



# Univers'Emploi

Developing a support methodology for disabled students  
allowing to conjugate effectively academic success and access to employment

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## Editorial: The *Univers'Emploi* project

The *Univers'Emploi* project is entering its test phase which involves supporting 20 students in each country. Apart from the project partners mentioned in the previous letter, it coordinates the work of the University of Cork in Ireland as well as that of Montpellier 1, Strasbourg and Nanterre in connection with Tremplin-Études, Handicap, Entreprises, as well as numerous private and public sector companies. This test phase is based on the welcome and support methodology developed since October 2010 which was the approach developed by the University of Aarhus.

This methodology includes the issue of employment at the beginning of the process of fostering and encouraging students with special educational needs to participate in the support service. The methodology refuses to define these students by their special needs and instead treats them as any other students whose needs must be met by the university. Beyond the issue of help and advice the service aims to develop the academic, professional and personal competences of the students involved.

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# State of the play

## Common support model

Since the beginning of the Univer's Emloi project, we have been working on developing a model which focuses on how to support students with additional learning differences and special educational-, professional- and employment needs in their transition from education into employment, based on the integrative model from the Counselling and Support Centre, University of Aarhus. This work has resulted in a model, hence a learning oriented approach enhancing employment opportunities for the target group, and the model has been approved by all partners in the project.

The model is based on the idea of providing learning oriented inclusion in the educational system as well as in society in general, with a specific focus on supporting students with specific learning differences in their transition to work based on a holistic approach. This inclusive intervention is based on three main principles:

### **Principle no. 1: General inclusion**

The model is focused on a facilitation of the students' participation in the learning processes and the learning environment within the framework of the system. The goal is to support the students' participation in the specific framework of the learning environment and learning process provided by the education in a wide sense, with a view to developing their potential to act in terms of their future work situation. Therefore, the support takes place at the educational institutions as part of the learning environment and by not removing the students from their study environment in order to give them special education in an external institution and/or in a special school.

### **Principle no. 2: Students as students**

The model emphasizes the importance of meeting all students as students. The student is not regarded as a disabled but as a person with a physical or psychosocial disability in a given educational context or, in other words, as a student with certain individual learning differences and special educational-, professional- and employment needs. Therefore, the interventions do not take the specific diagnosis of the student as

their point of departure. Primarily, because treatment is not the purpose of the efforts; it is rather to give the students a better opportunity (potential) to be retained and thus to complete their education with a view to entering the labour market. Consequently, it is not a matter of simply compensating the student for his/her mental, physical, sensorial etc. difficulties as this implies a degree of passivity. Instead, the efforts are directed, as far as possible, towards an expansion of the students' opportunity to act as well as a competency development intended to enable the student to participate on equal terms with other people. These students is thus seen as students who are to live up to the same goals and demands for quality as everyone else, both in their education and in the labour market, however, within the conditions of their individual situation. Therefore, the efforts are based on the students' own perception of their difficulties given their individual life situation. It is our ambition to meet the students as whole persons with an educational life and a desire to be included in the labour market on the basis of their real professional competencies

### **Principle no. 3: Proactive efforts**

The importance attached to the students own perception of the situation also refers to the fact that the efforts should be as proactive as possible. The purpose of the interventions is not just to compensate and adjust but certainly also to develop and encourage the students' own ability to master their existence. Therefore, the interventions are also a means to clarify and develop resources and competencies in order for the students to be able to function as active members of society who take an active part in shaping their own lives, their education and their choice of career. Moreover, the aim of the intervention is, on the one hand, to guarantee the demands and the quality of the educational system as well as the labour market, and on the other side, to be able to meet the students as persons with individual goals, wishes and expectations to life.

The model is thus taking into account the importance of enforcing employment



opportunities of the individual student with a learning difference. Here the representation of and cooperation with enterprises plays a significant and important role. This learning oriented approach is in the experimentation period going to be implemented and adjusted into the specific national context by each partner in the project. Hence financial

situation, national legislations, human resources etc. differs in each partner country and therefore plays a significant role on how the model enhancing employment opportunities for students with individual learning differences and special needs is implemented and what elements needs to be adjusted in order for the model to work in different countries.

## New Partners

### Tremplin-Études, Handicap, Entreprises: official partner

Over the last 20 years Tremplin-Études, Handicap, Entreprises has been working towards creating links between students with disabilities at second and third level and businesses with the aim of achieving three objectives:

1. Encourage senior cycle second level students and third level students with disabilities to pursue their paths towards higher education.
2. Prepare students, irrespective of their region, for their future employment prospects whether enrolled in a course of study or having recently finished a course and in need of individual support.
3. Support businesses in implementing welcome policies, training and integration of students with disabilities in their different institutions and their different activities.

This essential expertise renders Tremplin very valuable as regards supporting these students from the time they are in university until they are in the workplace. It is therefore natural that Tremplin has agreed to co-ordinate work groups in France, Italy, Ireland and Denmark and to call upon volunteers in universities, companies and the student population.

Over the past year Tremplin has been following the course of 20 students from Foro Italico

university in Rome, universities in west Paris, Nanterre, Montperier 1 and Strasbourg as well as other participants in the universities and in public and private businesses. The project is about creating networks between universities and companies, training staff in the universities to welcome and support students with disabilities while preparing them for professional employment and establishing

connections with businesses, organisations and support services who promote employment for students with disabilities. As a major player in this project, Tremplin forms a link between participating countries and allows the pooling of results of the research for the implementation of three policies by the end of 2012: a support guide for students with disabilities, a training programme for university staff and guidelines for businesses.

Being a participant of the Univers'Emploi gives Tremplin the opportunity to use its skills and experience to develop a methodology for students with disabilities, as attendees of the university and participants in business at both a local and national level.



For more information on Tremplin go to:  
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## University College Cork: official partner

University College Cork (UCC) is the premier University in Munster in the South of Ireland. It is the first University in Ireland to be awarded the status of University of the Year for the third time. The award is based on the fact that UCC's overall performance outstripped other Irish Universities in key areas, such as research, teaching and learning and student support. It is also the first Irish university campus to be awarded the Green Flag for an environmentally friendly campus in student-led innovation.

The student body at the university totals almost 20,000 with over 2,000 overseas students from all five continents making it one of the most international campuses on the island of Ireland. The university has over 120 degree and professional programmes given through some 60 departments.

UCC's Access Programme has been an outstanding success story. In 2010/11, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) reported that UCC had the highest combined number of full-time mature students, students with a disability, traveller students and students from lower socio-economically backgrounds among the third level institutions in Ireland. The Disability Support Service was established in 1995. The goals of the service are to increase access and participation of students



with disabilities through a range of outreach programmes and to empower students registered with the service to become independent learners through the use of assistive technologies and learning strategies. The Service currently supports over 600 students with a wide range of disability

categories. University College Cork has the largest participation of blind and vision impaired students compared to any other University in Ireland and the Disability Service has developed a vast range of expertise in this area focusing particularly on use of assistive technologies and orientation/navigation support.

The Service has a staffing of nine personnel comprising of a range of multi disciplinary professionals working in the area of dyslexia, mental health, sensory disabilities, assistive technologies and career support.

The mission statement of the Service is "to empower students with disabilities to achieve their academic and vocational goals by creating an inclusive learning environment where the abilities of all students is acknowledged".

University College Cork will collaborate with Trinity College as an associate partner in the Leonardo Project "Univers 'Emploi" It will identify students with disabilities who will benefit from the project and enhance their employability skills.



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## French universities

### Paris-Ouest-Nanterre

The University of Paris West, which hosts 31,466 students, is a public establishment of cultural, scientific and professional character which is located on three sites: Nanterre Campus, for all the following faculties: law, economics and management, languages, arts, culture, IT and sports science; Ville d'Avray, for industrial technology sector and DUT GEA and social careers; Saint-Cloud, for literary and audiovisual communication.

The Disability Support Office depends on the CACIOPE service. It is the privileged spokesperson for 267 students who are registered as having a specific disability, either temporary or permanent, relating to any of the following areas: motor disability, sensory, hearing, psychological, linguistic, progressive or incapacitating disease.

The role of the Disability Support Office is to support students and implement measures to



ensure success in their studies and their lives on campus. Its aim is to implement the law of 11th February 2005 and the Universities Disabilities Charter signed in September 2007 regarding accessibility, schooling and occupational integration of students with disabilities.

To fulfil its role, the Disability Support Office offers a range of services, namely:

- Study support and support measures (extensions, note takers, adaptation of exam papers, provision of suitable computer equipment, tutoring methodology....) in connection with the teaching staff, the disabilities referents of the UFR and the

medical practitioner responsible for evaluating the needs of the students with disabilities.

- Support for occupational integration and training on legislation regarding disabled employees. It offers support for course and employment research for students in conjunction with other services in the university

(CREFOP, BAIFE).

It offers assistance on the personal and professional development of the student from the first year of the degree and assistance on research techniques for training and employment and linking with a network of companies and local authorities who are familiar with the area of disability.



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## Montpellier 1

The University of Montpellier 1, brings together seven university faculties (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Economics, Social and Economic Administration and Sciences and Science and Techniques of Sports and Physical Activities). It has 23,512 students, 979 teacher and lecturers and 936 non-teaching staff.

The Disability Support Office (a charge of Mission, a co-ordinator and a responsible host) located within the Directorate of Studies and Student Life in 2005, is dedicated to supporting students and staff with disabilities. Its role is to co-ordinate actions between parties and services within the university with the help of the teaching and administrative staff in each faculty.

A pioneer in the development of mentoring students, Montpellier University has developed a mentoring disability service. During the previous academic year, graduate students (Masters, Doctorate) have served as aides to students with disabilities. They contributed to the success of students with disabilities that attended during their time at university.

In 2010/2011, 134 students were supported by the Office (17 of which were given personal assistance). 130 were adaptations in relation to courses and 104 adaptations relating to exams. Since 2007 the Disabilities Unit has been actively involved in research conducted by the SANTESIH laboratory (Health Education and Disability Status) which is developing a programme based on the professional future of students with disabilities. (Participating in



the development of follow up reviews of the professional integration of former students) SANTESIH and the Disability Support Unit are participating in the "Univers Emploi" project which will enable the testing of a support service for final year students who are at the end of their training. This project allows these two bodies the opportunity to engage in transnational "action research" where the goal is to share experience with other participants in the project with a view to developing knowledge that will enable the Office to better fulfil its objectives.

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# Strasbourg

With nearly 42,000 students (of which 20% are foreign students) and 4600 staff members, the University of Strasbourg is, today, the most important multi disciplinary university in terms of numbers of students and staff in France. Covering all areas of study (law, economics and management, humanities and social sciences, science and technology and health sciences) Strasbourg University has an innovative approach in terms of initial and continuous training, research, and integration of students into the professional world whilst all the time playing a major role both in the city of Strasbourg and on the international scene.

Equipped with a true "Disability Support Mission", Strasbourg University has, in the last three years, supported nearly 200 students with disabilities who needed assistance with their careers and studies.

Because the integration into working life is far from easy for a person with disabilities, the University of Strasbourg decided to participate in the European Leonardo project, Univers'Emploi, piloted by l'INS HEA, in order

to test a support service methodology which is designed to better facilitate the transition from university to work and offer every opportunity to students with disabilities to find their way in the professional world by developing their academic qualifications and above all else their skills.



The Danish model employs this model of support which centres on the learner and is based on the premise of "learning to learn". The

issue of professional preparation is introduced very early in the courses of study and progress is evaluated formally and regularly by way of support tools.

Six students with disabilities will participate in the experimentation of this support method. The idea is to refine the approach undertaken with companies by putting in place tutoring support and enriching existing tools by measuring them against those developed by Espace Avenir and then designing a support strategy towards employment based on the results of the experiment. Start date of the experiment: November 2011



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