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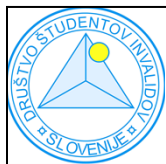


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# Best practices for social inclusion

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Guidebook for youth workers for social inclusion in urban spaces through non-formal education



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# *I. Introduction*

## *I.I The project*

The project, realized with the contribution of the Erasmus + program, saw the collaboration of five partner organizations from Bulgaria, Spain, Slovenia, Lithuania with the Italian coordination of Creativi108. Respectively: Association of Young Psychologists in Bulgaria; Geseme 1996 SL; Slovenian Association of Disabled Students; Active Youth Association.

Lasting 30 months, the project's path took place in an interlayer of partner meetings and two essential youth-oriented mobility activities: a Makeathon in Slovenia and Blended mobility in Barcelona, with the presentation of the urban action in front of the Arc de Triomphe implemented by the young people involved.

The video of the urban action is available on the [project website](#).

This project aimed to propose inclusive educational practices that help connect and unite diverse young people in the context of urban spaces. Considering that “diversity” is broadly seen as a range of differences (i.e. overall heterogeneity) among young people, we examine the theoretical frameworks that help explain group dynamics and contextual conditions that contribute to students' exclusion (e.g., peer victimization, rejection, lack of friendships), based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, body size, and so on. We argue that youth organizations and youth workers need to be aware of the group and the interpersonal dynamics in order to be able to facilitate inclusion (peer acceptance, friendships between groups). They also need to understand how some common non-formal education practices may highlight differences and segregate young people by promoting even further divisions and reinforcing negative stereotypes instead of countering them.

The text proposes proactive practices such as "integrated" prevention to increase social inclusion. In addition, relevant intervention approaches are examined. To conclude, we discuss the training of organizations wishing to engage in inclusion and provide recommendations for future research.

## *I.II What is social inclusion*

In some countries, inclusive non-formal education is considered the approach that must be applied in order to serve young people with disabilities in generic educational contexts. However, the provision of inclusion is still limited to the educational environment and is hardly applied in other situations, such as young people's free time or other recreational activities.

On the international level, inclusion is seen as the principle that supports and welcomes diversity among all the young people who participate in the activities of aggregation. The major goal is to eliminate social exclusion by developing a positive attitude toward diversity in terms of race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability. As such, it starts from the belief that equal treatment and equal opportunity are fundamental human rights and are the foundation for a more fair society.

But there is a point that needs to be considered. When working in a heterogeneous group, terms like "fairness" and "inclusion" can be confusing as they may assume different meanings and involve different values based on the different backgrounds of the people involved and the countries where they come from. For this reason, it is important to have a shared understanding of what "inclusion" means in order to proceed with fewer difficulties.

Our research suggests that it is beneficial to use a vision of inclusion in which both the process for identifying participation's obstacles and the process for practically removing those obstacles need to be identified. These processes can emphasize those groups of young people who may be at risk of marginalization.

We found that a debate could be opened regarding the different inclusive approaches of the organizations involved in the YUA project. A debate focused on the different visions of what inclusion is and how it should be built within the processes of group cohesion and collaboration between partners. There is a profound disparity between the abstract conceptualization of the word inclusion and the practical management operation of an inclusive project. For instance, one major consideration is to step outside the perspective that every action is immediately accomplishable and every task is apparently easy-reachable for everyone in the group. It is important to reconsider every aspect in an inclusive approach, starting from actions such as walking in the city, staying in a hotel, taking a classroom course, accessing information on the internet, using digital tools, receiving health benefits, traveling by plane, booking a seat at a restaurant, reaching the airport, etc. Hence, all the aspects of each process should be properly reconsidered by placing inclusion at the center, which is often taken for granted.

### ***1.III Using inclusive language***

This chapter speaks about how we should address or refer to people with disabilities, in written language or during conversations. There is no "right" or "wrong" terminology for disabled people, but some terms are more appropriate than others. But before we go to the core, we need to explain what disability really is and who disabled people are.

In most countries, disability is defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which states that "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (United Nations, 2006, art. 1). Disability is part of being human. Almost everyone will temporarily or permanently

experience disability at some point in their life. Over 1 billion people – about 15% of the global population – currently experience disability (WHO, 2022). This number is partly increasing due to population aging and the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. A disability may result from a health condition, such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome or depression. Similarly, the disability may develop or worsen from personal and environmental factors, including negative attitudes or treatment, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, as well as limited social support. A person's environment greatly affects the experience and extent of disability. Inaccessible environments create barriers that often hinder the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others. To improve social participation among persons with disabilities, barriers to community inclusion should be addressed and opportunities for integration facilitated (WHO, 2021).

There are some general agreements and some basic guidelines when it comes to using disability related language. It is no longer acceptable to say a sentence such as, “Hey, I saw a deaf and dumb cripple today.” That would be extremely offensive. Words such as “crippled,” “mute,” “deaf-mute,” and “deaf and dumb” are no longer acceptable while addressing people with disabilities, unless one is portraying a character who likes to be offensive. (Mills, 2011).

First, let's examine collective terms and labels. The word 'disabled' is a description, not a reference to the group of people. It is thus preferable to use the phrase 'disabled people' as a collective term rather than 'the disabled.' However, many deaf people whose first language is sign language consider themselves part of 'the deaf community' – they may describe themselves as 'Deaf', with a capital D, to emphasize their deaf identity. Moreover, one must avoid medical labels. They say little about people as individuals and tend to reinforce stereotypes of disabled people as 'patients' or unwell. Furthermore, it is best not to automatically refer to 'disabled people' in all communications – many people who need disability benefits and services don't identify with this term. Consider using 'people with health conditions or impairments' if it seems more appropriate (GOV.UK, 2021).

The second key element is to be positive and not negative; enforce positivity. Avoid phrases like 'suffers from', which suggest discomfort, constant pain, and a sense of hopelessness. For example, wheelchair users may not view themselves as 'confined to' a wheelchair – try thinking of it as a mobility aid instead and refer to them simply as wheelchair users (GOV.UK, 2021).

Lastly, it is important to remember that most people with disabilities are comfortable with the words commonly used to refer to daily activities. People who use wheelchairs 'go for walks' and those with visual impairments may be very pleased – or not – 'to see you'. An impairment may mean that some things are done differently (GOV.UK, 2021).

Finally, here is a table of words to avoid and those to use instead:

<b>Avoid</b>	<b>Use</b>
(the) handicapped, (the) disabled	disabled people
afflicted by, suffers from, a victim of	has [name of condition or impairment], i.e. has a visual impairment
confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	wheelchair user
mentally handicapped, mentally defective, retarded, subnormal	with a learning disability (singular) with learning disabilities (plural)
cripple, invalid	disabled person
spastic	person with the cerebral palsy
able-bodied	non-disabled
mental patient, insane, mad	person with a mental health condition
deaf and dumb; deaf-mute	deaf, a user of (...) Sign Language, a person with a hearing impairment
the blind	people with visual impairments; blind people; blind and partially sighted people
an epileptic, diabetic, depressive, and so on	a person with epilepsy, diabetes, depression or someone who has epilepsy, diabetes, depression
dwarf; midget	someone with restricted growth or short stature
fits, spells, attacks	seizures

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## ***II. Non-formal education as a tool to achieve social inclusion***

### ***II.I Why use non-formal education with young people***

Non-formal education includes adult basic education, adult literacy education or school equivalency preparation. Participation in this form of learning allows people to develop their values, as well as social and emotional skills. Non-formal education is open to any age, origin and personal interest. Moreover, it's a type of education that is mostly voluntary and features diverse teaching methods, and its end goal is not to earn a degree but rather to learn for learning's sake.

It is more beneficial to use non-formal education with young people since children and teenagers tend to lose concentration easily. For instance, while giving a formal speech to children regarding the dangers of crossing the street at a red light, many would stop paying attention and lose focus. Instead, using a method like storytelling might be more beneficial. For instance, a speaker could come up with a story about a 5-year-old boy who went to the store without his mother's permission, crossed the street at a red light and almost got hit by a car. Later on, he got really scared and promised himself and his mother that he would always cross the street at a green light from now on. Children may be more interested to hear that since they will always be enthusiastic about listening to a story. It is practical to employ a method that will make students focus on the details while they learn, which will help them retain what they are being taught.

Young people are usually always distracted by what is happening in their personal lives – relationships, going out with friends or having fun are among their priorities. Their goals are affected by their emotional condition, including their current and often spontaneous needs. Therefore, paying attention to any type of formal education could be very difficult. However, coming up with an actual practical task can significantly assist the learning process. Hence, learning will take place naturally, without students even realizing it, which may very well be the best way to learn.

Outdoor education, participation in music or dance classes, volunteering, or restorative practices are well-known examples of non-formal learning activities known to contribute to developing social and emotional skills. It is always beneficial for the Youth, especially children, to learn about social skills that aren't taught in school. Developing emotional intelligence could be a big plus not only for young people but for anyone.



Non-formal education has a lot of added benefits, such as:

- Supporting growth and maturation on a personal level as well as within society. In many cases, teamwork or coexisting can play an important role;
- Developing the skills of each individual and improving self-esteem;
- Extending the learning capacity, which in turn, contributes to a healthy, critical attitude toward the surroundings, social norms, and power mechanisms.

Non-formal education may take place in various locations, which could also be a significant subject of interest for young people, especially children. If a picnic in the woods is organized, and a lecture is given there while the kids just play around and have fun, the chances of the lecture being successful would certainly be higher.

It is also important for young people to be able to rest properly. Listening to what their bodies are saying and getting a good amount of sleep is essential for youth. In formal education (schools, colleges, universities), it is well known that getting up really early in the morning is inescapable. It is also proven that the brain can't work to its full potential without enough sleep. Another good aspect of non-formal education is that organization and methods are flexible; therefore, it is quite possible to rest and still learn something.

Working with children and young people stimulates learning; in other words, it offers possibilities for education and growth. In order to improve their learning, the interests of the children and young people involved should be taken into account. The pedagogical staff should support those children in taking on responsibility for implementing said interests. In non-formal education, the process is a communicative and cooperative activity where children and young people, together with others, acquire knowledge. Children and young people are given support in formulating their interests and actively coming to terms with their environment.

Non-formal education creates the feeling of dynamic growth since it adds personal interests to the skillset of young people. The opportunity for youth to learn more about the topics they are passionate about with complete freedom could be a powerful inspiration. They get the chance to study whenever they want and however they like, and most importantly – they're doing it for themselves, and that's all that matters at the end of the day. Non-formal practices have the potential to boost dopamine, enhance productivity, and improve sleep quality (Wise, 2004).

It is also proven that if a kid or a teenager is told what they should do – they will most likely do the exact opposite. Youth need to be listened to and have their wishes respected, so the teacher or youth worker should try to understand everything they're saying and help them achieve success without pressuring them into something they don't want to do. Every person is different; therefore, every person will need a different study method. Some people can't learn by listening; they need to either read the information or write it down, or even both. Other people find it extremely easy to listen and end up remembering everything only by doing that. That's why formal education wouldn't be beneficial for everybody. Every person needs to find their own way of achieving success.

Choosing non-formal education could make young students feel more at ease. Learning to control and plan their free time will make youth more responsible and fulfilled while motivating them to follow their dreams and accomplish their goals.

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# *III. Urban spaces: why and how they matter*

## *III.I Urban spaces and social inclusion*

Cities have grown in size and density, and the global urban population is rapidly increasing; more than half of the world's population now lives in cities, with the United Nations projecting that figure will rise to 68% by 2050 (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018). However, because of the city's size and excess, residents are experiencing a shared sense of social isolation, and personal interactions are becoming more ephemeral within the rigid structures of a consumerist society.

Cities are hotspots for social differences such as ability status, age, class, citizenship, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic position. These differences in the city are frequently created and enacted rather than simply revealed and can be used as triggers for action, social mobilization, and performances that take place in the city's private and public spaces. In other words, public spaces serve as a playground for society to reinvent itself (Bunschoten, 2002).

To accommodate such social distinctions and the growing diversity, the concept of "inclusion" was developed. More precisely, the concept of an "Inclusive City" provides a solution for urban diversity. The inclusive city can be defined as one that promotes "social inclusion" by providing adequate housing and basic services and facilities to all residents, regardless of race or ethnic origin, as well as equal access to social amenities, opportunities, and public goods critical to everyone's well-being. Additionally, the inclusive city promotes "political inclusion" by safeguarding citizens' rights and liberties and encouraging social and political engagement. Economic inclusion is another critical aspect of the inclusive city; it refers to equal business and employment opportunities, as well as the promotion of pro-poor economic policies through the economic development process. Finally, "cultural inclusion" is critical for an inclusive city because it entails valuing people's cultural rights by promoting creative artistic expression and heritage activities (UN-HABITAT, 2008; El Zafarany & Salah Ouf, 2020).

Numerous studies have established that creating a happy city requires a focus on well-being in city design and policy and that social inclusion significantly impacts mental health and well-being. Thus, it is critical to developing more creative, diverse, and inclusive urban spaces if we are to achieve a happy, well-being-focused city. As a result, mayors and local governments worldwide collaborate with designers, architects, planners, and residents to propose and implement innovative and practical solutions for an inclusive, safe, and sustainable urban environment.

When it comes to inclusion in a public space, every decision counts in the design process, but it doesn't mean we should expect every choice to be ideal right away. The best approach to avoid these hazards of bad design is to engage in a strong community process that involves "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" design trials as well as continuing public space management to guarantee that design and programming both develop in response to community demands (Peinhardt & Storrington, 2019)

Katherine Peinhardt and Nate Storrington (2019) illustrate five strategies for designing and redesigning public spaces for all:

#### 1. DESIGN FOR DIFFERENT ABILITY LEVELS.

Great settings are built to include and delight everyone, even individuals with varying cognitive, sensory, physical, or developmental skills. Almost every aspect of a public environment can be made more accessible: Tactile crosswalk strips; accessible toilets and parking spaces; color contrast applications to poles, bollards, and steps; and more. The goal should be to ensure that everyone feels at ease in a location.

#### 2. THINK ABOUT GENDER DYNAMICS.

To determine the best ways to make all people feel welcome and safe, public space designers must pay attention to how people of diverse gender identities and expressions traverse and use a public area.

When designing gender-inclusive venues, it is important to consider the issue of safety, realising obvious access and exit paths, visible navigation, and unimpeded lines of sight into a public area can make everyone feel more at ease in a park or square. However, it is also critical to create exciting, inclusive spaces not only for all genders but also all sexualities.

#### 3. MAKE AMENITIES AVAILABLE FOR CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Often, public space planners aim for either replication of other "iconic" parks or low-maintenance, low-imagination facilities that result in bland urban spaces that discourage social interaction. To ensure that a space is always a location of true cultural interchange, designers must be agile in their design choices and maintain a mindset of deep listening.

#### 4. UNDERSTAND PUBLIC URBAN SPACES AS STORYTELLERS.

Whether the designer realizes it or not, the public space design always conveys a message. Choices such as the content, aesthetics of branding, wayfinding, memorials, and signage send a

cumulative message that each potential user and user group may understand differently. As a result, it is critical that during the design process, place makers ensure that exhibits, such as plaques, monuments, and signage, reflect local history so that members of the community feel recognised, validated and acknowledged.

#### 5. MAKE SOME ROOM FOR RETAIL.

Public venues that allow underrepresented vendors to sell their wares might draw a larger audience and help to re-distribute economic possibilities to those who might not otherwise have access to a physical site to sell their goods or services.

### *III.II Educating through urban spaces innovation*

Many cities around the world intend to "build back better" in the aftermath of Covid-19, presenting an excellent opportunity to create more inclusive urban areas (Hadani & Vey, 2020).

On a variety of levels, urban territories can give unique learning opportunities, such as enabling people to perceive themselves as citizens and members of a community or communities (from the street to the neighborhood to the city layer). They allow people to engage in meaningful and direct interactions with city issues, concerns, and opportunities in collaborative problem-solving situations. Furthermore, witnessing the urban landscape exposes people to social diversity, which is important for developing empathy and tolerance, both of which are highly valued in today's world. As a result, it is critical to understand urban spaces as fruitful learning environments and to investigate what people can learn in urban territory that cannot be taught through formal education or work, as well as what urban characteristics can be developed to foster social connection and empowerment (Mazzuco, 2019).

There is a close connection between the physical (building something to represent a concept) and internal cognitive activity (Bidzan-Bluma & Lipowska, 2018). As a result, a well-designed physical environment may positively impact hands-on activities and internal cognitive processes related to learning, such as theoretical concept attainment. Hence, urban places must be constructed with this in mind.

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## ***IV. Best practices***

### ***IV.I Corpo Poetico® in Italy by Creativi108***

Corpo Poetico® is a method devised by the director and choreographer Anna Albertarelli. It is a movement/dance/theater practice aimed at young people and adults to promote inclusion between learners with different abilities. The educational/training model was born from years of experience within the integrated artistic contexts \* of the VI-KAP collective. Since 1998, the method has opened up a space for exchange among the participants, capable of re-reading the educational and performative language and transforming the practice of dance, theater, and training.

For several years, contemporary theater and dance have worked with disability in therapeutic terms. Today this practice aims to experiment with a working methodology that goes beyond therapeutic analysis, using other tools to promote social inclusion, such as sensory expressions and poetics. Another perspective is assumed: the perspective of contemporary art in order to affect stereotypes and resistances in the relationship with "the other different from me", maintaining reciprocity of experiential growth.

The practice is designed in order to provide adequate theoretical and practical skills to those who intend to work in training, educational and artistic fields aimed at social integration through physical theater and dance courses and the concept of dance and community theater.

It uses methods like:

- group dynamics with body mediation aimed at the verbal and non-verbal relationships and communication;
- elements of psycho-pedagogy of the movement;
- relaxation techniques;
- elements of sensory anatomy;
- spontaneous movement analysis;
- dance contact improvisation;
- instruments and genres of theatricality;
- theatrical improvisation techniques;
- verbalization of the body/experiential experience shared with the group of participants.

The used path investigates bodily sensations and emotions in the interpersonal relationship. It constructs bodily experiences as the only collective identity in which the disabled body, with its bibliography, expresses its existential experiences. The construction of a bodily identity lived in an equal way between the able and the disabled. A passage from a conscious body to a dancing body to reach the poetic body manifested in urban representation.

In this way, with the learners, a creative imagery composed of different artistic poetics is reached in which the imagination and the vision are manifested, and diversity does not appear as a determining element of the urban or performative action but rather is included. The group will no longer recognize itself among the different abilities but will be able to organize its own performative action or urban action with a clear and direct message of inclusion, as can be seen from the video on the project site at the following link: [www.youthurbanaction.com/outputs](http://www.youthurbanaction.com/outputs).

The impact on the participants is the consequent awareness of diversity, of how to approach and relate to it and make it an inclusive legacy for her future life.

\*Definition of integrated context = context that includes able and disabled people

## ***IV.II Psychodrama by Association of Young Psychologists in Bulgaria***

There are numerous benefits of performance-based therapies. For example, psychodrama, a psychotherapy method created by Jacob Levy Moreno. Drama play entangled with methods of psychology allows full conscious recognition of actions taken during certain stressful events. The mind often creates its own stories, and a person doesn't always have a clear perception while going through a triggering moment. The human mind is susceptible to a wide range of negative effects as a direct result of exposure to adverse experiences.

All people have fears and traumas living in their conscious and unconscious minds caused by the social pressures established throughout human history. By observing the beauty standards, the public perception of success and the template of what happiness should look like, one can discern the creation of an unhealthy environment for the whole of society. The philosophy of modern culture, created by social media and television, is triggering even more insecurities, hatred and hesitation directed towards the existence and the individuals a person encounters. People with disabilities are even more prone to trauma and stress related to modern society's standards. According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults with disabilities report experiencing frequent mental distress almost 5 times as often as adults without disabilities (CDC, 2020 ).

It is also different being hereditary or congenitally disabled in contrast to being with an acquired disability, but at the same time, the mental and emotional distress is very similar.



Congenitally disabled people very often grow up not completely aware of the difference they have compared to other children. The awareness arises towards the teenage years with the hormonal changes and the needs that adolescents have.

Individuals with acquired disabilities tend to experience forms of depression after an injury or medical condition. In most cases, the mental condition deepens and is a cause for the emotional inability to engage in any form of social interaction. Not taking the necessary precautions for mental health, the possibility of depression evolving into a more serious condition is high.

People with disabilities often suffer from feelings of worthlessness and futility. The difficulty of the daily routine doesn't contribute to their mental health. Emotional traumas are deepening day by day, and working on them allows the individual to build healthy self-confidence and willingness to enter society.

According to Moreno, the expression of feelings through drama play is more healing than conversational therapy (Moreno, 1966). The therapy uses drama techniques, enabling the so-called protagonists to repeat a shocking event in their life that caused psychological trauma in a safe environment. It is usually practiced in groups of eight to twelve people. Every group member can go through the session on different days scheduled by the therapist. The duration is around two hours, allowing the protagonist to have time to explore in depth the cause and consequence of a personal traumatic event. Throughout the therapy, the protagonist can analyze the situation with a clearer perception, express the suppressed feelings and examine the interpersonal actions that took place.

There are three stages of the psychodrama process.

#### 1. Warm-up:

The first stage is about creating a safe space and cohesion where the participants would feel secure to experience catharsis incited by opening up to personal issues related to past, present or future events. The responsibility is taken by the therapist, whose role is to build an atmosphere of security, trust and motivation among the participants. There are various applicable techniques to facilitate easier flow through the second stage.

#### 2. Action phase:

During the action phase, the protagonist creates a scene based on a significant event in their life. The therapist directs the session, while other group members participate as auxiliary egos and individuals from the protagonist's life. The rest of the group members act as an audience. The techniques used in this stage serve as an accelerator for the spontaneous expression of feelings. The therapist can rely on standard psychodrama methods such as - mirroring, doubling, soliloquy, etc.- or create new ones.

### 3. Discussion:

Sharing, discussion and reflection is the final stage of the therapy, leading to integration and interpretation of what took place during the action phase. All group members can address their feelings and emotions formed throughout the session. The audience might also consider other topics, such as how their thoughts or observations could impact the protagonist's ways of interacting or relating with others.

People with disabilities are very creative and smart. By realizing their own strengths and talents, they could be more than capable of being an efficient part of society. Drama therapy assists in releasing what is no longer feasible on an emotional level and allows the building of strong, mentally healthy and emotionally stable individuals. The method is used for treating PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder), depression, eating disorders, identity issues, etc. Hence, when more people learn about psychodrama and its benefits, it can be used to help persons with disabilities better integrate into society and their local communities.

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## ***IV. III Good practices of young people inclusion in urban spaces in Lithuania by Active Youth***

Nowadays, everybody's inclusion is still a struggle in many places, and Lithuanian cities are no exception. There is still a lack of understanding of what facilities or infrastructure are needed for older people or people with disabilities to feel comfortable and included. However, the issue of diversity and inclusion is increasingly at the center of public discussion in many countries, and Lithuania's new initiatives offer a good look at inclusive urban areas that can accommodate everyone.

### **Educational trail “Šeirė”**

One of the best examples of inclusive urban areas is a regional park located in the northwestern part of Lithuania: “Šeirė.” The park has an educational trail easily accessible for everyone – kids, seniors, and people with disabilities. The trail is convenient not only for people who have walking disabilities but also for those who have vision impairment, as it has Braille signs with useful information about the park and audio guides. The whole infrastructure allows everyone to experience nature through eyesight, smell, hearing, touch, and movement. As the national park director mentions, even though an infrastructure project was created 10 years ago, they attempt

to make the park even more inclusive and attainable every year. The park offers stunning views, showing the sites of Šerės forests, Gaudupiai swamps, and Plateliai lake. The path leads to a peninsula where a castle was built long ago. The trail is 4 kilometers long, but the views one sees while walking makes this educational trail very quick and effortless. During the walk, stopping by children's playing grounds or rest zones is possible.

### **Library for everyone**

Another excellent example of inclusive urban spaces in Lithuania is the Mažeikiai library. On the doors of this library, it is written that it is a “Library for everyone”, which is entirely accurate. After a renovation in 2016, the building’s spaces became accessible to everyone. It is easily approachable for people with physical disabilities, mental health conditions, autism spectrum disorders, and intellectual disabilities. For example, the library archives offer phonic and Braille-written books for people with visual impairment. There is also a special place called “Space for expression of emotions” in the children and youth section, where young people can learn how to control emotions, block anger and stress.

The Mazeikiai library is a place of paramount importance for people who have autism spectrum disorders. Especially during the national lockdown, this library was helping a lot by delivering books to those who could not come to the library but truly desired to read books. Moreover, the Mažeikiai library is open to all organizations, including those working with people with disabilities. Together they create events, exhibitions, and doll theater performances. As the library director says, the library's goal is to be more than just the place where people take books: it is to be a place for everyone, despite their age, status, gender, and abilities.

### **Inclusive restaurants**

One more place is “Mano guru” ( my guru). “Mano guru” is more than a restaurant which serves delicious food. It is a social project which started in 2004. The restaurant employs people with alcohol or drug addictions, people with disabilities, ex-offenders, and homeless people. In 17 years, they managed to employ 700 people, and 75% of them successfully returned to the labour market. It aims to integrate people who were left out back into society. Help them with free training on becoming a bartender, cook, or waiter while providing consultation with the psychologists, if needed.

## ***IV. IV Mixed-ability youth exchange in Slovenia by Slovenian Association of Disabled Students***

**Project title:** Meet the Neighbors

**Project type:** a traveling multilateral youth exchange

**Topics:** studies, employment, sports and culture for disabled youth

**Activity duration:** 12 days

**Project duration:** 4 months

### **Short project description:**

This project was a multilateral youth exchange involving young people with and without disabilities from four neighboring countries: Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia. It was a traveling youth exchange, so the activities took place in all four countries for twelve days. During the project, we focused on four themes: culture, sport, education and employment. The participants explored these themes through experiential learning by participating in workshops, discussion groups, visits and fieldwork. The youth exchange aimed to give young people with disabilities the possibility to be involved in international work, examine the situation in other countries, and learn how to promote their rights and improve their quality of life.

### **Types of participants actively involved:**

- Youth with mobility impairments (difficulty walking or wheelchair users)
- Youth with visual impairments
- Youth with allergies and other chronic health conditions
- Non-disabled youth
- Personal assistants and drivers

### **Activities:**

In **Slovenia**, activities focused on getting to know each other, group building and employment.

Employment-related activities involved visiting the employment rehabilitation center and the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. Later, a local youth club organized a workshop focused on job interview skills and self-evaluation as well as a visit to Maribor's old town.

In **Croatia**, activities focused on group building and culture. They included workshops on body expression, circus and drama. A visit to the Museum of modern art with a guided tour and workshop was organized, and later a 'treasure hunt' activity was conducted to get to know Zagreb and its cultural heritage.

In **Hungary**, activities focused on group building and sports. The group stayed near lake Balaton, which offered opportunities for different sports – swimming, cycling, table tennis, mini golf and basketball. The participants were able to try adapted sports such as boccia, showdown, tandem cycling and wheelchair basketball. The whole group also went sailing with a wheelchair-accessible sailing boat.

In **Austria**, activities focused on evaluation and studies/education. They included a visit to the University of Graz Disability support center to learn about the support disabled students receive there. Then participants engaged in group discussions around topics of accessibility and support during studies. A 'treasure hunt' activity was used to explore the city of Graz and its accessibility for disabled people.

#### **Methods:**

- the expression of motivation and expectation activity – post-its and thermometer
- getting to know each other and team building games,
- field visit to the Rehabilitation and employment center – trying out activities at training workstations
- field visit to the Faculty of electrical engineering and computer science – learning about developing technologies
- workshop about employment readiness and interview skills – small group work activities on working preferences and styles, role play job interviews, employer and employee expectations discussion teams
- activities on body language and expression – human statues, body art,
- circus skills – juggling, magic tricks,
- drama skills – speed dating (participants received cards and had to act out the person, the other had to guess who they are), short play development on prompt words,
- watching and experiencing audio described film and trying to do audio description for the blind
- guided tour of the Museum of Modern art and a workshop on expressive art
- team building games and picnic lunch in the park
- treasure hunt activity on getting to know cultural heritage of Zagreb

- evening out at a local dance club
- field visit to the Disability support center at the University of Graz
- world café discussion on accessibility and supports during studies
- action plan activity – what each country group can propose at home university to be improved based on the experiences of other participating countries
- treasure hunt activity to explore Graz and its accessibility for disabled people (participants had to find certain locations and needed to interact with local people to find out about accessibility or try the accessibility themselves)
- final evaluation activity
- farewell evening and activities – reveal of the secret friend, good wishes rock for every participant, karaoke, dancing
- daily learning and skills development activity to be used for issuing a youthpass
- a country evening as part of the intercultural learning

#### **Active involvement of young disabled participants:**

The application was submitted in April, approved in the beginning of August and the youth exchange was carried out in the beginning of September. The preparation phase involving all youth leaders and at least one or two participants from each country started in January.

It was agreed that each partner group would design the programme and activities in their home country. In this way, each group was responsible for a three-day programme on their selected topic. The youth leaders and some participants helped in writing the project application.

After the project was approved, each partner group met on a regular basis to create and organize the programme in their own country and give feedback on the programme draft of other countries.

The participants were highly motivated. Very few had already participated in a youth exchange, while most had no experience in youth exchanges and project work, so the youth leaders needed to play the role of the group's mentor.

The group shared their wishes and expectations about their selected topic.

Afterwards, the participants discussed the possible activities and determined the most appropriate methods to carry them out. In some cases, they had to contact other institutions and arrange a visit or workshop there.

Some of the participants also took on the role of facilitators of certain activities such as getting-to-know-each-other games, team building games and daily energizers, as well as treasure

hunt activities, group discussions and evaluation. All participants were actively involved in the country's intercultural event and the final farewell event.

The experience, knowledge, abilities and English language skills of individuals in the programme group varied, so it was really important to find suitable assignments for each and give them enough room to participate equally.

### **Additional considerations:**

Since the group included young people with two very different disabilities, the participants needed to be very careful about the accessibility issues to ensure inclusive activities for all when planning the programme. The participants shared their experience and knowledge about the limitations of both impairments (the physically disabled contributed their views, and youth with visual impairment theirs). So they could adapt activities in a way that everyone could participate, in some cases with the help of assistants.

Finding appropriate and wheelchair-accessible accommodation was somewhat of a challenge in some countries, but we managed to find accessible accommodation in all countries.

Finding accessible transportation also proved to be a bit challenging since our initial idea was to use public transport. Unfortunately, using trains and buses was not possible for wheelchair users. We then wanted to rent an accessible bus, but it was too expensive, so we ended up traveling by adapted vans which were able to take on board some wheelchair users and some passengers who sat in the seats.

Apart from creating the YE programme, the participants also prepared some sample materials for YE and prepared accessible electronic documents, braille print and tactile pictures for the visually impaired.

They also needed to check that all the places we visit and all the outdoor activities in nature or parks are wheelchair accessible. During the exchange, we also rented two additional wheelchairs so that people who had difficulty walking could participate in city treasure hunt games since they would not be able to walk so much and keep up with the rest of the group.

The exchange also included personal assistants, who helped with daily living tasks, such as helping people with their hygiene, dressing and meals for those with mobility impairments, as well as acting as guides for the visually impaired.

## *IV.V Best practice in Spain by Geseme*

Sport is a fantastic tool for improving any individual or society. Sports practice encompasses the physical part and goes much further, bringing important benefits to people, such as social and personal growth.

Inclusion can be defined as the flexibility of the different parameters that allow people to understand diversity in youth work. The term inclusion is closely related to the concept of heterogeneity. This must be understood as an opportunity to enrich, grow and learn from each other rather than perceiving diversity as a difficulty or problem.

If a group wants to work in an inclusive way, a thorough diagnosis of the factors that will condition the learning process must be made in advance. That is, the social, economic and cultural context of young people, as well as age, number, individual characteristics, special needs as well as their interests and motivations. Thus, when carrying out the didactic programming, the group can start from the group's needs to encourage it to be fully contextualized. However, pedagogical methodologies based on cooperation can be used, proposing activities where young people exchange views, interact, and generate knowledge together. These factors can be defined as elements that will produce significant learning outcomes.

The practice and learning of sport is a truly inclusive educational tool, as young people capture the information through three different channels: visual, auditory, and stenosis, even though they always have more ease of retention through one of these. Notably, sport integrates these three channels of information retention, allowing for adaptation to the individual abilities of participants.

When one begins to work by encompassing the diversity that exists in the group, it is when the concept of sport emerges strongly. Sports can be a useful tool to encourage the inclusion of people with functional diversity and groups at risk of social exclusion in a given environment. With regard to groups at risk of social exclusion, sports can offer an important cultural exchange, the improvement of the social-community dimension and the emotional-emotional dimension, as well as the acquisition of routines and hygienic habits, among others.

The ultimate objective of this method is to equip young people with tools to adapt to their environment (economic, cultural, and family situations). The following points will help trainers to integrate well-being practices into their non-formal education sessions:

- The acquisition of values such as respect, teamwork, empathy and effort, among others, can help young people to adapt to the school world and later to the work environment;
- Emotional education, empowering young people to channel and verbalize their own feelings and emotions through sport, contributing to their holistic development;
- The mechanization of different routines and habits that can directly influence the increase in the school performance of those young people with more academic difficulties;
- The prevention of risky behaviors, such as tobacco, alcohol and other drug typologies.



Sport facilitates the acquisition of values and fosters personal and social development, improving the individual and their social relationships. For this reason, the practice of sports is fundamental to those who live in situations of vulnerability or social risk. Thanks to sports, we can help bring balance to the inequality that exists in today's society. Anyone can play, regardless of race, sex, social status, origin or physical ability.

Sport facilitates the creation of links between different members of the group and, in turn, strengthens the image of the individual and the collective self. This creates the autonomy and identity of all members. It also promotes personal growth, and certain values such as responsibility, commitment, solidarity and respect are reinforced.

A clear example could be the "Play sports" project that is being started by the Pere Tarrés Foundation or the "FutbolNet" project of the Football Club Barcelona Foundation.

### **"FUTBOLNET" SESSIONS - Sport as an engine of change**

In each session, a value is worked out through sports games in which participants have to put it into practice in the best way possible. To facilitate the activity, they have different spaces for reflection and the sessions are divided into three parts:

1st Time: Players talk autonomously and agree on the rules of the game. For example, if someone misses a partner, he whistles a penalty.

2nd Time: A football game of about 15 minutes is played. Here young people develop their ability to relate, and educators accompany them to be responsible for their actions.

3rd Time: The participants hold a debate session in a critical spirit where the game's outcomes are evaluated, and the winners are decided according to the behavior and the application of the value in question. The most important aspect is the reflection. The team of monitors helps them to reflect on how they have felt during the game, whether they have respected the rules or how they could improve coexistence for the next occasion.

The Barça Foundation takes the FutbolNet socio-educational intervention method throughout Catalonia through secondary schools and also in other social centers.

#### **Reference:**

- Cunit.cat, An afternoon of values with FutbolNet and with ex-Barça player Antoni Pinilla, March 9, 2020.

## *V. Case study: Youth Urban Action*

### *V.I Makeathon Slovenia*

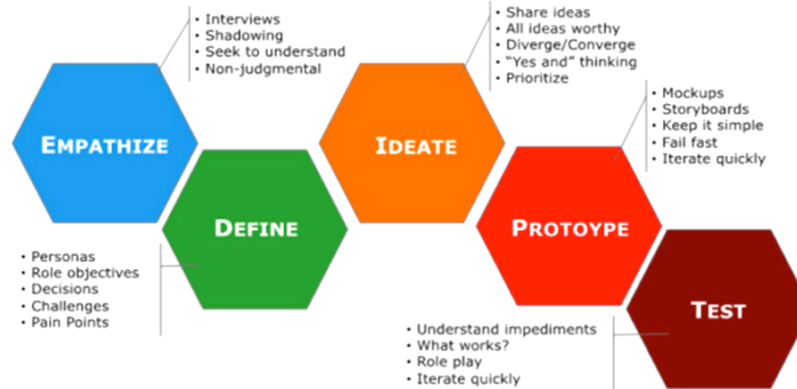
The mobility in Slovenia held in June 2022 saw an integrated group participate in two different sections of activities. Contact improvisation activities were held in the morning, while the Design Thinking methodology was utilized during the rest of the day. The challenge was: how can we use urban spaces to communicate an action/request for change? The activities carried out in groups were modulated with the intent to generate the creative impulse useful to activate the group in an action to be taken in urban spaces conceived by the participants as a result of the activities.



Design Thinking is an approach to innovation that rests its foundations in the ability to solve complex problems using vision and creative management. Design thinking is also defined as a problem-solving methodology developed through a process centered on the person and the resolution of complex problems, aiming to generate value through innovative solutions. It can be used by anyone who has a problem to solve and needs creative solutions to tackle it.

The process is extensively documented in numerous texts, and its synthesis is contained in the following graphics.

## Design Thinking PROCESS



At the end of the activity, each group staged a possible urban action with its own communication objectives and demands.

The impact on the participants was increased cohesion, the desire to tell stories, and the pleasure of being listened to, involved and proactive. A process that has generated an empathic and inclusive community thanks also to the architectural facilities of the Ars Viva hostel accessible and disabled-friendly in every architectural choice of the structure.



## ***V.II Urban Action Barcelona***

During the Blended Mobility, carried out in Barcelona in September 2022, the Corpo Poetico® methodology was applied. A five-day workshop for the implementation of urban action with the tools of physical theater and performing arts.

The activities intertwined the four work plans such as educational, pedagogical, social, and artistic. In a rigorous process where all these components have the same level of importance.

Dramaturgically, the urban action is connected to the idea of a "manifestation", which is commonly used by groups labeled as "different" or "marginalized" to revendicate something, but also allows them to perceive themselves as "not fragile" and recognize the power of a united group.

### **➤ THE CHOICE OF THE URBAN SPACE**

The theme was dedicated to the inclusion and rights of people with disabilities. The place chosen was the Arc de Triomphe. 30 meters high and designed by architect Josep Vilaseca as the main entrance to the universal exhibition of 1888. It was built together with the Lluís Companys walkway, and the long pedestrian boulevard leading to the Parc de la Ciutadella was where the urban action was held.

Unlike similar works, such as the arches of Rome or Paris, the Arc de Triomphe of Barcelona was not built to celebrate a military victory but to pay homage to humanity's economic, artistic and scientific progress. It is a typical crossing point during the Barcelona marathon and half marathon and has been used as a finish destination for some years.



Urban actions, therefore, can use existing urban architecture as a reinforcing center of implicit messages. Container of meanings and suggestions for the choreographic "backbone".

The key words used during the integrated workshop are: to pay homage, progress, art, humanity, destination and arrival. The architectural suggestion contributed to designing the urban action

from the perspective of a group of young people who marched forward relentlessly. The urban scenography in the background was the Arc de Triomphe.

#### ➤ **GROUP ANALYSIS AND PROCESSING ON THE TOPICS**

The group, during the first day, worked on discussing which topics could be addressed by the message of the urban action; the message had to be inherent to rights, emancipation and a new perception of people with disabilities. Dwelling on meanings and synonyms such as rights, claim, manifest and social body. All connected to the idea of young people moving forward and demonstrating, protesting for their rights.

#### ➤ **HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SUGGESTIONS**

The evocative historical suggestions supported the group's creative imagery composed of an artistic poetic. Historical and social or political narratives were used as evocative suggestions that solicit an unconscious component.

Since the participants were not united by a single mother tongue because they came from different EU countries, the use of images facilitated a clear understanding of the meanings to which the creative process was applied.:

#### **GIUSEPPE PELLIZZA FROM VOLPEDO - ITALY (1868-1907)**



**The Fourth Estate: symbol of workers' rights of the twentieth century.**

This image served as a creative prompt for the youth urban action group, allowing them to visualize their march. The picture portrays a group of people in a demonstration that is advancing with screams, whistles etc. A mass of people who symbolically represented a much larger and more distinct "Social Body".

**EUGENE DELACROIX - FRANCE (1798-1863)**



**Freedom leading the people.**

It depicts a crowd of rioters advancing, led by a woman waving the French flag aloft. This woman is the personification of France; it is Marianne (the allegory of the French Republic) who becomes the personification of Freedom. She who unites all classes to win against the oppressor (historically Charles X). Freedom leads the people.

**MUSTAFA HASSONA - GAZA (2018)**



***13th attempt to break the Gaza blockade by sea ( 2018)***

The photo A'ed Abu Amro, the 20-year-old Palestinian, immortalized shirtless during the clashes in Gaza for the Israeli naval blockade on 22 October 2018. Immortalized by Mustafa Hassona, a Turkish photographer. The image has gone viral on international social media. Many have noticed



the similarity between this photo and "Freedom Leading the People", the painting by Delacroix, quoted above.

## ➤ THE SCENES

The urban action was an occasion in which the disabled and non-disabled young people involved could feel like spokespersons for something great, to be brought to the public of passers-by with strength and determination. Interpretation thus becomes a tool to show oneself differently. The goal was the unity of the group and the strength it draws from it. Urban action consists of consecutive scenes, each with a well-defined communication intent.

In the **first scene**, the performers with disabilities appear; they are the protagonists. They appear one at a time like a Greek coryphaeus to show themselves in complete silence, with only the physical presence telling the viewers: I am here as I am, and I represent 1000 others like me. Then the remaining group joins as a Greek choir (in theatrical language, the Greek choir represents a group of characters acting collectively on the stage) and all together will initiate the dramatic action.

In the **second scene**, the gestural language expresses personal needs, struggles and demands. In response, each person makes a deliberate gesture that communicates their claim.

In the **third scene**, the demonstrators advance, in unison, blowing whistles, clapping their hands on their bodies and screaming. Passers-by stopped and thus observed what was happening. Urban action has uncomfortably entered their daily life.

In the **fourth scene**, all the young people stopped for a slow-motion action. To give strength to the looks of "warriors" about to attack. Fighters are on the front line without hesitation. The gaze, in this case, plays a decisive role; it helps to modify or perceive the person with disabilities. You see it with other eyes. Slow motion helps to experience everything in an alienating way.

In the **fifth scene**, the demonstrators, who are in the process of advancing, put in the scene a physical score that goes backwards, as if the actions that took place before were carried out by themselves. Two temporalities, one forward and the other backward. How to retrace the same struggles back and forth in time and always begin from the starting point. This a clear message not to take social and civil rights for granted. The scene ends with a run forward of some young people who had "rewound", who sketch a jump to the barricades, while the rest of the group acts as a shield.

In the **sixth scene**, there is a tableau vivant (living picture), deliberately referencing Delacroix's painting Freedom leading the people. Wheelchairs are turned upside down, and bodies are placed on the ground. The whole advance of this mass of people seems to come to an end with this pictorial image. After a moment of silence, everything is dramaturgically reversed back to normal, from tragedy to comedy.

In the **seventh scene**, the young people begin to involve the audience and ask for help to recover the bodies of people with disabilities; they need help, requiring arms and hands that make physical contact and lift people off the ground. The spectators who observe from afar, in their comfort zone, are catapulted into the performative action with the cunning that only a comic and clownish action can do by breaking uncomfortably into his daily life.

In the **end**, the collective started advancing once again, but this time with people from the public and other passers-by and with a decidedly more cheerful mood from a protest march to the disabled pride parade. As if the battle has achieved the desired results.



## VI. Conclusions

In summary, based on the ideas that surfaced in this review of international experiences, research, and non-formal education practices concerning the methods of promoting equity and inclusion, there are several good practices.

This manual represents the full experience and the learning-by-doing research undergone throughout the YUA project and the group of individuals that have been participating.

A path that started by sharing and understanding the different shades hidden behind the broad-known concept of “inclusion”. A concept that assumes diverse meanings depending on both the personal background and the cultural/national heritage that was brought by the individuals of the group involved in the project activities. Some reported that inclusion is about not feeling judged or not feeling discriminated against; others mentioned that inclusion is about tolerance and acceptance; even more declared that inclusion is connected to the dualism of liberty - freedom. All valid statements, which demonstrated that “inclusion” is something that can be addressed quite easily. At least on conceptual and theoretical levels. However, when it is time for these concepts to be translated into concrete arrangements, practical processes and face-to-face relationships, that's where the difficulties occur.

Aside from how “inclusion” can be defined, the true and major challenge is shifting from the theoretical vision of inclusion to the actual and down-to-earth creation of inclusive situations. Implementing the YUA project and its activities was a proper demonstration of this challenge and allowed the staff and participants to learn from such situations. In fact, the learning outcomes did not limit themselves to the sharing of inclusion's good practices (previously reported as suggestions and recommendations for useful and impactful inclusive best practices) but demonstrated to the Youth Workers and to the participants involved the following conclusion: “inclusion” cannot remain interpreted only as a concept.

“Inclusion” must be considered as an omnipresent approach that has to cover every minimal aspect. It has to become the main guideline for every decision, every task management or every action in order to create a setting for proper inclusive situations and fully integrated groups. The Youth Workers that promote inclusion, or are willing to do so, need to carefully consider that “inclusion” cannot be only a concept that may be applied here and then in limited situations or referred to a specific category of people. “Inclusion” must be interpreted as a well-rounded vision that must embrace every choice and every individual held inside the group, even the smallest one.

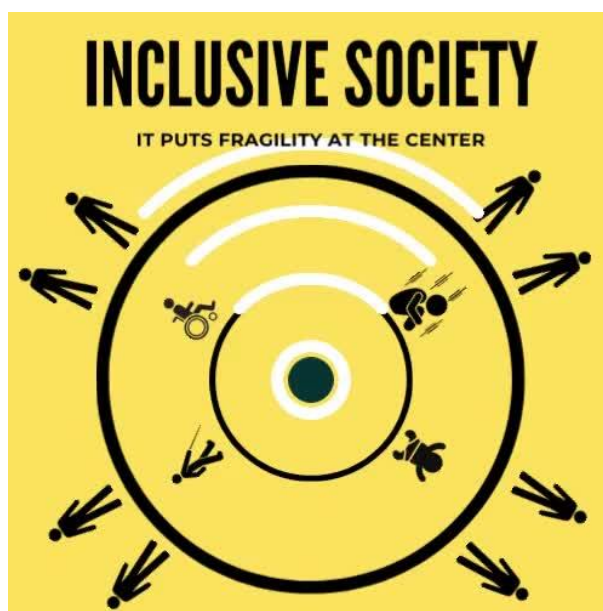


Fig.1

It can be useful to imagine a group as a system in which it is crucial to ask: “Where fragility is placed?”. Like human rights, inclusion is a choice. Placing fragility “at the center” means setting up the consequential personal and collective choices in an inclusive approach (fig.1). The importance of what has been said so far can be highlighted by the fact that the results would be way different if other priorities were placed at the center. For instance, if the system had placed “profit” in the middle, the consequential choices would have been modeled very differently.

Placing fragility “at the center” means changing perspective. Perspective of ourselves and towards others. As mentioned in the previous chapters, non-formal education can be a very powerful tool to promote such vision in a more interactive and experiential way. In particular, the best practices reported offering different examples of how the individuals involved in such activities can shift their perspectives. But there is more.

The YUA project showed that the best practices would receive added value and impact when performed in public spaces. In other words, when the best practices are remodeled as an **URBAN ACTION** as shown in chapter V and by the [YUA video](#). Urban action means reappropriating urban spaces as spaces of openness, dialogue, and meeting with citizens. Thus, fostering new models that function as a “stage” for inclusive activities can inspire individuals to reconsider their own biases and stereotypes. Thus redefining urban spaces not only from an urban point of view but also from the aggregation point of view. The process of reinventing puts the relationship back at the center and presents socializing opportunities that overcome the obstacles of intrusiveness, invisibility and hostility. Urban space, such as a square, a park, or a public building, can thus become the scene for inclusive events where young people with and without fragilities can change their perspective. It encourages people to meet, affirms their identity, urges people to communicate without preconceptions and perceive themselves as not fragile while recognizing

the power of the group. At the same time, changing the perspective of others by showing people a life in a society that includes diversity.

The salient points that emerged during the project's execution can be noted as follows:

- Partnerships should be based on clear and widely understood definitions of what the terms for inclusion are.
- Inclusion and fairness should be defined clearly and by considering them as a common approach in order to work aligned during the project implementation processes.
- Emphasis should be placed on specific training approaches in which youth workers are supported in developing inclusive practices.
- An accreditation of quality standards would be useful for organizations wishing to carry out a disability and inclusive project.
- The youth education center should provide guidance in promoting inclusion and equity, such as principles that guide the work of youth workers and the management team in all European countries.
- Policies should draw on the experience and expertise of all those involved in the life of disabled and non-disabled young people.
- There should be a collective effort to think that every activity for young people should be considered accessible for every different motor skill and not only.

In executing the YUA project, we became aware of the complexities involved. It was difficult to think of the processes underway and see them as connected within an "ecology of equity". By this, we mean that the extent to which the experiences and results of young people are equitable does not only depend on the educational practices of their trainers; it depends on a whole series of interacting processes that reach the organization, which, in terms, reflect their models of governance. The ways in which the partner hierarchies are established and maintained and how the actions of the Erasmus + program are constrained and made possible by their positions in those hierarchies. As we can see, social exclusion/inclusion is an indisputable term; therefore, its relevance for Europe is fundamental but still open to many unsolved issues.



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