



## **Accessibility and International Student Mobility**

### **A Check List for Exchange Students and Higher Education Institutions**

This check list has been put together by the Centre for International Mobility CIMO in cooperation with ESOK (the network for access in higher education in Finland) and it is meant for those working with international affairs as well as accessibility and disability issues in higher education and students in need of accessibility services.

A student going on an exchange abroad may need accessibility services due to a disability, illness or, for example, due to learning difficulties. The aim of personalised arrangements is to support the studies and daily lives of students: accommodation, mobility, access to leisure activities, health and welfare. The need and scope for services will be different for everybody, and so will the solutions.

Arrangements for services needed should be started well in advance of the exchange period.

Students should play the key role in expressing their needs regarding accessibility and special arrangements needed.

The points listed in this document are recommendations, and higher education institutions and exchange partners may use and modify the list according to their own needs.

## Practical guidance

### Students

- Contact the person responsible for international affairs or accessibility in your institution already when you are planning to go on an exchange. Start preparations about 6 months before the exchange.
- Learn about the accessibility situation and services in higher education institutions in your host country, for example, from web sites of universities or from the HEAG database. You can also contact the person responsible for accessibility and disability issues in your host university well in advance of your exchange.
- If you *receive services based on the disability services act in Finland or receive regular rehabilitation*, contact the social services providers of your home municipality and the relevant organisation responsible for rehabilitation (e.g. the Social Insurance Institution of Finland KELA, your insurance company or social services) well in advance of your exchange.
- If you need *special equipment*, find out if they are covered abroad by your insurance.
- If you use *regular medication*, it is recommended that you take all the medication needed for the whole duration of your exchange with you from Finland. However, find out what the latest regulations and restrictions regarding export and transport of medication are in the host country and from your airline.
- If you need *special arrangements due to a disability or illness during your exchange*, find out what official documentation your host higher education institution requires. Practices may vary from university to university, from country to country. Acquire the documents needed, have them translated into English and submit them to your host institution 2 to 3 months before the start of your exchange.
- When your exchange period is confirmed, establish how to communicate with your home and host universities before and during your exchange.

### The home higher education institution

- Start preparations with students about 6 months before the exchange.
- Listen to the students' own assessments about their requirements and individual needs.
- A specific accessibility grant is available in many exchange programmes. Contact CIMO well in advance regarding applications for accessibility grant.
- Find out about the accessibility situation in higher education in the host country. You can learn about suitable hosts, for example, by using the HEAG database and learning from previous experiences of staff members and students.
- Contact the host higher education institution and, depending on the particular needs of students, find out about
  - its accessibility (facilities, practices, services and staff's know-how)
  - possibilities for special study arrangements (e.g. extra time in exams)
  - possibilities for accessible accommodation and mobility and related services available
  - accessibility to health services during the exchange
  - leisure and student union activities geared towards exchange students.
- If students will need special arrangements due to a disability or illness during their exchange, remind them that they need to check what kind of official documents their host university requires. Requirements may vary from university to university and country to country. Students must acquire the necessary documents, have them translated into English and submit them to the host university 2 to 3 months before the start of the exchange.
- Name the contact person/s whom students and host universities need to keep in touch with during preparations (and during the exchange if needed).
- When the exchange period is confirmed, establish how to communicate with the students before and during the exchanges.

### Host higher education institution

- Take care of and inform about accessibility and services of your university also when it comes to international student mobility. Make sure that
  - information about accessibility is easy to find on your website
  - information is accessible
  - information is available in English, too.
- Based on the questions and information received from the sending university, find out about how your university and region can support students in
  - special arrangements regarding studies
  - accommodation and mobility
  - accessibility to health services
  - accessibility to leisure activities geared towards exchange students.
- Be proactive in informing about accessibility practices within your university.
- Find out and explain what documents your university requires from incoming students to ensure they receive the special services they need.
- When needed, ask for further information from the sending university.
- Name the contact person/s whom students and sending universities need to keep in touch with before and during the exchanges.



## Useful sources

Higher Education Accessibility Guide HEAG (covers Europe):

<http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/heag/>

The network for access in higher education in Finland ESOK

<http://esok.jyu.fi/linkit/> (links mainly in Finnish)

The guidebook on accessible higher education by the National Board of Education in Finland (in Finnish and Swedish):

[http://www02.oph.fi/koulutusoppaat/Esteeton\\_opas.pdf](http://www02.oph.fi/koulutusoppaat/Esteeton_opas.pdf)

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