

**Work Package no. 2 – Design Principles for the course to build inclusive higher education systems for HEI teachers, HEI administrative staff and academic tutors specialized in SEN**

**A 2.4. Conducting focus groups with experts for validating the design principles and possible contents**

***Achieved results: Report on focus groups***

First list of design principles for the IncluMusic course was validated by the partners through four national focus groups (with groups of teachers, students, administrative staff of conservatoires) and an international focus group held in Leuven during the AEC international conference.

The focus group consisted of three parts:

- Introductory phase: presentation of the project and collection of participants' socio-demographic information.
- Central phase: work on the Design Principles (DP= through specific questions, the grades assigned by each participant before the focus group and through the three metaphors (mirror, microscope and binoculars) to be presented during the focus group.
- Closing phase: thanking the participants and proposing future collaboration (if the participants agree).

Participants information:

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Online/In-presence</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Average Age</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>
<b>ANGMD</b>	03/07/23	Online	10	42.37	3-27
<b>CONSPA</b>	6/07/23	In-presence	10	37.20	1-35
<b>EUC</b>	7/09/23	Online	9	-	7-32
<b>RIAM</b>	28/06/23	Online	10	-	10-40

The focus group was conducted in pairs, i.e. a leader and a co-leader. The leader's role was to guide the participants during the discussion, while the co-leader was responsible for taking notes.

During the focus group, in addition to the presentation of each participant, the group was asked to provide a definition of the Design Principle and to evaluate the list produced by the project, with its definitions. Participants are guided in their group reflection – to validate the list – through three metaphors: the mirror metaphor, the microscope metaphor and the binoculars metaphor.

- the mirror metaphor: participants are asked to reflect on themselves and their direct and indirect experiences;
- the microscope metaphor: participants are asked to look at things closely, in depth;
- the metaphor of binoculars: participants are asked to look into the future.

So with respect to the first metaphor, the participants were given the following food for thought: “Think of an experience (concerning inclusion in the field of music, in higher education but not only) in which you have participated (directly or indirectly) and which you think has worked very well (it is also OK if participants think of a project in which they did not participate but which they consider of great value). What are the key aspects in terms of design principles that made that project a success in your opinion? Are these elements (the elements mentioned in thinking about a successful experience) on the list? Check together whether the elements mentioned are already on the list or whether you can add them.” At that point, the focus shifted to a detailed examination of the items in the list of Design Principles.

For the microscope metaphor, participants were given the following input: “Reviewing item by item, how would you improve them? (Facilitator's tip: if no one speaks, reflect starting with the items with the lowest scores, which were given earlier).”

With the metaphor of binoculars, the focus was on the future of inclusion and inclusive education in institutions of higher musical education. The input provided was as follows: “Looking at the future of inclusive education in higher music education institutions, which design principles should not be missing?”

This methodical approach to validation not only confirmed the principles' relevance but also led to the identification of additional considerations for the development of inclusive education courses aimed at teachers, administrative staff, and academic tutors in music education.

Among the results, the first ones concerned of the definition of “successful inclusion” in music education that was validated as follows:

- Participants from the focus groups conducted by **ANGMD**: *“very comprehensive and detailed”*
- Participants from the focus groups conducted by **CONSPA**: *“clear and complete”*
- Participants from the focus groups conducted by **EUC**: *“Overall the definition was fine, well rounded and encompassing. Thus, some of participants made these suggestions: «It should include more clear information about how students with SEN should be invited to work in groups with other students; Maybe also provide a sentence about giving them a*

*strong foundation for assisting them in their future career in music and their musical employment; give them equal access”.*

- **RIAM:** all participants agreed with the definition.

Emerging themes were the following ones:

- **ANGMD:** information; to establish the typology of special needs; differentiate between students who need assistance and those who, once helped, can manage on their own; consulting a specialist whom teachers can seek advice from; the students' willingness.
- **CONSPA:** 5 people in the focus group wondered how the assessment process would be made more inclusive and be removed from the traditional idea of just giving grades. They wondered how students would be assessed in an inclusive way and how to go about promoting different types of assessment based on the needs of the individual students.
- **EUC:** more clarifications for the wide audience, i.e. which categories are included? written in a more promotional manner; two different leaflets: this one for academics and another one with easier language and clearer definition of terms for the wide audience; Maybe we should refer to educational obstacles that students face, instead of educational difficulties.
- **RIAM:** need to better understand what SEN means; who is included? Difficulties of receiving a diagnosis; do educators need formal documentation or can be self assessed? Cultural bias and discrimination lead to students fear diagnosis.

Further important proposals were the following:

- **ANGMD:** necessary to educate and promote adaptation among the peers as well; adaptation at new situations (Targu Mures student).
- **CONSPA:** adaptation as ANGMD highlighted; involve the people who work with the student and their family members e.g. teachers, psychologists etc; Focus on and value the strengths of the students and start from there rather than focusing on their weaknesses or disabilities.
- **EUC:** The public needs to become more sensitive to others who have SEN.
- **RIAM:** all in agreement with DP.

The analysis of the results essentially confirmed the validity of the principles, with the addition of a few more issues that were taken into account in the development phase of the courses for teachers, administrative staff and academic tutors specialising in inclusive music education.

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