

# Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is the result of the VRAILEXIA project ([www.vrailexia.eu](http://www.vrailexia.eu)), co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union (GA 2020-1-IT02-KA203-080006). MoU is entered into and effective as of 01/09/2023.

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This agreement is not legally binding, and all parties involved agree to the following items. The duration of the MoU is five years from the signature with the possibility to be renewed.

## 1. Purpose of the MoU

This MoU is one of the intellectual outputs of the VRAILEXIA project. The main purpose of the MoU is the promotion and creation of inclusion common strategies among European higher education institutes, focusing on students with specific learning disorders, especially considering dyslexia. As well, the MoU contents can be exploited by Vocational school. The contents of the MoU pretend to increase the capacity of universities or vocational school to become innovative centres in supporting dyslexic students in their university study and enable them in their first step into the job market.

The MoU is the result of the combination of the analyses conducted by three round tables on: (i) training and teaching activities; (ii) supporting services and tools; and (iii) supporting services for fostering employability. The outcomes of the working groups have been combined with the outputs of self-reported questionnaire in which students highlighted the mandatory services and tools useful for the enhancement of inclusivity and accessibility.

All supporting policy strategies, activities and procedures proposed in this MoU are:

- In accordance with all the parties involved in the MoU;
- In accordance with all the associated partners who have signed the MoU;
- A guide for the institution in the successful adoption of shared policy to drive University and Vocational schools' basic values of diversity, inclusion, access, and equity;
- An integration for the already active and validation strategic inclusive plans that are already applied in the universities that have signed the MoU;
- The results of VRAILEXIA partnership works and the contents reflect the view only of the parties; thus, the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

## 2. Tools for teaching and learning

This section contains the good practices to be considered for providing useful tools for teaching and learning. By addressing the accessibility of course materials and assessments, students with dyslexia can fully engage with the content and demonstrate their knowledge and skills without being hindered by reading or writing difficulties.

- a. University should support the use of digital tools for teaching and learning, providing an opportunity to enhance accessibility for students with dyslexia, or more in general, with reading difficulty.
- b. University/Vocational school should promote the use of shared platform for enhancing learning and teaching material, following the structure and the contents proposed by VRAILEXIA in the realization of the Toolbox (<https://toolbox.vrailexia.org/>).
- c. University/Vocational school should provide dyslexic students with digital handbook, such as tablet, to enhance accessibility to information, allowing students to access the content in a format that suits with their needs.
- d. Tools reported in point 2.a. should offer features like text-to-speech for reading support; automatic creation of summary and conceptual maps; automatic extraction of keywords, text formatting in terms of interline, font, font size; dictionary; substitution of words with picture and/or hand-made draws.
- e. Tools reported in point 2.a. should be purchased by the University/Vocational school and offered to all students; regardless the diagnosis or not of specific learning disorders.
- f. Students should be informed and trained on the use of such technologies through apposite workshop organized at the beginning of each trimester/semester/year according to the typology of the study courses.
- g. Lecturers should have the possibility to use the digital tools for teaching purpose in order to improve the accessibility of the materials used to deliver the courses.
- h. Teaching methods should be innovated and followed criteria reported in special education, such as (i) interactive teaching, (ii) multisensory approach, and (iii) cooperative learning.
- i. When organizing the tools for teaching and learning, the University/Vocational school should consider the compatibility of assistive technology tools and their financial implications. If

possible, University/Vocational school should use part of the funds received by the National Minister for inclusion for the purchase of digital tools.

- j. When selecting the most appropriate digital tools, the ones based on artificial intelligence should be preferred with respect to the others.

### 3. Services for accessibility

This section contains the good practices to be considered for guarantee the right services to support students with dyslexia during their academic studies. University/Vocational school should aim to ensure the right to study of students with dyslexia and their inclusion in all areas of university life through multiple support services.

- a. Each University/Vocational school should set up an Inclusive Education Unit, whose role is to create information for the organization and staff and to assess the needs of dyslexic students. The purpose of this Unit should be to accompany students with dyslexia as they enter the university world and support them during their studies, in order to enable them to carry out their university studies in the most profitable way.
- b. Each University/Vocational school should guarantee within the Inclusive Education Unit the presence of tutors who are suitably trained to support students with dyslexia, following the good practices depicted in Paragraph 5.
- c. Each University/Vocational school should guarantee the peer mentoring program, which is based on having a peer student supervising the needs of the first-year students, especially those with specific learning disorders. This policy encourages the development of a supportive and empathetic environment where students can mentor and support their dyslexic peers.
- d. Each dyslexic students should receive individualised assistance to evaluate the necessary supports and design appropriate curricular adaptations in different subjects.
- e. Each dyslexic students should receive career counselling and guidance for creating networks with companies to promote the job placement.
- f. University/Vocational school should spread self-assessment questionnaire to prepare students for employment. The questionnaire should pretend to offer the opportunity for students with dyslexia to assess their skills, strength, and areas of expertise.

- g. University/Vocational school should guarantee, if possible, additional funding to promote Erasmus+ mobility grant for students with dyslexia.
- h. The frequency and contents of support and counselling as in 3.b, 3.c and 3.d depend on the students' request. Customized support should be promoted to address specific challenges.
- i. University/Vocational school should provide emotional support, psychological counselling, motivational support to face with emotional challenges and low self-esteem that characterized students with dyslexia.
- j. The service in the point 3.i. should be free of charge, strictly confidential and working on the basis of self-referral by the student.
- k. The service in the point 3.i. should guarantee at least five free meetings. At the end of the process, the modalities of continuation should be evaluated.
- l. University/Vocational school should provide Pedagogical-Didactic counselling service aimed at providing support in dealing with problems related to learning processes.
- m. The service in the point 3.l. should provide support in the acquisition and/or refinement of study methodology, in redefining one's own study path and in the identification of compensatory tools.
- n. Students with dyslexia should benefit from specific measures and tools during the tests for access to numbered study courses.
- o. Following the point 3.n., the following facilities should be envisaged: (i) the granting of additional time, compared to that established for the majority of students, deemed appropriate by the University in relation to the type of test and in any case not exceeding 30% more; (ii) the granting of additional time up to a maximum of 30% more than that defined for admission tests to degree and master's degree courses; (iii) in the event of particularly serious dyslexia, universities - in their autonomy - may assess additional measures to guarantee equal opportunities in the performance of the tests themselves.
- p. University/Vocational school should acquire dyslexia-friendly fonts, which are appropriately designed to enhance the readability for dyslexic students.
- q. The fonts in 3.p. should be used by all the lecturers for the preparation of studying materials and exam tests.
- r. The fonts in 3.p. should be used by administrative staff for the preparation of university communication.

- s. University/Vocational school should promote the administration of psychometric tests to assess the level of dyslexia, anxiety, self-esteem of dyslexic students by fostering the use of digital tools based on virtual reality.
- t. The tests in 3.s. should be delivered at different time period in order to monitor the academic study of students with dyslexia.
- u. University/Vocational school should promote the use of specific self-reported questionnaire in order to understand the most appropriate supporting methodology for each student with dyslexia.
- v. The questionnaire in the point 3.u. should be available online through a platform embedded with artificial intelligence algorithms for the customization of supporting methodology.
- w. University/Vocational school can take inspiration for the realization of 3.v. from the BESPECIAL, which is one of the outputs of the VRAILEXIA project (<https://vrailexia.eu/the-project/>).
- x. University/Vocational school should guarantee economical facilitations for students with dyslexia.
- y. Considering the point 3.x, the possibility of enrolment as part-time study and the reduction and/or exemption from university fees represent two feasible facilitations.

#### 4. Rules for exam preparation and taking.

This section contains the good practices to be considered for defining the rules to be adopted for guaranteeing equal opportunities in the preparation and taking of exams. It is worth noticing that the following policies are in accordance with the guidelines, if existing, already emanated in the EU countries.

- a. The University/Vocational school is committed to support its students with dyslexia with specific compensatory tools, as provided for by current legislation, during lessons and examinations.
- b. Following the point 4.a., compensatory tools include:
  - i. Digital recorder;
  - ii. PC with spell-checker;
  - iii. Texts in digital format;

- iv. Speech synthesis programmes;
  - v. The presence of a tutor to act as a reader if it is not possible to provide examination materials in digital format;
  - vi. Calculator;
  - vii. Tables and forms;
  - viii. Concept and mind maps;
  - ix. Teaching materials in accessible formats (presentations, handouts, exercises), provided, if necessary, in advance of the lessons.
- c. The University/Vocational school is also committed to support its students with dyslexia with specific dispensatory measures, as provided for the current legislation.
- d. Following the point 4.c., dispensatory measures include:
- i. Dividing the examination subject into several part-tests;
  - ii. Giving preference to oral rather than written examinations, also considering the individual ability profile;
  - iii. In the case of written examinations, check whether the chosen format (e.g., multiple-choice, or closed-response tests) represents an obstacle and whether it can be replaced by other forms of written assessment; alternatively, provide for the quantitative, but not qualitative, reduction of the test itself, or the granting of additional time, up to a maximum of 30%, for the performance of the test;
  - iv. Considering content rather than form and spelling in the assessment.
- e. The University/Vocational school should promote the creation of study groups, boosting the group activities in the preparation of exam.

## 5. Training

This section contains the good practices to be considered for delivering training course to improve the awareness on the dyslexia among lecturers, administrative staff, and peers. For the structures and contents of the courses, University/Vocational school can take inspiration for the ToC & ToT realized within VRAILEXIA project (<https://vrailexia.eu/the-project/io4-toc-tot/>).





- a. University/Vocational school should organize training course for lecturers and administrative staff in order to train them on the main topics related to the dyslexia and enhance the awareness at least twice per academic year.
- b. University/Vocational school should organize information session on studying with dyslexia at least twice per academic year. This information session provides an opportunity to educate peers about dyslexia, its characteristics, and dispel any misconceptions.
- c. Training courses should be modular and focused on the following topics: positive psychology, communication skills and universal design for learning.
- d. Training courses should include groups activities.
- e. Training courses should include the use of innovative technologies, such as virtual reality (VR), especially considering the use of VR for empathy.
- f. Considering point 5.e. appropriate virtual scenarios that helps to empathize with dyslexic students and deeply understand the problems that such students have to face during academic studies should be adopted. For the contents of the scenarios, University/Vocational school can take inspiration from the “In the shoes of dyslexics” realized within the VRAILEXIA project (<https://vrailexia.eu/the-project/io1-in-the-box/>)
- g. Courses should be available as tutorials to guarantee lifelong access to the contents for all the members of the University/Vocational school.
- h. Both lecturers and students should receive training and support on the use of digital tools described in Paragraph 2 in order to promote and facilitate their adoption and usage.
- i. University/Vocational school should promote specific days based on creativity in order to strengthen the skills of dyslexic students.

## 6. Signature

All parties hereby agree to the above policies laid out in this Memorandum of Understanding

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