

**PACES Newsletter No. 2****Issued: August 2019****PACES Third Project Coordination and Training Meeting, Maribor, Slovenia****Date of event: 25-28 of September 2018**

PACES will set up Accessibility Centres for Students with Disabilities, providing equipment and support. Needs will be analysed, international good practice shared and practical assistance supplied. Cooperation across regions and the establishment of the Employers Network will increase the relevance for the labour market.

In September 2018, the PACES project reached the milestone of its third project partner meeting, based in Maribor, Slovenia. The meeting was not only a chance for the project partners from Maribor, Egypt, Morocco, Spain and Greece to meet and re-group face to face but also aimed to look at the progression of the training, determine contacts from each university who will be nominated to undertake the training and a chance to share best practices from each participating university.

Ultimately the aim is to develop socioeconomic growth by modernising Higher Education and making it more accessible to students with special needs, thereby enabling Students with Disabilities to enter the workforce and to become independent and economically less disadvantaged. This project will target groups of: teaching staff, trainees either administrative staff or technical staff, high level management students and graduate students with and without disabilities, and employers.

Throughout the four-day project and training meeting, there were great suggestions on how the project might benefit from some technical support – such as frequently organised webinars for project partners or something e-learning based which would allow them to learn at their leisure/ flexibly. However, an

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obstacle was pointed out that in some countries there might not be strong enough internet connection to support this.

In order to continue the progression of the PACES project successfully, there is a work package dedicated to Quality, Monitoring and Sustainability of the project, led by the Université Abdelmalek Essaâdi (Tétouan, Morocco). The quality evaluation surveys have 13 questions for each partner to complete in order to maintain a high quality of the deliverables on the project, and during the project partner meeting in Maribor, this was presented as exceeding expectations as more than one person from each university had responded and given their feedback of how they thought the project was running / being facilitated.



On the third day of the project partner meeting, there was some key value added by each partner presenting their best practices from their university on how they support students with disabilities and facilitate flexible learning environments to cater for all. For example, Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport (Alexandria, Egypt) presented an assistive technology programme that is important because it directly supports students when there are barriers to technology access or

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## Progression of Accessibility Centres in higher Education for Students with disabilities in North Africa

accessibility. This programme (TAP) works with students who need to use assistive technologies such as screen readers and voice recognition programmes, and thanks to the PACES project which is funded by ERASMUS+, this funding has helped AASTMT buy in the necessary equipment.

During the third day of the meeting Dr. Ahmed Mehanna and Team from AASTMT presented the progress of Work Package 7: Dissemination and Exploitation. He reminded the partners that this work package is an integral and important part of the PACES project and that the project should be disseminated to university teachers, students and researchers, government representatives, trainers, and the wider community. The team demonstrated the PACES Project Website: [www.pacesproject.eu](http://www.pacesproject.eu) to the other partners.



During the second half of the third day, there was the opportunity for the partners to make practical plans for future actions and to discuss the most valuable aspects of what they had learned during the meeting. Actions included training students to use supportive technology such as the screen readers so that they felt more confident in using them; other partners decided they had already a large number of people

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supporting students with disabilities and wanted to ensure that they felt part of the community, helping with logistics and language tasks.

As part of the project meeting and to finish the four days as a team, the University of Maribor provided everyone with a tour of the campus and also gave us an overview of what they are currently doing to support students with disabilities. The Career Support for Students Officer, Mojca Slana, shared some of the excellent work she and her team were providing – such as public speaking support to give students that extra boost of confidence, CV and career plan advice, and also making a new web app available which gives support from a mobile phone.

The meeting was a great milestone for the PACES project as it provided all partners with a number of key ideas and suggestions to think about during the next phase. Here at Coventry University, we are keen to provide the necessary support and guidance to all students.

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**Prepared by:**

**Esmé Spurling**

**Research Assistant**

**Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University**

**Reviewed by**

**Dr. Ahmed Mehanna**

**Assistant Professor**

**AASTMT, Egypt**