Presentation by the Disability Committee

Submitted to the meeting of the Presidential Committee of 12 March 2021,

Item 7 on the Agenda

Corvinus Accessibility and Disability Policy

Budapest, 1 February 2021

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Preamble

The management and all the citizens of the Corvinus University of Budapest are committed to **adopting an accessibility approach** with regard to all the educational, cultural and other forms of contemporary institutional activities in which students [1], lecturers, and other staff members with disabilities are involved. Disability has far-reaching consequences for an individual's way of life, its impacts going beyond the teaching/learning and the exam situations, therefore it should be placed in a broad social context.

In order to fully develop and offer **equal opportunities** and **accessibility**, the following document summarises all the theoretical and practical objectives through which the non-discriminatory integration of university citizens with disabilities would be feasible.

Accordingly, the document is governed by the Hungarian and international legal and social standards of accessibility and universal planning [2]. The successful university journey of students with disabilities is one of the cornerstones of the Corvinus Disability and Accessibility Policy. The **objective is to set up a flexible framework** which caters for both the needs of the relevant students and the professional expectations of the University, irrespective of the "type" of the disability.

In the disability policy, the terms "student" or "students" with disabilities are deliberately used both in the singular and in the plural. This implies that the provision of customised assistance and services is of primary importance for persons with disabilities.
Moreover, the University makes continuous efforts to achieve accessibility and to create an accessible environment through the technical implementation of this principle.

 The **accessible and easy to handle, easy to** use **university environment** is considered as a set of tools required for the welfare of not only

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[1] Over the forthcoming years, it is very unlikely that the very low ratio inferred from the data of the microcensus would become significantly over-represented in the composition of the Corvinus University's students.
However, it is our moral obligation to make sure that all the academic levels and specialisations and all forms of employment at our University are available to an increasing number of talented members of this social group. Hungarian source: https://www.ksh.hu/mikrocenzus2016/kotet_8_fogyatekos_es_az_egeszsegi_ok_miatt_korlatozott_nepesseg_jellemzoi

[2] By universal planning we mean more than the design and construction of barrier- free physical spaces, buildings etc. It covers the entire organisation and operation of a university along these lines.

persons with disabilities, i.e. it is open and inclusive for all the citizens of the Corvinus University, and attempts to achieve maximum accessibility.

We trust that the identified - holistic - principles, methods etc. will in the future become known, accepted, applied and inspirational for all the organisational units of our University.

As the Corvinus Accessibility and Disability Policy - **owing to its technical language** - is sometimes difficult to interpret, a brief summary of the key sections is provided in Annex 3, furthermore, the key terms requiring special attention have been highlighted in the main text.

In order to emphasise the equal value of the individual areas, the chapters have not been numbered, all the listed areas being of identical priority.

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3 This will be compiled when the main text becomes official. The work is supervised by the Disability Coordinator of the University, and the completed text will be approved by the Disability Committee of the institution. It will then be made available to the citizens of the University in both printed and electronic forms.

Interpretative framework of disability and accessibility

Disabilities

Nowadays the scope of the term disability - as this was emphasised in the preamble above - is far from being restricted to the systemic and therefore medical segments of permanent physical, sensory, mental, multiple etc. impairments. In accordance with the current state of disability science, any permanent disability becomes a concrete disability in a given social-cultural context. Consequently, the **inclusive and open Corvinus University** allows for establishing, jointly shaping and maintaining an environment where the student in question shares the burdens associated with his/her condition with the citizens of the University as much as possible.

Accessibility

Just as this is true for the understanding of disability, accessibility today is not limited to a built environment that is **adjusted to the needs of people with disabilities**. Naturally, "classical" building conversion and modernisation related to accessibility arrangements may not be neglected, either. In this case, however, it is essential to take into account the criteria of universal planning, which are summarised below:

- When designing a building or a public space, or when making reconstruction or renovation plans, the objective is to make sure that independent use and access is possible for all members of society. This should be done in such a way that the usability and the aesthetic implementation of the facility do not imply that it is tailored to special needs.

- As ICT interfaces permeate and shape our lives more and more, barrier-free thinking is necessary on these platforms as well. It is important to represent difference and disability **without stigmatisation** in the on-line space, too. By securing unhindered access to the information and communication spaces of the Corvinus University, an environment that is easier to access and more inclusive for all parties may be created.

If **accessibility** and disability **are treated in such a wide spectrum**, we cannot avoid focusing on the challenges faced by foreign students and lecturers, either.

Therefore, in the context of both disability/disabilities and **accessibility**, it becomes clear that there are no university citizens for whom the

implementation of the inclusive and open **Corvinus Model** would not offer a more comfortable university life.

Our mission, guided by a set of shared values

The Corvinus University is a value-bearing and value-creating community. It is of primary importance to establish an atmosphere of cooperation and trust among the citizens of the University. Students, lecturers and other staff members with disabilities should form an integral part of the micro- and macro-climate of our University. Thus, the promotion of equal treatment is not simply an emblematic objective, but rather one of the "engines" of our everyday modus operandi. Corvinus, in the process of renewal, does not only wish to become the best university in Hungary and internationally and to take steps to this end, but in close connection with this, wishes to position itself as an institution promoting positive social processes. The development of the social aspect should go hand in hand with the extension of the present, basically technical approach to accessibility, so that **trust**, **humanity** and **cooperation** as basic values contribute to the establishment of an accommodating social-cultural environment.

Moreover, one of the strategic objectives of our University is the gradual implementation of internationalisation, therefore in the forthcoming years we can expect an increasing number of non-Hungarian students and lecturers among us.

With its **open and inclusive Corvinus Model**, and along global **complex accessibility principles** and practices, the University could also become a landmark example in Hungary, allowing us to reposition ourselves in the international landscape and to gain a competitive advantage in the future.

Our principles of action and operation

We primarily seek to establish an environment that is accessible, available and inclusive for everyone. One of the supporting pillars thereof is the development and continuous monitoring of a communication culture that is adjusted to both individual and organisational objectives. Discourse on difference in Hungary tends to concentrate on deficiencies therefore thinks in terms of compensating disadvantages, and articulates views along those lines. In this respect, one of the innovations of the **inclusive** Corvinus Model is to go further than concentrating on deficiencies, which can be achieved through the principle of **levelling-up**.

We are planning to set up an integrated information and **support** system that provides an information net for all the students, lecturers and citizens performing administrative tasks, whichever programme they are involved in, thereby offering a service environment that is accessible not only for persons with disabilities.

Another objective is to implement a first-class university journey along the guidelines identified in our disability policy.

The range and the quality of services offered by us are adjusted to both the different individual goals and the university's community objectives.

To our mind, the disability policy of the Corvinus University is the framework through which the strategic objectives of our accessibility and disability policy may be implemented.

In the context of disability and accessibility, we seek to transcend the conventional concepts and categories, and apply this approach to all areas of university life. On this basis, the mapping of the integration difficulties of foreign students without disabilities and the development of the required forms of **assistance** also take place in this **broadly understood system**.

Guidelines on applicable and available support[4]

Support throughout the entire student journey

We wish to support the successful completion of the university journey by establishing a mentor programme that could operate as a safety net, in which access with equal opportunities and the provision of participation in all activities at the University are important items. In the alumni phase, this can be realised by providing information.

Equal treatment and fairness

Apart from what is stipulated in Hungarian and international legislation, the system of university regulations, and within it this document, seeks to secure broad accessibility, both in intellectual and practical terms, to students with disabilities as well as to their lecturers and the staff members providing assistance to them. Progress checks should be adapted to the student's abilities, making sure at the same time that the prescribed requirements are met.

Management of sensitive data

It is mandatory for all the citizens of the University to keep in confidence the personal data of students with disabilities. At the same time, this respectful atmosphere may encourage the students in question to speak about their difficulties and challenges in a frank and open manner in the facilities of the Corvinus University.

Organisational and operational framework

Both the professionals and all the citizens of the University should be ready to meet the expectations that may facilitate the student to get across until he/she obtains the diploma. Acting with the help of other professional areas, they should afterwards assist the student in the transition from the student status to an employee status, considering the following principles:

- Give the least possible publicity to the student's disability.

- It is important to make sure that the outcome requirements defined in the relevant legislation and necessary for issuing the diploma attesting

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[4] The scope of benefits that may be requested by students with disabilities and the modalities of their practical implementation are set out in the Corvinus University's Regulations on ensuring equal academic opportunities for students with disabilities.

a degree or a title are not compromised. Another key consideration is that the application of customised accessibility, methods and support associated with a specific requirement according to the principles of equal treatment should not be unfair to fellow students, either.

- The operational framework of our organisation ensures the provision of support for a customised journey, which includes and is governed by the current Regulations ensuring equal academic opportunities for students with disabilities. The work of the Disability Committee (DC) is guided by these Regulations.

Principles of supporting and practical activities performed in the various phases of the student journey

To meet the needs of students with disabilities coming to and pursuing their studies at the Corvinus University, the document defines **three phases**. These serve as useful inputs with regard to the complex initiative aiming at the successful completion of the student journey, to the different perspectives and to the framework in which practical steps may be taken.

Phase of integration

As a first step, personal needs should be assessed. Following that, it is necessary to work out and implement an integration process that is embedded into an awareness-raising and active discourse involving the student, his/her future fellow students, and last but not least, the future lecturers. This is done to lay the foundations of a successful university journey, and to pave the way for the development of the next phase. In this period, each personal success may be an inspiration for every person with disabilities who had previously thought they could never enter higher education. Each time a success is accomplished, it should be highlighted in the communication of the university.

Phase of supporting studies

The phase of actual assistance begins after the fine-tuning of awareness-raising. A detailed description of the modalities of assistance provided for the purposes of facilitating and completing studies is included in the chapter *Guidelines on applicable and available support* of the present document. Under this section, we primarily discuss the theoretical horizon of their mode of their operation. Any financial, technical, intellectual or other support provided to the student serves the specific purpose of making the road to obtaining the qualification as barrier-free as possible. Any support approved by the Disability Committee is of course adjusted to the academic and quality assurance requirements and expectations of the programmes of the University. Furthermore, Act 2011 on National Higher Education and the government decrees on its implementation, as well the requirements of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) are also observed. While the requested and granted benefits, exemptions and aids all constitute means of allowing students with disabilities to develop to their full potential and to complete the targeted university journey, they do not mean that that the professional competences and the associated progress checks defined in the outcome requirements are compromised.

Phase of career building

Efforts need to be made to make sure that students are able to align their career ideas with the real opportunities offered by the targeted university degree. The career support services of Student Counselling and Support are available to all students. By using these services, students may take more informed decisions about career planning, they can get help in developing their competences, and therefore can readily respond to the challenges of the labour market.

We are able to give students in the second phase of their PhD studies information about possibilities offered by the career model, and we can assist them in navigating through the theoretical and practical steps required for the achievement of their objectives.

Intellectual and moral conditions for transforming the Corvinus into an inclusive university

We are committed to establishing a supportive and complex university community that enables students with disabilities to successfully accomplish their objectives in the university, scientific or professional community selected by them in an increasingly barrier-free environment.

The assistance provided in the accomplishment of personal skills and competences required for **successfully** completing the training programme will be available to all the students of our University, thereby the acquisition of the necessary and complex skills will be ensured. The diversity of **individual competences** and the road leading to them is taken for granted, whether the university citizen has a disability or not. One of the cementing forces of today's human communities is to support efforts to create a level playing field for the individuals experiencing different life situations. As a matter of fact, that is why universities set up their social support schemes, making sure that talented but disadvantaged students are not deprived of the possibility of building a successful career. Such activities therefore facilitate access, irrespective of whether the students in question have a disability.

Obstacles and disabilities are seen as possibilities. The practical implementation of the **inclusive** Corvinus University concept will facilitate the mutual understanding and exploration thereof, as well the tapping of the inherent potential.

We seek to create a university where **persons with disabilities are accepted as valuable persons** who contribute to **the community as members with full rights**.

Hungarian legislation under which the Corvinus Accessibility and Disability Policy was created

The objectives and practical actions defined in the document are based on the following Hungarian and international legal instruments and university provisions:

- Act XXVI of 1998 on the Rights and Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities

- Act CXXV of 2003 on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities

- Act XCII of 2007 on the promulgation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the related Optional Protocol (Purpose: "to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity")

- Act CXXV of 2009 on Hungarian Sign Language and the Use of the Hungarian Sign Language

- Government Decree 370/2017. (8 December) on the National Register of Sign Language Interpreters

- Decree 62/2011 (10 November) of the Ministry of National Resources (NEFMI) on the operation of sign language interpreting services and conditions related to the use of sign language interpreting services.

- Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education

- Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education

- Government Resolution 1187/2020) (28 April) on the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Disability Programme until 2022

- STUDENT REQUIREMENTS (ROO VOLUME III) PART 5 Regulations ensuring equal academic opportunities for students with disabilities. The Board of Trustees adopted the *Regulations ensuring equal academic opportunities for students with disabilities* under Resolution 31/2020 (18 August).

Annex

As indicated in the Preamble: "As the Corvinus Accessibility and Disability Policy - owing to its technical language - is sometimes difficult to interpret, the annex provides a brief summary of the key items of its contents. This text, which also intends to serve accessibility, will be included in the annex as described in footnote 3 as soon as the main text becomes official.