



Civic engagement of higher education students in the creation of a pan-European mapping app for socially inclusive higher education institutions and accessible European cities

What is Map4Accessibility?

Map4Accessibility develops a European accessibility mapping app which provides information on the accessibility of public spaces. The project will engage higher education students by combining community engagement and academic coursework, preparation and reflection via service learning. In such a way the students will learn through active engagement and work on a community-identified concern.

How do you define accessibility?

Map4accessibility applies participatory approaches to evaluate physical and digital accessibility in the city and propose possible solutions to enhance it. Accessibility can be analysed from multiple perspectives: urban planning and design, infrastructure safety, social inclusivity. A place, a route, a web content is accessible when it's easy-to-reach from all the citizens of the community regardless of disability, age, sex, ethnicity etc. Essentially accessibility is "an umbrella term for all aspects which influence a person's ability to function within an environment".

¹ Iwarsson, S., & Ståhl, A. (2003)



What are we developing in Map4Accessibility?

Our Map4A11y App

Our Progressive Web App (PWA) will be an accessibility map outlining the physical and web accessibility of various objects and provide precise information on accessible places at the city level. Such an app has already been developed by Associação Salvador, a Portuguese NGO, and has been applied in Lisbon, Portugal. Map4Accessibility aims to improve it and apply it in 3 more locations – Berlin, Germany; Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria and Catania, Italy. It will cover accessibility standards, embed Universal Design Principles and add improvements to the existing app. It will be adapted, co-designed and co-developed through service-learning activities with higher education students.



How are we developing it?

We are using Service Learning, Exploratory and Urban Walks

Service-learning is a pedagogical approach which combines community service or engagement into the curriculum. The learning derives from the active engagement in the community and work on a real-world problem. The aim is to give students a sense of civic engagement and responsibility and work towards positive social change in society.

Exploratory walks are a community participatory tool to assess accessibility needs in public space (squares, streets, green space, public institutions or university campuses). The participants will walk within the city to (i) identify the issues that limit their possibility to access and enjoy it and (ii) collectively explore solutions to make public space adapted to their needs. Depending on the issues, targeted participants can be disabled people, women, children, the elderly or local citizens.

Urban walks involve mapping the urban environment via a questionnaire prepared based on exploratory walks. They aim to acquire quantitative data to respond to the needs of the participants.

What do we aim to achieve?

The long-term aim of the mapping app will be to incentivise higher education institutions and cities to adopt accessibility strategies on:

-  The built environment and public spaces, facilities, and services
-  Transport and related infrastructures
-  Information and communication, including information and communication technologies
-  Legally binding and non-binding accessibility standards

Who we are?

We are 7 partners from 5 different EU countries - Italy, Germany, Bulgaria, Portugal and Belgium.



Contact us



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