

Identifying, Informing and Supporting Socially Disadvantaged University Students – the “Umbrella” Project

Evridiki Zachopoulou, Vasilis Grammatikopoulos, and the *Research academic team of the “Umbrella” project
International Hellenic University, Greece

Abstract

The “Umbrella” project is a modern social support structure, that has been operating at the International Hellenic University during the last three academic years, through the European program «Supporting social care interventions for students» (Operational Programme: Human Resource Development, Education & Lifelong Learning, 2014-2020). “Umbrella’s” main aim is to enhance the percentage of timely completion of studies and to promote the equal representation of students from disadvantaged social groups (low income, special needs, single families, students from immigrant background, or students with severe health problems). Since the beginning of the project (2019) several activities have been put in place to ensure meeting successfully Umbrella’s targets. The current study presents the types of activities that took place to identify, inform and recruit potential student participants to the project who would benefit from the project. The study also presents the activities that took place between student participants a) and students that act as their mentors (i-mentors), and b) with the academic staff that participate in Umbrella. The number of students that so far have utilized the help offered by the Umbrella structure and were supported to successfully continue and finish their studies reached 283 by now. The current study presents the profiles characteristics of these students and their views on the type of support they received through their participation to the Umbrella project, showcasing the important innovation of the «Umbrella» structure, that it is based on both a holistic and a person-centred approach.

Key words: Disadvantage students, European project; Greece; Higher Education; Vulnerable students

*Members of the Research academic team of the “Umbrella” project: G. Mpamnios, K. Goulianas, Ch. Bialas, G. Dimitrelli, M. Vitoulis, Th. Kosmanis, A. Pavludi, E. Taousani, I. Grigoropoulos, I. Ioannidis, I. Nitsos, Ch. Megalonidou, Z. Tziortzioti, A. Gregoriadis, N. Tsigilis, R. Kotsakis, M. Tsitiridou