Briefing Paper 1:

Promoting innovation and inclusion

The development of policies that extend access to opportunities, is essential to combat the permanent nature of the exclusion. In this sense, EHEA declarations and communiqués have insisted on promoting the social dimension in Higher Education. ACCESS4ALL, adding to the many initiatives and efforts made to greater overall participation and increased participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, aims to promote the educational and social inclusion of underrepresented groups as well as of non-traditional learners.

Inequalities in training for reasons of geographic, ethnic or social origin, and in job opportunities, salaries and incomes are critical dimensions of social exclusion. The development of policies, including those concerning education, that extend access to opportunities, is essential to combat the permanent nature of the exclusion. In this sense, within the framework of the Bologna process, the social dimension of higher education has been present since the Prague communiqué of 2001, which emphasised the need to work towards the inclusion of students and the need to promote the possibilities of mobility for all. The successive declarations and communiqués (from Berlin, 2003 to Ye-revan, 2015) have continued insisting on the need to promote the social dimension in constructing and consolidating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and specifically, the need to create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education as well as the provision of adequate student services. Reports by the EACEA/EURYDICE (2012) underline this when they indicate that, despite the major progress made in European educational systems, there remain some challenges that need to be responded to: promoting measurable set targets related to the social dimension; establishing systems to monitor the participation of under-represented groups in HE; moving to HE policies those measures needed to assist vulnerable groups already existing in other areas in Europe. ACCESS4ALL complements projects as those identifying vulnerable groups and the promotion and monitoring of more inclusive policies in Higher Education (e.g. EAN, EQUNET, STAY-IN, GLAS, ED-ITE, Expando and the BFUG on the social dimension, among others). However, there are still major deficiencies in this area that recommend the development of "more comparative research on the social dimension of higher education based on recent data to be used by policy makers" (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012, p.71). •

Access4All is also complementary to studies demonstrating the problems associated to the access and success of vulnerable groups (due to factors such as socio-economic background, disability, ethnicity, migrant status, etc.), and non-traditional students (part-time students, those with demanding

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family responsibilities, adult learners, etc.) in HE.

ACCESS4ALL therefore aims to add to the many initiatives and efforts made to comply with one of the EHEA's main priorities for the decade to come: greater overall participation and increased participation of underrepresented groups in higher education (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, April 2009). ACCESS4ALL takes as starting point all the achievements of the projects mentioned before, and addresses those needs by designing an operational framework that systematises, orders and promotes the effective development of actions for aiding access and persistence for underrepresented

groups and non-traditional learners in Europe.

In this framework, the main aim of Access4All is to promote the educational and social inclusion of underrepresented groups as well as of non-traditional learners, thereby broadly satisfying one of the main priorities being called for (i.e. the improvement of the capacities of organisations active in the fields of education, training and youth, notably in the areas of strategic development, quality of learning provision, equity and inclusion, qualitative and targeted activities for specific groups) and addressing clearly one of the important features of the Erasmus+ programme: promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating the access to learners with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers.

This main aim is addressing 4 specific objectives: (1) to establish a map with the institutional policies for attending to vulnerable groups in relation to academic access and success; (2) to establish guidelines to be implemented by higher education organisations

to promote initiatives aimed to encourage the access and successful development of students who are under-represented in universities; (3) to co-create strategies and measures promoting the access, permanence (and success) of vulnerable students and non-traditional learners at university; (4) to create a laboratory for the creation of innovative and flexible strategies in order to promote social commitment of Higher Education institutions in relation with the most vulnerable student groups. •

ACCESS4ALL enables the access and exchange of numerous policies and initiatives that seek to improve access to, continuation and success in Higher Education for underrepresented collectives and non-traditional learners. Higher Education Institutions interested in the inclusion of non-traditional learners and disadvantaged groups are invited to participate in the ACCESS4ALL open activities that each partner will hold in their campus.

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