

MAGADARE

THE DARE MAGAZINE

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First kick-off meeting at University of Murcia, Spain, 2016

In this final issue, MAGADARE bids farewell to DARE family members and its readers who have followed our journey to reach the goals of this Erasmus+ project in capacity building to develop programmes for access to higher education for three disadvantaged groups in Georgia and Israel: students from minority backgrounds, students with physical disabilities or learning difficulties, and students who are women. Going on this journey has been like trekking through a dense forest in a difficult terrain, with many streams to cross and boulders to climb over. In supporting one another and lending a hand when someone faltered, we have now reached our journey's end, exhausted but at the same time, elated. Since the first meeting in Murcia, DARE has succeeded in making three levels of influence a priority: individuals (how have students, staff and faculty benefitted), institutions (how have the institutions changed), and national bodies (how has DARE influenced change on the national level). We will all come together one last time in Brno, Czech Republic, to bring closure to the project and collaboratively write the final report that will chronicle DARE's achievements.

DARE is indeed diversity in action in its range of actions taken. Our partners have put the theoretical and ideological visions into practice and implemented measures that best serve their target groups. Some institutions focused on restructuring their student support services making it more accessible to provide better as well as new services. Other institutions built on programmes that did not succeed previously and thus used DARE's opportunity to revamp to be more successful. All have trained their staff in supporting diversity and in making inclusive education a reality at their institutions.

A Handbook has been produced to share with other HEIs and their stakeholders the DARE experience and our knowledge, expertise and practices in increasing and sustaining diversity. It includes materials for training and different models of how our partners have implemented programmes to overcome specific diversity challenges and successfully embedded the practice of inclusion within their institutions. We hope it will both inform and inspire.

DARE's success is the result of the dedication and collective efforts of everyone involved, including students, and staff who worked quietly in the 'backroom' to ensure that the DARE machinery functioned efficiently for three years. A big **'THANK YOU'** to you all!



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The 7th Consortium Meeting, 8th-11th October 2018, Masaryk University Brno

The 7th and final consortium meeting will be hosted by Masaryk University Brno, the second largest public university in the Czech Republic, and considered one of the most important teaching and research institutions in the country.

At this meeting Prof Gaspar Ros will present the QA final report, and all partners will present the material they have prepared for inclusion in the project final report. We will also have a session to explore possible future joint projects. There will be several highlights to look forward to: **Prof Hanan Alexander's** lecture to Masaryk University students and faculty **"Education for Peaceful Coexistence"** will elaborate on Project DARE and the Pedagogy of Difference on which DARE was based; and a poster exhibition to showcase DARE partners' achievements.

The Teiresias Centre

Another highlight will be a tour of the renowned Teiresias Centre (Support Centre for Students with Special Needs) arranged for us by **Martin Vrabel**. The Centre, which formed part of Masaryk University since 2000, provides services for all students with sensory and other disabilities to ensure maximum accessibility to all study programmes at the University – students with sensory impairments: visual or hearing; with mobility impairments; with specific learning difficulties; with psychological difficulties; with chronic diseases.



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The Centre's renown reaches far beyond serving students at the University. The primary recipients of its services also include teachers and employees of the University; non-academic public; academic and non-academic institutions involved in educating pupils and students with impairments or responsible for sensory and physical accessibility of public events, buildings and areas. The Centre also coordinates life-long education programme for the blind. More information about the Centre can be found on:

<https://www.teiresias.muni.cz/?lang=en>

There is much to be learned from the Centre. DARE consortium will visit its special library and access study materials in special formats; try out its technical interpreting services, e.g. recording studio; explore the application and assistive technologies; and discuss the study agenda including services for students with special educational needs. It is hoped that they will take back with them not just a memorable experience but also the know-how they can apply to their work in serving students with disabilities.



Visually impaired students at Teiresias Centre

“DARE with US”

Diversity and Inclusion: Supporting Student Success



We are delighted to share with you, over a glass of Georgian beer and some ‘khinkali’ dumplings, the handbook, “**DARE with US**” prepared to disseminate material about DARE during and after the life of the project.

Part 1 of this handbook gives a general outline why diversity is important for an institution. It provides a model of applying the Principles of Universal Design which is more inclusive and adaptive to the needs of different students and has been shown to enable them to succeed. It also describes the Student Lifecycle for a holistic approach.

Part 2 addresses the challenges in student support services as well as with administrative staff and academic faculty development and training focusing on serving students from diverse groups. The materials developed for the training sessions, such as the importance of empathy – putting oneself in the student’s shoes; learning the rules to fit in; the danger of the single story: the iceberg exercise; good and bad communication; know yourself to serve your students – the Medicine Wheel; reflection for future development; are included in this section. It is hoped that these will be useful for other academic institutions to adopt or adapt for their own staff development programme.

The first section of Part 3 introduces the different institutions that made up DARE’s consortium and briefly explains how they contributed to the programme. The following section provides examples of what DARE partners have accomplished in Georgia and Israel. Each section is open with a common visual chart that enables the reader to immediately get an overall picture of what programmes were created and how they impacted the particular institution. The presentation of the information in the second section contains some ‘**jewel in the crown**’ of the institutions, briefly describes the programmes they implemented and offers a glimpse into the step-by-step process of how the project developed and grew.

Below is a snapshot of the core achievements of each DARE partner in Israel and Georgia. The full version of the handbook can be found on the DARE portal: <https://dare.erasmus-plus.org.il>

In Israel



The Simulation Lab as a Tool for Inclusion

The creation of the Simulation Lab offers Achva Academic College an innovative approach to the training of faculty and staff, as well as a unique space in which to work with pre-service teachers in developing skills for teaching in a diverse classroom. The beneficiaries are lecturers, administrative staff, pre-service teachers and students with physical disabilities. 150 lecturers participated in training seminars on inclusion. Training for stakeholders on special needs given in 18 workshops for school principals and teachers from the region – a total of 375 participants. Simulation workshops as part of the pedagogy courses – 120 pre-service teachers participated. Teaching and Learning in the Simulation Lab – 3 courses per year were taught in the Lab: 90 pre-service teachers (20% had difference special needs) practiced and studied in the Lab on a regular basis. 10 students participated in workshops for students with physical disabilities.



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DARE – Developing programs for Access of Disadvantaged groups of People and Regions to Higher Education – coordinated by University of Haifa, Israel, has 13 partners from Czech Republic, Georgia, Israel, Lithuania, Romania, Spain, UK; and 4 NGO associated partners: 2 Georgian and 2 Israeli.



Helping Women Over 30 Take the LEAP to Success

At Gordon College of Education, women over 30 years of age are given an opportunity to become teachers through LEAP and 39 women have successfully completed the programme. Support services developed for LEAP students include computer room set up for their use; follow-through programme from LEAP into regular studies; testing for learning disabilities. 10 administrative staff have been trained to be sensitive to and provide services and information to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. 100 faculty members trained to design and develop accessible methods of teaching and evaluation. A one semester accessible online course “Digital Citizenship” developed. This course is given to all second year students: 200 each semester, for a total of 400 a year. ALL LEAP students have or will be taking this courses. The quality of Gordon’s online courses have been improved to include accessibility tools (video instructions, translation of materials, text enlargement capacity, etc.).



Changing Mindsets and Opportunities

Within the framework of DARE, University of Haifa has developed and implemented 8 programmes. An online course to help students from minority backgrounds. Staff and faculty training in supporting students from minority backgrounds and those with disabilities. The Bridge to Employment Internship programme for students with disabilities. Reorganisation of the Student Support Services Centre to include ALL support services within one unit, including a Writing Centre. A branch of SAMAN – “Students Promoting Accessibility” – a union for students with disabilities on campus. Advice and counselling for students at risk of dropping out (OMETZ). The University considers the programme for Druze men one of the jewels in the crown. Before DARE counselling and support for Druze women existed, but Druze men were not coming to the University. Through DARE, UH aimed to recruit members of this group to the University after their military service, develop the services to support these men throughout the pursuit of their degree; and above all to change their perception of higher education as not for them – 75 students have begun their studies.



Macro to Micro: Israeli Policy regarding Students

As part of the programme Sapir set three main goals: collaboration with the student steering committee; creating accommodated English courses to suit the disabled; and changing the national budget. 300 lecturers attended the training on accessibility; created 6 new English courses each semester for students with learning disabilities – 540 student beneficiaries so far. Advancing student-staff communication on accessibility with monthly meetings with students that are part of the SAMAN union and the Director of Accessibility Centre – 30 meetings so far. Promoting awareness about accessibility issues – 150 students participated in the week of promoting accessibility at Sapir. Encouraging student activism with the tripling of the number of students in SAMAN from 5 to 15 student activists working for accessibility. Recruited 40 Deans to join the effort in lobbying for national policy change on funding accessibility.

In Georgia



Developing a New Instrument for Inclusion: Self-Assessment for Students

Iliia State University has provided capacity building with training of academic and administrative staff in learning disability and minority cross-cultural issues – 5 meetings with Leadership delivered, 30 administrative and academic staff trained. Its recruitment strategy has been renewed to attract minority groups – 35 information sessions with over 2000 attendees. Georgian as a second language course includes online learning platform and support programme. Developed pathway preparatory courses for those in need to pass the unified university entrance exams. Blended learning courses designed and delivered to 75 students, 30% of whom are ethnic minorities. It has stepped up lobbying for policy change on institutional and national levels. Iliia’s ‘jewel in the crown’ is the development of its Learning Disability

Services: screening instrument created, data collected and analysed; Consultation and Support Services Plan put in place; institutional legal framework prepared for delivery of the services.



Offering Vulnerable Students a Chance

Sokhumi State University has taken a holistic approach in supporting their students with the implementation of across the board strategies. More than 100 ethnic minority students have benefitted from its three additional courses: Georgian, English and a blended online course. Its DARE computer class and Auditorium for Psychological Service has been used by more than 150 minority students, as well as those with LD. Trainings in learning and teaching and student support were given to academic and administrative staff – 5 trainers, 35 academic and 25 administrative staff have been trained. Sokhumi has undertaken research, analysis and screening of students for LD – annual screening is now compulsory for first year students. It has changed university regulations on examinations to take into account the needs of LD and minority students. It has started renovation of university infrastructure to improve accessibility for those with disabilities.



Daring to Make a Difference Inside and Outside of the Classroom

Serving the Kakheti region with a vastly diverse ethnic and religious minorities, Telavi State University's main concern is the integration of these students. In the classroom it has created 3 blended learning courses: Intercultural Education, Inclusive Education, and WEB 2 Technologies which enable students to design their own websites and share their cultures. Three trainings on ethnic and religious and LD issues have been given to 51 academic and administrative staff. It has conducted research to identify LD and adapted its infrastructure for disability access. Outside the classroom, Telavi recruited the service of Student Self-Government to work with ethnic minority students to integrate them fully into university life. The dialogue between them is now a permanent feature. Georgian students appreciated the effort for the inclusion of minority students has enriched their own student life and made them aware that they can learn from one another with mutual respect.



Lifelong Learning

To serve its three target groups: internally displaced persons (50% of its student population), students with LD, and students with families, University of Zugdidi took a long-term view and created the Lifelong Learning Centre putting previously fragmented support services under one roof – 80 minority Abkhazian refugee students, including 18 who cross the border daily, have sought help. 36 academic and 130+ administrative and support staff trained in diversity and inclusion. Piloted Career Management course using Learning Management System – 45 students, 7 refugees from Abkhazia benefitted. Institutional transformation has taken place with policies to support accessibility and inclusion, e.g. modification of syllabi; infrastructure improvement for disability access; video and audio lectures bank for students with LD and those needing extra support to catch up. There is a DARE CARE room for students to leave their kids – 20 students have made use of this facility.



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