Report – BIP: Designing a University for All

The BIP: Designing a University for All, held at the Polytechnic University of Tomar from 22 to 26 June 2026 (face-to-face component) and on 16 June and 17 July (online component), had as its main objective the promotion of accessibility in higher education.

Its specific objectives were to develop practical skills in promoting accessibility; raise awareness of its many dimensions; draw up institutional action plans; foster a cross-cutting culture of inclusion; produce immediately applicable outcomes; and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely Goals 4 and 10.

The BIP was organised in partnership with eight universities from the KreativEU European University Alliance consortium: D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics (Bulgaria), Valahia University of Targoviste (Romania), Breda University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands), Södertörn University (Sweden), the University of Greifswald (Germany), the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice (Czech Republic), Opole University of Technology (Poland) and Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University (Turkey). Representatives from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (Hungary), the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia) and the Warsaw University of Business and Applied Sciences (Poland) also took part.

It was aimed at lecturers and other professionals involved in the KreativEU consortium's Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, as well as lecturers, researchers and support staff involved in services or activities related to inclusion, and was attended by 21 participants.

The BIP provided an opportunity for reflection, collaborative learning and the sharing of knowledge on accessibility, inclusion and participation in higher education. Through a series of thematic workshops, the programme addressed key challenges in building more inclusive higher education institutions, linking the conceptual framework with practical examples and strategies that can be applied in different institutional contexts.

The workshops focused on seven main areas: accessibility and inclusive practices; digital accessibility; pedagogical accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL); inclusive communication and language; invisible disabilities; support for students with special educational needs; and institutional mechanisms for reporting irregularities.

This thematic diversity made it possible to address inclusion from a cross-cutting perspective, covering physical spaces, digital resources, teaching and assessment methodologies, communication, support services and organisational procedures.

The programme's implementation prioritised participatory methodologies, including debates, interactive questionnaires, analysis of videos and real-life situations, small-group work, the identification of barriers and the drafting of proposals for improvement.

Notable activities included conducting accessibility audits on campus, revising digital documents and presentations, adapting course modules in line with the principles of the DUA, and analysing support measures for students with special needs. These activities encouraged critical reflection and the identification of concrete solutions, strengthening the link between the content covered and its practical application.

The BIP programme can be viewed here.

The results achieved are reflected, above all, in the systematisation of knowledge, the identification of best practice and the formulation of proposals that can be applied to other institutions. These include, in particular, carrying out regular accessibility assessments; producing accessible digital materials; diversifying the ways in which content is presented, and the methods of participation and assessment; using language that respects diversity; raising awareness of invisible disabilities; establishing clear procedures for providing reasonable adjustments; and publicising safe and confidential reporting channels.

Cooperation amongst participants was fostered through collaborative activities, the sharing of perspectives and experiences, and exposure to different approaches to the challenges of inclusion. Group work and joint reflection enabled participants to recognise common problems, compare practices and identify ways of adapting to different institutional contexts.

Among the key lessons learnt, one that stands out is the realisation that inclusion must be understood as an ongoing institutional responsibility, rather than merely a response to identified individual needs. Accessibility benefits from a proactive approach, based on universal design, consultation with those involved, pedagogical flexibility and coordination between teaching staff, support services and management bodies.

The importance of recognising needs that are not immediately visible and of ensuring that adjustments promote equity without compromising academic objectives was also highlighted.

The dissemination of the results is based on the systematisation of the content and good practices from the workshops into a summary document, designed for dissemination and adaptation by other higher education institutions. This resource can support awareness-raising initiatives, the training of teaching staff and support staff, the review of procedures and the development of improvement plans.

The book of workshop summaries and the guide to good practice resulting from this BIP can be consulted here.

In terms of impact, the BIP has helped to stimulate further discussion on inclusive policies and practices and to provide tools that can support pedagogical and organisational change. The long-term impact will depend on the effective implementation of the recommendations, the monitoring of the measures put in place, and the assessment of their effects on accessibility, participation and academic success.

Environmental sustainability was also taken into account in the organisation of the BIP, through the use of recycled materials during coffee breaks and by encouraging the use of reusable bottles.

According to the results of the evaluation questionnaire completed by participants, the BIP was very well received. The vast majority of participants (91 per cent) felt that the initiative fully met the reasons that had motivated their application.

The evaluation was equally very positive regarding the support provided prior to the BIP, the organisation, the workshops, the cultural visits and the virtual sessions.

Some comments from participants:

“The BIP provided us with a wealth of new knowledge, particularly practical insights into working with people with special needs. We learnt about the necessary adaptations to physical spaces, the learning process, teaching methods and institutional strategies aimed at making universities more inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of their individual needs. I have gained many valuable insights and practical recommendations that will be extremely beneficial in my professional work.”

“The workshop content was comprehensive, practical and closely aligned with the principles of inclusive higher education. It addressed accessibility from a holistic perspective, going beyond physical infrastructure to include educational, digital, communication and strategic dimensions. One of the key strengths was the integration of policy and practice. Participants explored institutional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) plans, alongside practical solutions for architectural, digital, educational and communication accessibility, which enabled them to understand how strategic commitments can be translated into day-to-day university practices.”

“The content covered during the workshops was clear, well-structured and in line with the objectives.”

“The workshops provided valuable and inspiring content, combining theoretical knowledge with practical activities and real-life examples. I particularly appreciated the opportunity to exchange

experiences and perspectives with colleagues from different countries, discuss inclusive approaches in higher education and develop new ideas together."