

# Support Centre for Students with Special Needs

## Annual Activity Report 2003

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As a public school of tertiary education, MU has a significant obligation to create conditions facilitating study of disabled students. To meet those obligations, a centre for assistance to students with special needs was set up in 2000 as part of the student services department. Activities of the Centre are carried out in cooperation with the Faculty of Informatics MU, which provides rooms and technical equipment for the Centre's operation.

Results of the Centre's work in individual areas are summarized in sections 1 to 3 of this report. On a general level of the organisation, the following principal results have been achieved:

1. The 2002 pilot transformation project of the Ministry of Education helped to extend activities of the Centre from the visual impairment to sensory disabilities generally (and the name of the Centre was changed accordingly).
2. The Centre's comprehensive web ([www.teiresias.muni.cz](http://www.teiresias.muni.cz)) and wap ([wap.sluzba.cz/teiresias](http://wap.sluzba.cz/teiresias)) presentations were completed to serve the needs of the disabled.
3. On the initiative of the Centre, Rector issued a general directive 4/03 on the study of people with special needs, in which the extent of special needs that MU promises to support is clearly defined (upper limits of individual study periods) and the rights to get tutors, instructors, interpreters and technical assistance during study are spelled out.

The Centre's activities in 2004 were financed mainly from specific funds allocated under the transformation and development projects of the Ministry of Education.

### 1. CARE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

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The Centre's main tasks are in the following areas:

- a. methodological and legal: the Centre cooperates with headmasters of secondary schools, attendance offices of faculties and teachers to provide reliable information about prospects and possibilities in individual fields of study, provides technical support to entrance examinations, creates conditions for a proper engagement of students in study programmes, provides students with access to written materials, and oversees the inclusion of special provisions necessary for the visually impaired students into the internal MU regulations;
- b. spatial orientation: the centre instructs students about access routes, provides for the students' accompaniment, and proposes changes to the layout of buildings and the surrounding areas to make them also useable by partially sighted students;
- c. the library and digitization services: the Centre systematically builds digital, tactile and hybrid library of study materials to provide a comprehensive coverage of entire disciplines, provides for haptic publications of digitized study materials, materials for written exams, certificates and official correspondence;
- d. haptic and acoustic information: the Centre provides visually impaired students with the software necessary for study purposes.

## Full-time and combined study of the visually impaired students

Results in brief:

- an increase in the number of full-time visually impaired students at MU from 25 to 38
- 15 obligatory courses were organized as tutorial semester courses (one-to-one seminars)
- increasing the seating capacity of the university study room for the blind from 9 to 12 places (one of which permanently reserved for the visually impaired)
- new access to 570 items of study literature for visually impaired students (70 printed, 590 electronically, 5 audio, 5 hybrid)
- providing escort and assistance for the blind at one educational trip abroad (Salonica)
- providing escort and assistance for the blind at a summer training course for the blind (hiking in mountains, ascent to Mt Olympus)
- presentation of the Centre at 2 international conferences (Rome, Zollikofen)

**Table 1 Structure of the group of students in the care of the Assistance Centre, by study branch**

| Faculty          | branch              | situation at 1. 1. 2003 |         | situation at 1. 1. 2004 |         | expected situation at 1. 1. 2005 |         |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------|-------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|---------|
|                  |                     | branch                  | faculty | branch                  | faculty | branch                           | faculty |
| <b>FoI</b>       | Informatics         | 1                       | 3       | 1                       | 5       | 1                                | 7       |
|                  | Applied informatics | 2                       |         | 4                       |         | 6                                |         |
| <b>SoSS</b>      | Psychology          | 3                       | 3       | 5                       | 5       | 7                                | 7       |
|                  | Social work         | 3                       |         | 5                       |         | 7                                |         |
| <b>FoA</b>       | Czech studies       | 1                       | 6       | 1                       | 8       | 2                                | 13      |
|                  | Classical languages | 1                       |         | 2                       |         | 2                                |         |
|                  | Psychology          | 3                       |         | 4                       |         | 6                                |         |
|                  | History             | 2                       |         | 2                       |         | 2                                |         |
|                  | Russian studies     | 1                       |         | 1                       |         | 1                                |         |
|                  | English studies     | 0                       |         | 1                       |         | 2                                |         |
| <b>FoE</b>       | Special pedagogy    | 7                       | 10      | 10                      | 14      | 10                               | 13      |
|                  | Czech studies       | 1                       |         | 1                       |         | 1                                |         |
|                  | English studies     | 2                       |         | 2                       |         | 2                                |         |
|                  | German studies      | 2                       |         | 2                       |         | 2                                |         |
|                  | Music education     | 0                       |         | 1                       |         | 1                                |         |
|                  | Civics              | 1                       |         | 1                       |         | 1                                |         |
| <b>FoEA</b>      | Corporate economics | 0                       | 0       | 1                       | 1       | 3                                | 3       |
| <b>FoL</b>       | Law                 | 3                       | 3       | 5                       | 5       | 7                                | 7       |
| <b>MU, total</b> |                     | <b>25</b>               |         | <b>38</b>               |         | <b>50</b>                        |         |

## Life-long education for the visually impaired

The Centre also organizes life-long education for visually impaired students as well as public at large. In 2003, the life-long education programmes focused primarily on:

- A. Non-academic programmes designed mainly for people from higher age brackets and aimed at improving their chances in their career social roles, with a specific emphasis on
  1. Information technologies for the visually impaired
  2. Foreign languages and literature for the visually impaired
  3. Introduction to university mathematics for the visually impaired

- B. Academic programmes for applicants for the study at a university that contribute to equalizing the conditions for the visually impaired in the admission proceedings at schools of higher education, with a special emphasis on
1. Information technologies for the visually impaired
  2. Foreign languages and literature for the visually impaired

Results in brief:

- increase in the number of participants from 70 to 76 (an increment lower than expected on the basis of 2002 because the maximum capacity limits of premises provided by the FoI had been reached)
- introduction of hybrid books technology to classes
- Computer camp held by the Linz University under the auspices of the EU in Zollikofen (Switzerland)

The Centre also participated in organizing or co-organizing a number of associated activities:

- life-long education project for state administration employees in communication with people who have special sensory needs
- facilitating the learning of mathematics for students of secondary schools and schools of higher education
- handicap-free school leaving exams

**Table 2 Structure of the group assisted by the Centre**

| type                | branches of study  | situation at 1. 1. 2003 | situation at 1. 1. 2004 | expected situation at 1. 1. 2005 |
|---------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>non-academic</b> | Information technologies for the visually impaired (A)           | 5                       | 6                       | 7                                |
|                     | Foreign languages and literature for the visually impaired (A)   | 49                      | 52                      | 55                               |
|                     | Introduction to university mathematics for the visually impaired | 4                       | 4                       | 6                                |
| <b>academic</b>     | Information technologies for the visually impaired (B)           | 3                       | 3                       | 5                                |
|                     | Foreign languages and literature for the visually impaired (B)   | 9                       | 11                      | 12                               |
| <b>MU, total</b>    |  | <b>70</b>               | <b>76</b>               | <b>85</b>                        |

## 2. CARE FOR STUDENTS WITH IMPAIRED HEARING

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Activities of the Assistance Centre for students with impaired hearing are organized in cooperation with the Special Pedagogy Department of the faculty of Education MU, which provides part of interpreting services, and Labyrinth Brno, the Association for Integrated Education, which organizes cooperation with other institutions and special-interest groups of people with defective hearing.

The Centre's main tasks are in the following areas:

- a. headmasters of secondary schools, attendance offices of faculties and teachers to provide reliable information about prospects and possibilities in individual fields of study, provides technical support to entrance examinations;
- b. overall orientation: the Centre explains the students (using sign, oral and total communication means) the organisation of study at the university, the study regulations, use of the MU information system, etc.;
- c. the library and digitization services: the Centre systematically builds digital, tactile and hybrid library of study materials to provide a comprehensive coverage of entire disciplines in the form of e-learning for students with hearing impairment;
- d. sign language and interpreting: The Centre provides sign language interpreting for students with impaired hearing, and it supports the development of technical terms for the Czech sign language.

Results in brief:

- increase in the number of students with impaired hearing from 4 to 11
- introduction of sign language interpreting to classes
- introduction of e-learning to foreign language classes for students with impaired hearing

The Centre also participated in organizing or co-organizing a number of associated activities:

- life-long education project for state administration employees in communication with people who have special sensory needs
- development of technical terms for the Czech sign language

### **3. CARE FOR STUDENTS WITH OTHER DISABILITIES**

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MU is also attended by students with physical disabilities who require special personal assistance, or extra costs for alterations in buildings. The care of those students was organized by the faculties where the students attended classes, by the Halls of Residence and Refectories Administration, and was supported by the Educational Policies Fund of the Ministry of Education. As part of its building and maintenance activities and care of the campus, MU endeavours to create technical conditions for the study of the disabled.