



Becoming Aware of Disability: Developing a Curriculum Based on Cognitive Evolution in Higher Education

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01 – Feasibility and Analysis Report on Measurement of the Perception and Awareness Regarding Disability and Disability Rights in Higher Education

-GREECE REPORT-

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University
of Humanities
and Economics
in Lodz





1. Introduction

The main objective of the project “Becoming Aware of Disability” is to design a curriculum for the students in higher education including disability and disability rights based on human rights, disability legislation, employment opportunities, labor and social security regulations, legal arrangements about criminal law, tax legislation, effective communication, communication techniques with subtitle, empathy, body language, comparative disability legislation and practices. It is also important to increase public awareness about disabled individuals with this prepared curriculum. In addition, it aims to enable the students with disabilities in higher education to reach the living standards which are more comfortable and have higher social sensitivity by having equal access to fundamental rights and freedoms.

One of the main benefits of the curriculum to be prepared within the scope of the project is to ensure that non-disabled students have information about disability, disability rights and disability legislation and that people with disabilities raise awareness of their rights in their work life. It is also important to ensure that their harmony and communication in the society between all students is strengthened.

For that reason, the first Intellectual Output of the project aims to measure the perception and awareness regarding disability and disability rights in higher education. Moreover, the output deals with the competences of recognizing existing legal and social rights in every partners’ country and using them at higher education level.

The analysis that is being conducted throughout the duration of the output aims to map the current situation of the Universities and university students in Greece concerning the awareness about the rights of the students with disabilities and the concept of accessibility.

In specific, the concept of accessibility is the key word for equity access for people with disabilities to all areas of human activity, employment, health, welfare and social care, culture, entertainment and education. It is associated with the quality of life of individuals and creation of human-centered environment, which ensures to every citizen the right to equal participation in social life (Hall & Imrie, 2001). Thus, accessibility is a condition of a technical nature referring to every environment – natural, artificial, technological- in order to fully ensure access to all without exception of people with or without disabilities.

Within this theoretical framework, it is necessary to design the educational reality in such way, as to ensure equal access to the experiences of everyday university life. (Scott et al., 2002).

In order to ensure all the above mentioned regarding the accessibility of students with disabilities in education sectors the following measures should be considered:

- To formulate clear educational goals within the university, that allow all students to participate in learning process successfully and on the other hand allow effective use of teaching time.



- To utilize multiple educational tools and materials. The respective subject should be presented multi-sensory, such as with images and sound so that it is accessible to students with different needs.
- To support the use of multiple alternative teaching methods (Tomlinson et al. 2003) and teaching strategies such as flexible team building, collaborative teaching, collaborative learning etc.
- To enhancing the self-confidence, self-regulation, self-determination of students with mental disabilities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities¹ is considered a milestone in its world history disability, as it describes with complete clarity and thoroughness the rights of persons with disabilities, setting the principals that should apply to protect these rights to the fullest.

Moreover, it sets out the obligation of the UN Member States towards people with disabilities and process measures to meet the needs as equal citizens of the European Community.

1.1 Greek legislative framework for the education of students with disabilities

According to the institutional framework (Law 3699, Government Gazette 199 / 2-10-2008)² for the education of students with disabilities in Greece, the state is committed to securing and upgrading the compulsory nature of special education and training as an integral part of compulsory and free public special education and training to disabled people of all ages and for all stages and educational levels.

More particularly, the law for the education of students with disabilities includes:

- Special education schools in primer education, secondary education and vocational upper secondary education with appropriate infrastructure
- Inclusive education programs
- Home teaching programs
- Implementation of special syllabi according to the personalized curriculum which is planned by the relevant Educational and Counselling Centres (KESY)
- Design and implementation of appropriately differentiated syllabi at both individual and small-group levels. They make use of a wide range of special learning methodology approaches and strategies, such as breaking learning objectives into

¹<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

² <http://www.minedu.gov.gr> (Νόμος 3699/2008 για την Ειδική Αγωγή, Εφημερίδα της Κυβερνήσεως, τεύχος πρώτο).



smaller units, direct instruction teaching, Braille writing system, guidance and mobility training for blind or visually impaired students, sign language for deaf students, new technologies, etc. There is also provision for recovery programmes conducted by psychologists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists.³

In particular, the law for the education of students with disabilities seeks for:

- a) A comprehensive and harmonious development of students with disabilities.
- b) An improvement and utilization of their potentials and skills to enable their inclusion to the general school, where and when possible
- c) An integration according to their skills and potentials, to social and professional life.
- d) A mutual acceptance, a harmonious coexistence with the society a whole and their equal social development, with a view to ensuring the full accessibility of students with disabilities and with special educational needs.

³ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/separate-special-education-needs-provision-early-childhood-and-school-education-27_en



1.2 The educational framework of the Greek Universities. The case of University of Thessaly

Founded in 1984, University of Thessaly is a non-profit public higher education institution located in all four cities of Thessaly region (Volos, Larissa, Trikala, Karditsa) as well as in Lamia (Sterea Ellada region). Officially accredited and recognized by the Greek Ministry of Education, University of Thessaly (UTH) is a dynamic higher education institution that offers courses and programs leading to officially recognized higher education degrees in several areas of study.

The University of Thessaly has followed a rapidly ascent path within its 30-year span and nowadays enjoys a highly rated position in the Greek and international map of the scientific research, even in comparison with much older Universities. The constant support of its students with disabilities in terms of access and their overall engagement to academic activities is one of the most significant priorities of University.

For this reason, University of Thessaly in order to ensure a sustainable and qualitative supportive framework for the students with disabilities has designed and launched an integrated online service called “Access”.

The main goal of the online service “Access”, is the mapping of the needs of students with disabilities and/or special education needs and their teachers, as well as their information and support. Furthermore, an important mission of “Access” is the operational intervention in the premises of the University in order to improve students with disabilities accessibility.

Students with disabilities can be students with

- Special learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia etc.)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Visual disability, deafness / hearing loss)
- Kinetically disabilities
- Speech problems
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Chronic Health Problems

Students with disabilities and teachers, register to the online platform of “Access” to express their needs, to be informed and / or to receive support regarding issues of access to the University. Indicative, students with disabilities can register into “access” in order to inform the service about obstacles to their access, to ask for support during their courses or alternative examination ways.

If the students with disabilities need further support, fellow students take on the role of volunteers in order to enhance the access of their fellow students. Specifically, students / volunteers in collaboration with faculty members can assist the students with disabilities



with their transportation within the University premises, in attending courses, in converting educational material into an accessible form and in their preparation for the exams.

Finally, as far as the deaf students of the University of Thessaly are concerned, the possibility of interpretation in the Greek sign language is given.

More specifically, the following services and support groups are organized and operate in “Access”.

- Mapping individual needs of students using informal assessment tools.
- Organization and formation of a student support network consisting of the scientific officer Mrs. Magda Nikolarazi, the “ACCESS” committee, its scientific staff, the professors of the departments and the volunteer students.
- Support for professors
- Modification of educational material and textbooks in an accessible format based on the individual needs of each student.
- Use, support and lending of assistive technology
- Proposals and interventions regarding the solution of the building accessibility problems
- Supporting students of self-determination and self-advocacy as well as their autonomy within the academic community
- Organization of seminars and workshops with experiential and interactive character
- Creation and organization of a network of volunteers, participation in social activities and volunteering initiatives
- Communication with community bodies that have related goals.

According to the data received, the last academic semester 2019-2020, there are 252 registered users/ beneficiaries in the platform.⁴

⁴ http://prosvasi.uth.gr/index_en.html



2. Survey

The aim of the survey was to track and tackle the perception and awareness regarding disability and disability rights in higher education.

After an initial literature study conducted at the very beginning of the project implementation, from all project partners, the consortium unanimously developed the survey using key questions aiming to determine the basic needs of the students with disabilities in higher education.

The survey was comprised of 16 questions, the responds of which will be thoroughly analysed further in this report. The respondents were 67 higher education students with and without disabilities. The survey was shared to students from various Greek higher education institutes from April until July 2020. The results obtained gave us the opportunity to have a wider national overview of the student's perception.

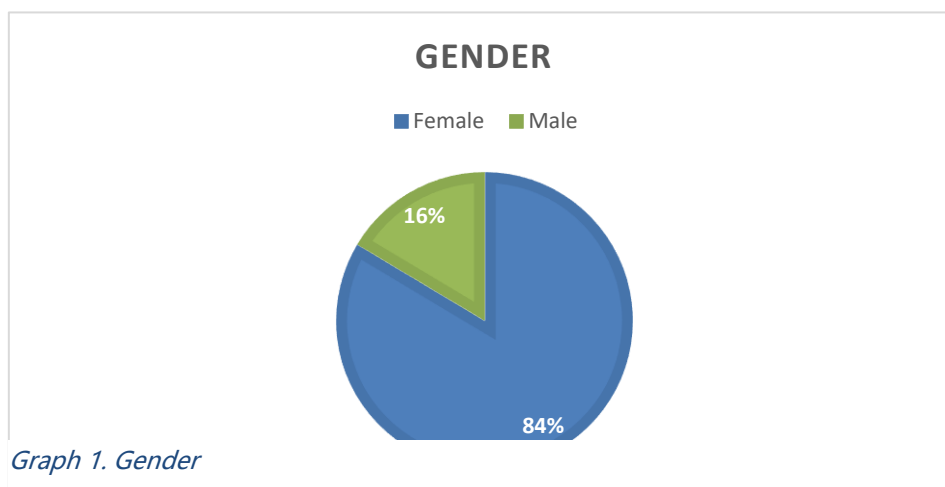
The consortium will thoroughly access the results obtained from all analysis studies and will share them in various platforms with strategic partners and stakeholders, by compiling them in a comprehensive curriculum.

This deliverable is an internal document of the partnership and will be only available in electronic format. This document reflects only the partners' views and the European Commission (EC) is not responsible for any use that might be made of the content of the information contained within.

2.1 Demographic data

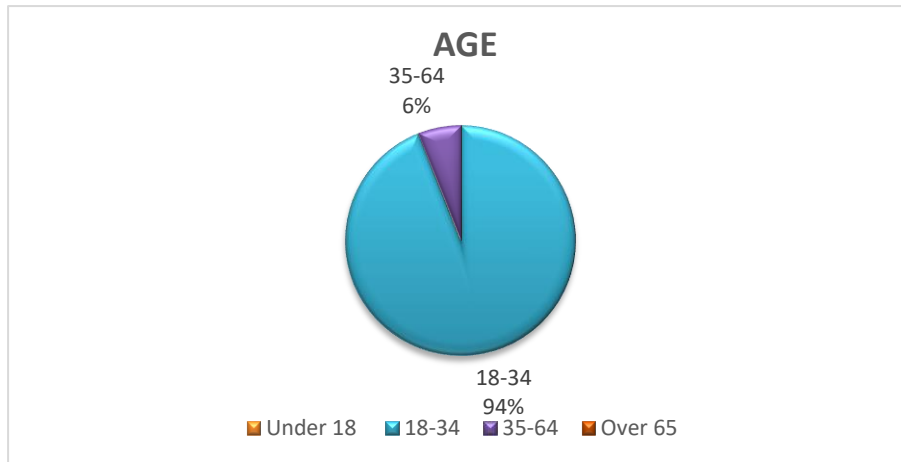
The first 4 demographic questions addressed the gender, age, place of birth and population of the city they study.

As far as their gender is concerned 56 were female and 11 males as seen in the graph below.



Graph 1. Gender

The majority of the respondents of the survey were students aged between 18-34 as depicted in the graph below.

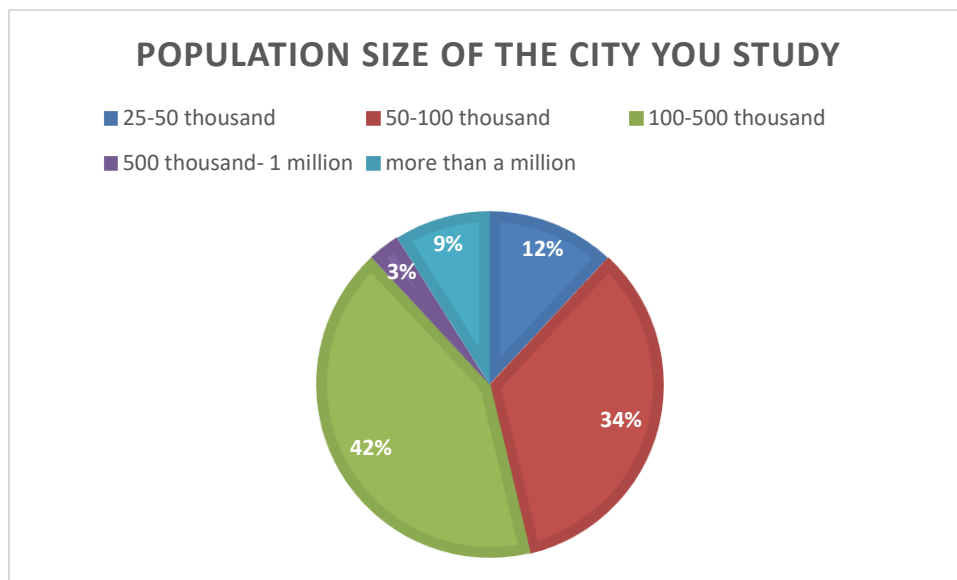


Graph 2. Age

Their place of birth varies from many Greek cities. Most indicative ones are the following:

Edessa, Athens, Volos, Thessaloniki, Kastoria, Trikala, Hania, Patra, Larissa, Kozani and the country of **Cyprus**.

The population of the city they study is depicted in the graph below.

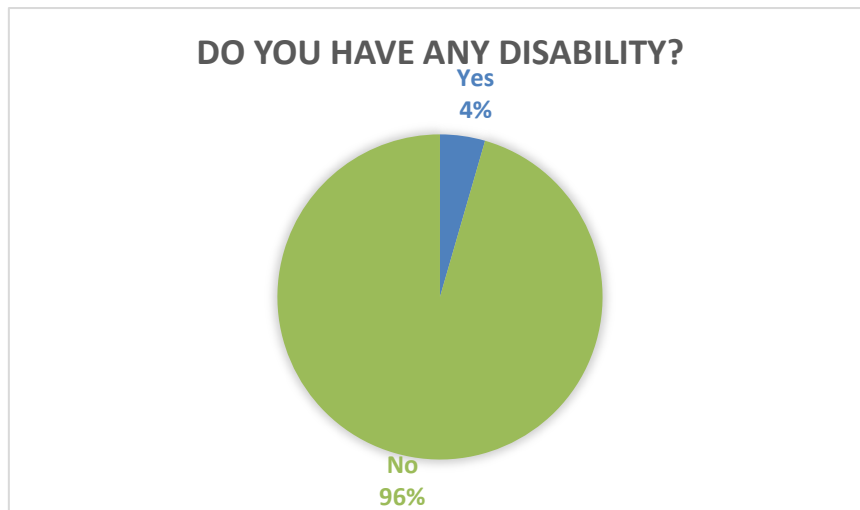


Graph 3. Population size of the city where you study

2.2 Data based on the level of awareness

The following 12 questions aim to investigate the level of awareness regarding the rights of students with disabilities in higher education.

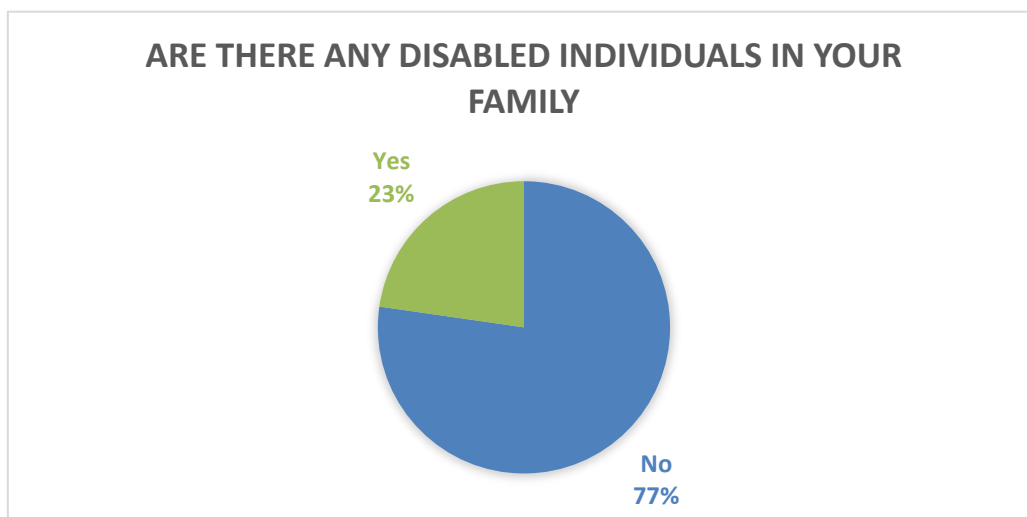
Question 5 was about, whether the respondents have any form of disability. The indicative graph below shows the results obtained.



Graph 4. Do you have any disability?

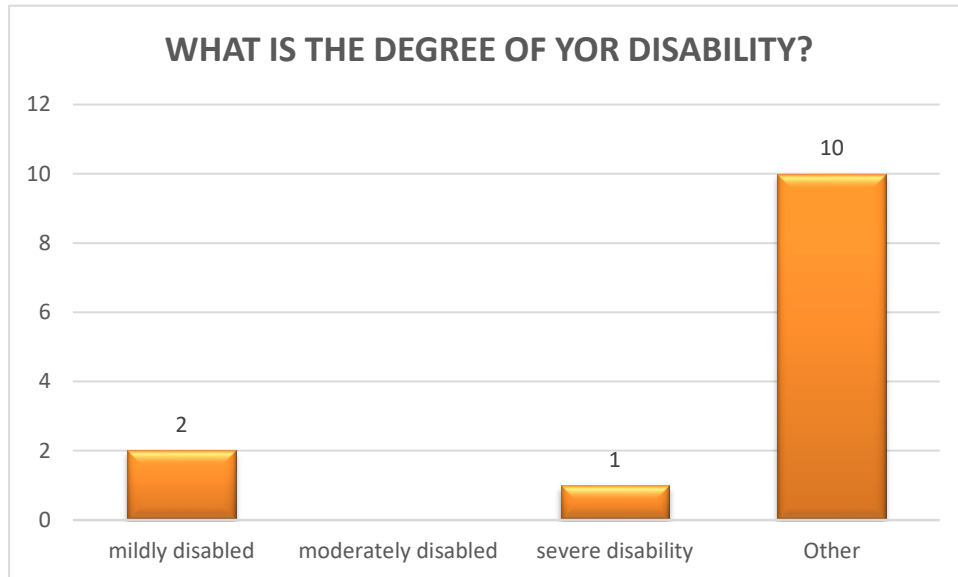
As seen from the graph, the majority of the respondents don't have any form of disability and only a small percentage of them (4%) experience disability.

The following question No 6 asked the respondents whether any other member of their families had a form of disability. According to their responds, the graph bellow, has been realized.



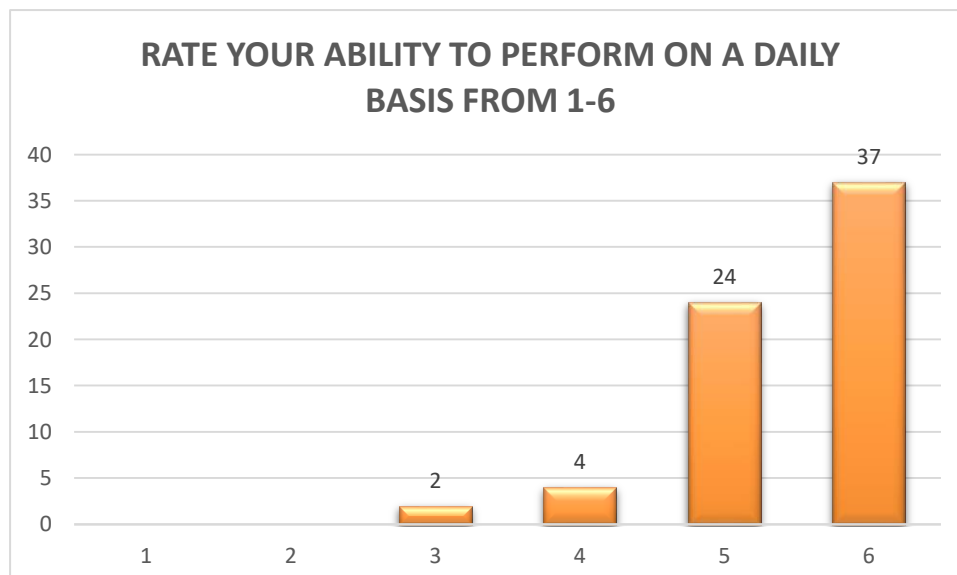
Graph 5. Are there any disabled individuals in your family?

The following question 7 addressed the disability degree of the respondents with disabilities. The graphic representation of their answers can be seen below. 2 of the respondents are mildly disabled, 1 is has a severe disability while 10 of them have other forms of disability.



Graph 6. What is the degree of your disability?

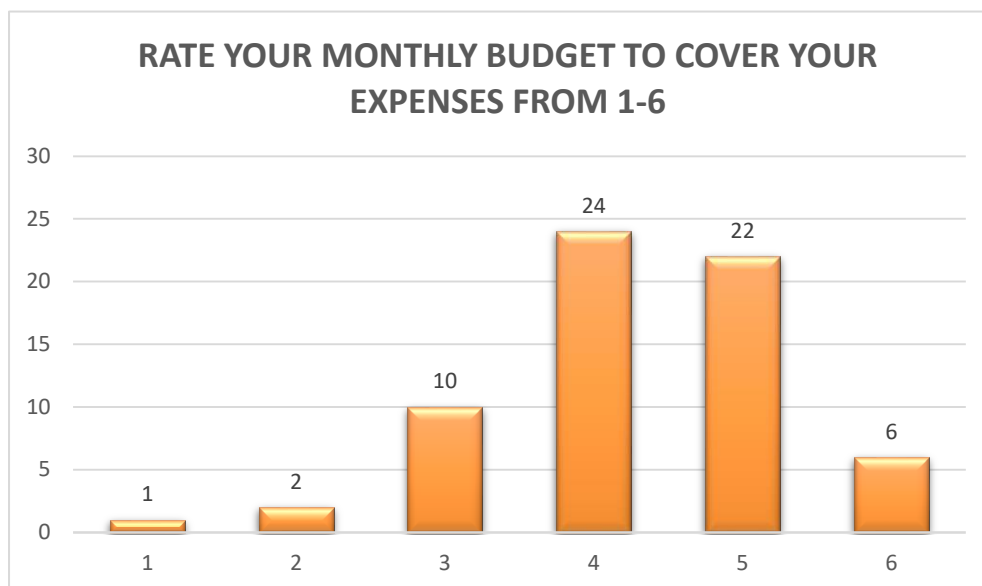
Question 8 addresses the ability of all the respondents to perform on a daily basis. The respondents provided their answers based on a scale of 1-6 where the 1 applies for “I never accept”, 2 for “I accept a little”, 3 for “I do not accept” 4 for “I have no idea/ I’m not sure”, 5 for “I accept” and 6 for “I absolutely accept”. The graphical representation of the answers given is depicted below.



Graph 7. Rate your ability to perform on a daily basis from 1-6

From their responds it can be assumed that the majority of the students in higher education have the ability to perform on a daily basis.

As far as the ability to cover their monthly expenses is concerned, the survey participants declared their answers based on the same above mentioned scale 1-6. Their answers are depicted below.



Graph 8. Rate your monthly budget to cover your expenses from 1-6

On question 10 the students were asked to state the faculty they study at. The results are as follows:

- School of Humanities and Social Sciences 83.6%
- School of Engineering 4.5%
- School of Science 3%
- School of arts 3%
- School of tourism and hospitality 2%

Regarding the utilization of the educational, sports, social and cultural facilities of the Universities, question 11 requested to answer based on their level of satisfaction on a scale of “Not satisfied at all” to “totally satisfied”.

- As far as the educational facilities of the Universities are concerned, 2 of the respondents stated that they are totally satisfied, 23 of them are very satisfied, 11 are not sure about their answer, 24 are satisfied and 7 are dissatisfied.
- Following, the respondents of the survey expressed their satisfaction about the utilization of the activities of the student clubs, where 4 are very satisfied, 4 are satisfied enough, 25 are not sure, 16 are satisfied and 18 are dissatisfied.

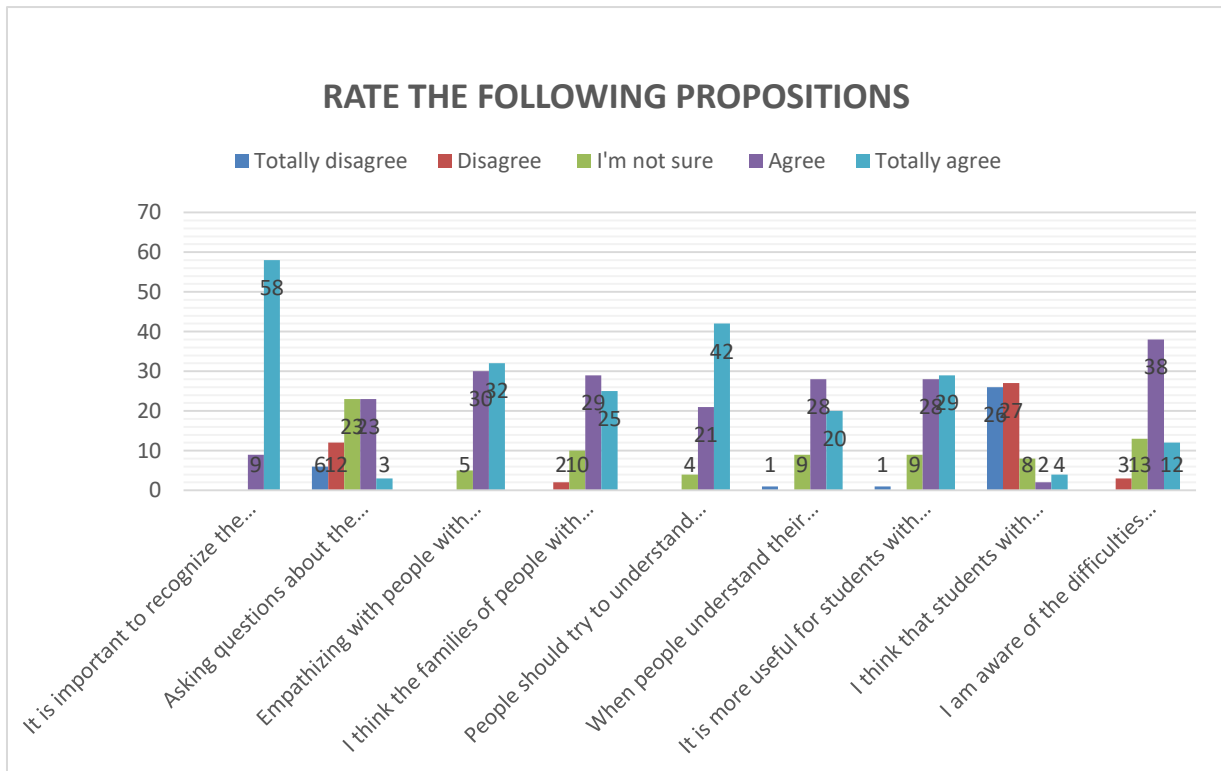


- On the utilization of the sports facilities the students stated that, 1 is very satisfied, 6 are satisfied enough, 18 are not sure, 19 are satisfied and 23 are dissatisfied.
- Regarding the care and rehabilitation services the respondents of the survey expressed their level of satisfaction and in particular, 1 is totally satisfied, 1 is very satisfied, 8 are satisfied enough 17 are not sure on what to answer, 22 are satisfied and 18 are dissatisfied.
- Concerning the Psychological and counseling services that take place inside the University premises, the level of satisfaction based on their utilization from the students is satisfactory enough and this derives from the fact that 2 of the respondents are totally satisfied, 8 are very satisfied, 8 are satisfied enough 18 are not sure, 22 are satisfied and 9 are dissatisfied.
- As far as health care services are concerned, 1 of the respondents is totally satisfied, 4 are very satisfied, 2 are satisfied enough, 25 are not sure, 17 are satisfied and 18 are dissatisfied.
- Regarding the cultural activities, the level of satisfaction is as follows: 7 are very satisfied, 12 are satisfied enough, 23 are not sure, 15 are satisfied and 10 are dissatisfied.

On question No 12 the respondents were asked to evaluate some key propositions.

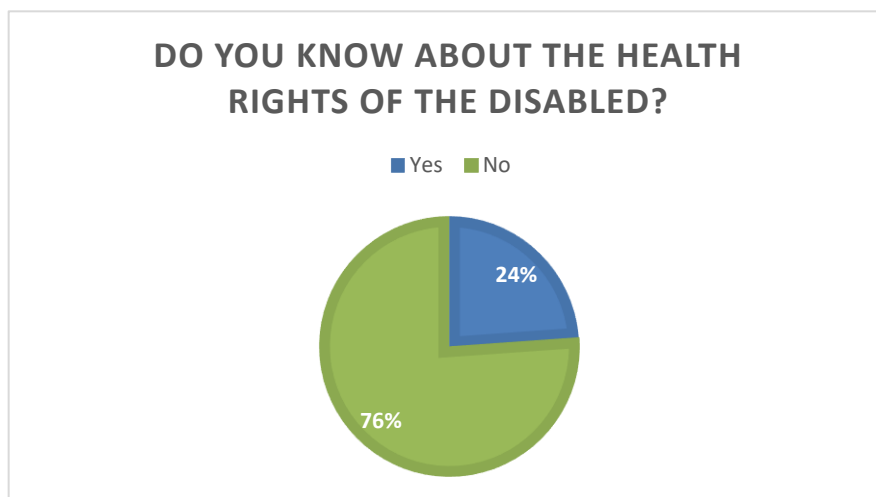
The key propositions are the following and their level of satisfaction is depicted in the graph below:

- ✚ It is important to recognize the presence of people with disabilities in the community.
- ✚ Asking questions about the personal lives of people with disabilities does not help to understand them.
- ✚ Empathizing with people with disabilities is an important factor in raising awareness of people.
- ✚ I think the families of people with disabilities should receive special education.
- ✚ People should try to understand how people with disabilities feel.
- ✚ When people understand their feelings, people with disabilities feel better.
- ✚ It is more useful for students with and without disabilities to study together.
- ✚ I think that students with disabilities are more advantageous in finding a job after graduation.
- ✚ I am aware of the difficulties experienced by people with disabilities.



Graph 9. Rate the following propositions

On the following 13 question the respondents of the survey were asked to state their view on whether they are aware of the health rights of the students with disabilities. Their views are illustrated in the graph below.

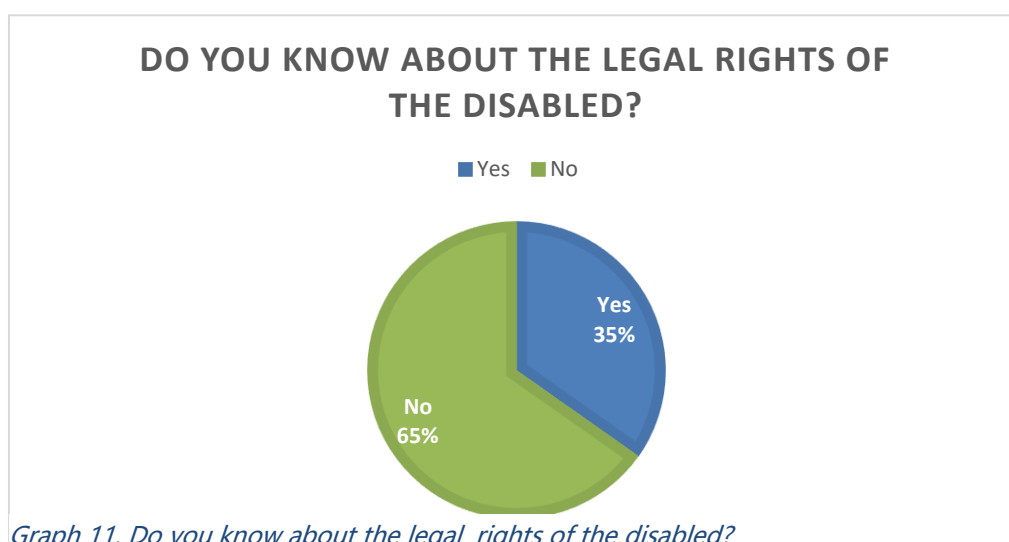


Graph 10. Do you know about the health rights of the disabled?

The students who were aware of some of the health rights of the people with disabilities indicated some of their opinions as seen in the following statements:

- *Yes, Physiotherapist, speech therapist, psychologist etc.*
- *Yes, all people with disabilities have the right to access the necessary treatments they need*
- *Yes, I know they are entitled to some benefits*
- *Yes, Equal treatment for people with special educational needs and disabilities in healthcare*

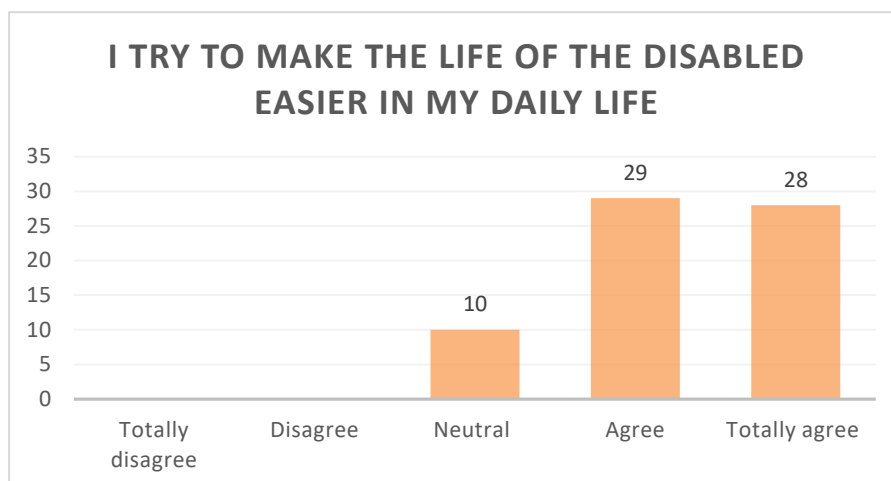
As far as their awareness regarding the legal rights of the students with disabilities in higher education is concerned, the following graph illustrates their responses.



The students who were aware of some of the legal rights of the people with disabilities indicated some of their opinions as seen in the following statements:

- *Yes, the same rights as people with formal disabilities in addition to anti-discrimination legal coverage*
- *Yes, they have the right to work, to social events, to education*
- *Yes, Equality in relation to non-typical peers. Participation in the commons, recognized groups of people with disabilities, funds (small) are spent on their education.*

Question 15 of the survey raised a generic view of how peer students try to make the everyday life of students with disabilities easier and pleasant. Based on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is totally disagree and 5 is totally agree the respondents were asked to provide their point of view on the matter. The following graph illustrates the answers given.



Graph 12. I try to make the life of teh disabled easier in my daily life

The final question of the survey that the respondents were asked to answer and fulfill, asked the respondents to state their opinion on which they believe are the most common difficulties the students with disabilities face during their studies in higher education. The answers received gave us an overview of the situation and a clear picture to work on in order to improve the situation. Their individual views are provided below:

- *Accessibility*
- *The fact that the society emphasizes particular forms of disabilities, for instance physical disability while ignoring others forms like students with visual impairment and as a result they are treated as secondary without providing efficient solutions.*
- *Mobility and job search*
- *Accessibility*
- *Accessibility to all the environments, education, entertainment*
- *Acceptance as equal members of the society*
- *Social inclusion issues and accessibility*
- *Work*
- *Inadequate access to places and all buildings they wish as well as their education*
- *All forms of accessibility and educational, political, social and professional involvement.*
- *Issues that have to do with accessibility*
- *Accessibility, acceptance, equality*
- *The toughest difficulties exist in self-service*
- *Being able to coexist with people who do not have a disability*



- *University infrastructure issues and meeting their various academic needs*
- *Dealing with society and public facilities (inaccessible)*
- *Perception and stereotypes of society members who are not interested in their fellow human beings*
- *Marginalization, unequal integration into society, non-protection of their rights*
- *Their integration to everyday life*
- *Finding a job*
- *Mobility*
- *Access to services. Finding a job. Tackling bullying. Their integration into society*
- *Finding a job, autonomy, social acceptance*
- *Accessibility, violation of their rights, non-acceptance by society, rejection by workplaces and the dominance of the medical model with the consequence of avoiding the responsibilities*
- *access to cultural sites and their daily lives, lack of creative employment centers for adults and children with disabilities, their jobs, their financial rehabilitation*
- *Socialization, autonomy, vocational rehabilitation*
- *Most of the time they are unable to meet their physical needs*
- *The non-acceptance by the community, the medicalization of their condition and the absence of basic rights*
- *Disability, lack of access to space (social, cultural) as well as information and education, lack of structures and qualified staff for their equal support*
- *Access to services, vocational rehabilitation, etc.*
- *Difficulties in accessibility*
- *The non-acceptance by the society and the non-essential access to the community*
- *The secondary disability that comes from the way society treats them, which sees only weaknesses and not possibilities. Due to this perception, additional problems are created which, however, do not stem from the disability itself. It is not enough to make the space accessible by simply installing a ramp, for example, but people with normal development should also make themselves accessible to people with disabilities.*
- *Discrimination against other people due to their disability, difficulties in joining communities, violation of their rights, difficulties in accessing public areas*



- *Public participation*
- *The treatment of society with regard to people with disabilities, the participation of people in events. Difficulty in integrating into the general class. Stigmatization by other students*
- *Difficulties in access and accessibility*
- *The non-acceptance by the society and the non-essential access to the community*
- *Accessibility issues, stereotypes*
- *The difficulties they encounter in their daily lives, both in their access and in their integration into society as a whole*
- *Some common public areas do not have the necessary facilities for people with disabilities (elevator, ramp, etc.). Not enough traffic lights*
- *In my opinion it is the access to various structures and the daily violation of their rights.*
- *Every kind of accessibility to public services*
- *The difficulty in motilities, in communication and racist attitude towards them*
- *To a group of people that their disabilities are invisible the biggest difficulty that we face is contempt.*
- *Accessibility, participation in social and other activities, existence of stereotypes*
- *I believe that a common difficulty for people with disabilities is that they are not accepted by many people, as a result of which they feel disadvantaged and although several attempts are made to intergrade them into society, they do not have the maximum satisfactory result. In addition, people with disabilities cannot function independently and facilitate their daily lives.*
- *Issues: accessibility, recognition of fundamental rights, recognition of equality, right to education and employment, addressing prejudices and medical models, are some areas in which people with disabilities face difficulties!*
- *Education, leisure time, finding a job, socializing*
- *Not easily accessible services*
- *Not enough facilities to serve their needs. Infrastructure eruptions*
- *Stigmatization that often leads to unemployment*
- *Living with the consequences*



- *It depends of the form of disability. The most common difficulty is how people with disabilities feel and deal with everyday aspects of life.*
- *Disrespect and marginalization.*
- *They are heterogeneous groups, i.e. each person has different characteristics and faces different difficulties. Perhaps the only common difficulty is they are not treated equally.*
- *Mobilization*
- *Transportation in the city and public transport. Even their access to stores*
- *Understanding and recognition*
- *Every day accessibility and transportation and their inclusion to society*
- *Transportation and finding a job*
- *Transportation to the city. Accessibility to places that are lacking ramps. The perception of the world towards people with disabilities.*

3. Conclusions/ Recommendations

The education of students with disabilities is today one of the most important and controversial issues in pedagogy. However, beyond any contradictions, it is a common view that educating people with disability must be based on the recognition of the rights of these students in a less possible restrictive environment. In other words, education of students with disabilities must include a set of practices and corresponding perceptions based on the assumption that all students have the same right to benefit the most from the educational experiences provided.

According to the answers and opinions received from the survey shared among university students, it can be assumed that the majority of the respondents are not ware about the health and legal rights of the students with disabilities. Furthermore, according to the difficulties that students with disabilities face during their studies in higher education, the most indicative ones show that the majority, face difficulties with their everyday accessibility and transportation within the university premises along with their integration and participation to the community. Last but not least it is of great importance to be mentioned that there exists marginalization of the target group within the university communities, as



well as types and incidents of discrimination and prejudices towards the students with disabilities.

Consequently, the University environment must be structured in a way so that all obstacles that hinder the possibility of equal participation are eliminated. Furthermore, it is totally recommended to make use of all the skills that students have according to their individual needs. In order to successfully achieve equal accessibility to students with disabilities in higher education, the following are highly recommended to seriously be taken into consideration and to be applied in all Universities:

- To ensure access for all students with disabilities to faculties, sectors and premises (auditoriums, laboratories, libraries, dorms, catering etc.)
- To set up a reception for information and support service to students with disabilities so that they can be informed about their rights during their studies in higher education
- To examine students with disabilities in the same subject as other students but to adapt the examination way (written instead of orally and vice versa, extension of examination time, printing in braille), depending in the needs of each student
- To provide to students with disabilities with an allowance which will vary depending on the form of disability
- To be in advance and regularly informed by an authorised employee of the secretariats of the Department about the study program, time and place of the courses and about every alteration or change on their student status
- During the exam period, to compete in venues that are easily accessible, to be accompanied if necessary to the examination premises by University staff and be examined in ways according to their individual needs.
- Throughout the academic year to appoint a professor or professors to whom students will be addressed to discuss their problems and who can mediate to the University authorities to resolve problems.



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