

## IDEA\_ACCESSIBILITY UNIT

Work Package	Title of Work Package
WP2	Establishment/ Enhancement and operationalization of Accessibility Units/Student Advisory Office
Outcome 2.1.1	Development of New Protocols and Drafting Policy Papers with Normative Suggestions

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## 1. Introduction

In accordance with all legal acts in force, University of Donja Gorica (UDG) implement an equal policy for all students with or without disabilities with the aim of providing them complete and most equal access to all aspects of university life.

University of Donja Gorica aims:

- To guarantee the promotion and protection of the rights of students with disabilities in UDG to enable their full and effective participation in the studies offered by UDG and to guarantee the access of these students to all student activities, scientific research and all other activities offered by UDG through assistance and support.
- To determine the responsibility of all responsible structures of UDG in the implementation of principles of inclusion and accessibility to reduce or even remove barriers for persons with disabilities in order to enable their equal participation in the activities and services of UDG.

### 1) Legislation in Montenegro

Montenegro is making effort to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life long learning.

The Constitution of Montenegro, as the highest legal act, in Article 6 guarantees the protection of human rights and freedoms, in Article 7 promotes the prohibition of inducing or inciting of hatred or intolerance on any grounds, in Article 8 proclaims the prohibition of discrimination and in particular stipulates that ratified and published international treaties and generally accepted rules of international law make an integral part of the internal legal order and have the supremacy over the national legislation and are directly applicable when they regulate the relations differently from the internal legislation. Article 68 of the Constitution guarantees special protection to persons with disabilities.

The Government of Montenegro at the end of 2007 adopted the Strategy for Integration of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro for the period 2008-2016. This is the first strategic document which analyzes the current situation involving persons with disabilities with a series of measures and recommendations needed to be taken in the eight-year period in order to improve the situation of the above-mentioned population.

The Government of Montenegro adopted the Strategy for Integration of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro for the period 2016-2020.

The Government had adopted a strategy for the protection of persons with disabilities from discrimination for the period 2017-2021, which followed the areas of activities and timeframe of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, with a special overview of the results of the previous strategy, the existing legal framework and the current position of persons with disabilities in Montenegro, determining on the basis of that strategic goals in each of those areas and concrete measures and activities.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified by Montenegro in 2009, aims to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Montenegro is the first Balkan country which has prepared the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the Braille, alternative script, audio script, and the sign language (according Article 21 of the Convention).

New Law on Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities was adopted in 2015, which is fully in compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This Law shall regulate prohibition and protection from discrimination of persons with disabilities, as well as promotion of equality of those persons with other persons.

Law of Higher Education, Official Gazette of Montenegro, 044/14 of 21 October 2014, 052/14 of 16 December 2014, 047/15 of 18 August 2015, 040/16 of 30 June 2016, 042/17 of 30 June 2017, 71/2017, 55/2018, 3/2019 and 17/2019 of 27 March 2019):

- Under Article 6 of this Law, discrimination in the exercise of the right to higher education is prohibited. The list of explicitly mentioned grounds of discrimination includes sex, race,

marital status, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, ethnic origin, membership of a national community, property and disability.

- Article 23 An institution can be founded and can perform its activity, if it has: ...” proper conditions and unrestricted access for persons with disabilities;
- Article 70 Students with disabilities at both public and private institutions shall be exempt from paying fee.
- A student with disability is entitled to take an exam at a place and in a manner adjusted to their abilities, in accordance with statute of institution.

Montenegro, Law on Vocational Education (Zakon o strucnom obrazovanju), Official Gazette, nos.064/02, 049/07, 045/10, 039/13, 047/17, Article 2b. vocational education is accessible to all persons and cannot be directly or indirectly restricted on grounds of: sex, race, colour, language, religion, marital status, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or other origin, property, disability, or another similar ground, position or circumstances, in accordance with a special law (Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination).

The Law on Movement of Persons with Disabilities with Dog-helper ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", no. 76/09 from November 18 2009, 40/11 from August 08 2011). Article 4 stipulates that persons with disabilities with dog-helper are entitled to free access and stay at public places such as: official premises, hotels, restaurants, banks, post-offices, theatres, sports facilities, markets, shops, schools, faculties etc.. Persons with disabilities with dog-helper are also entitled to access and stay in health facilities.

## **2) Brief description of the current procedures and regulations at UDG**

To reach the highest level of providing support to students with disabilities, the Student Advisory Office (SAO) had established in cooperation with Association of youth with disabilities (AYDM) within project Support and Inclusion of students with disabilities at higher education institutions in Montenegro SINC@HE.

The Office offer its services to all individuals with legally recognized disabilities, as well as to those who are able to document the negative effect of health on their education. Assistance should be offered whenever a health-related handicap is proven to influence the process of learning.

The SAO's work is organized in the form of services that students may be qualified for the assistance. The SAO's services is addressed to anyone whose disability or other health-related problems make the following of a 'regular' course of studies difficult. The difficulties in question may be connected with an inability to participate in lectures (hearing disabilities), the availability of reading material (visual disabilities), access to university buildings (mobility disabilities) or attendance (e.g. due to recurring illness).

According to the Law of Higher Education, Official Gazette of Montenegro, 044/14 of 21 October 2014, 052/14 of 16 December 2014, 047/15 of 18 August 2015, 040/16 of 30 June 2016, 042/17 of 30 June 2017, 71/2017, 55/2018, 3/2019 and 17/2019 of 27 March 2019) Students with disabilities are exempted from paying fee.

#### Procedure:

- Persons applying for the services of the SAO are obliged to fill out registration form and submit to the SAO the required medical documentation relating to disability. In particular, persons with a classified degree of disability are obliged to submit to a faculty a copy of the official statement certified by a member of the SAO staff.
- If the SAO finds the submitted documents unsatisfactory, it will ask for additional documentation or a medical examination by a doctor cooperating with SAO.
- Documents submitted to the SAO relating to an applicant's medical condition cannot be dated earlier than 90 days before the date of submission, except in cases of permanent disability. Where submitted documents fail to state a permanent condition, students with disabilities applying for or making use of SAO services are obliged to update their documentation on demand of SAO.
- If the submitted documentation and medical examinations fail to establish a relationship between a students' health condition and the difficulties incurred in following their course of studies, the SAO will refuse to offer or continue with assistance. The refusal shall be

submitted in writing. The student may lodge an appeal against the refusal with the Vice-Dean for Student Affairs, within fourteen days of receiving the decision.

- When submitting documents for enrolment at the University, if needed, students with disabilities will also submit a request for alternative solutions. Once Students Services Office receives the application for alternative solutions, it will contact the SAO in order to get their opinion and confirmation that particular student with disabilities needs alternative solutions.

## 2. Accessibility unit

### 2.1 Theoretical basis

- 1) **Design of the physical and virtual environment.** Accessibility of the premises and technology.
- 2) **Design of Curricula.**
  - Accessibility of study books.
  - Accessibility of study literature
  - Accessibility of the way of teaching, accessible teaching methodology.

Basic requirement of the students with disabilities: basic problem is **access problem**. Defining the student's requirement is very important. Universities have to analyze the specific needs of each student with disability and students with learning difficulties and when needed make individual adjustments for SwD and SwLD.

#### ✓ **Students with disabilities need to:**

- Access to interpersonal communication with staff member;
- Access to structured environment of the university: can go to the building of his/her department, library etc. in the same way that the rest of the students go
- Access to the printed or electronic educational material;
- Access to the board and presentations made in the auditorium;
- Access the exam/test in order to compete equally with their non-disabled peers;
- Access to the content of the web and internet services.

### 2.2 Accessibility Unit location

At the University of Donja Gorica UDG the Unit will be one part of the Students Service Office to be concerned with student issues, along with the International Cooperation Office.

The unit will be administered by an academic staff who already passed trainings in the field of disability and teaching methods for students with disabilities in collaboration with the respective university units.

### **2.3 Mission**

The mission of Accessibility Unit is the achievement in practice of coequal access to the academic studies of students with different abilities and needs, by providing environmental modifications, Assistive Technologies, and Access Services.

### **2.4 Services at the Accessibility Unit**

The unit is foreseen to offer the following services:

#### **▪ Study Guidance**

Provides organizational support for the studies of disabled students from enrolment to completion of studies:

- organizing accessible enrolment into study,
- organization of the course of study (devising an individual study plan, organizing individual tutoring or examination dates if needed),
- help in contacting teachers and Office for Studies employees at the faculties.
- provide administrative procedure for students with disabilities with full assistance of SAO
- cooperate with SAO in order to recognise individual circumstances and abilities of each individual student in respect to its disability and medical condition
- make assistance to Computer Center Unit for selecting ICT services and facilities related to needs and disability of each particular student
- make assistance to Teaching Unit and Dean/Head of Departments for adaptation of teaching materials, examination procedures and scheduling tasks:
  - Adoption of teaching materials and examinations based on SAO's and Administration Unit's suggestions with full flexibility in considering the educational needs of students with disabilities.

- Adoption of teaching process by providing appropriate educational settings that best suits the individual's needs of each student with disability (e.g. special classes/units in mainstream schools, special equipment in classes, etc.)
  - Trainings for teaching staff for work with students with disabilities and preparation of learning materials
- Cooperation with Technical Office in order to prepare learning materials and make them available to date on which it is planned to use the materials.
  - make timetables available sufficiently in advance of the beginning of a semester for needs of SAO's transportation assistance.
- **Technical Support**

Providing suitable technology necessary for making accessible of students with disabilities:

- access to information and knowledge
- learning and teaching situations
- personal communication and interaction
- access to educational and administrative procedures

Furthermore, the following responsibilities should be emphasized:

- offering specialized hardware and software equipment for each kind of disability (e.g. work-desks with personal computers, speech synthesizers, scanning devices, specially adapted keyboards, special equipment like FM System etc.)
- cooperation with Teaching Unit in activities about adoption of teaching materials
- library services of the University library for students with special needs.

## **2.5 Model of services:**

### **a. Directly to the students (immediate impact).**

Fulfill the specific requirement of the SwD and SwLD. Individual adjustments for students with specific needs.

**b. Addressing student' environment:**

- Adjustments made to academic environment.
- 1. Accessibility of libraries and labs service. Accessible library (general services and library building accessible). All entrance must be accessible, orientation maps should be placed;
- 2. Equipment- Accessible equipment in all facilities;
- 3. Guideline service for academic staff:
  - Guideline on how to produce accessible slide to present lessons.

**2.6 Beneficiaries of the unit services are the following groups:**

▪ **Students of UDG:**

- ✓ with sensory impairments: visual or hearing;
- ✓ with mobility impairments;
- ✓ with specific learning difficulties;
- ✓ with psychological difficulties;
- ✓ with chronic diseases.

▪ **Academic and administrative staff of UDG:**

- ✓ with the above-mentioned impairments and difficulties,
- ✓ or those involved in teaching students with impairments and difficulties;

▪ **Non-academic public**

- ✓ with impairments,
- ✓ or those involved in educating pupils and students with impairments;

▪ **Academic and non-academic institutions**

- ✓ involved in educating pupils and students with impairments,
- ✓ responsible for sensory and physical accessibility of public events, buildings and areas.

### 3. CONCLUSION

To this end, the following principles are singled out:

- Providing teaching materials in alternative form, including:
  - Administrative procedures for requesting the alternative forms of teaching materials
  - Specification of alternative forms of teaching materials (e.g. enlarged print, audio recordings, video recordings, computer files etc.)
- Providing alternative forms of examinations and other tests, including:
  - Administrative procedures for requesting the alternative forms of examinations and other tests
  - Specification and recommendations of allowed forms depending on the type of disability (e.g. time extensions, use of additional equipment, changed forms of examination (written to oral or oral to written); short-hand note-takers or reading assistants, changes of examination venue, etc.)
  - supervision of the alternative form of examination
  - responsibility for the confidentiality of materials during their conversion into alternative forms.
- Providing rescheduling exam sessions including:
  - Administrative procedures for requesting the exam's rescheduling
  - Circumstances under which the rescheduling may be enabled and its relation to deadlines for the fulfillment of course requirements and other prerequisites.