



Guidance Material Booklet

Recommendations and guidelines to promote inclusive and supportive informal learning spaces

Institution: Akdeniz University

Country: Türkiye

Author: Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız



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1 Introduction

Within the NIILS Project:

NIILS - New Approaches for Inclusive Informal Learning Spaces - University for Continuing Education Krems (donau-uni.ac.at)

1. Focus groups were conducted with stakeholders, lecturers and students to learn more about ILSs at our universities.
2. Student survey was conducted to investigate the relationship between ILSs and various student factors.
3. An online platform providing information and photos about ILSs at our universities was developed.
4. Walking interviews were conducted to develop and receive feedback about the online platform.
5. Workshops were organized to start learning communities about ILSs.

The NIILS Guidance Material produced by Akdeniz University (Antalya, Türkiye; AKD), provides a synthesis of the previous reports of the NIILS project. Individual universities worked on each work package and prepared reports and documents separately. Later the leading university of each package prepared a comprehensive report for each project result.

- University for Continuing Education Krems (Krems, Austria; UWK) prepared Comparative Report: Availability and Infrastructure of Informal Learning Space.
- Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft (Berlin, Germany; HTW), prepared Users' Perspective Analysis Report: Usage, Perception, and Impact of Informal Learning Spaces.
- Sapienza University of Rome (Rome, Italy; SAP) prepared Mapping Platform Report: Design, Development, and Analysis.
- Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius, Lithuania; MRU) prepared Learning Communities' Co-creation Framework.

At the last work package of the NIILS project Akdeniz University synthesized the overall knowledge and experience that were collected from the previous activities and project results from a meta perspective and prepared guidance materials to promote inclusive and supportive informal learning spaces (ILSs) using technology and collaboration of different target groups in higher education in Europe.

In order to ensure transferability, we hope that these recommendations will help to concretize our understanding of the significance, applications, and features of inclusive ILSs, with particular attention to spatial, geographical, and cultural differences as well as the requirements of various user groups.

2 Methodology

2.1 Target group

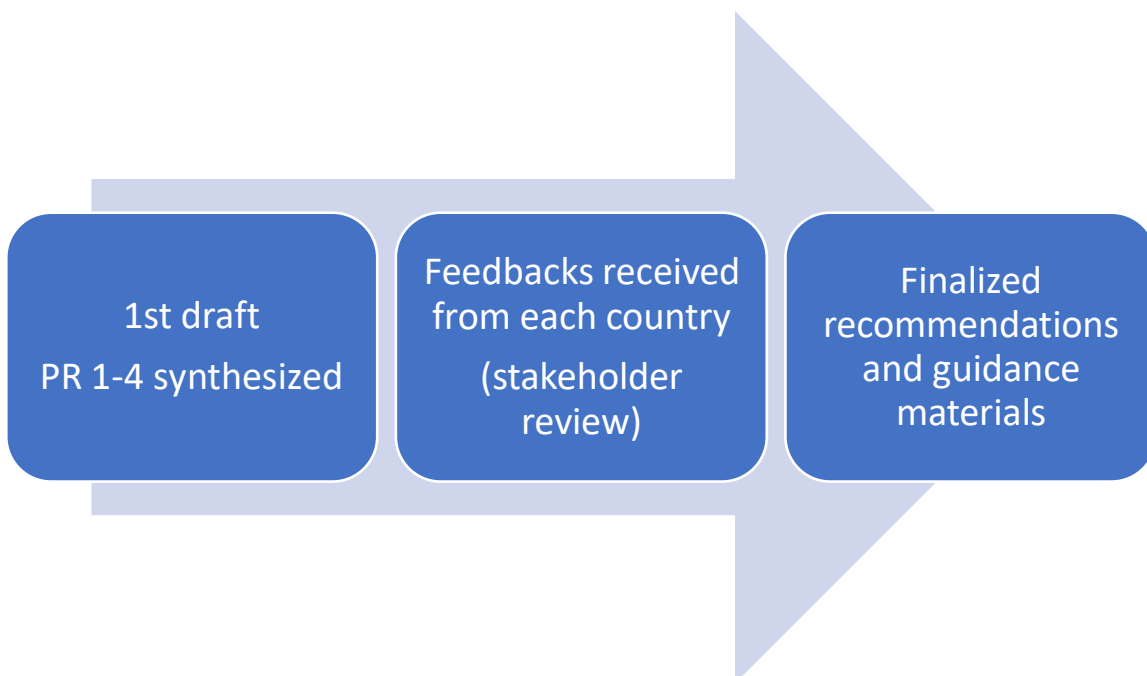
The last stage of the project is the development of recommendations and guidance material for all stakeholders. The target group of the guidance materials are;

- (1) executives and decision makers (*Government Institutions, Council of Higher Education, University Rectorates, Sponsors, Investors, ERASMUS+ initiatives etc.*)
- (2) enablers and practitioners (*Facility management, IT staff, architects, student administration staff etc.*)
- (3) lecturers
- (4) students

These target groups are either responsible for the planning and management of ILSs on and off campus, or they use ILSs for teaching and learning. Therefore, recommendations on raising awareness, taking action and increasing communication and networking for inclusive ILSs have been prepared for these groups.

2.2 Procedure of guidance material development

The development of the guidance materials took place in three phases: The first draft had been developed using the input from PRs 1-4 (users' perspective, mapping platform, existing practices and stakeholder views, and learning communities). The first draft was then shared with key stakeholders through multiplier events in each country, and they provided feedback on the guidance material (Stakeholder-Review). Finally, the recommendations and guidance material were finalized after taking into account their input.



As the multiplier events were organized at different times in each partner university, stakeholders provided feedback on different versions of the guidance materials. In this way, feedback was received at each stage in the development process of guidance materials. Four universities allocated time for feedback within the multiplier event and organized workshops. Akdeniz University organized separate workshops for each target group (4 groups) after the multiplier event. The participants of the workshops provided feedback on the final draft of the guidance materials.

2.3 Type of the guidance materials

According to the project's objective, which is to use technology and collaboration amongst various target groups in higher education in Europe to promote inclusive and supportive ILSs. It was deemed appropriate to design guidance materials both for printing and for online dissemination with the aim of being inclusive and reaching out students and teachers who are facing barriers in using digital technologies and tools.

The following guidance materials have been prepared for this purpose:

- 1 booklet addressing all stakeholders (the booklet you are currently reading)
- 2 posters addressing all stakeholders
- 1 brochure prepared for executives and decision makers
- 1 brochure prepared for enablers and practitioners
- 1 brochure for lecturers
- 1 brochure for students
- 1 brochure addressing all stakeholders and containing the project information and its key findings

The presentation of the recommendations and guidance material on the project website will be implemented in a way that users and stakeholders can comment on them, share their experiences and add ideas and best practices.

3 Literature review on informal learning spaces in higher education institutions

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of informal learning spaces within higher education institutions. Unlike traditional classrooms and lecture halls, ILSs provide students with environments for self-directed and collaborative learning outside of formal teaching sessions. This literature review aims to explore the significance of ILSs in promoting student engagement, academic success, and overall well-being within higher education institutions, with a particular focus on inclusivity.

3.1 What is an informal learning space (ILS)?

A learning space is any location where learning occurs (Smith & Johnson, 2020). ILSs are defined as areas where students can freely choose to engage in self-organized, uninstructed learning outside of scheduled teaching sessions (Brown, 2015; Ninnemann & Jahnke, 2018; Tinto, 2017). In this context, the focus is on higher education institutions, emphasizing spaces on campus or within their spatial infrastructure. Examples include student lounges,

interim spaces such as stairwells, hallways, niches, and auditorium vestibules, university libraries, working areas, canteens, cafeterias, seminar rooms, lecture halls, and outdoor places on campus (Leijon et al., 2022; Ninneman et al., 2020; Schneidt, 2022; Wu et al., 2021).

Inclusive ILSs are designed to be accessible and available to all students, aiming to integrate and empower students with fewer opportunities (SWFO) to reduce inequalities on campus (Salto-Youth Inclusion Resource Centre, 2014). SWFO are students who face additional challenges in their studies due to diverse factors that place them at a severe disadvantage (Radcliffe, 2009). These exclusion factors include disabilities, health problems, educational difficulties, cultural differences, geographic barriers, and economic and social obstacles (Earthman, 2002; Matthews et al., 2011; Rashid & Zimring, 2008).

3.2 Why are ILSs important for higher education institutions?

Learning spaces have evolved significantly in recent years due to the pandemic and the increasing digitalization of education (Johnson et al., 2020). Nowadays, most higher education institutions around the world offer face-to-face, hybrid, and online education formats (European Commission, 2018). Consequently, any location with internet access has the potential to become a learning space for students. Despite this shift, it is evident that many universities do not give adequate attention to ILSs beyond traditional lecture halls and seminar rooms.

Space is a critical variable that interacts with other variables impacting students' learning behaviors and outcomes (Ellis & Goodyear, 2016). ILSs provide environments where students can interact, network, and support one another. These spaces enhance students' commitment, satisfaction, academic success, and overall well-being (Matthews et al., 2011; Kuh, 2008). Social integration within ILSs leads to the formation of relationships and the development of shared attitudes and values, which are vital for personal development (Thomas, 2012). Furthermore, social integration decreases dropout rates and increases student commitment and satisfaction (Berger & Milem, 1999).

Higher Education Institutions should prioritize creating new ILSs and improving the conditions of existing ones, while also developing comprehensive strategies to promote ILSs across the campus (Ellis & Goodyear, 2016). It should also be noted that the criteria for the allocation and utilization of learning spaces are related to the availability and accessibility of the space as well as the quality of the equipment used in the space (Johnson et al., 2020). The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) also plays a role here, as it recognizes the importance of both formal and informal learning in providing a comprehensive education framework (UNESCO, 2019).

3.3 Evolution of learning spaces

Traditionally, learning spaces in higher education institutions were confined to formal classrooms and lecture halls. However, with advancements in technology and changes in pedagogical approaches, the concept of learning spaces has evolved significantly (Astin, 1993). ILSs now encompass a wide range of physical and virtual environments, including student lounges, libraries, outdoor areas, and online platforms (Oblinger, 2006). These

spaces offer students opportunities for flexible learning, social interaction, and knowledge creation beyond the constraints of traditional teaching settings (Brown & Lippincott, 2003).

3.4 Importance of inclusive informal learning spaces

ILSs play a crucial role in fostering student-centered learning experiences and promoting active engagement in the learning process (Brown, 2015). Research has shown that inclusive ILSs contribute significantly to the academic success and well-being of all students, including those from marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds (Tinto, 2017). However, it is important to note that Students with fewer opportunities (SWFO) often report significantly lower availability and accessibility of ILSs, social integration, and well-being compared to students without fewer opportunities (Smith & Johnson, 2020).

Furthermore, inclusive ILSs have been found to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among peers, leading to enhanced social and cognitive development. Students from diverse backgrounds benefit from these interactions, as they provide opportunities for exposure to different perspectives and experiences (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Additionally, ILSs provide environments that support the physical, emotional, and social well-being of students, fostering a sense of belonging and community within Higher Education Institutions (Harper & Quaye, 2009). This sense of belonging is essential for student retention and persistence in higher education (Strayhorn, 2012), as it enhances students' motivation, satisfaction, and overall academic success (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

3.5 Challenges and opportunities

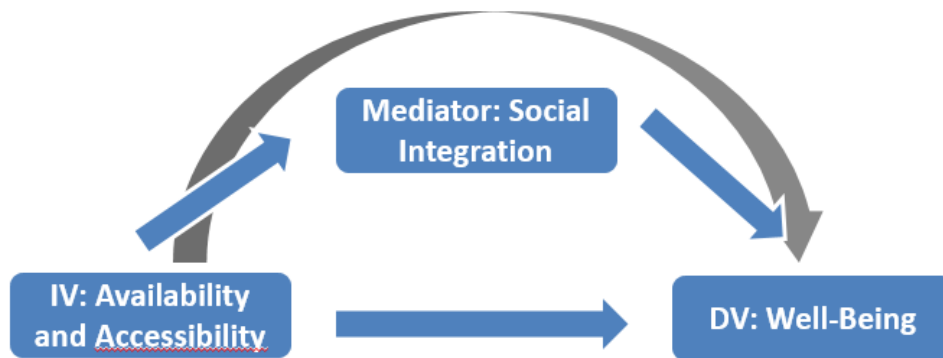
While ILSs offer numerous benefits, they also present challenges for higher education institutions. One of the primary challenges is ensuring equitable access to ILSs for all students, particularly those with disabilities or other accessibility needs (Jamieson, 2009). Additionally, designing inclusive ILSs requires careful consideration of factors such as space utilization, technological infrastructure, and ergonomic design. However, these challenges also present opportunities for higher education institutions to innovate and create inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of their student populations.

3.6 Summary of the literature review

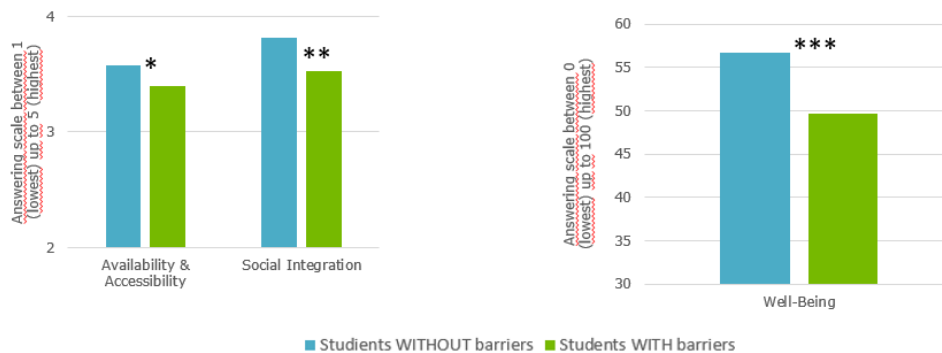
In conclusion, inclusive ILSs represent dynamic and multifaceted environments that are integral to the modern higher education landscape. By providing students with opportunities for flexible, collaborative, and self-directed learning, inclusive ILSs contribute to the holistic development of learners and enhance the overall quality of education within higher education institutions. This literature review aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding inclusive ILSs and inform evidence-based practices for their design, implementation, and evaluation within higher education institutions.

4 Key results of NIILS student survey

Results from NIILS student survey revealed the importance of ILSs. The findings from the NIILS online survey, in which a total of 1037 students from five partner universities participated, showed that:



- **Availability and Social Integration:** Increased availability and accessibility of informal learning spaces (ILSs) correlate with higher social integration among students.
- **Social Integration and Well-being:** Higher social integration is linked to improved student well-being.
- **Availability and Well-being:** Greater availability and accessibility of ILSs are associated with enhanced student well-being.



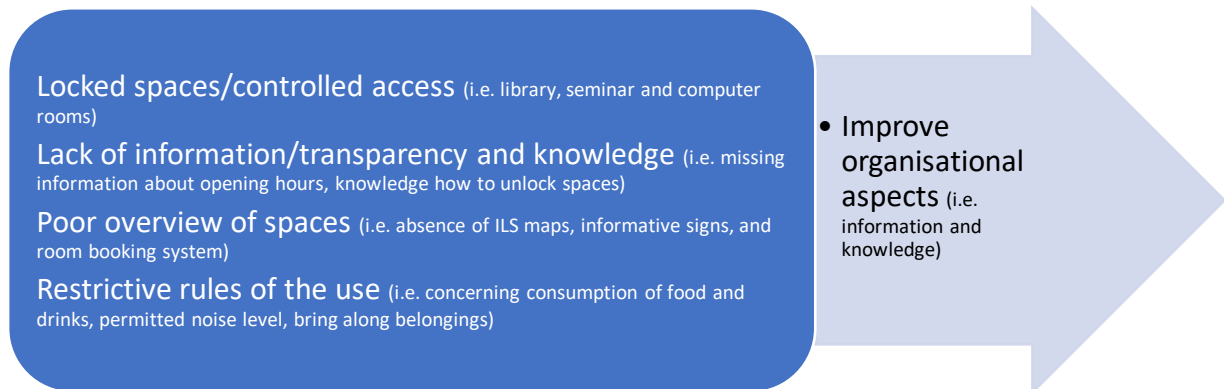
* d = 0,21
** d = 0,33
*** d = 0,31

- **Disparities for SWFO:** Students with fewer opportunities (SWFO) report significantly lower availability and accessibility of ILSs, social integration, and well-being compared to students without fewer opportunities.

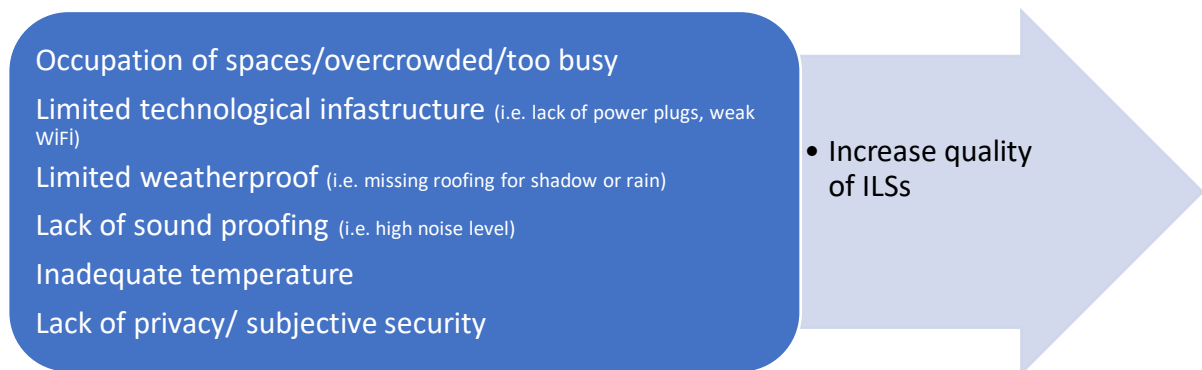
5 Barriers regarding accessibility and availability of ILSs and suggestions to overcome barriers

The barriers regarding accessibility and availability of ILSs and suggestions to overcome these barriers that were shared below are based on the results of the student and lecturer focus group interviews conducted at all participating partner universities.

5.1 Barriers regarding accessibility of ILSs and suggestions to overcome barriers



5.2 Barriers regarding availability of ILSs and suggestions to overcome barriers



6 The NIILS mapping platform

<https://www.niilsmappingplatform.eu/>

The NIILS platform is a searchable directory listing the features of some of the ILSs on the campuses of partner universities. NIILS platform have the following information about ILSs on the campuses of partner universities:

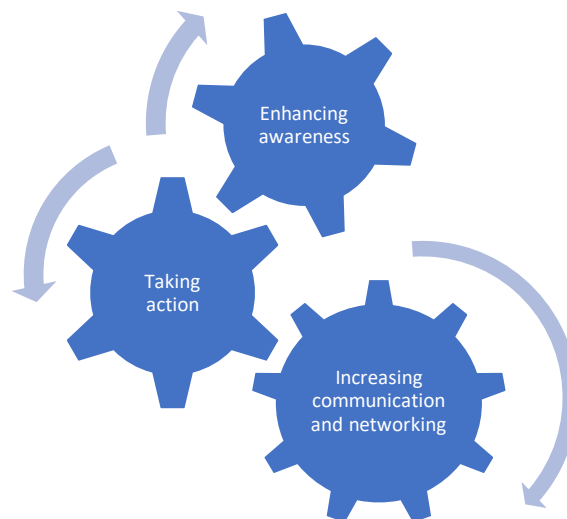
Accessibility info about ILS	Features of ILS	Suggest an ILS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of the ILS • Operating hours of ILS • Accesibility of ILS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage (suitable for focused &or collaborative learning) • Availability of WIFI • Availability of catering facilities • Availability of restrooms • Furniture features • Building climatic • Weather proof • Photos of the ILS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NIILS platform also allows users to suggest new ILSs on campus that can be added to the platform.

Below you may find our suggestions related to NIILS platform.

- Advertise NIILS mapping platform.
- Encourage active use of the NIILS platform by integrating it into the university web page or student system.
- Develop the NIILS platform to cover all ILSs in the university.

7 Recommendations

The information from the focus groups (students, instructors, and stakeholders), the student survey, the walking interviews with students and instructors, and the workshops for the learning communities is the foundation for the recommendations that are provided here. The recommendations to each target group were grouped under three main themes: enhancing awareness, taking action, and increasing communication and networking.



7.1 Recommendations to executives and decision makers

ILSs are very important for students and higher education institutions. Some changes may not require large budget. Effective decisions of executives and decision makers can make a big difference for students. As executives and decision makers you can take the following actions to make better use of the ILSs that caters for a more inclusive and healthy learning environment.

The recommendations for executives and decision makers and the recommendations for practitioners and enablers can be considered to substantially overlap. For this reason, the target group who is primarily responsible is included at the end of the recommendations in brackets.

7.1.1 Enhancing awareness

- Conduct orientation sessions, campus tours, and promotional materials to introduce students and staff to ILSs while ensuring that they include information about the accessibility features of ILSs and emphasize their inclusivity for students with diverse needs. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
- Create promotional materials such as posters, brochures, and digital signage to raise awareness. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
- Organize informational sessions and workshops to educate stakeholders about the features and uses of ILSs, emphasizing the importance of creating inclusive environments within ILSs and highlighting strategies for accommodating students with disabilities, cultural differences, and other barriers to participation. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
- Utilize social media platforms, university newsletters, and other communication channels to share success stories and updates about ILS initiatives. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
- Partner with student organizations, campus ambassadors, and other relevant stakeholders to advocate for the importance of ILSs and encourage their use. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)

7.1.2 Taking action

- Establish task forces, working groups, or learning communities dedicated to implementing improvements related to ILSs. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Pilot new initiatives in collaboration with students and staff to test their effectiveness before full implementation. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Allocate resources and funding to support innovative projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing ILSs, with a priority on improving accessibility and inclusivity. This may include initiatives such as installing ramps, elevators, and assistive technologies, as well as providing training for staff on inclusive practices. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Recognize and celebrate individuals and teams who take proactive steps to improve and promote the use of ILSs while demonstrating a commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion within these spaces, acknowledging their efforts to create

welcoming environments for all students. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)

- Encourage faculty and staff to incorporate ILSs into their teaching and research activities, leading by example. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)

7.1.3 Increasing communication and networking

- Foster partnerships with external organizations, industry professionals, and alumni to broaden the reach and impact of ILS initiatives. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Establish robust communication channels and online forums that facilitate ongoing dialogue among students, faculty, administrators, and facility managers regarding the needs, priorities, and importance of inclusivity in ILSs. Encourage the sharing of ideas and best practices for creating accessible and culturally diverse spaces. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers, Enablers and Practitioners)
- Provide professional development opportunities for staff and faculty involved in ILS initiatives. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Create online platforms or forums where stakeholders can share ideas, feedback, and best practices related to ILSs. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
- Host regular networking events or meetups where stakeholders can connect, collaborate, and share insights about ILSs, with a specific focus on promoting diversity and inclusion. These events provide opportunities for stakeholders to collaborate on initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility, representation, and inclusivity within ILSs. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)

7.2 Recommendations for enablers and practitioners

ILSs are very important for students. Some changes may not require large budget and effective decisions of enablers and practitioners can make a big difference for students. As practitioners and enablers you can take the following actions to make better use of the ILS that caters for a more inclusive and healthy learning environment:

The recommendations for practitioners and enablers and the recommendations for executives and decision makers can be considered to substantially overlap. For this reason, the target group who is primarily responsible is included at the end of the recommendations in brackets.

7.2.1 Enhancing awareness

- Conduct orientation sessions, campus tours, and promotional materials to introduce students and staff to ILSs while ensuring that they include information about the accessibility features of ILSs and emphasize their inclusivity for students with diverse needs. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
- Create promotional materials such as posters, brochures, and digital signage to raise awareness. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
- Organize informational sessions and workshops to educate stakeholders about the features and uses of ILSs, emphasizing the importance of creating inclusive environments within ILSs and highlighting strategies for accommodating students

with disabilities, cultural differences, and other barriers to participation. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)

- Utilize social media platforms, university newsletters, and other communication channels to share success stories and updates about ILS initiatives. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
- Partner with student organizations, campus ambassadors, and other relevant stakeholders to advocate for the importance of ILSs and encourage their use. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)

7.2.2 Taking action

- Establish task forces, working groups, or learning communities dedicated to implementing improvements related to ILSs. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Pilot new initiatives in collaboration with students and staff to test their effectiveness before full implementation. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Allocate resources and funding to support innovative projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing ILSs, with a priority on improving accessibility and inclusivity. This may include initiatives such as installing ramps, elevators, and assistive technologies, as well as providing training for staff on inclusive practices. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Recognize and celebrate individuals and teams who take proactive steps to improve and promote the use of ILSs while demonstrating a commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion within these spaces, acknowledging their efforts to create welcoming environments for all students. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Encourage faculty and staff to incorporate ILSs into their teaching and research activities, leading by example. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)

7.2.3 Increasing communication and networking

- Foster partnerships with external organizations, industry professionals, and alumni to broaden the reach and impact of ILS initiatives. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Establish robust communication channels and online forums that facilitate ongoing dialogue among students, faculty, administrators, and facility managers regarding the needs, priorities, and importance of inclusivity in ILSs. Encourage the sharing of ideas and best practices for creating accessible and culturally diverse spaces. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers, Enablers and Practitioners)
- Provide professional development opportunities for staff and faculty involved in ILS initiatives. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers)
- Create online platforms or forums where stakeholders can share ideas, feedback, and best practices related to ILSs. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
- Host regular networking events or meetups where stakeholders can connect, collaborate, and share insights about ILSs, with a specific focus on promoting diversity and inclusion. These events provide opportunities for stakeholders to

collaborate on initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility, representation, and inclusivity within ILSs. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)

7.3 Recommendations to lecturers

As lecturers you can take the following actions to make better use of the ILS that caters for a more inclusive and healthy learning environment:

7.3.1 Enhancing awareness

- Recognize the significance of ILSs and advocate for their implementation within university structures.
- Engage actively in the design, enhancement, and management of ILSs, and promote awareness among peers.
- Familiarize yourself with available ILSs both on and off campus to inform teaching decisions and learning activities.
- Incorporate group work into course planning to foster student interaction and utilization of ILSs.
- Inform and motivate students to explore and utilize various ILSs, especially within group/team projects.
- Recognize diverse student needs and guide them to suitable ILSs.
- Mediate between students and administration to transform existing spaces into ILSs.
- Facilitate the creation of learning communities focused on improving ILSs across the university.
- Ensure that awareness-building efforts include information on the accessibility features of ILSs and emphasize their inclusivity for students with diverse needs.

7.3.2 Taking action

- Implement diverse teaching methods that encourage student engagement and interaction within ILSs, such as problem-based learning or flipped classroom approaches.
- Collaborate with colleagues to share best practices and innovative ideas for integrating ILSs into teaching strategies.
- Organize workshops or training sessions for students to familiarize them with the features and benefits of different ILSs on campus.
- Advocate for the allocation of resources to improve and maintain ILSs, such as updating technology or enhancing accessibility features.
- Actively participate in research projects or case studies focused on the effectiveness of ILSs in enhancing student learning outcomes.
- Encourage the creation of inclusive learning communities within ILSs, where all students feel welcome and valued.
- Collaborate with student organizations or diversity offices to organize events and initiatives that promote inclusivity and celebrate diversity within ILSs.

7.3.3 Increasing communication and networking

- Establish a dedicated online platform or forum where lecturers can share experiences, resources, and recommendations related to ILSs, with a specific focus on promoting inclusivity and diversity within ILSs.

- Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty members to explore new ways of utilizing ILSs across different subject areas.
- Initiate regular meetings or discussions with students, ensuring that their voices are heard and their diverse experiences with ILSs are taken into account to address concerns, suggestions, and promote inclusive learning environments.
- Engage with industry partners or external organizations to explore potential collaborations or sponsorships for enhancing ILSs.
- Attend conferences, seminars, or webinars focused on educational technology and interactive learning environments to stay updated on emerging trends and best practices.

7.4 Recommendations to students

As students, you can take the following actions to make better use of the ILS that caters for a more inclusive and healthy learning environment:

7.4.1 Enhancing awareness

- Actively inform yourself about available ILSs and use them consciously and purposefully for different learning activities and informal exchange.
- Utilize ILSs to benefit from peer learning opportunities.
- Collaborate with users to establish inclusive usage rules and prevent monopolization of spaces.
- Provide feedback to enhance accessibility and quality of ILSs, addressing issues like extended hours and improved booking systems.
- Utilize the NIILS platform to explore available ILSs and suggest additions, contributing to a comprehensive directory.
- Organize student-led workshops or events within ILSs to share knowledge and skills with peers, fostering a culture of collaborative learning and inclusivity among students from diverse backgrounds.

7.4.2 Taking action

- Form study groups or project teams and utilize ILSs for collaborative learning and brainstorming sessions.
- Take initiative in organizing student-led workshops or events within ILSs to share knowledge and skills with peers.
- Volunteer to participate in focus groups or committees aimed at improving the design and functionality of ILSs on campus.
- Establish learning communities on inclusive ILSs.
- Explore opportunities for experiential learning or internships that involve utilizing inclusive ILSs for research or project work.
- Advocate for the establishment of designated quiet zones within ILSs to accommodate different learning preferences and needs.

7.4.3 Increasing communication and networking

- Join learning communities, student clubs, and organizations focused on inclusive ILSs, educational technology, and innovation to connect with like-minded peers and professionals.
- Utilize social media platforms or online forums to share tips, recommendations, and experiences related to utilizing inclusive ILSs for learning and collaboration.
- Attend campus-wide events or seminars where guest speakers discuss topics related to ILSs, interactive learning, and educational technology.
- Participate in surveys or feedback sessions organized by university administration to voice opinions and suggestions regarding inclusive ILSs.
- Collaborate with faculty members or academic advisors to explore research opportunities or projects related to inclusive ILSs and student learning outcomes.

8 Summary of the recommendations

8.1 Recommendations to executives and decision makers

- Recognize the significance of ILSs and advocate for their implementation within university structures.
- Establish task forces and allocate resources to support innovative projects aimed at enhancing inclusive ILSs.
- Foster communication channels and networking opportunities to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing.

8.2 Recommendations to enablers and practitioners

- Conduct orientation sessions, workshops, and promotional activities to raise awareness about inclusive ILSs.
- Implement pilot initiatives and allocate resources to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of ILSs.
- Facilitate networking events and online forums to encourage dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders.

8.3 Recommendations to lecturers

- Incorporate ILSs into teaching strategies and advocate for their use among students.
- Implement diverse teaching methods and collaborate with colleagues to enhance student engagement within ILSs.
- Establish communication channels with students to gather feedback and address concerns related to ILSs.

8.4 Recommendations to students

- Actively utilize ILSs for learning activities and peer interactions.
- Organize student-led workshops and events within ILSs to promote collaborative learning.

- Participate in campus-wide events and online forums to share experiences and provide feedback on ILSs.

9 Conclusion

By utilizing the literature and considering the findings of the NIILS project, it is possible to reach the following conclusions:

- ILSs are places where students interact, establish networks, and support each other (social integration develops).
- Social integration leads to increased student commitment and satisfaction.
- Commitment and satisfaction decrease dropout rates and increase academic success.
- As a result, prioritizing awareness, proactive action, and improving communication and networking are crucial to promote inclusive ILSs and foster a supportive learning environment in higher education institutions.

10 References

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11 Appendices


11.1 Poster 1 for all target groups

INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

+ This action aims to improve your understanding of the importance of Informal Learning Spaces in Higher Education Institutions
 + This platform is a practical guide for you, providing a series of 20+ months informal learning and a wide-ranging project (NIILS) supported by 18 universities from 6 different countries in Europe



Co-funded by the European Union



New Approaches for Inclusive Informal Learning Spaces

Informal learning space (ILS)

A learning space, usually free from other learning activities, where students can learn through the student of their own free will. Informal learning spaces are not designed to provide structured learning activities.

Examples include outdoor learning, student spaces such as libraries, hallways, study and study rooms, or libraries, meeting rooms, eating areas, and more. Activities include games, reading, writing, and student-student activities.


The importance of ILSs for higher education institutions

- ILSs allow students to learn in a more practical way than in a classroom setting
- ILSs increase student engagement and motivation, leading to better academic performance
- ILSs provide a safe space for students to explore their interests and passions
- ILSs provide a space for students to learn from each other and from staff
- ILSs provide a space for students to learn from each other and from staff

Key findings of NIILS project

+ ILSs are not just a luxury, but a necessity for higher education institutions to provide a high-quality learning experience

- ILSs are not just a luxury, but a necessity for higher education institutions to provide a high-quality learning experience
- ILSs are not just a luxury, but a necessity for higher education institutions to provide a high-quality learning experience
- ILSs are not just a luxury, but a necessity for higher education institutions to provide a high-quality learning experience



Barriers regarding accessibility and availability of ILSs and suggestions to overcome barriers

Availability of ILSs

- Lack of space and/or budget
- Lack of staff resources
- Lack of student interest
- Lack of institutional support

→ Increase institutional support

Accessibility of ILSs


- Limited technological infrastructure
- Limited weatherproof
- Lack of sound proofing
- Inadequate temperature
- Lack of privacy/subjective security

→ Increase quality of ILSs

Recommendations about ILSs

Decision makers & Enablers

- **Balance resources**
 - Consider resources (staff, space, budget)
 - Keep communication channels open
 - Engage students in the decision-making process
- **Take action**
 - Create learning spaces in unexpected places
 - Allocate resources to support projects related to learning in ILSs
 - Set up a dedicated committee or group to monitor progress
 - Encourage research and innovation in the design of ILSs
 - Find time for staff development in learning innovation
- **Increase communication and awareness**
 - Host regular networking events in ILSs
 - Organize workshops and seminars in ILSs
 - Encourage staff to use ILSs for their own learning
 - Set up a dedicated committee or group to monitor progress
 - Find time for staff development in learning innovation




Lecturers & Students

- **Balance resources**
 - Engage students in the decision-making process
 - Encourage staff to use ILSs for their own learning
 - Set up a dedicated committee or group to monitor progress
 - Find time for staff development in learning innovation
- **Take action**
 - Create learning spaces in unexpected places
 - Allocate resources to support projects related to learning in ILSs
 - Set up a dedicated committee or group to monitor progress
 - Encourage research and innovation in the design of ILSs
 - Find time for staff development in learning innovation
- **Increase communication and awareness**
 - Host regular networking events in ILSs
 - Organize workshops and seminars in ILSs
 - Encourage staff to use ILSs for their own learning
 - Set up a dedicated committee or group to monitor progress
 - Find time for staff development in learning innovation

NIILS mapping platform

+ It is available at: <https://www.niils.eu>

Accessibility info about ILS	Location of the ILS
Features of ILS	Operating hours of ILS
Support on ILS	Availability of parking facilities
	Availability of restrooms
	Furniture features
	Building details
	Privacy of the ILS
	The NIILS platform also allows users to suggest new ILSs on campus that can be added to the platform.

 NIILS mapping platform

11.2 Poster 2 for all target groups

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES

Akdeniz University
Doç. Dr. Evrim Çetinkaya Yıldız

Executives & decision makers	<p>Enhancing awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct orientation sessions and campus tours to introduce students and staff to informal learning spaces (ILS). (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners) Create promotional materials such as posters, brochures, and digital signage to raise awareness. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners) Organize informational sessions and workshops to educate stakeholders about the features and uses of ILS. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners) Utilize social media platforms, university newsletters, and other communication channels to share success stories and updates about ILS initiatives. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners) Partner with student organizations, campus ambassadors, and other relevant stakeholders to advocate for the importance of ILS and encourage their use. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners) 	<p>Taking action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish task forces, working groups, or learning committees dedicated to implementing improvements related to ILS. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers) Pilot new initiatives in collaboration with students and staff to test their effectiveness before full implementation. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers) Allocate resources and funding to support innovative projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing ILS. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers) Recognize and celebrate individuals and teams who take proactive steps to improve and promote the use of ILS. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers) Encourage faculty and staff to incorporate ILS into their teaching and research activities, leading by example. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners) 	<p>Increasing communication & networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form partnerships with external organizations, industry professionals, and alumni to broaden the reach and impact of ILS initiatives. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers) Establish communication channels for ongoing dialogue between students, faculty, administrators, and faculty managers regarding ILS needs and priorities. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers) Provide professional development opportunities for staff and faculty involved in ILS initiatives. (Primarily responsible: Executives and Decision Makers) Create online platforms or forums where stakeholders can share ideas, feedback, and best practices related to ILS. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners) Host regular networking events or meetups where stakeholders can connect, collaborate, and share insights about ILS. (Primarily responsible: Enablers and Practitioners)
Enablers & practitioners	<p>Enhancing awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize the significance of ILS and advocate for their implementation within university structures. Engage actively in the design, enhancement, and management of ILS, and promote awareness among peers. Familiarize yourself with available ILS both on and off campus to inform teaching decisions and learning activities. Incorporate group work into course planning to foster student interaction and utilization of ILS. Inform and motivate students to explore and utilize various ILS, especially within group/team projects. Recognize diverse student needs and guide them to suitable informal learning spaces. Mediate between students and administration to transform existing spaces into ILS. Facilitate the creation of learning communities focused on improving ILS across the university. 	<p>Taking action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement diverse teaching methods that encourage student engagement and interaction within ILS, such as problem-based learning or flipped classroom approaches. Collaborate with colleagues to share best practices and innovative ideas for integrating ILS into teaching strategies. Organize workshops or training sessions for students to familiarize them with the features and benefits of different ILS on campus. Advocate for the allocation of resources to improve and maintain ILS, such as updating technology or enhancing accessibility features. Actively participate in research projects or case studies focused on the effectiveness of ILS in enhancing student learning outcomes. 	<p>Increasing communication & networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a dedicated online platform or forum where lecturers can share experiences, resources, and recommendations related to ILS. Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty members to explore new ways of utilizing ILS across different subject areas. Initiate regular meetings or discussions with students to gather feedback on their experiences with ILS and address any concerns or suggestions. Engage with industry partners or external organizations to explore potential collaborations or sponsorship for enhancing ILS. Attend conferences, seminars, or webinars focused on educational technology and interactive learning environments to stay updated on emerging trends and best practices.
Lecturers	<p>Enhancing awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively inform yourself about available ILS and use them consciously and purposefully for different learning activities and informal exchange. Utilize ILS to benefit from peer learning opportunities. Collaborate with users to establish inclusive usage rules and prevent monopolization of spaces. Provide feedback to enhance accessibility and quality of ILS, addressing issues like extended hours and improved booking systems. Utilize the NIILS platform to explore available ILS and suggest additions, contributing to a comprehensive directory. 	<p>Taking action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form study groups or project teams and utilize ILS for collaborative learning and brainstorming sessions. Take initiative in organizing student-led workshops or events within ILS to share knowledge and skills with peers. Volunteer to participate in focus groups or committees aimed at improving the design and functionality of ILS on campus. Join learning communities on ILS. Explore opportunities for experiential learning or internships that involve utilizing ILS for research or project work. Advocate for the establishment of designated quiet zones within ILS to accommodate different learning preferences and needs. 	<p>Increasing communication & networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join learning communities, student clubs, and organizations focused on ILS, educational technology, and innovation to connect with like-minded peers and professionals. Utilize social media platforms or online forums to share tips, recommendations, and experiences related to utilizing ILS for learning and collaboration. Attend campus-wide events or seminars where guest speakers discuss topics related to ILS, interactive learning, and educational technology. Participate in surveys or feedback sessions organized by university administration to voice opinions and suggestions regarding ILS. Collaborate with faculty members or academic advisors to explore research opportunities or projects related to ILS and student learning outcomes.
Students	<p>Enhancing awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively inform yourself about available ILS and use them consciously and purposefully for different learning activities and informal exchange. Utilize ILS to benefit from peer learning opportunities. Collaborate with users to establish inclusive usage rules and prevent monopolization of spaces. Provide feedback to enhance accessibility and quality of ILS, addressing issues like extended hours and improved booking systems. Utilize the NIILS platform to explore available ILS and suggest additions, contributing to a comprehensive directory. 	<p>Taking action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form study groups or project teams and utilize ILS for collaborative learning and brainstorming sessions. Take initiative in organizing student-led workshops or events within ILS to share knowledge and skills with peers. Volunteer to participate in focus groups or committees aimed at improving the design and functionality of ILS on campus. Join learning communities on ILS. Explore opportunities for experiential learning or internships that involve utilizing ILS for research or project work. Advocate for the establishment of designated quiet zones within ILS to accommodate different learning preferences and needs. 	<p>Increasing communication & networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join learning communities, student clubs, and organizations focused on ILS, educational technology, and innovation to connect with like-minded peers and professionals. Utilize social media platforms or online forums to share tips, recommendations, and experiences related to utilizing ILS for learning and collaboration. Attend campus-wide events or seminars where guest speakers discuss topics related to ILS, interactive learning, and educational technology. Participate in surveys or feedback sessions organized by university administration to voice opinions and suggestions regarding ILS. Collaborate with faculty members or academic advisors to explore research opportunities or projects related to ILS and student learning outcomes.

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11.3 Brochure for executives and decision makers (page 1)



**INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES
IN HIGHER EDUCATION:**

**GUIDANCE MATERIAL FOR
EXECUTIVES AND
DECISION MAKERS**










This brochure aims to inform you about the importance of informal learning spaces at higher education institutions.

The guidance material you are reading is a result of 30 month international and interdisciplinary project (NIILS) work conducted by 16 researchers from 5 different universities from 5 countries in Europe.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

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Within the NIILS Project:

1. Focus groups were conducted with stakeholders, lecturers and students to learn more about ILSs at our universities.
2. Student survey was conducted to investigate the relationship between ILSs and various student factors (satisfaction with campus, sense of belonging, interpersonal relationships, and well-being).
3. An online platform providing information and photos about ILSs at our universities was developed.
4. Walking interviews were conducted to develop and receive feedback about the online platform.
5. Workshops were organized to start learning communities about ILSs.
6. Guidance materials were prepared to promote inclusive ILSs.



[NIILS web page](#)



What is an Informal Learning Space (ILS)?

A learning space is any location where learning occurs. Informal learning spaces (ILSs) are defined as any areas students can freely choose for self-organized, uninstructed learning outside of scheduled teaching sessions. In this context, we focus on higher education institutions, emphasizing spaces on campus or within their spatial infrastructure. Examples include student lounges, interim spaces such as stairwells, hallways, niches, and auditorium vestibules, university libraries, working areas, canteens, cafeterias, seminar rooms, lecture halls, and outdoor areas on campus.

Why ILS is important for higher education institutions?

- ILSs are places where students interact, establish network and support each other.
- ILSs increase commitment, satisfaction and success in studying as well as health and well-being.
- Social integration leads to the establishing relationships and enhances similar attitudes and values to personal development.
- Social integration also decreases dropout rates and increases commitment and satisfaction of students.

Let's improve **INFORMAL
LEARNING SPACES!**

11.4 Brochure for executives and decision makers (page 2)


Key findings of NIILS project

for more information see NIILS synthesis report

- Availability and Social Integration:** Increased availability and accessibility of informal learning spaces (ILSs) correlate with higher social integration among students.
- Social Integration and Well-being:** Higher social integration is linked to improved student well-being.
- Availability and Well-being:** Greater availability and accessibility of ILSs are associated with enhanced student well-being.
- Disparities for SWFO:** Students with fewer opportunities (SWFO) report significantly lower availability and accessibility of ILSs, social integration, and well-being compared to students without fewer opportunities.

Recommendations

As executives and decision makers you can take the following actions to make better use of the ILS that caters for a more inclusive and healthy learning environment:



- Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships or philanthropic support to supplement institutional funding for ILS initiatives.
- Facilitate the establishment of learning communities on ILS with stakeholders.
- Encourage research and innovation in the design and utilization of inclusive ILSs.
- Recognize and celebrate individuals and teams that take proactive steps to improve and promote the use of inclusive ILSs.

Barriers regarding accessibility and availability of ILSs and suggestions to overcome barriers

Improve organisational aspects (i.e. information and knowledge)	Increase quality of ILSs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locked spaces/controlled access Lack of information/transparency and knowledge (i.e. missing information about opening hours) Poor overview of spaces (i.e. absence of ILS maps, informative signs, and room booking system) Restrictive rules of the use (i.e. concerning consumption of food and drinks, permitted noise level, bring along belongings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupation of spaces/overcrowded/too busy Limited technological infrastructure (i.e. lack of power plugs, weak WIFI) Limited weatherproof (i.e. missing roofing for shadow or rain) Lack of sound proofing (i.e. high noise level) Inadequate temperature Lack of privacy/subjective security

1) Enhancing awareness

- Conduct orientation sessions and campus tours for new students to introduce them to ILSs.
- Create promotional materials such as posters, brochures, and digital signage to raise awareness about ILSs.
- Organize informational sessions and workshops to educate students and staff about the features and uses of ILSs.
- Highlight specific examples of successful implementation of ILSs and their impact on student engagement and learning outcomes.

2) Taking action

- Establish task forces or working groups dedicated to implementing specific improvements or projects related to inclusive ILSs.
- Allocate resources and funding to support innovative projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing ILSs.

3) Increasing communication and networking

- Partner with stakeholders to advocate for the importance of ILSs.
- Establish online platforms or forums where students and staff can share ideas, feedback, and best practices related to inclusive ILSs.
- Host regular networking events where stakeholders can connect, collaborate, and share insights about inclusive ILSs.
- Foster partnerships with external organizations, industry professionals, and alumni to broaden the reach and impact of ILS initiatives.

NIILS mapping platform

is a searchable directory listing the features of some of the ILSs on the campuses of NIILS partner universities.

What is in the NIILS mapping platform?

Accessibility info about ILS	Location of the ILS Operating hours of ILS Accessibility of ILS
Features of ILS	Usage (suitable for focused &/or collaborative learning) Availability of WIFI Availability of catering facilities Availability of restrooms Furniture features Building climatic Photos of the ILS
Suggest an ILS	The NIILS platform also allows users to suggest new ILSs on campus that can be added to the platform

[NIILS mapping platform](#)

11.5 Brochure for enablers and practitioners (page 1)



**INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES
IN HIGHER EDUCATION:**

**GUIDANCE MATERIAL FOR
ENABLERS AND
PRACTITIONERS**



This brochure aims to inform you about the importance of informal learning spaces at higher education institutions.

The guidance material you are reading is a result of 30 month international and interdisciplinary project (NIILS) work conducted by 16 researchers from 5 different universities from 5 countries in Europe.



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the European Union

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Within the NIILS Project:

1. Focus groups were conducted with stakeholders, lecturers and students to learn more about ILSs at our universities.
2. Student survey was conducted to investigate the relationship between ILSs and various student factors (satisfaction with campus, sense of belonging, interpersonal relationships, and well-being).
3. An online platform providing information and photos about ILSs at our universities was developed.
4. Walking interviews were conducted to develop and receive feedback about the online platform.
5. Workshops were organized to start learning communities about ILSs.
6. Guidance materials were prepared to promote inclusive ILSs.



[NIILS web page](#)

What is an Informal Learning Space (ILS)?

A learning space is any location where learning occurs. Informal learning spaces (ILSs) are defined as any areas students can freely choose for self-organized, unstructured learning outside of scheduled teaching sessions. In this context, we focus on higher education institutions, emphasizing spaces on campus or within their spatial infrastructure. Examples include student lounges, interim spaces such as stairwells, hallways, niches, and auditorium vestibules, university libraries, working areas, canteens, cafeterias, seminar rooms, lecture halls, and outdoor areas on campus.

Why ILS is important for higher education institutions?

- ILSs are places where students interact, establish network and support each other.
- ILSs increase commitment, satisfaction and success in studying as well as health and well-being.
- Social integration leads to the establishing relationships and enhances similar attitudes and values to personal development.
- Social integration also decreases dropout rates and increases commitment and satisfaction of students.

**Let's improve INFORMAL
LEARNING SPACES!**



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the European Union

11.6 Brochure for enablers and practitioners (page 2)

Key findings of NIILS project

for more information see NIILS synthesis report

- **Availability and Social Integration:** Increased availability and accessibility of informal learning spaces (ILSs) correlate with higher social integration among students.
- **Social Integration and Well-being:** Higher social integration is linked to improved student well-being.
- **Availability and Well-being:** Greater availability and accessibility of ILSs are associated with enhanced student well-being.
- **Disparities for SWFO:** Students with fewer opportunities (SWFO) report significantly lower availability and accessibility of ILSs, social integration, and well-being compared to students without fewer opportunities.

Barriers regarding accessibility and availability of ILSs and suggestions to overcome barriers

Improve organisational aspects (i.e. information and knowledge)

Locked spaces/controlled access
Lack of information/transparency and knowledge (i.e. missing information about opening hours)
Poor overview of spaces (i.e. absence of ILS maps, informative signs, and room booking system)
Restrictive rules of the use (i.e. concerning consumption of food and drinks, permitted noise level, bring along belongings)

Increase quality of ILSs

Occupation of spaces/overcrowded/too busy
Limited technological infrastructure (i.e. lack of power plugs, weak WiFi)
Limited weatherproof (i.e. missing roofing for shadow or rain)
Lack of sound proofing (i.e. high noise level)
Inadequate temperature
Lack of privacy/ subjective security

Recommendations

As enablers and practitioners you can take the following actions to make better use of the ILS that caters for a more inclusive and healthy learning environment:



1) Enhancing awareness

- Conduct orientation sessions and campus tours for new students to introduce them to ILSs.
- Create promotional materials such as posters, brochures, and digital signage to raise awareness about inclusive ILSs on campus.
- Organize informational sessions and workshops to educate students and staff about the features and uses of ILSs.
- Utilize social media platforms and university webpage to share success stories and updates about ILS initiatives.
- Advertise NIILS mapping platform.

2) Taking action

- Establish task forces, or working groups dedicated to implementing specific improvements or projects related to inclusive ILSs.
- Allocate resources to support innovative projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing inclusive ILSs.

- Encourage faculty and staff to incorporate ILSs into their teaching and research activities.
- Take part in the establishment process of learning communities on ILSs.

3) Increasing communication and networking

- Partner with student organizations and campus ambassadors to advocate for the importance of ILSs and encourage their use.
- Establish communication channels for ongoing dialogue between students, faculty, administration, and facility managers regarding ILS needs and priorities.
- Host regular networking events or meetups where stakeholders can connect, collaborate, and share insights about inclusive ILSs.
- Foster partnerships with external organizations, industry professionals, and alumni to broaden the reach and impact of ILS initiatives.

NIILS mapping platform

is a searchable directory listing the features of some of the ILSs on the campuses of NIILS partner universities.

What is in the NIILS mapping platform?

Accessibility info about ILS	Location of the ILS Operating hours of ILS Accessibility of ILS
Features of ILS	Usage (suitable for focused & collaborative learning) Availability of WiFi Availability of catering facilities Availability of restrooms Furniture features Building climatic Photos of the ILS
Suggest an ILS	The NIILS platform also allows users to suggest new ILSs on campus that can be added to the platform

 [NIILS_mappingplatform](https://niils.mappingplatform.com)

11.7 Brochure for lecturers (page 1)



INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

GUIDANCE MATERIAL FOR LECTURERS



This brochure is prepared to support your teaching activities in relation to informal learning spaces. It aims to inform you about the importance of informal learning spaces at higher education institutions.

The guidance material you are reading is a result of 30 month international and interdisciplinary project (NIILS) work conducted by 16 researchers from 5 different universities from 5 countries in Europe.



Co-funded by the European Union

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Within the NIILS Project:

1. Focus groups were conducted with stakeholders, lecturers and students to learn more about ILSs at our universities.
2. Student survey was conducted to investigate the relationship between ILSs and various student factors (satisfaction with campus, sense of belonging, interpersonal relationships, and well-being).
3. An online platform providing information and photos about ILSs at our universities was developed.
4. Walking interviews were conducted to develop and receive feedback about the online platform.
5. Workshops were organized to start learning communities about ILSs.
6. Guidance materials were prepared to promote inclusive ILSs.



NIILS web page



What is an Informal Learning Space (ILS)?

A learning space is any location where learning occurs. Informal learning spaces (ILSs) are defined as any areas students can freely choose for self-organized, uninstructed learning outside of scheduled teaching sessions. In this context, we focus on higher education institutions, emphasizing spaces on campus or within their spatial infrastructure. Examples include student lounges, interim spaces such as stairwells, hallways, niches, and auditorium vestibules, university libraries, working areas, canteens, cafeterias, seminar rooms, lecture halls, and outdoor areas on campus.

Why ILS is important for higher education institutions?

- ILSs are places where students interact, establish network and support each other.
- ILSs increase commitment, satisfaction and success in studying as well as health and well-being.
- Social integration leads to the establishing relationships and enhances similar attitudes and values to personal development.
- Social integration also decreases dropout rates and increases commitment and satisfaction of students.

Let's improve INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES!



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11.8 Brochure for lecturers (page 2)

Key findings of NIILS project

for more information see NIILS synthesis report

- **Availability and Social Integration:** Increased availability and accessibility of informal learning spaces (ILSs) correlate with higher social integration among students.
- **Social Integration and Well-being:** Higher social integration is linked to improved student well-being.
- **Availability and Well-being:** Greater availability and accessibility of ILSs are associated with enhanced student well-being.
- **Disparities for SWFO:** Students with fewer opportunities (SWFO) report significantly lower availability and accessibility of ILSs, social integration, and well-being compared to students without fewer opportunities.

Barriers regarding accessibility and availability of ILSs and suggestions to overcome barriers

Improve organisational aspects (i.e. information and knowledge)

Locked spaces/controlled access
Lack of information/transparency and knowledge (i.e. missing information about opening hours)
Poor overview of spaces (i.e. absence of ILS maps, informative signs, and room booking system)
Restrictive rules of the use (i.e. concerning consumption of food and drinks, permitted noise level, bring along belongings)

Increase quality of ILSs

Occupation of spaces/overcrowded/too busy
Limited technological infrastructure (i.e. lack of power plugs, weak WiFi)
Limited weather proof (i.e. missing roofing for shadow or rain)
Lack of sound proofing (i.e. high noise level)
Inadequate temperature
Lack of privacy/ subjective security

Recommendations

As lecturers you can take the following actions to make better use of the ILS that caters for a more inclusive and healthy learning environment:



1) Enhancing awareness

- Recognize the significance of ILSs and advocate for their improvement.
- Familiarize yourself with available ILSs both on and off campus to inform teaching decisions.
- Recognize diverse student needs and guide them to suitable ILSs.
- Inform and motivate students to explore and utilize various ILSs.
- Advertise NIILS mapping platform.

2) Taking action

- Engage actively in the design, enhancement, and management of ILSs, and promote awareness among faculty and other stakeholders.
- Implement diverse teaching methods that encourage student engagement and interaction within ILSs, such as problem-based learning or flipped classroom approaches.
- Organize workshops or seminars to show the benefits of ILSs to stakeholders.

- Actively participate in research projects focused on inclusive ILSs.
- Facilitate the establishment of learning communities on ILSs with students and other stakeholders.
- Use NIILS mapping platform and carry out studies for its development.

3) Increasing communication and networking

- Collaborate with colleagues to share best practices and innovative ideas for integrating ILSs into teaching strategies.
- Establish an online platform or forum where lecturers can share experiences, resources, and recommendations related to ILSs.
- Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty members to explore new ways of utilizing ILSs across different subject areas.
- Initiate regular meetings or discussions with students to gather feedback on their experiences with ILSs.

NIILS mapping platform

is a searchable directory listing the features of some of the ILSs on the campuses of NIILS partner universities.

What is in the NIILS mapping platform?

Accessibility Info about ILS	Location of the ILS Operating hours of ILS Accessibility of ILS
Features of ILS	Usage (suitable for focused &or collaborative learning) Availability of WiFi Availability of catering facilities Availability of restrooms Furniture features Building climatic Photos of the ILS
Suggest an ILS	The NIILS platform also allows users to suggest new ILSs on campus that can be added to the platform

[NIILS_mapping.platform](https://niils.mapping.platform)

11.9 Brochure for students (page 1)



INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

GUIDANCE MATERIAL FOR STUDENTS

This brochure is prepared to support your learning activities and well-being in relation to informal learning spaces. It aims to inform you about the importance of informal learning spaces at higher education institutions.

The guidance material you are reading is a result of 30 month international and interdisciplinary project (NIILS) work conducted by 16 researchers from 5 different universities from 5 countries in Europe.



Co-funded by the European Union

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What is an Informal Learning Space (ILS)?

A learning space is any location where learning occurs. Informal learning spaces (ILSs) are defined as any areas students can freely choose for self-organized, uninstructed learning outside of scheduled teaching sessions. In this context, we focus on higher education institutions, emphasizing spaces on campus or within their spatial infrastructure. Examples include student lounges, interim spaces such as stairwells, hallways, niches, and auditorium vestibules, university libraries, working areas, canteens, cafeterias, seminar rooms, lecture halls, and outdoor areas on campus.










Within the NIILS Project:

1. Focus groups were conducted with stakeholders, lecturers and students to learn more about ILSs at our universities.
2. Student survey was conducted to investigate the relationship between ILSs and various student factors (satisfaction with campus, sense of belonging, interpersonal relationships, and well-being).
3. An online platform providing information and photos about ILSs at our universities was developed.
4. Walking interviews were conducted to develop and receive feedback about the online platform.
5. Workshops were organized to start learning communities about ILSs
6. Guidance materials were prepared to promote inclusive ILSs.



[NIILS web page](#)

Why ILS is important for higher education institutions?

- ILSs are places where students interact, establish network and support each other.
- ILSs increase commitment, satisfaction and success in studying as well as health and well-being.
- Social integration leads to the establishing relationships and enhances similar attitudes and values to personal development.
- Social integration also decreases dropout rates and increases commitment and satisfaction of students.

Let's improve INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES!

11.10 Brochure for students (page 2)

Key findings of NIILS project

for more information see NIILS synthesis report

- **Availability and Social Integration:** Increased availability and accessibility of informal learning spaces (ILSs) correlate with higher social integration among students.
- **Social Integration and Well-being:** Higher social integration is linked to improved student well-being.
- **Availability and Well-being:** Greater availability and accessibility of ILSs are associated with enhanced student well-being.
- **Disparities for SWFO:** Students with fewer opportunities (SWFO) report significantly lower availability and accessibility of ILSs, social integration, and well-being compared to students without fewer opportunities.

Recommendations

As students you can take the following actions to make better use of the ILS that caters for a more inclusive and healthy learning environment:



1) Enhancing awareness

- Actively inform yourself about available ILSs and use them for various learning activities.
- Utilize ILSs for peer learning opportunities.
- Collaborate with users to establish inclusive usage rules and prevent space monopolization.
- Provide feedback to enhance accessibility and quality of ILSs.
- Utilize the NIILS platform to explore available ILSs and suggest additions.
- Organize student-led workshops within ILSs to foster collaborative learning.

2) Taking action

- Form study groups or project teams and utilize ILSs for collaborative learning.
- Take initiative in organizing student-led workshops within ILSs.
- Volunteer for focus groups aimed at improving inclusive ILS design and functionality.
- Establish learning communities on inclusive ILSs.
- Explore opportunities for experiential learning utilizing ILSs.
- Advocate for designated quiet zones within ILSs.

3) Increasing communication and networking

- Join learning communities and organizations focused on inclusive ILSs.
- Utilize social media or online forums to share experiences related to utilizing inclusive ILSs.
- Attend campus-wide events discussing topics related to ILSs and educational technology.
- Participate in surveys to voice opinions regarding inclusive ILSs.
- Collaborate with faculty members to explore research opportunities related to inclusive ILSs.

NIILS Mapping platform

The NIILS mapping platform is a searchable directory listing the features of some of the ILSs on the campuses of NIILS partner universities.

[NIILS_mapping_platform](#)

What is inside the NIILS Mapping platform?

Accessibility info about ILS	Location of the ILS Operating hours of ILS Accessibility of ILS
Features of ILS	Usage (suitable for focused &/or collaborative learning) Availability of WIH Availability of catering facilities Availability of restrooms Furniture features Building climatic Photos of the ILS
Suggest an ILS	The NIILS platform also allows users to suggest new ILSs on campus that can be added to the platform

11.11 Key findings brochure (page 1)



**INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES
IN HIGHER EDUCATION:**

KEY FINDINGS



Funding: ERASMUS+ Cooperation partnership
Duration: 01/01/2022 - 30/06/2024

Objectives:

- provide data on informal and non-conventional physical and hybrid learning spaces available for and used by higher education students from different social groups in different European countries and regions.
- develop recommendations and guidelines for learners, lecturers and university administration to mitigate existing inequalities and promote technologically enhanced inclusive informal learning environments in HE.

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Within the NIILS Project:

1. Focus groups were conducted with stakeholders, lecturers and students to learn more about ILSs at our universities.
2. Student survey was conducted to investigate the relationship between ILSs and various student factors (satisfaction with campus, sense of belonging, interpersonal relationships, and well-being).
3. An online platform providing information and photos about ILSs at our universities was developed.
4. Walking interviews were conducted to develop and receive feedback about the online platform.
5. Workshops were organized to start learning communities about ILSs.
6. Guidance materials were prepared to promote inclusive ILSs.



NIILS web page



PROJECT CONSORTIUM:

University for Continuing Education Krems, Austria (Coordination)

Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft, Germany

Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy

Akdeniz University, Türkiye



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LEARNING SPACES!**

11.12 Key findings brochure (page 2)

