

June 2024

30th Anniversary of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Inclusion in education



The 30th Anniversary of the Salamanca Statement on Inclusion in education took place last June. Indeed, in 1994 during the World Conference organized by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education and Science of Spain in Salamanca, attendees adopted and widely endorsed the **“Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education”**, which established

the basic principles of inclusion at school and the main policy changes needed to ensure access and accompaniment of all children, in particular those having special educational needs. After the text:

“The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accomodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all (...).”

As stated by UNESCO, **the concept of inclusion has broadened up to cover all levels of education today, including higher education, and the approach of “one-size fits all” has definitely been replaced by the conviction that policy transformations are required to be able to serve diversity.** In spite of the progress accomplished since the Salamanca Statement, **students with special needs still have to face many types of barriers in accessing higher education. At the same time, accompaniment by universities cannot be taken for granted as it entails a whole shift within the institution** involving professors for sure, but also administrative staff, the presence of specialized units or officers, the purchase of specific equipment, training to diversified students’ needs and tools, shifts in perceptions and cultural considerations, and so on.

IFCU has played an instrumental role in accompanying member universities in this field since 2012, when a wide international program covering five regions of the world was launched. **The program entitled “Towards a more inclusive culture and pedagogy”** was led in close collaboration with the Campus Capacitas experts of the Catholic University of Valencia in Spain, namely Prof. Gabriel Martínez Rico and Prof. José Tena Medialdea, with the occasional participation of experts from the Universidade Catolica Portuguesa in Portugal and the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium.

Among the outcomes of the program, we should mention:

- The conduction of a [worldwide survey on inclusion within Catholic higher education institutions](#), in collaboration with CRESGE-Catholic University of Lille in France;
- The organization of [study visits](#) to the Catholic University of Valencia, the Catholic University of Lille in France and the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium.
- The conduction of a series of [on-site training sessions](#), which benefitted from [institutional visits](#) to follow-up the implementation of relevant policies and practices;
- the publication of a [comprehensive guide on designing a plan of inclusion](#) within higher education institutions, which is available on demand (in English and Spanish);
- the production of a [handbook of best practices in the field of inclusion within African and Asian higher education institutions](#), [which may be downloaded here](#);
- the production of a [Policy brief](#) entitled “Inclusive Higher Education: Participation of Disabled Persons in Universities”, [which may be accessed here](#);
- the creation of the **International Observatory Capacitas-IFCU on disability and inclusion within higher education** - Led by the experts from the Campus Capacitas of the Catholic University of Valencia in conjunction with CIRAD-IFCU, the Observatory network is composed of IFCU member institutions from the so-called Iberoamerican community, that is, from Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal.
- The organization of several [online training workshops](#) addressed to Latin American universities that are members of the Observatory.

The activities of the Observatory, which have been somehow slowed down since the COVID pandemic, will be reinvigorated soon with the design of a complete program. Among the activities to be carried out there is the [organization of a presential training event in Central America](#) and several [on-site and online follow-up visits](#) in order to share expertise according to contextual needs.

If your institution is part of IFCU and is located in Iberoamerica, you can be part of the Observatory network for free! Just let us know, it will be a pleasure having you onboard!

Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education:

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427>

Campus Capacitas, Catholic University of Valencia (Spain):

<https://www.ucv.es/campus-capacitas/-que-es-el-campus-capacitas>

Capacitas-IFCU Observatory on disability and inclusion within higher education (only available in Spanish)

<https://www.ucv.es/investigacion/observatorios-ucv/capacitas-fiuc/presentacion>



***Dr. Montserrat Alom, Director of CIRAD
International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU)***