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**Guide for professionals**  
Inclusive education and technology:  
from theory to practice



# ABLE TO RISE

The ultimate aim of this guide is to be a comprehensive and up to date resource for all educational actors interested in making inclusive education a reality, helping them to work for the inclusion of students with physical and other disabilities in order to give them the opportunity to reach their maximum educational potential and thereby contributing to the creation of a more inclusive European society.

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**FAMMA**  
Cocemfe Madrid



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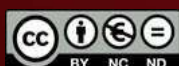
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# Get to know us!

Who are we?



FAMMA

— Cocemfe Madrid —

## Federation of Associations of People with Physical and Organic Disabilities of the Community of Madrid

The Federation of Associations of People with Physical and Organic Disabilities of the Community of Madrid (FAMMA - Cocemfe Madrid), is a non-profit organization that aims to improve the quality of life of the people it represents and their families, promoting their personal autonomy, their active participation in society and their decision-making.



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## Humanity & Longevity

Humanity and Longevity (Sofia, Bulgaria) is dedicated to caring for and working directly with older people, people with disabilities, populations at risk of social exclusion, and children with special educational needs and their families.



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**Inclusive education is not just about putting all students in the same classroom, but about providing each of them with the tools and resources necessary to succeed. Technology plays a fundamental role in this process**

**Thomas Hehir**



In total **than 150 professionals participated in the training** organized within the framework of the project.





## ABLE TO RISE

Is a European project whose objective is to expand and complement **the training in techniques, methodologies and technological tools (ICT) from an inclusive education perspective** of educational professionals who work with students with disabilities.

The ultimate purpose of the proposal is to promote personal autonomy, interpersonal relationships, social skills, self-confidence and adaptation to the environment among minors with disabilities, contributing to learning and participation in the educational environment.

ABLE TO RISE is part of the **European ERASMUS+ program, and entities from Spain and Bulgaria**, collaborate in it, promoting cooperation between organizations from different countries to exchange ideas, practices and experiences that allow **improving education in Europe within a framework that advocates for real inclusion.**

The training proposal allowed us to collaborate with **various educational agents** immersed in the daily life of children with disabilities: management teams, teachers and specialists, social educators... and of course with families.

**Resources** were made known that we will present later, and **guidelines and guidelines** for their correct use and to be able to obtain benefits, thus seeking **to help all these educational professionals become true agents of change**, who with their professionalism and personal qualities advance towards a best school at:

- Express concerns regarding what happens both inside and outside your classroom and educational center.
- Have shared intentions regarding the need to learn for yourself and from others.
- Consider diversity and the challenges it poses as a springboard towards inclusion.
- Generate new, truly significant knowledge from your personal and characteristic reality.

# 1 How to walk towards inclusive education

When we talk about **inclusion in education**, we refer to the fact of **constantly seeking new and better ways to respond to the diversity of students**, valuing this from a positive point of view and as an opportunity to enter new paths that are in line with society current.



## **Challenges and needs in current education: diversity in the educational system**

The current reality is framed towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030, UN), which includes quality education, which seeks to: **guarantee inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.**

Education continually faces and must respond appropriately to multiple situations, highlighting in this case the diversity present in the educational field in terms of educational needs. The existence of this diversity implies that students show heterogeneous characteristics that generate needs that require multiple responses.





## Inclusive education is a **principle based in promoting equal opportunities** and equity in education for all

Providing all students with quality education is a universal right, so it is **the right of all students**. (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

This idea appears included in different documents, among which stands out:

"The Convention on the Rights of the Child" (1989) **Article 28**: Every child has the right to education and it is the obligation of the State to ensure at least free and compulsory primary education. The application of school discipline must respect the dignity of the child as a human person.

"The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities"  
**Article 24**: States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunities, the States Parties will ensure an inclusive education system at all levels as well as lifelong learning.

In this way, it is necessary for **the school to transform its culture, its organization and its educational practices** to be able to attend to all the diversity present in it and move towards the challenge of inclusion.

### **Educational principles for inclusion**

Mel Ainscow, a leading expert in inclusive education, reminds us that: **inclusive education is the key to educational excellence**. It also names the agreement that emerged from the Education 2030 Conference (UNESCO):

"Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. **No educational goal should be considered achieved unless it has been achieved for all.**" (Incheon Declaration for Education 2030)

Therefore, based on the above, it can be stated that:

Inclusive education is a principle to promote equal opportunities and equity in education, since it aims for **education to reach everyone, for schools to be able to provide educational responses that guarantee equality and social justice, successfully educating the diversity of its students**.

And the reality is that, as Echeita (2017) says, the adjective "inclusive" is added to the term "education" because **it still does not meet the necessary conditions to respond with equity**.

In this way, for proposals designed as inclusive to really be so, they need to be based on principles that (Booth and Ainscow, 2011):

- Respect inclusive values and put them into action (right, equality, trust, participation, community, optimism...) to guarantee a positive and enriching vision of diversity.
- Increase the participation of students in teaching and learning activities, since each and every one of them are the main active agents in its construction.
- Seek to reduce exclusion, discrimination and barriers to learning and participation, at the same time breaking stereotypes and prejudices that have

been ingrained for years both in society and in educational centers.

- Commit to collaboration and support between all those involved (teachers, families, management team, specialists) to ensure that all students reach the maximum development of their potential.

And of course: **recognize that inclusion in education is an aspect of inclusion in society**, because The school is not alone on the path, and in addition to including all members of its school community, it must extend its inclusive proposal to the environment that surrounds it.

### **Universal Learning Design (UDL): a means for real inclusion**

Universal Learning Design (UDL) emanates from the Universal Design (UD) proposed by Ron Marce (1970) in the field of architecture. With it, it was discovered that it not only benefits people with disabilities and that, therefore, diversity is inherent to any human being, so that by offering different alternatives it benefits all people and allows them to choose the most appropriate option in relation to their individuality.

Thus, UDL is a **pedagogical approach that seeks to provide equal learning opportunities to all students, regardless of their particular diversity, based on the premise that all obstacles to learning must be eliminated from the beginning**.

To achieve this, its three fundamental principles are:

- **Multiple representation**: offer access to content and information in various ways to promote student motivation.
- **Multiple action and expression**: allow students to express themselves in multiple ways, so that they remain active in their own learning process.

- **Multiple comprehension:** offer alternatives so that students can understand and learn.

In this way, these designs take into account all students without implementing individualized responses that do not encourage the real and equal participation of students with disabilities. Furthermore, they follow the educational line that the difficulties in accessing learning do not reside solely in the person in terms of abilities or skills, but in the very nature of the materials, media or teaching methods, which are too rigid and do not satisfy diversity. of the students.

Furthermore, more specifically, a series of benefits are highlighted for students with physical disabilities:

- Improving access to the curriculum more effectively by removing physical and cognitive barriers.
- Development of adaptive skills to promote independence, overcoming limitations and developing effective learning strategies.
- Promoting self-esteem and motivation by offering meaningful opportunities for learning and success.
- Preparation for life and real inclusion.

In conclusion, **through the UDL the perspective of inclusion is respected**, addressing educational needs and making it functional by guaranteeing the real participation of students in their teaching-learning process and in the life of educational centers.



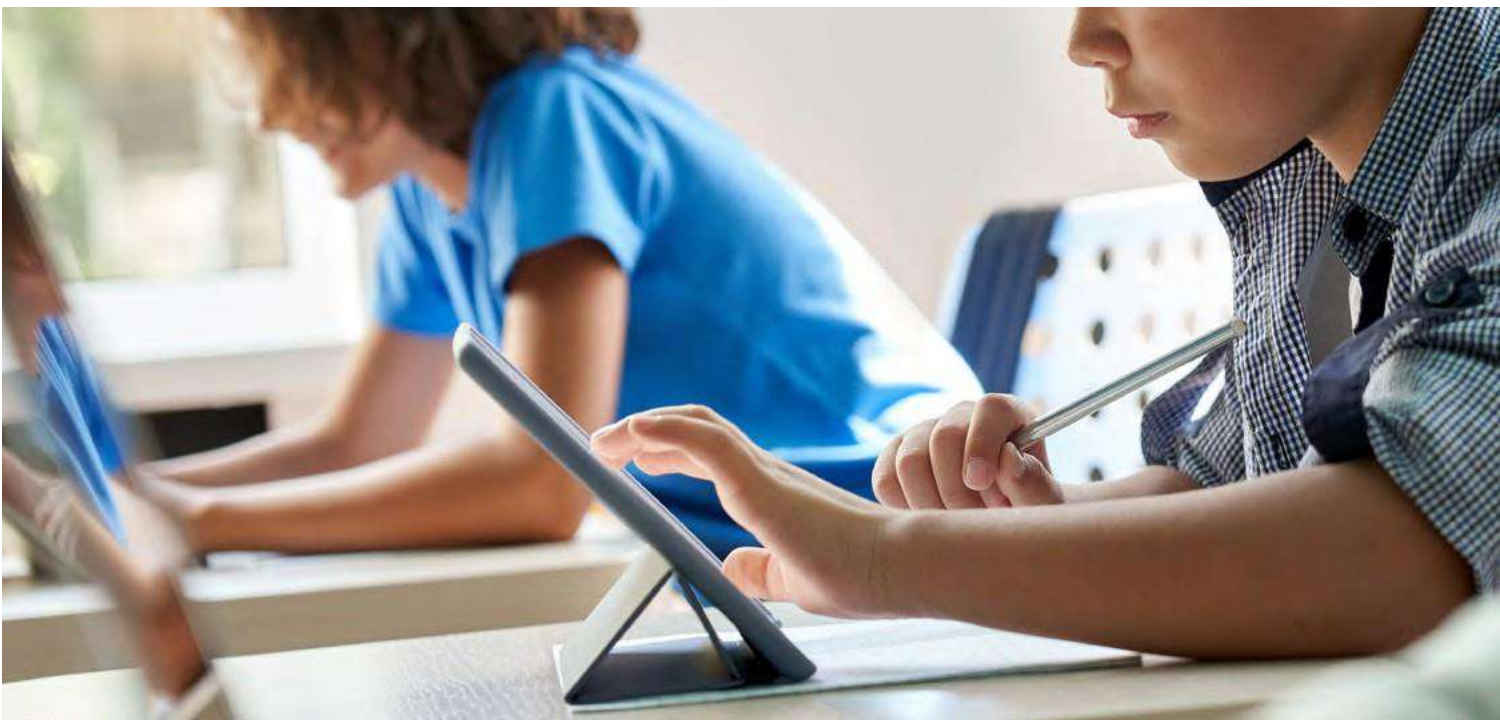
# Fundamental principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Provide multiple means of



## 2 Inclusive learning environments: technology as an ally

The creation of inclusive learning environments is essential to guarantee the effective inclusion of all students in the educational field. In the case of students with physical disabilities, it is necessary **to configure educational environments that promote their active participation and equal opportunities.**



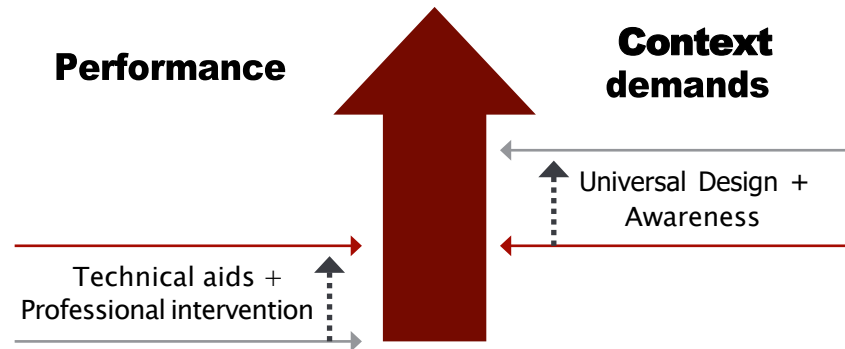
To do this, in addition to taking into account the exposed UDL lines, it is time to introduce a great ally of current education: **technology and everything it includes.**

This not only improves accessibility, but also **offers empowerment opportunities for students with physical disabilities by providing tools that allow them to participate actively and meaningfully.** At the same time, the flexibility offered by technology not only benefits students with physical disabilities, but also enriches everyone's

educational experience by promoting diversity of approaches to learning and participation.

Consequently, it is time to confirm how the integration of technological resources in inclusive environments reinforces the commitment of the educational community to equal opportunities and inclusion, supporting the creation of environments that allow each and every one of the students of educational centers, including students with physical disabilities, reach their maximum potential.

» Without intervention in the environment or in the student with special needs, the gap between their school performance and environmental demands is very large. To reduce this gap we must have technical aid, awareness and correct implementation of the principles of universal learning design.



### Accessibility in the educational environment: physical spaces and digital spaces

The physical learning environment plays a crucial role in inclusion, and more than a legal requirement it is an ethical necessity that promotes equal opportunities.

For this reason, it is essential to visualize the entire school site as an educational space, and not only the classroom, but all the spaces and rooms that make it up: entrance, hallways, outdoor areas, green areas, recreational areas, libraries, specialized classrooms, offices...

In this sense, the UDL, in favor of the inclusion and real participation of students with physical disabilities, advocates the elimination of architectural barriers, which includes the installation of access ramps, elevators, wide doors and adaptable furniture in classrooms; as well as clear and legible signage to facilitate orientation and correct movement of students.

On the other hand, currently, the digital revolution in education has led to the recognition of the importance of accessibility in virtual learning environments, emphasizing the need to design digital platforms and resources that also follow the principles of UDL.

Here, a critical aspect is web accessibility, as the importance of ensuring that

educational websites meet accessibility standards is highlighted, allowing the use of screen readers and other assistive technologies.

### Design of inclusive classrooms and recreation spaces integrating technological resources

If before we talked about the entire school campus being a learning space, it is time to focus on the reference space for the students: the classroom, as well as the main moment that a less directed educational environment offers: recess time, and both can be further enriched by the incorporation of technology.

The configuration of inclusive classrooms and recreational spaces play a critical role in promoting inclusive education for students with physical disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account a series of aspects that allow the active and equitable participation of all students.

The classrooms, to respond to current social demands and the particularity of each classroom group found in them, must have a flexible design. This implies that said space has the capacity to adapt the different areas and furniture to accommodate the needs of students with physical disabilities. It may include: adjustable seats that allow children in wheelchairs to sit comfortably, and height-adjustable tables to adapt to different heights and access needs.

Within the classroom, your organization is also crucial. The space must be organized so that it is accessible to everyone, including that all educational materials and resources are within reach of the students.

In this sense, it is necessary to highlight that if there are technological devices in the classroom (screen readers, augmentative and alternative communication applications...) these must be part of it in a standardized way. Being able to use them at any time necessary must be guaranteed as a right, since sometimes limiting their use can at the same time limit the students' chances of success in their learning process, as well as their access, participation and communication.

As for recreational spaces or recreational areas, they become fundamental places for socialization and the development of socio-emotional skills for students. Designing inclusive recreational spaces allows everyone to interact and socialize with their peers in a full and meaningful way.

These spaces must consider accessibility to play equipment (adapted swings, access ramps, stable surfaces...), but also to rest areas, since only in this way will interaction and socialization between equals be guaranteed in a comfortable and equitable manner.

Furthermore, as in the classroom, access and use of technological devices must

## The incorporation of technological resources in inclusive environments **reinforces the educational community** commitment to equal opportunities and inclusion

be guaranteed during these relaxed moments. If technology is introduced, it can make recreational activities even more accessible and attractive (for example, through virtual reality) and facilitate communication and collaboration between peers, encouraging social interaction in inclusive gaming environments.

### **Use of assistive technology and interactive resources in inclusive environments**

This section is presented as a conclusion to the previous points, and introduction to the next chapter, because assistive technology and interactive resources play a fundamental role in the creation of inclusive learning environments for students with physical disabilities and the enrichment of the educational inclusion.

Assistive technology has been proposed as a means to overcome the barriers that students with physical disabilities face in accessing curriculum and communication, since it includes a wide range of devices and tools designed to improve independence and participation in the educational environment.

Inclusion is also favored through the implementation of interactive resources. Furthermore, if its use is related to peer collaboration, it allows offering new opportunities to receive support in academic and social activities.

In conclusion, **assistive technology and interactive resources not only eliminate barriers, but also empower students in general, and students with physical disabilities in particular, by providing**

**the tools and support necessary to fully participate in their education.**

These resources promote autonomy and independence, while strengthening equal opportunities in the educational field.

Effective integration of assistive technology and interactive resources in inclusive environments supports the creation of educational environments that value and support diversity of abilities, thereby reinforcing the commitment to educational inclusion.

Thus, we find some

### **Benefits for both the students:**

- Improve access to content by offering a wide variety of possibilities.
- Increases attention and increases student motivation
- They encourage autonomy, curiosity and self-learning
- They adapt to the needs of the user (person-machine fit) helping them to overcome the limitations that arise from their disability.

### **As for educational professionals:**

- Offer multiple response possibilities through few resources.
- Continuously evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the resources proposed, as well as being able to introduce modifications.

- Respond appropriately to the diverse needs of students.
- Adjust to the social advances of the present, and be more prepared for those of the future.

Even so, at the same time, it must be taken into account that there may be a series of disadvantages, which professionals and educational centers must be aware of in order to try to reduce or eliminate them, being the most relevant to avoid:

- The lack of knowledge and preparation of the professionals who are going to implement them, since it can cause a certain rejection of their use.
- Failure to adequately assess needs and make the necessary adjustments to guarantee access.
- Not correctly defining the objectives to be achieved and not selecting the most appropriate means to achieve them.

Assistive technology and interactive resources not only remove barriers, but also **empower learners** in general and learners with physical disabilities in particular by providing the necessary tools and supports to participate fully in their education.



# 3

## Useful resources and tools to introduce technology as an instrument for inclusion

The following section highlights guidelines on accessibility, educational and technological resources, and includes organizations and support networks at the European level that can be very useful in understanding accessibility within the framework of the European Union.



### Accessibility Guidelines

It is necessary to delve into guidelines on accessibility, since they are essential to guarantee that the proposed technology, digital resources and educational platforms are accessible to all students and promote inclusive and equitable education. Some of the key guidelines to keep in mind with students with physical disabilities include:

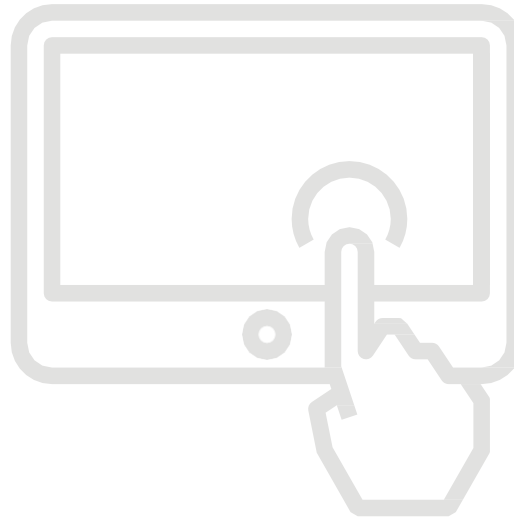
- **Assistive technology** that responds to the real needs of students.
- **Compatibility of technological resources with assistive technology.** Technological resources must be compatible with the assistive technology used to access the technology (screen readers, alternative keyboards, voice control devices...).



- **Ensure access to key functions.** Technology resources must provide access to all key functions using assistive technology.
- **Interface customization.** Options for text size, contrast, colors, design... must be made to adapt to the preferences and needs of the students.
- **Support for alternative input devices.** Technological resources must support different input devices (joysticks, eye control devices...) to allow effective interaction with the technology.
- **Multimodal content.** The technological resources proposed to be used must provide content in multiple modalities, such as text, audio and video, to allow the choice in the form of access that best suits particular needs.
- **Support for screen readers** to convert visual content into audible speech, allowing greater access to content.

**Usability testing** should be done to identify and address potential accessibility barriers, as well as resources **updated and maintained** on a regular basis to ensure they remain accessible as technologies evolve.

The effective implementation of these guidelines contributes to the creation of equitable and accessible educational environments so that all students, and in this case especially students with physical disabilities, can fully participate in learning experiences.



**Usability testing** should be done to identify and address potential accessibility barriers

#### **Advanced Device Settings: Accessibility Features**

It is worth knowing that the operating systems and search engines that we use most in our daily lives – such as Microsoft, Apple or Google – include a varied configuration of accessibility functions that can facilitate the use of different technological devices by students with special educational needs.

Apple has a screen reader, different touch configurations and screen touch sensitivity for students with motor disabilities, changing letters and fonts for visual accessibility. See more at: <https://www.apple.com/es/accessibility/>

Microsoft also offers settings that improve device accessibility based on user needs. In this way, it is possible to adapt keyboard shortcuts, voice navigation or text-audio transcription applications that facilitate access to educational content. See more at: <https://www.microsoft.com/es-es/accessibility>

#### **Educational and technological resources and support products**

» **A assistive product is “any product (including apparatus, equipment, instruments, technology and software) specially produced or already available on the market, to prevent, compensate, control, alleviate or neutralize deficiencies, limitations in activity and restrictions in the participation of people with disabilities” (UNE-EN ISO 9999:2023 Support Products Standard)**

There are many support products and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) differentiates different types according to their functionality: for personal use in daily life, for employment, for communication for mobility, etc

Here you can find a list of educational and technological resources that can facilitate the implementation of UDL and improve accessibility in educational environments.

**Technology challenges us to think about education more inclusively. It forces us to consider how we can use it to overcome barriers and allow all students to participate fully in learning.**

**Kathy Schrock**

We must remember that to **introduce technology in an inclusive way in the classroom** and for it to benefit students with motor disabilities, and the entire classroom group, careful planning and consideration of existing needs based on possible limitations and the skills, as well as the assistive technological tools they use.

The resources proposed are:

- **Screen readers** that allow access to devices and digital content through text conversation in audible speech.
- **Alternative keyboards** that adapt to the possibilities when a conventional keyboard cannot be used.
- **Voice recognition software** to control devices and create content using voice commands.
- **Interactive whiteboards and digital tablets** to be able to interact with digital content in a tactile way and to be able to adapt to meet needs.
- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication Applications** to

overcome verbal communication difficulties through symbols, images and text that can be selected by touches or movements.

- **Mice and pointing devices adapted** to respond to mobility limitations through devices that allow more precise interaction with technology.
- **Virtual reality and augmented reality** that will allow us to offer immersive and

accessible educational experiences for students with motor disabilities, allowing them to explore virtual environments and manipulate digital objects.

- **Accessible online learning resources** that meet accessibility guidelines to ensure that educational content is accessible to all learners.
- **Planning and organization applications** to help students organize their tasks, take notes and manage their time efficiently.
- **Online collaboration platforms** to facilitate group work in situations where there are travel difficulties.
- **Adapted hardware** to ensure the technology is more accessible.
- **Accessible digital educational resources** that comply with accessibility regulations to ensure that learning materials are accessible.
- **Educational apps** that allow a new way to access practically any educational content in various ways and are more motivating. In addition, many of them

allow you to track the learning process.



**>> You can find a catalogue of examples of technical aids, support products and a list of apps for students with special educational needs at [educationabletorise.eu](https://educationabletorise.eu)**



**The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education is an organisation which periodically publishes reports and training resources to implement inclusive educational practices in schools all Europe.**

### **Organizations and support networks**

The role that numerous organizations and support networks play in promoting educational inclusion and in the effective implementation of accessibility guidelines in the educational field is undeniable.

Some of them are presented here, highlighting their role in providing resources, guidance, support and advocacy to ensure that people with physical disabilities have equal opportunities in education.

- **Foundations and Associations:** in each country there are social entities that are dedicated to promoting the inclusion and well-being of the population they serve, offering different resources such as support programs, accessibility resources, guidance, training... ( Do you already know EASPD, the European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities?).

- **Inclusive Education Networks:** These networks bring together educators, families, students and inclusion advocates to share effective practices, research and resources related to inclusive education, in ways that promote collaboration and mutual learning (see, for example, the Network European Union of Inclusive Education and Disability: Includ-ed ).

- **Family associations,** which offer emotional support, information and guidance to students' families, and advocate for inclusive educational policies and practices.

- **Government entities.** In many countries, Ministries of Education place special emphasis on aspects related to inclusive education and accessibility by offering guidance to educational centers, developing policies and providing financial resources (we recommend visiting the Ministry or Department of

Education in your country, and inform you about the latest news).

- **Online support platforms** offering resources, inspiring stories and practical advice for people with disabilities and their families, including information on inclusive education and assistive technology.
- **Rights advocacy groups** that promote accessibility in technology and the physical environment by advocating for accessibility standards and working to ensure that technological resources are inclusive. (We encourage you to discover **GAATES**, Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments)

The function of these organizations and support networks is multiple, and together they contribute to the creation of an educational and technological environment that values diversity, respects the rights of people with physical disabilities and promotes equal opportunities in education.



## 4 Concluding remarks: practical recommendations



This guide concludes with a series of **recommendations**, extracted mainly from the content collected, that seek to make the inclusion of students with physical disabilities a reality through technology.

**Start by carrying out an assessment of the real needs within your classroom or educational center.**

**Stay in continuous training and professional development to learn how to use technology and its advances in an inclusive way and how to support your students in their educational experience so that it is enriching.**

**Make sure all technology devices used in the classroom are accessible and compatible with assistive technology.**

**Choose educational software and apps that are accessible and meet accessibility guidelines, including providing alternatives for media content and customization options.**

**Familiarize yourself with the assistive technologies used by your students, and make sure they are configured correctly and available in the classroom.**

**Consider hardware adaptations based on individual student needs.**

**It encourages collaboration and open communication between all those involved in the educational field to ensure an accessible and inclusive learning environment.**

**Also apply the principles of UDL when planning learning activities and resources, relying on new technologies to offer various options for representation, expression and understanding, so that all students can participate in a meaningful way.**

**Provides technical support to help students with disabilities use technology effectively.**

**Conduct a continuous evaluation to check if the technology used is effective and addressing needs as they evolve.**

**Involve your own students by listening to their contributions in relation to the selection and evaluation of the approaches proposed in response and the resources used.**

### And don't forget...

**promote awareness and empathy between students with and without disabilities** to further contribute to an inclusive environment, and ensure the existence of clear policies and procedures related to accessibility and inclusive technology within your educational center. We hope that by following these practical recommendations you can integrate technology effectively, promoting the inclusion and academic success of students with disabilities.

## Teaching experiences

In addition to providing training, the ABLE TO RISE project has allowed us to carry out a study on the perceptions that teachers and specialists have of the diversity care practices carried out in their centers. In total, the ABLE TO RISE project has reached More than 150 professionals and these have been some of their experiences:

"Sometimes computers, tablets and other electronic devices, with necessary adaptations of both hardware and software, have been the only way to guarantee access to education for very affected students. In general, they facilitate the individualization of learning"  
**(Primary Education teacher with more than 15 years of experience)**

"Technology allows teachers to present information in different ways so that each student learns according to their learning style. It also facilitates teacher training and brings together different ways of working on the same content"  
**(Therapeutic Pedagogy Teacher, 10 years of experience)**

"Technology facilitates learning since it adapts to the needs of the entire class and allows individualized work"  
**(Therapeutic Pedagogy Teacher with more than 15 years of experience)**

"It facilitates communication between equal counselors. Using technological tools "like others" increases the self-esteem of students with special needs."  
**(TEA Classroom Teacher with more than 10 years of experience)**

"Technology helps us get closer to the student and make learning more motivating"  
**(Secondary Teacher with more than 15 years of experience).**

Technology helps to increase expressive language, autonomy, to communicate with peers and adults and be understood, to be able to express oneself and to reduce frustration levels  
**(Counselor, 5 years of experience)**

"It allows content to be presented from different approaches, it allows adaptation to different learning rates and continuous access to them"  
**(SD, Secondary School Teacher, 7 years of experience)**



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