



ROAD2EU SUMMER SCHOOL 2026 — LECTURE 5

Implementation Lab: Inclusive UX, Co-Design and Support Services for Refugee, Migrant and Mobile Students

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SS LECTURE 15



WHAT THIS LECTURE COVERS

- 01** Inclusive higher education
- 02** Co-design with student services
- 03** Accessibility and UX
- 04** Mobility and recognition
- 05** Support for migrant and refugee learners
- 06** Inclusion outcomes

STUDENT SUPPORT DESIGN AFFECTS ACCESS, BELONGING, AND STUDY SUCCESS

- The EU explicitly links **excellence and inclusion** in higher education — they are not in tension but mutually reinforcing.
- **Student support design** — how services are structured, communicated, and delivered — directly affects access, sense of belonging, and study success.
- This lecture focuses on practical inclusion and service usability, not abstract principles.

INCLUSION AS SERVICE DESIGN

Inclusion is not just a values statement. It is an operational challenge that requires well-designed, coordinated, and genuinely usable services for all students.



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THE POLICY BACKBONE: INCLUSION, RECOGNITION, ACCESSIBILITY, AND REFUGEE SUPPORT

POLICY 1

Inclusive and Connected Higher Education

EU framework linking excellence and inclusion, with targets for widening participation and reducing barriers.

POLICY 2

Recognition Tools

ECTS, Diploma Supplement, Europass, and national qualification frameworks supporting academic mobility and continuity.

POLICY 3

Accessibility Requirements

EU Web Accessibility Directive and WCAG standards requiring accessible digital services for all users.

POLICY 4

Support for Migrants and Refugees

EU frameworks for recognition of qualifications from third countries and support for displaced learners in higher education.



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CO-DESIGN WITH STUDENT SERVICES: COORDINATION OVER FRAGMENTATION

Admissions

Entry point for all students; must communicate clearly about requirements, processes, and support.

International Office

Coordinates mobility, recognition, and support for international and mobile students.

Accessibility Support

Provides reasonable adjustments and ensures digital and physical accessibility for students with disabilities.

Language Support

Critical for migrant, refugee, and international students navigating academic and administrative processes.

Counselling

Mental health and wellbeing support, especially important for displaced and first-generation students.

Digital Teams + Students

Digital teams design the service interfaces; students provide the user perspective that makes co-design genuine.



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INCLUSIVE UX MAKES DIGITAL SERVICES GENUINELY USABLE FOR ALL STUDENTS

- **Student-facing pages and services** should be clear, navigable, accessible, and predictable for all users, regardless of language, disability, or digital literacy.
- The aim of **inclusive UX** is to make digital services genuinely usable — not just technically compliant with accessibility standards.
- Inclusive UX is a form of educational equity: poorly designed services create invisible barriers that disproportionately affect vulnerable students.

UX AS EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

A student who cannot find the right support service, or cannot understand the process once they find it, is effectively excluded — even if the service formally exists.



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FOUR ACCESSIBILITY PRINCIPLES: PERCEIVABLE, OPERABLE, UNDERSTANDABLE, ROBUST



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P

Perceivable

Information and interface components must be presentable to users in ways they can perceive — including text alternatives for non-text content.

O

Operable

Interface components and navigation must be operable — including keyboard navigation and sufficient time to read and use content.

U

Understandable

Information and operation of the interface must be understandable — including readable text and predictable navigation.

R

Robust

Content must be robust enough to be reliably interpreted by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies.

PROCEDURAL CLARITY IS PART OF INCLUSION: PLAIN LANGUAGE AND NAVIGABILITY



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1

Clear Headings

Use descriptive, hierarchical headings that allow users to scan and navigate content efficiently.

2

Predictable Structure

Consistent page layouts and navigation patterns reduce cognitive load for all users.

3

Visible Next Steps

Every process should make the next required action clear, with no dead ends or ambiguous instructions.

4

Accessible Alternatives

Provide multiple formats and pathways for accessing information and completing processes.

5

Obvious Contact Points

Make it easy to find a human contact when automated processes are insufficient or unclear.

MOBILITY SUPPORT SHOULD ADDRESS ACADEMIC CONTINUITY, NOT ONLY ADMINISTRATION

- **Recognition tools** such as ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, Europass, and national qualification frameworks are essential for mobile learners.
- Support should address **academic continuity** — ensuring that prior learning is recognised and that students can progress without losing credits or qualifications.
- Mobility support that focuses only on travel and accommodation misses the most important dimension: academic recognition and continuity.

RECOGNITION IS THE CORE

The biggest barrier for mobile students is not travel or housing — it is the risk of losing academic credit and having to repeat learning they have already completed.



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DISPLACED LEARNERS NEED JOINED-UP LANGUAGE, RECOGNITION, AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

- For refugee and migrant learners, **language skills and recognition of prior qualifications** are the two most critical support needs.
- Support should combine **academic, linguistic, and administrative pathways** — not treat them as separate services with separate entry points.
- Joined-up services reduce the burden on displaced learners who are already navigating multiple complex systems simultaneously.

JOINED-UP SERVICES

Displaced learners face multiple barriers simultaneously. Fragmented services that require them to navigate separate systems for language, recognition, and administration multiply those barriers unnecessarily.



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SUPPORT SYSTEMS SHAPE WHETHER STUDENTS FEEL THEY BELONG

- **Belonging** — the sense of being genuinely welcome and valued — is a predictor of retention, engagement, and academic success.
- Support systems shape belonging through their **design, tone, accessibility, and responsiveness** — not just through their formal existence.
- Inclusion also has a values-based and civic dimension: universities that serve diverse communities model the inclusive society they are preparing students to participate in.

BELONGING AS AN OUTCOME

Students who feel they do not belong leave — or stay but underperform. Belonging is not a soft outcome; it is a measurable predictor of retention and academic achievement.



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MEASURING INCLUSION OUTCOMES: A MANAGEABLE MONITORING LOGIC

- Track **access and retention rates** for students from underrepresented groups, disaggregated by relevant characteristics.
- Monitor **take-up of support services, satisfaction with service clarity, recognition cases resolved, and accessibility issues addressed.**
- A manageable inclusion-monitoring framework focuses on a small number of meaningful indicators that can be tracked consistently over time.

MONITOR WHAT MATTERS

Inclusion monitoring should be proportionate: a small set of meaningful, consistently tracked indicators is more valuable than a comprehensive framework that is never actually used.



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SUGGESTED PRACTICAL OUTPUTS FOR THE SUMMER SCHOOL



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1

Redesigned Service Page

A revised student-facing service page applying inclusive UX and plain language principles.

2

Support-Workflow Map

A visual map of the student journey through key support services, identifying gaps and friction points.

3

Inclusion KPI Sheet

A short table of inclusion indicators with targets, data sources, and review dates.

4

User-Feedback Form

A simple, accessible feedback instrument for collecting student experience data on support services.

5

Short Policy Brief

A concise document communicating inclusion priorities and evidence to institutional leadership.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- **European Commission.** *Inclusive and Connected Higher Education.* COM(2022) 16 final.
- **European Commission.** *Migrants and Refugees in Higher Education: EU Framework and Country Practice.* 2023.
- **European Commission.** *Mobility and Cooperation in Higher Education: Erasmus+ Programme Guide.* 2026.
- **European Commission.** *ECTS Users' Guide.* 2015 (updated 2021).
- **W3C / European Parliament.** *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1* and *EU Web Accessibility Directive (2016/2102).*



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Questions & Discussion

Where should your institution start: service-page redesign, recognition support, or feedback-driven inclusion review?

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