcomes across Europe.
- ▶ **Krisztina Kovacs**, disability coordinator of ELTE university, introduces the support system available at the hosting university. She provides some data that reflects the situation of students with disabilities in Hungary:

Number of students in the higher education system: 361.000

Number of students with special needs: 2.160 (0.6%)

(Statistics from Ministry of National resources, 2010)

In the last three years the number has doubled due to a new law introduced in 2002 and 2005 by the government to increase the number of disabled students in the higher education system and to facilitate their integration. The government grants 50 credits to disabled students for

enrolling, but some of them continue to have problems to continue their studies.

The Higher Education Institute elaborates the by-law for students with special needs and provides the pre-conditions:

- barrier-free environment
- special equipment for independent learning
- personal assistant and sign language interpreters
- disability officer/coordinator
- on-site training of teachers, lecturers

The disability coordinator/officer has the following tasks:

- Registration
- Participation in the committees that make decisions on the students' request on absolving of different subjects
- Provision of support for learning and passing exams
- Making suggestions on how to spend the extra normative support
- Advising and being in contact with the student with special need and his/her personal assistant

In terms of financial resources, the normative provides an extra support with an amount of is 120.000,-HUF/year/student (equivalent to 440,-Euro). The funds go to the university budget and not to the student personally. This extra support does not cover students with chronicle illnesses. The allowances are only for Hungarian students. These resources are meant to cover:

- Paying personal assistants (other students, parents or family members, community support services)
- Buying special equipment
- Making the environment accessible
- Production of adapted learning material

The Higher Educational Law (2005) mentions 6 categories of disability: physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech impairment, learning disability (dyslexia, ADHD, etc.) and autism.

Universities can support the integration of students with disabilities into the mainstream higher education system through the provision of more flexibility.

- Those subjects which are impossible to take because of the disability can be substituted by others
- Oral exams can be changed to written ones or visa versa
- Releasing the students from the otherwise obligatory state language examination or only the oral or the written has to be absolved
- Sign language interpreter should be guaranteed
- Using special aids and equipment (e.g. dictionaries)
- Providing more time during the exams

Some statistics related to the hosting university:

Number of students at ELTE University: 32.500

Number of students with disability: 293

Ratio: 0,9 (higher than the national mean)

Each faculty has a disability officer and there is a disability coordinator at university level. Their tasks are:

- Adaptation of the physical environment
- Counselling
- Personal assistant
- Borrowing special equipment
- Information accessibility
- Individual instruction in informatics
- Special language courses

Each library has a special space for blind students.

Challenges

How to make all faculties accessible?

Adaptation of the special literature – copy rights; financial issues

Maintaining and refreshing technical equipment – financial issues; lack of specialists

High unemployment rate among people with disability (Among 500.000 people there are only 37.000 who are employed) – what to do after finishing the university?

- ▶ **Agnes Szekely**, Erasmus coordinator of ELTE, provides some data on the Erasmus student mobility and students with disabilities:

Special support for the outgoing students and teachers with disabilities

~1,67% of the outgoing students live with disabilities.

	Supported students, amounts	Supported teachers, amounts
2007/2008	For study: 3 – 1.747 € (average: 582 €)	0
2008/2009	For study: 8 – 4.000 € (average: 500 €)	1 – 1.375 €
2009/2010	For study: 10 – 2.925 € (average: 292,5 €) For internship: 1 – 250 €	0
2010/2011	For study: 9 – 1.900 € (average: 211 €)	0

- ▶ **Csilla Szauer**, managing director of the Public Foundation for Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities, introduces her organisation. The Foundation aims to promote, to protect and to ensure the human rights of people with disabilities and to respect the human dignity of people with disabilities. The organisation has been active for almost 15 years and has a lot of experience in disability affairs and a deep knowledge of the whole scale of the field:
 - » Well trained professionals
 - » All target groups covered (according to the definition of UN Convention)
 - » All ages tackled (from early intervention to active ageing)

The actions carried out involve all areas of rehabilitation. The three main missions of the Foundation involved:

Research, Development and Innovation

- Managing several research programs for evidence based planning (2009-2010)
 - The labormarket integration of students with hearing disabilities – research experiences among students, parents and service providers
 - The labormarket situation of parents bringing up persons with severe multiple disabilities
 - The National Survey on the situation of persons with autistic spectrum disorders
- Service development projects built on research experiences (2009-2010)
 - Services for students with hearing disabilities in vocational schools to support their labormarket
 - Pilot program to enhance the labormarket integration of parents in two regions
 - The board for programs and services for persons with ASD

Knowledge Center

- Collecting knowledge (surveys, publications, films ect.)
- Providing information
- Piloting promising practices
 - library
 - Accessible workplaces and workshop rooms

Adult Training Center

Developing trainings and training materials (70 training programs)

- Raising awareness trainings
- Providing special knowledge for experts (website accessibility, labormarket integration, project/management ect.)
- Training of trainers

- Methodological workshops (How to provide accessibility for social services?)
 - Language courses (sign language)
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- ▶ **Elena Mendelova**, Support Centre for Students with Special Needs at Comenius University Bratislava, speaks about the opportunities and challenges for students with disabilities at Comenius University. (see report site visit Bratislava)
 - ▶ **Darina Ondrusova**, ExchangeAbility Ambassadors from Comenius University Bratislava, speaks about her experience as Erasmus student in Germany
 - ▶ **Robert Durkovic**, ExchangeAbility Ambassadors from Comenius University Bratislava, shares with the audience his experience as Paralympic sportmen in Athens 2004 Olympic games and his experience as disabled student at Comenius University.
 - ▶ **Matej Golian**, ExchangeAbility Ambassadors from Comenius University Bratislava, studies translation and would like to go in Erasmus to Sweden
 - ▶ **Ilona Krizsan**, ExchangeAbility Ambassadors from ELTE University, shares with the audience her experience as student at the Faculty of Social Sciences. She has a physical disability (cerebral palsy due to hypoxia and brain haemorrhage caused by prematurity). Ilona highlights the importance of studying in an integrated high school. She underlines the importance of the mentoring programme for supporting students with special needs. Ilona lives with her mother in a barrier free youth hostel of the university. Budapest has developed recently, but there is still a lot to do to overcome physical barriers and to make public transports accessible. Only Combino trams and some buses are accessible.
 - ▶ **Zoltan Danilo**, ExchangeAbility Ambassadors from ELTE University, speaks about how is being a blind student at ELTE. 80 pc of the information we receive is visual, blind people need special support to fill in this gap. He highlights the importance of JAWS and other types of technical devices available to support blind students. All this devices can be found in the different support centres available in each faculty. Human assistance is also very important, volunteer students accompany people with disabilities to their lessons in their free time
 - ▶ **Norbert Farkas**, ExchangeAbility Ambassadors from ELTE University, tells about his different mobility experiences as a student, volunteer and trainee in Spain, Germany and Austria. He highlights the importance of mobility for self-realisation, especially when you have a disability (he is hard of hearing).

According to the law all deaf students can have free sign language interpreters for 60 hours each semester, not just for studies, but for any aspect of their lives. The interpreters are specialised in the educational language, not all interpreters can interpret in an academic context. The faculties that do not respect the legislation have to face sanctions.

The social support system in Hungary is not as developed as in Slovakia, some allowances are very low, less than 100 euros per month. People with a profound disability that work for two years can retire and get a pension.

There is an economic support for people with physical disabilities for transportation. Some companies provide this service and are cheaper than taxis, however they are not cheap at all. Someone who drives a car can get some support for paying the gas.

One of the main difficulties identified is finding a job after the studies. According to the law, one out of 20 employees must be disabled, many possibilities opened after this. Big companies did not always found as many disabled employees as they needed to meet the law. Universities not always comply with the law because they have a lot of autonomy. Moreover, the funds available to adapt buildings are scarce. The EU provides some funds the their availability is decreasing and they are not exclusively focused on universities.

The provision of notes by lecturers are not always available and is not regulated. In Slovakia, note taking services must be covered by the allowance that each student receives.

It is hard to make universities more accessible, not only the disability matters, but also the language. People with disabilities are the ones who have to complain and raise their voice.

The group participates in the Faculty's programme 'Day of Health and Sport' organised by students in the garden of the centre.

After lunch, the group visits the Faculty of Special Education which is fully accessible. We can find elevators, ramps and accessible toilets. Blind students receive a training when they start their studies to learn how to interpret the signs available in the building.

At university level, there are still a lot of barriers to the mobility of wheelchair users. Three types of buildings can be identified:

- Accessible
- Semi-accessible
- Non-accessible

It is necessary to change this and to increase the number of accessible faculties.

The participants move to the Faculty of Natural Sciences and visit the support centre for students with special needs. The building is accessible because it is a relatively new construction. All the computers are equipped with braille displays and screen reader JAWS. Some demonstrations to transform graphs into tactile form take place. IBM Hungary has financed the center and provided the equipment to facilitate learning and language acquisition. At the moment we visit the center a student with a physical disability is teaching English to a blind student.

The group then visits the Faculty of Humanities which is semi-accessible. Wheelchair users have to use a special itinerary to access the building, because there are stairs in the main entrance. The disability officer of the faculty, the dean and some professors show around the buildings and the support center for students with special needs. Zoltan Danilo explains the kind of support he receives in the faculty as a disabled student.

The group visits several interesting spots in the city and has a dinner in the center. The participation in the party organised by the students of ELTE university is cancelled. The location has been changed and the new place is not accessible. The local and visiting students go to have a drink in a bar to get to know each other and to discuss the outcomes of the day.

Friday, 25 March

The participants visit the Ability Park, a thematic amusement park that has received national and international awards. The objective of the centre is to help people get acquainted with the life of people with disabilities in an interactive and entertaining fashion that facilitates social inclusion. The idea behind the park is to shift social attitude and offer a meaningful and pleasant experience through games led by people with disabilities to all visitors who wish to play, have a good time and test their abilities. <http://www.abilitypark.hu/eng/>

The group experiences different types of disabilities and participate in several quizzes and assignments. All the participants are very satisfied with the visit and enjoyed the experience.

After lunch at the Faculty of Special Education, the group meets to summarize the site visit and to discuss the main conclusions. Everybody agrees that the personal experiences presented by the students are the most interesting part of the seminar. The Ability Park is also considered a very interesting feature in the programme.

Elena Mendelova highlights the importance of the project to establish contacts among students and university officers. It provides a good ground to share experiences and best practices, and therefore possibilities for improvement.

The students are asked if they would go abroad to study. Zoltan Danilo stresses the wonderful experience he had during the last two days. He has learnt a lot about the visiting university, but also about his own institution. He highlights the importance of meeting new friends and establishing contacts. He is studying languages and therefore would like to experience mobility.

Katarína Krajanová, ESN representative from Comenius University Bratislava, congratulates on the brilliant organisation and stresses the importance of having experiences such as the ones the group had in the Ability Park. The cancellation of

the party in the programme due to accessibility issues has taught her the necessity of checking the venues before organising an ESN event.

Ágnes Sarolta Fazekas has already experienced mobility and highlights the importance of sharing Erasmus stories with others and to increase the number of students with disabilities participating in Erasmus. For her it was a very enriching experience that changed her life.

Darina Ondrusova highlights the importance of adapting legislation to new realities and agrees with Agnes on the importance of mobility for personal development. Krisztina Kovacs stresses the passivity that disabled students show sometimes to deal with topics of their concern. She encourages the students to think about it and to raise their voices.

Matej Golian shows his satisfaction with the site visit and stresses all the things he has learnt. After the event he is even more certain that he wants to experience mobility. For Matej the Ability Park was the most interesting part of the programme.

Robert Durkovic shares with the participants his insights. He finds the project very interesting and thanks for the opportunity to take part in it. The site visit has been a very positive experience for him and he is happy of having made new friends. Robert says that he needs more motivation to learn foreign languages, especially English. He underlines the professionalism of the organisers and encourages UNICA to continue preparing this kind of projects in the future. The day before, Robert was just speaking Slovakian, he presents his opinions in English, that is already a very positive outcome of the project!

Ilona Krizsan says that the site visit has encouraged her to help other physically challenged students. She does not know if she will go to study abroad or not, but she stresses that the experience was fantastic! Her mother and personal assistant, Ilona Krizsán, highlights the importance of this type of projects, not just for the students, but also for the families. She encourages her daughter and other students to pursue what they want. She says that she has seen her daughter more open to the world and happier during the last two days.

All the visiting committee, including university officers and coordinators, stay in a hotel managed by disabled people. <http://www.hotelpanda.hu/>

Steering Committee

The members of the steering committee meet to discuss the outcomes of the site visit. Everybody found it very interesting and successful. The officers from each university, hosting and visiting, will provide UNICA with a short report speaking about their impressions. They will ask the support of the ExchangeAbility ambassadors.

Some conclusions regarding the main challenges identified by disabled students are outlined:

- Physical barriers at universities
- Accessible learning materials
- Limited personal assistance
- Teachers' mindset
- Freedom of choice
- Lack of financial resources
- Accessibility of cities and transports
- Lack of information about mobility programmes
- Incompatibility of services in terms of mobility
- Job opportunities after studies

ESN will send an online evaluation form that will be filled out by all the participants, including the invited speakers. The students are encouraged to participate in the blog and the facebook group. A story competition will be launched with a prize.

Regarding the financial aspects, the hosting university will send a financial report to the project coordinator including all the invoices related to the organization of the event. Elena Mendelova will provide the project coordinator with the per diem forms of the visiting group. UNICA will process the payments as soon as possible.

There are no questions regarding the work plan or the evolution of the project.

The participants thank the hosting university for their warm welcome and great organization, and especially Krisztina Kovacs, Nikolett Rékasi (ESN ELTE) and students. The next site visit will take place in Nicosia on 7-8 April and will be count on the participation of the Hungarian team. All the partners will be able to follow the preparation through the Google group mailing list. This may help other site visit organisers to get ideas. An external evaluator will be invited to the site visit of Tallinn, 5-6 May 2011.