

Diversity and Equality Award

The Aurora Diversity and Equality Award contest was set up in 2017 as a tool to identify and highlight initiatives that enhance Diversity and Equality in higher education institutions. Diversity, Inclusion, and Equality are vital to the core vision and mission of Aurora as a university network. Although it is organised as a contest, the purpose is to acknowledge all valuable initiatives that stimulate diversity, inclusion, and equality. The third Aurora Diversity & Equality Award will be announced and presented as part of the reception of the Amsterdam Aurora Biannual, 28 October 2019, 18.15 – 19.00. Karen van Oudenhoven – Van der Zee, as chair of the Diversity group and the award jury, will give a short introduction on the purpose of the Award and the jurying process. The objective of the award is to identify and exchange good practices and advance the Aurora network's vision of diversity. Our panel of judges has reviewed all projects, and after extensive discussion and deliberation, the following three projects have been shortlisted, one of which will be proclaimed the winner and will receive last year's interchangeable award. In random order, the three projects are:

Support for Access to Audio-visual Media, University of East Anglia

'Support for Access to Audio-visual Media' ('SAAM') is an inclusive and innovative language-learning initiative. SAAM provides practical opportunities for students to use their language(s), whilst engaging with local and global communities. Participation is on a voluntary basis. The key objectives of the project are: fostering creativity in teaching and education and; providing equal access to audio-visual media to a diverse community. The number of volunteers has risen from seven in 2016 to 34 in 2019 as the interest in the project had taken an international dimension, attracting students from the University of Alcalá, Madrid (Spain). Since the inception of the project, SAAM has helped seven organisations on a national and international level by providing translations and subtitles for documents and video clips. These beneficiaries include organisations fighting for the protection of children, marginalized groups, and refugees. The student volunteers benefit greatly from the project. The project helps them develop their communication and translation skills, but also makes them aware of diverse communities and how their work provides equal access to audio-visual media. The students are often paired up with other students who speak the required native language, in order to get the 'tone' of the translation right.

INSERLAB, Rovira i Virgili University

INSERLAB is a transformative program for students with an intellectual disability. The program is coordinated by the Rovira i Virgili University ('URV') Chair for Social Inclusion and the Social Business Research Lab. Additionally, INSERLAB involves 15 organizations external to the URV, 22 lecturers, and various URV services. It is a one-year course (38 credits) focusing on improving the autonomy and the educational level of the intellectually disabled student. Eventually, the program prepares the student for supported employment. In parallel, INSERLAB provides a mentoring program where the students obtain experience in the university community, as well as comprehensive, personalized education. There are several components to the project, such as practical learning, curricular work experience, and an entrepreneurship course, in which the students develop important competencies such as team work and problem solving. The teaching staff is specifically trained to adapt to cognitive diversity and to help the students with their specific needs.

Right2Education, Amsterdam University College

'Right2Education' ('R2E') is a non-governmental organization that offers free Dutch and English courses for people with a refugee background residing in the Netherlands. The organization was founded in 2015 and is fully student-led. At R2E, education does not only happen in a classroom; the organization and its educational strategies have a strong social aspect to them. As R2E aims to provide tools for people to further their own integration, their students are not referred to as refugees, but rather as guest students, as they are guests, studying at the Amsterdam University College ('AUC'). Besides language education through language courses, R2E offers a variety of social activities. Students can become part of the 'Buddy System', where guest students are paired up with local students. These pairs meet up, attend events, and study together. In addition to the Buddy System, R2E also organizes weekly events such as movie nights, museum excursions, and potluck dinners. These social events are integral to the aim of R2E as they provide a place to meet new people, practice language skills, and enable a valuable exchange of knowledge about different cultures, languages, experiences, and values. Students are taught language skills in the classroom that they can apply and practice in real life situations at events and with their buddy, while getting the chance to build new and meaningful relationships and continue higher education in the Netherlands.