

Workshop Mind Matters: Making Space for Neurodiversity in Mental Health Care

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EU-PROMENS 2025

Who Are We?

We are two PhD students at JKU Linz, Austria, with a strong interest in neurodiversity, accessibility and user-centered technology. Our project **DyslexiaLab** focuses on improving accessibility for neurodivergent students at JKU. Our goal is to identify barriers and address them by providing both social and technological support.

What Is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity (or neurodivergence in the singular form) refers to the natural variation in how people think, feel, and behave. It is not a measure of intelligence or effort. In fact, many neurodivergent individuals often put in extra effort behind the scenes to navigate daily life.

Common conditions under the neurodiversity umbrella include dyslexia (a reading and writing disorder), dyscalculia (a mathematical disability), ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), and Tourette's syndrome. It is estimated that up to 20% of the general population are neurodivergent.

The term neurotypical describes individuals who do not face challenges due to neurological variations.



What Does Inclusion Look Like?

Inclusion means creating environments where everyone feels valued and supported. Neurodivergent individuals often face stigmatization and co-occurring disorders, which can lead to mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety. These difficulties may result in feelings of isolation, substance abuse, dropping out of educational programs, and struggles in professional settings.

To foster a more inclusive environment, we need to reflect on our own workspaces. How can we make our institutions and infrastructure more welcoming for neurodivergent individuals? Clear communication that makes expectations explicit and providing sensory-friendly spaces are great starting points. However, remember that there is no one-size-fits-all solution – the best approach is to ask directly what kind of support is needed for each specific situation or task!



We'd be happy to stay in contact! You can reach us at anna.ajlani@jku.at & miriam.massoumzadeh@jku.at