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IDENTIFYING THE GAPS IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

The EU-funded project [INCLAVI](#) (INCLusive AVIation), develops an accredited online learning platform, targeting staff in airlines and in the aviation industry in general, to train them to better serve Persons with Disabilities (PwD) and accessibility requirements. INCLAVI drives change in air transport accessibility through respect, dignity, and inclusivity.

As a first step for this design, during 2023, the consortium has conducted extensive research including secondary and primary data, to get knowledge of the current state of stakeholder insights and develop policy recommendations.

The research focused on existing barriers that PwD face as part of their passenger journey, and an overview of content and approach of existing PwD trainings in the industry and educational institutes.

The process

Through 130 expert interviews, two online surveys with staff and students from educational institutes, and an extensive literature and desk research, the consortium has identified key challenges and come up with a proposed structure of a curriculum that will be taken further in the project. The curriculum can build upon existing and well-developed training frameworks, such as the one proposed by ECAC (European Civil Aviation Conference), which has drafted and recommended guidelines for training of airline and aviation staff in PwD related support. However, these trainings can be complemented and extended in some areas of interest.

The research also identifies an initial set of 18 occupations that could be targeted with the project. These cover key staff areas that interact with PwD during their passenger journey.

It has also become clear that, even though staff receive initial and refresher trainings on PwD, training curricula, content and materials, the way of delivering may not be appropriate. Staff has limited time for training and current trainings are usually 'squeezed' in between other activities.

The INCLAVI platform should therefore focus on developing innovative and inspiring methods of delivery and pedagogies, while adapting existing content as developed by specialized private training suppliers. Trainings would be modular, flexible, and will not follow a standardized approach, so that staff can learn based on their specific requirements and industry dynamics.

“Across recommendations, while we were conducting interviews, a common theme emerges, and it is the necessity of practical, inclusive, and regularly updated training, utilizing various delivery modes, engaging real-world scenarios, and involving stakeholders, including PwD, to ensure a holistic and adaptable learning experience”, **Jos van der Sterren**, Program Lead Research and Graduate School at BUAS.

The objective of the online learning platform is to bridge gaps, enhance empathy, and address emergent challenges in the aviation industry's provision of services to PwD.

Consortium Members attended WOCE'23



Consortium members during WoCE'23

INCLAVI Consortium Members attended IATA's Wings of Change Europe 2023, the region's flagship aeropolitical event, kindly hosted by KLM Royal Dutch Airlines in Amsterdam.

Key European aviation issues made up the agenda, including inclusive aviation in a dedicated session with representatives from our consortium in which **INCLAVI was prominently featured**, addressing travelers' perception, as well as rising compliance challenges for airlines.

"Aviation plays a vital role in global society, as it encourages tourism enhancement by connecting cultures, businesses, and families. This connectivity is important for everyone, including individuals with disabilities who often require special assistance to travel. As the world's population continues to age, the demand for accessible travel and tourism services is set to increase as well. Providing fully accessible air travel is a complex and cost-intensive task due to a wide variety of passenger needs and a regulatory landscape that varies significantly across geographies. Working in collaboration with stakeholders and bringing state regulators in this chain is important with innovation, training, and universal design as a game changer. Collaborating with educational institutions and spreading good practices targeting the wellbeing of travelers is another key topic that IATA and INCLAVI members are looking at very closely", **Linda Ristagno**, Assistant Director External Affairs, IATA.

During the discussion, the speakers demonstrated the steps aviation stakeholders take to advance accessibility far beyond what legislation may require and called for action to disseminate best practices.



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“It is critical that all stakeholders champion inclusive aviation and begin or continue the journey to deliver equitable experiences for their customers of all ages and different types of disabilities. The accessibility solutions to remove the barriers in aviation must be implemented to ensure ‘no person is left behind’ and that travel experiences for all are possible and equitable”, Paudie Healy, CEO, Universal Access.



Consortium Members during a panel at Wings of Change Europe (Amsterdam), November 2023

Later, during the event, INCLAVI representatives were able to actively network and bring the project's importance to the attention of many delegates.

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[Our Consortium Members attended WoCE'23](#)

[INCLAVI will attend WoCE'23](#)

[INCLAVI at eMobility Expo Congress](#)



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[Project team met to discuss development](#)

[International INCLAVI aims to tackle the challenges in the aviation industry by improving the travel experiences of people with disabilities and reduced mobility](#)

[INCLAVI kick-off at iGA Istanbul Airport in Turkey](#)

[International inclusive aviation project INCLAVI kicked off last Friday](#)