

International Staff Week (12th-16th July 2021)

University of Cadiz, Spain

Conclusions about the main issue of the week: Inclusion and Diversity

Inclusion and Diversity are priorities of the new Erasmus+ Programme for 2021 to 2027. The Erasmus+ Guide published by the European Union explains that “In order to implement these principles, an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy covering all programme fields is devised to support an easier access to funding for a wider range of organizations, and to better reach out to more participants with fewer opportunities” (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, page 7,8).

The barriers mentioned in the guide can hinder the participation of people with disabilities, health problems, barriers linked to education and training systems, cultural differences, social barriers, economic barriers, barriers linked to discrimination and geographical barriers.

One of the objectives of the week was to know how far are we already working out these priorities mentioned in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Another was to share information and to learn from each other, and to become aware of what we haven't thought of yet.

The participants of different universities presented their ongoing projects related to different barriers mentioned above and their facilities supporting students and staff (see programme and presentations published).

The participants are from the University of Split (Croatia), the University of Bretagne Occidentale (France), both, together with the University of Cadiz, partners in the European Alliance SEA-EU, Pázmány Péter Catholic University (Hungary) and the State University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sacz (Poland).

What does inclusion mean?

- It is a process, where everyone is involved and benefited.
- It is based on recognition, value and celebration of diversity.
- When we talk about inclusion, we need to talk about the whole community.
- We identify social, cultural and educational boundaries that compromise it.

- We need to be more sensitive and inclusive about language and expressions.

We have also learnt about service learning, which is an educational approach that combines learning objectives with community service in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience while meeting societal needs.

It was as well discussed how we can work to make it easier to overthrow those barriers for the next Erasmus mobility call, with the purpose of encouraging more students and staff to participate.

Issues like coordination between Erasmus Office and Inclusion Office were mentioned, as well as cooperation in the preparation of the dissemination of the next call. It was also discussed if it is necessary to designate an Inclusion Officer in the Erasmus Office or if inclusion projects are working more in international cooperation in the frame of all international activities and projects of the university or if proper training is provided to persons in charge of Erasmus Office.

This week was both about sustainability and inclusivity and the group notes that a truly sustainable approach is an inclusive one and they go hand in hand.

Attention was drawn to the fact that personal testimonies of participants of the Erasmus+ Programme were missing during this Staff Week. To address that, presentations of personal testimonies will be included in the programme of future Staff Weeks. We suggest likewise organizing a follow-up meeting in another university of the participating universities, including more experts in these two fields.