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![HEDforALL logo]

HEDforALL – Holistic Approach to Higher Education for All

Newsletter No. 3

Welcome to the third issue of the **HEDforALL project** newsletter, a key resource aimed at advancing inclusion and accessibility in Higher Education. This newsletter's edition underscores our continued commitment to sharing innovative research and collaborative initiatives that are reshaping educational opportunities for all.

In this issue, we are proud to introduce **Lucia Ferlino**, a researcher at CNR-ITD who shares her expertise on inclusion and accessibility in education, and her role in the project.

Next, we present the announcement of a new **scientific article**, *"Assistive Technology for Higher Education Students with Disabilities: A Qualitative Research"*, which explores the use of assistive technologies to support students with disabilities in higher education.

We also highlight the recent **Multiplier Events in Alicante Spain and** Genova **Italy**, held in May and July 2024 respectivley, as well as the outcomes of the latest **Transnational Project Meetings** in Alicante and Genova, where the project partners reviewed progress and planned future activities.

As always, we invite you to engage with the content, share your thoughts, and join us in our mission to foster a more inclusive and accessible educational landscape.

The **HEDforALL project** is supported by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme, Key Action "Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices", Action Type "Cooperation partnerships in higher education". Its duration is 36 months, from 01-02-2022 to 31-01-2025.

Meet the HEDforALL Project Partners: CNR-ITD

Lucia Ferlino is a researcher at CNR-ITD with a degree in Pedagogy from the University of Genoa. Her research focuses on digital educational resources, e-learning, inclusion, accessibility, and teacher training. She has taught in specialization courses for support teachers and collaborated with various chairs at the Department of Educational Sciences at the University of Genoa. Lucia has contributed to numerous research projects, including **Essediquadro**, **SoDiLinux**, and **HEDforALL**, all aimed at promoting the use of technologies for inclusion and educational innovation.

Three questions to Lucia Ferlino

What is your role in the HEDforALL project?

"As a researcher at CNR-ITD, my role in the HEDforALL project revolves around designing and evaluating accessible educational materials for students with disabilities. I work closely with the project partners to ensure that the resources we develop are practical, user-friendly, and tailored to meet the needs of students across different types of disabilities. I also contribute to the development of guidelines and tools that can be applied by educators to create inclusive and accessible learning environments."

Why is accessibility in higher education so important?

"Accessibility is not just a right—it is a prerequisite for achieving equity in education. In higher education, students with disabilities often face barriers that limit their participation and success. These barriers can range from inaccessible learning materials to the lack of understanding or support from academic staff. Addressing these challenges is critical to providing all students with the opportunity to thrive and succeed in their academic journeys. Inclusive practices benefit not only students with disabilities but also the entire educational community by fostering diversity and equal opportunities."

How is the HEDforALL project contributing to improving accessibility?

"The HEDforALL project is working on several fronts to enhance accessibility in higher education. We are developing customized educational materials that are specifically designed to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. The project also emphasizes the importance of training academic staff and accessibility advisors, providing them with the necessary tools and skills to support students in their learning. Moreover, by creating an online repository of accessible resources, HEDforALL is ensuring that these materials are available to educators and students across Europe, promoting widespread use and knowledge sharing."

[Research Article] Assistive Technology for Higher Education Students with Disabilities: A Qualitative Research

We are pleased to announce the release of a new scientific article, resulting from the research conducted within the HEDforALL project. The article contributes valuable insights into the use of assistive technologies in higher education, specifically for students with disabilities.

- **Papadopoulos, K., Koustriava, E., Isaraj, L., Chronopoulou, E., Manganello, F., & Molina-Carmona, R.** (2024). *Assistive Technology for Higher Education Students with Disabilities: A Qualitative Research*. *Digital*, 4(2), 501-511.

This study presents a qualitative exploration of the role assistive technologies play in supporting students with disabilities in higher education. Through in-depth interviews and analysis, the research highlights the challenges and opportunities that these technologies offer in enhancing the educational experience and

accessibility for students with visual, hearing, and physical impairments. The findings underscore the importance of tailored technological solutions in promoting inclusion and equity in higher education settings.

We invite you to read the full article and explore the detailed findings that are shaping the future of accessible education.

> ➢ Read the full article here: https://doi.org/10.3390/digital4020025.

Multiplier Event in Spain – Alicante, May 11, 2024

On **May 16, 2024**, the HEDforALL project hosted a **Multiplier Event** at the University of Alicante, organized by **University of Alicante** (UA). The event was aimed at promoting a set of practices for developing educational materials and Distance Learning/e-Learning methodologies to implement digital education in Higher Education and accessibility advisors shared their experiences and provided a unique, close-up perspective to help all attendees understand and recognize the importance of digital accessibility

Key Highlights:

- **Rafael Molina**, Vice-Rector for Digital Transformation, reiterated the University of Alicante's commitment to accessible digital education and the work carried out in the frames of the HEDforALL project to guarantee it.

- Members of the UA Digital Accessibility Unit, Mr José María Fernández Gil and Mrs Cristina Palomares, presented the unit's work in the frames of the project. Moreover they provided training in digital accessibility and accessible technologies and they highlighted the results of several studies that have been conducted on the needs and requirements of students with disabilities in higher education.

The event was attended by 35 local participants and 300 virtual online participants. The video streaming finally registered 439 views. Feedback from the event was provided by a questionnaire which was circulated to the participants at the end of the event, the results of which showed that the majority of participants would like to participate in an extended training program to expand their knowledge in this field. The event successfully promoted the importance of inclusive education and the importance of support for students with disabilities, especially in distance education.

> ➢ Read the full report on the project website.

Multiplier Event in Italy – Genova, July 11, 2024

On **July 11, 2024**, the HEDforALL project hosted a **Multiplier Event** at the University of Genoa, organized by **CNR-ITD** in collaboration with the University of Genoa's Teaching and Learning Centre (UTLC). The event was aimed at promoting strategies and methods for developing accessible educational materials, with a particular focus on Distance Education (DE) for students with disabilities (SwD). Attendees included local teaching staff, accessibility advisors, and external stakeholders, with additional participation from a wider audience via a virtual platform.

Key Highlights:

- **Flavio Manganello**, head of the CNR-ITD research unit for HEDforALL, opened the event with an overview of the project's goals, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to accessible education in higher education. He presented the key outcomes of the project to date, including research on the needs of SwD and the development of accessible materials. This session provided attendees with an understanding of the project's scope and impact on improving inclusivity in educational settings.

- **Lucia Ferlino** led an interactive workshop titled *"Let's Put Ourselves in the Shoes of..."*, where participants were invited to experience firsthand the challenges faced by SwD. Using accessible materials developed by HEDforALL, including textbooks, PowerPoint presentations, and videos with subtitles, the workshop fostered empathy and demonstrated practical solutions for enhancing accessibility in higher education. The session highlighted the importance of understanding the diverse needs of students and adapting teaching practices accordingly.

- **Andrea Maddalena**, member of the CNR-ITD research unit for HEDforALL, concluded with a session on *"Best Practices for Creating Accessible Educational Materials"*, focusing on standards and methodologies for adapting digital content for SwD. He showcased examples of accessible materials, such as DAISY and EPUB formats, and discussed how these resources can be integrated into online learning environments to improve accessibility. Andrea also explored the potential role of emerging technologies, such as AI and Machine Learning, in generating accessible content that meets diverse student needs.

The event was attended by 11 local participants (teaching staff; accessibility advisors; other stakeholders), 74 virtual online participants (teaching staff; accessibility advisors; university students; other stakeholders). The event fostered meaningful discussions among participants, with a special emphasis on the practical application of accessible materials in both traditional and online learning contexts. Feedback from the event indicated a strong interest in further training and collaboration on accessibility in education, with participants expressing a desire to implement the knowledge and tools gained in their own institutions.

➢ Read the full report on the [project website](#).

Transnational Project Meetings

The HEDforALL project team held two key transnational project meetings to review progress and plan upcoming activities. These meetings provided valuable opportunities for project partners to assess the ongoing work and coordinate future steps to ensure the success of the project.

- **Progress Meeting in Alicante (March 8-9, 2023).** This meeting, hosted by the University of Alicante, focused on evaluating the first phase of the project. Partners reviewed the research results on the needs of students with disabilities (RES1) and the knowledge and skills of teaching staff and accessibility advisors (RES2). Discussions also centered on the initial development of accessible educational materials (RES3). The meeting allowed partners to exchange feedback on the progress made and to refine the strategies for the next stages of the project, particularly regarding the design of accessible distance education materials and pilot courses.

- **Progress Meeting in Genova (April 18-19, 2024).** Held at the CNR-ITD in Genoa, this meeting brought together project partners to assess the ongoing pilot implementation of accessible distance education courses (RES5). The partners also discussed the expansion of the online repository of accessible educational materials (RES6), ensuring that it meets the diverse needs of students with disabilities across Europe. The meeting concluded with the planning of upcoming multiplier events and the integration of participant feedback into the final stages of material development. This meeting marked a pivotal moment for the project as it moved towards the final phase of implementation.

Both meetings reinforced the collaborative spirit of the project, ensuring that all partners remain aligned in their efforts to create inclusive and accessible higher education environments for students with disabilities.

➢ Read more about the HEDforALL Transnational Project Meetings on the [project website](#).

Project Partners

There are four partner organizations from four EU countries working together inside the HEDforALL project. All of them bring a different perspective to the project according to their profile.

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