**What can you do to facilitate students with a disability to go abroad?**

IWA Recommendations for HEI Staff

* **Be Understanding:** Family influence impacts people with disabilities’ perception of Erasmus, and many young people who engage with the IWA are of the belief that Erasmus is simply not an option for them. This is often because parents and family members do not consider this as an option, therefore the child is influenced and adopts the same mind-set.
* **Be Mental Health Aware**: Prior to travel, it is important that each student undertakes mental health screening with you to assess if student:

a) wants to participate

b) is ready to participate

c) has reasonable expectations of what lies ahead on their Erasmus Trip.

* **Be Prepared:** Take the time to create a realistic contingency plan with the student. Consider all potential risks so that in cases of emergency or if they cannot complete the period abroad due to disruption from medical problems, the student knows there are options and does not feel like a failure. Students may not be aware that if they cannot complete the year abroad, students may not have an option to slot back into their home institution’s academic year. Similarly, students cannot afford to waste a whole year out, as they may not be working and will have delayed their graduation for another year. If college staff are aware of these potential issues, they can also prepare. Advance planning for ‘worst case scenario’ empowers both students and staff to take control and helps reduce fears or disappointments for them.
* **Be disability aware:** Be aware of each student’s needs – academically and from a physical/mental perspective. Students are usually well aware of their own needs and can articulate them well. So just ask them! International offices in colleges are encouraged to audit their Erasmus practices in terms of disability. This involves altering the staff mind-set, information, equipment, perception, future planning. Are we prepared to facilitate a student with a disability going abroad now? If not, why not? Have a brainstorm with your colleagues on what you can do to be more inclusive!

**Our Recommendations:**

* A fully funded advance planning visit (APV) is extremely helpful for a student who is planning to undertake an Erasmus mobility period plus the accompanying person of their choice, who will travel with them. This visit is important for understanding their new environment, gauging potential challenges as early as possible and acclimatizing quickly when they do begin their Erasmus experience.
* Introduce an International Office 24/7 Mobile Helpline for Students. The staff could work on a rota to share the responsibility. The helpline would support students who require urgent medical or safety issues during their Erasmus experience. This helpline would be aimed at supporting those with a life-long medical condition or with a particular vulnerability especially.