



Objectives of the Country Context Analysis

Context situation on country level:

→ State of the art regarding informal learning spaces and inclusion in the NIILS partner countries (AT, GER, IT, LIT, TUR)

Context situation on institutional level, stakeholder perspective on:

→ Overview on existing informal learning spaces at partner universities (spatial characteristics, equipment, availability, accessibility, usage, etc.)

→ Awareness, perception and existing strategies at partner universities to promote inclusive and supportive informal learning environments

Partner universities

	Founding year	# Faculties	# Study programs	Fields of study	# Students	# Staff members
Akdeniz University (Antalya, Türkiye; AKD)	1982	24	171	Health science, Social science, Fine arts, Education, Engineering, Business Administration, Architecture ...	~ 67.000	7072 (2687 academic staff)
Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin (Germany; HTWB)	1994	5	75	Business, Engineering, Computer science, Design and Culture	~ 14.000	~ 900
Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius, Lithuania; MRU)	1990	4	21	Law, Public Security, Human and Social Studies, Public Governance and Business	~ 7.500	~ 400 (academic staff)
Sapienza University (Rome, Italy; SAP)	1303	11	>500	Architecture, Economics, Pharmacy and Medicine, Law, Civil and Industrial Engineering, Information Technology, Humanities and Philosophy, ...	> 100.000	~ 10.500
University for Continuing Education Krems (Austria; UWK)	1995	3	200	Business and Globalisation, Health and Medicine, Education, Arts and Architecture	~ 8.000	~ 720

Research Methodologies

Desk search – key word list & snowballing approach, to identify

- Key Stakeholders regarding provision, management and design of learning spaces in higher education promoting and supporting inclusivity
- Projects and good practice examples
- Tools, guidance materials, scientific publications dealing with informal, inclusive learning spaces

Focus group interviews / qualitative search design

Key Stakeholders from → University management & administration
→ Student and lecturer representatives
→ Experts involved in campus management planning, construction (Total sample size of 39 stakeholders)

Data collection → Semi-structured interviews (guided along interview guidelines)

Data analysis → Transcribed and analysed audio recordings (results provided by each partner, meta-analysis to synthesize the results, MAXQDA used for data analysis)

Derived topics → Types of informal learning spaces (ILS)
→ Characteristics of ILS
→ Usability of ILS
→ Awareness and Strategies to promote ILS

Stakeholders	f
Facility and Construction Management	9
Library / Information Services	8
Faculty Administration	4
Digital and Online Learning Centres/Units	3
Student Union/Representative	3
Rectorate/University Management	2
Student Services	2
Department Administration	1
Lecturer Service Center	1
Diversity / Inclusion Office-Service	1
International Relations Office	1
Dormitory Management	1
Health and Sports Directorate	1
School and Sports Facility Construction (ext.)	1
Federal Real Estate Company (ext.)	1
Total	39



Findings

65 various informal learning spaces were identified by stakeholders at five universities



Informal Learning Spaces	f
Indoor/Outdoor	
Indoor	44
Outdoor	18
Both	3
Suitable for focused / collaborative learning activities	
Focused	13
Collaborative	21
Both	31
Types of ILS	
Outdoor spaces (seating groups, parks)	18
Library	8
Lecture halls, seminar rooms	4
Cafes and restaurants	4
University canteens and cafes	6
Foyers, hallways	7
Social areas, lounges	8
Study areas, study rooms	7
Off-campus ILS	3
Total	65

Characteristics of identified Informal Learning Spaces (ILSs)

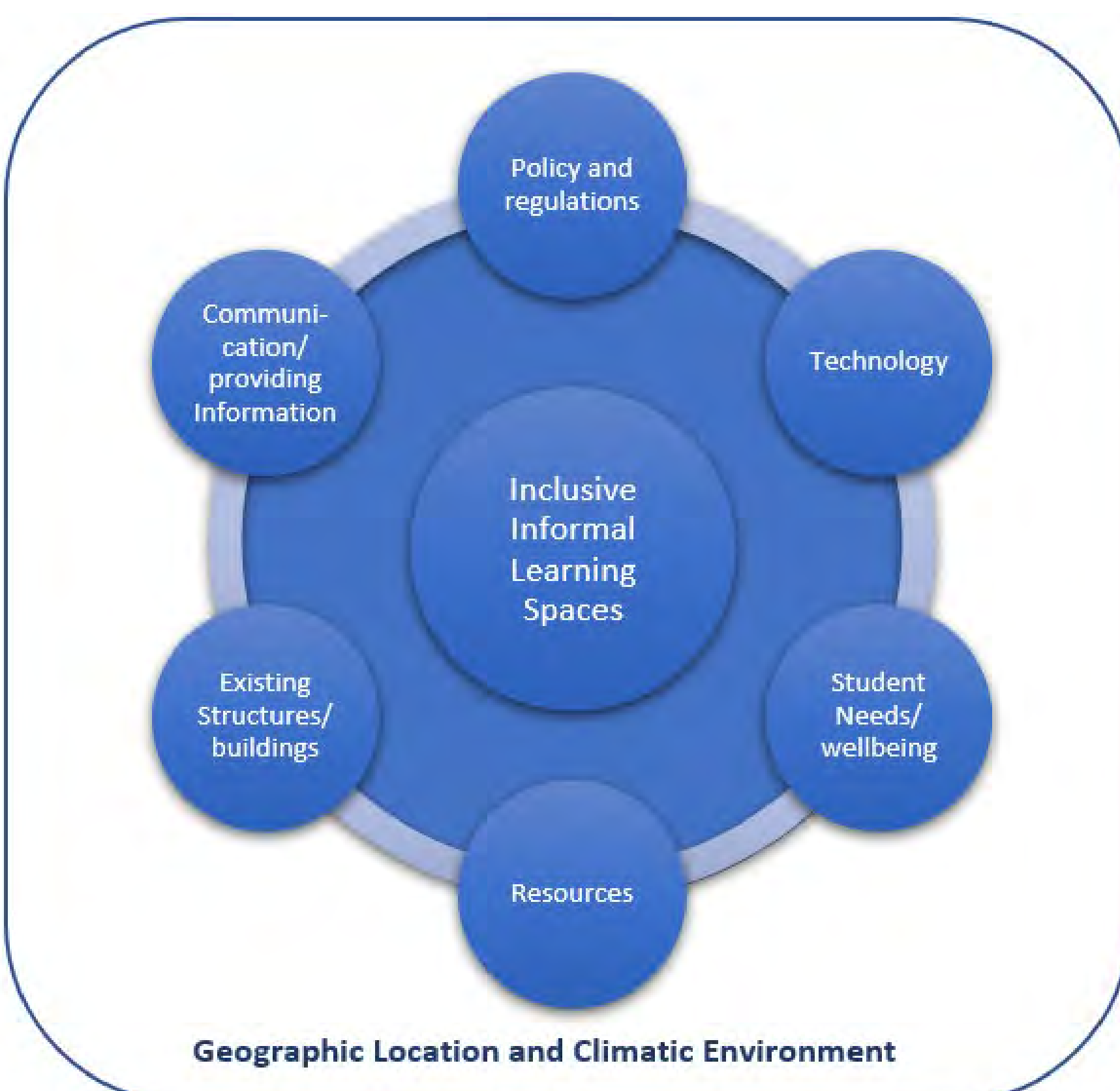
- Indoor environmental quality** (acoustics, lightening, air quality, thermal comfort)
 - Universities face challenges in managing noise levels, lighting control, comfortable temperatures, ...
- Equipment & furnishing**
 - Varying technical equipment (e.g. WiFi availability, electric plugs)
 - Furniture often not comfortable, ergonomic, or flexible enough
 - Lack of privacy, acoustic & visual protection impact focused learning activities
- Basic needs** (hygiene, water & food, proximity to sanitary facilities)
 - Generally met in all ILSs
 - Hygiene can be a challenge in times of high usage
- Design and attractiveness**
 - Most stakeholders recognized need for better planning and design of ILSs to ensure conduciveness to learning, well-being and inclusion
 - Some universities actively work on improving access and conditions in ILSs

Categories for the classification of the usability of Informal Learning Spaces

- Inclusivity**
 - Awareness for the of needs of students with fewer opportunities
 - Focus on physical impairments, international students, students with childcare responsibilities
- Accessibility**
 - Physical accessibility & barrier-free access
 - Administrative accessibility e.g. long opening hours (esp. in libraries)
- Availability & capacity**
 - Varying situation e.g. challenges during peak times (exam periods)
- Structure of the space**
 - Flexibility in furniture and space design

Stakeholders' awareness, strategies and future expectations regarding Informal Learning Spaces

- High level of awareness regarding importance but limited strategies to enhance ILSs
- No concrete plans or strategies for making ILSs more inclusive
- Focus of awareness is primarily on (physical) accessibility rather than on well-being
- Digitalization will shape didactics and learning space management
- ILSs are expected to grow in importance, especially for flexible and collaborative learning activities



The NIILS-Framework

Six factors were identified for designing, building, and managing Inclusive Informal Learning Spaces in higher education:

- Policy and regulations
- Existing structures and buildings
- Resources
- Technology
- Learners' needs and well-being
- Communication & providing information

These factors interact with each other and are shaped by framework conditions defined e.g. by geographic location and climatic environment.

