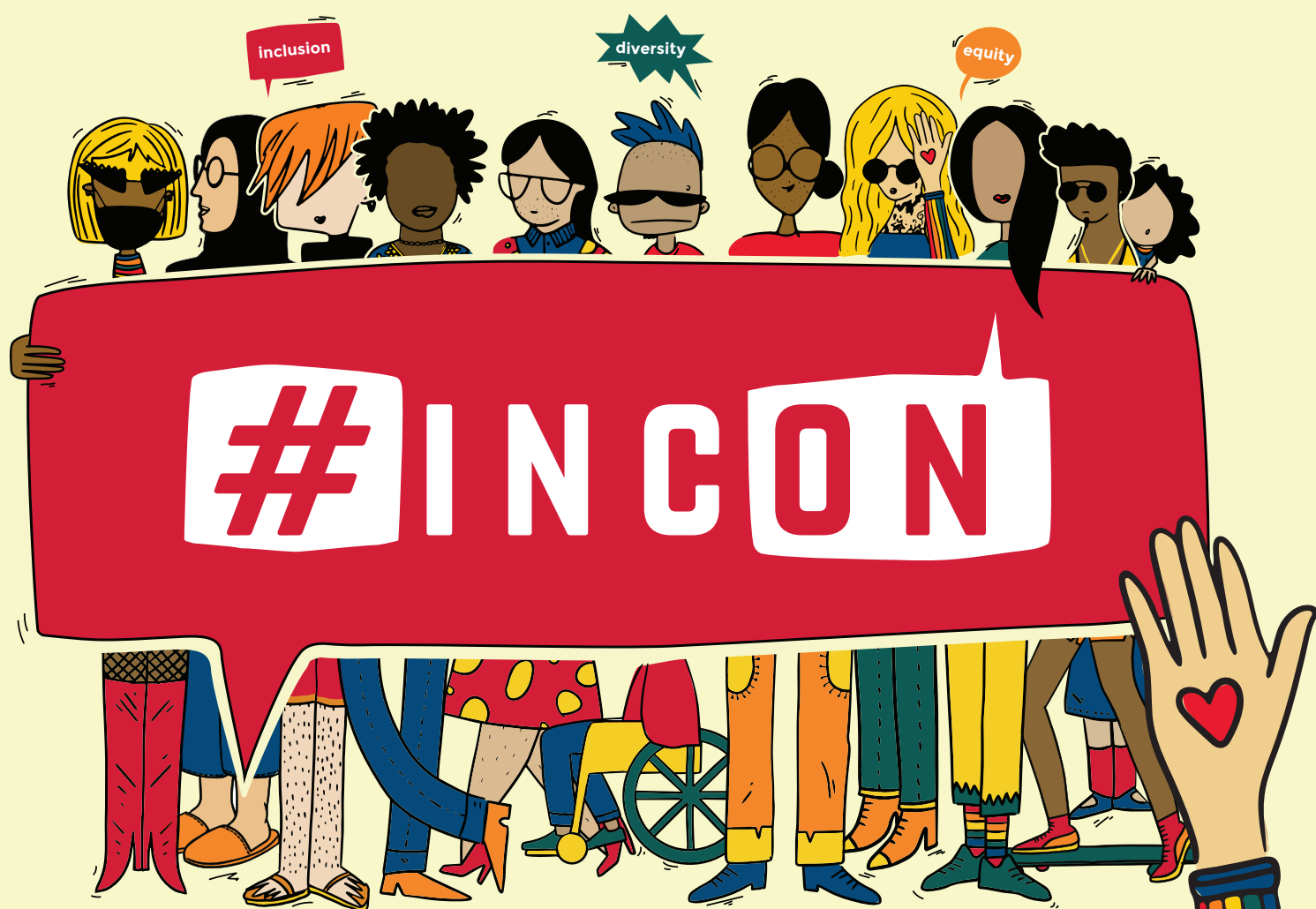


INCLUSION IS ON

A collection of good practices and tools
to foster social inclusion in youth free-time activities



Erasmus+ KA2-YOUTH
2021–2024

GOOD PRACTICES FROM THE PROJECT PARTNERS

This chapter presents good practices, such as previous projects, activities and manuals related to the topic addressed. There is one selected good practice from each participating organization to the project, which also reflect the starting points for the cooperation partners of each of them.



WHILE YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:

- What kind of thoughts does the good practice raise in you?
- Do you have anything in mind you would like to add on the good practice?
- How would the good practice or parts of it fit to your own work?
- Do you have some other similar kind of good practices in mind?

INTRODUCED BY HOBBIES

Accessibility manual to promote the accessibility of free-time activities for young people with immigrant background by Youth Academy (et al.).*

The project “Introduced by hobbies” (Harrastaen tutuksi in Finnish) aimed to make free-time activities more accessible for young people from immigrant backgrounds.

The project sought to promote their integration to the local community, for example through getting to know the locals and the culture. The idea of the project was to promote two-way integration, inclusion of immigrants, equality and develop inclusive practices in the youth field.

The main product of the project’s brainstorming workshops was a unique accessibility manual, which serves as a tool for those who want to be involved in making their free-time activities more open and accessible for everyone. The tools can also be applied for other kinds of services.

* Find the original version of the publication here (in Finnish): [Saavutettavan vapaa-ajan toiminnan askeleet](#).



SAAVUTETTAVAN VAPAA-AJANTOIMINNAN ASKELEET

Saavutettava harrastustoiminta on kaikkien yhteinen etu. Saavutettavuus ja avoimuus helpottavat uusien toimijoiden mukaan tuleamista sekä tekevät harrastustoiminnasta elinvoimaisempaa. Harrastamisella on myös tärkeä merkitys nuorelle oman paikan löytämisessä yhteiskunnasta.

Tässä sinulle opas, joka tarjoaa vinkkejä saavutettavan harrastustoiminnan kehittämiseen. Oppaan vinkkejä hyödyntämällä voitte tehdä vapaa-ajan toiminnasta kaikille nuorille saavutettavampaa.

Did you know: According to Statistics Finland, in 2022 there were 324,000 foreign citizens and 508,000 persons with foreign background (both parents born abroad) in Finland.

Objectives of the project

- to identify the needs of young people who have moved to Finland and channel them into the actions of those who organize free-time activities
- to involve new ideas and volunteers in the youth field and support the development of equality and accessibility of their own activities

Activites

- participatory workshops
- trainings
- hobby projects
- modeling the results

To whom?

- young immigrants looking for free-time activities

- youth 15–29 ages old
- youth clubs, sport clubs, non-profit sector
- workshops carried out in 7 different cities in Finland

Good practices/tools identified in the project

One of the main outcomes of the project was a manual on inclusive youth free-time activities (Saavutettavan vapaa-ajan toiminnan askeleet in Finnish).

It identifies five obstacles to inclusive youth free-time activities from young immigrants' perspective: lack of knowledge and communication, lack of networks and contacts, socioeconomic obstacles, thresholds related to time and area and insecurity and feelings of discrimination.

Below are the key take-aways of the manual on how to overcome these obstacles:



Lack of knowledge and communication

Young people in the area are not aware of all the opportunities available for free-time. What are the adequate channels to reach young people with a migrant or minority background?

How to overcome?

- use different languages
- remember diversity in visual communications material
- head on the spot to communicate with young people (e.g. schools)
- get in touch and cooperate with NGOs
- visit events where young people spend time
- communicate about your activities also through schools
- invest in clear and high-quality materials
- use plain language and multichannel communication
- produce short videos (e.g. to introduce your activities)
- active use of social media channels, for example Instagram



Lack of networks and contacts

It is often a challenge to find the right contacts. Going to an activity without anyone you know feels difficult.

There is a lack of tacit knowledge and networks.

How to overcome?

- pay attention to the diversity of coaches and instructors and offer support to young people interested in coaching; this lowers the thresholds to participate and strengthens connections with different kinds of families.
- involve people from different backgrounds in developing your activities at all levels; ask the young people in your association for advice and encourage them to develop the activities.
- offer mentorship activities or similar kinds of support



Socioeconomic obstacles

Lack of both economic and social resources are repeated in the experiences of young people again and again.

How to overcome?

- organize low-threshold activities in e.g. low-income areas
- make sure it is visible if your activities are free of charge
- communicate your activities also at the municipal level
- arrange free trials for young people to get to know the sport
- contact the municipal youth services and ask for information or support for applying grants
- find out what kind of grants are available to young people
- develop projects in cooperation with other actors
- create a list of free leisure activities in your area



Thresholds related to time and area

Young people have a lot of commitments in life. They must be at school, attend courses and/or work. Transport connections must be good enough so that participating in free-time activities is possible.

How to overcome?

- collect feedback and ideas from young people
- schedule your activities for evenings and weekends or to take place at the school after classes
- locate your activities along good (public) transport connections
- organize joint transports to free-time activities (e.g. carpools)



Insecurity and feelings of discrimination

Free-time activities lack the means to talk about prejudice and the tools to intervene in exclusion. It would be good to have more awareness and tools.

How to overcome?

- coaches and instructors should better understand culturally sensitive activities
- demand/provide training and materials for coaches and instructors
- create a code of conduct together with the group
- pay attention to taking different kind of people into account in planning and carrying out your activities; e.g. ask for participants' opinions
- create common guidelines to tackle discrimination
- pay attention to the transparency of everyday activities
- ensure participants know who to contact in case of discrimination/ other in-conveniences
- offer also non-competitive free-time activities

OUR DOORS ARE OPEN FOR EVERYONE

A guide to more inclusive practices by the Finnish Youth Association.*

Do you think your activities have open doors to all youth? How to know if yes or no?

The Finnish Youth Association is one of the largest youth hobby organisations in Finland. We reach children and young people across the country, especially in rural and remote areas. Some of our member organisations are struggling to find young people to take part in the association's activities and don't really understand why.

We say we have "open doors" but are they really open? To tackle this challenge, we wanted to explore whether this has to do with invisible barriers. Sometimes the main obstacles are the old ways of thinking and doing, the unconscious bias of individual people.

* Find the original version of the publication here (in Finnish): [Ovet auki kaikille! Yhdenvertaisuus- ja moninaisuusosaamisen opas.](#)



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Background

According to the School Health Survey from 2021, about 50% of young people in junior secondary school (age 14–15) have a cultural hobby (girls 66%, boys 34%), in high school 59% (girls 68%, boys 48%) and in vocational school 37% (girls 50%, boys 27%).

The number of sports hobbies is significantly larger, with 47% of junior secondary school goers having an organised sports hobby and 75% a self-organised sports hobby. In high school the numbers are about the same and in vocational school a bit lower.

Today, young people face an increasing number of mental health issues.

In a report on the future of young people, released on 25th of May 2022, 87% of young people said that they want to work in an environment in which everyone is respected as they are and in which they are treated equally. This most likely applies to free-time activities too.

LGBTQI+ youth are at a greater risk to face discrimination and mental health problems due to their gender or sexual identity. According to studies, young people with a multicultural background face the lack of opportunities due to language-related or cultural barriers.

Disabled young people tend to have less sports hobbies than non-disabled youth; there are no statistics about cultural hobbies.

29% of young people who identified themselves as a part of a minority face discrimination in cultural leisure-time activities (National study on young people's cultural free time activities, 2020). The overall number was 20% of all young people.

One third of all young people have experienced discrimination or bullying in free-time sports activities. With LGBTQI+ youth, this percentage is 60% (National study on young people's sports activities on their free time, 2018).

What is the guidebook for more inclusive practices?

Our organisation's values are participation, the sense of belonging (to a community), diversity and equity. In order to "walk the talk", we need to enhance our work with inclusive communities. We decided to start with our staff: we needed to find out how well they are acquainted with DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) themes to understand better what needed to be done. We did a survey among our staff to find out what is the level of understanding in DEI themes. This was done in autumn 2020 by one of our staff members, Riikka Järvinen, who was also doing her MA thesis on the topic. We needed to start from our staff so they would then recognise the potential challenges in our member organisation who are mainly in charge of running the free-time activities on local level. The local hobby instructors play a key role, as they are the ones meeting the young participants.

We decided to tailor training and create guidelines based on the findings of the survey. We wanted to investigate their competences, as well as their attitudes, unconscious bias, etc. In addition to training, we needed to develop concrete materials, such as the rules for safer space. We wanted to first train our staff and then our members, as mentioned above.

Key findings of the survey

During November-December 2020, 40 respondents responded to the survey, of whom 75% were in paid employment, 22% in training, and 3% were otherwise involved in activities (e.g. freelancers).

Equality in relation to one's own work in youth clubs provoked much reflection in the open answers.

The survey showed that the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion are recognized both in general and as part of the values of the organisation, but they do not always happen in practice.

Some respondents considered concrete actions (accessibility, inclusion), some whether changes needed to be structural. All recipients were familiar with the concepts of hate speech, language minorities and sexual and gender minorities whereas the concept of socio-economic status was recognised by 77,5% of recipients, gendering 62,5% and the principles of a safer space by 50%. Intersectionality was recognised by mere 27,5% of the recipients.



Content of the guide

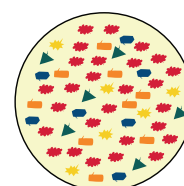
The guide investigates the concepts from the most common topics related to diversity, equity and inclusion, from theory to practice. The identified key concepts are 1) discrimination, harassment, and racism, 2) equality and equity and its different forms and 3) diversity of participants (gender and sexual minorities, different families, mental and physical health status, age and generation, different cultures, etc.). These were important to explain in order to recognize e.g. power structures and to understand one's own position in relation to others. The theory was put together from various sources.

The guide also contains tips on how to use the theoretical things in practice. The training that was developed according to the guide contains e.g. discovering unconscious bias and how to deal with them as well as how to implement the principles of a safer space in all practices that we do. Once we have trained our staff, they can then train our members who run the local branches of the Finnish Youth Association.

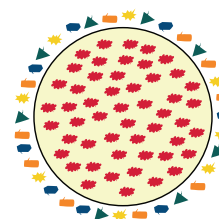
The content is:

1. Purpose of the guide - why is this relevant
2. Theory & vocabulary
3. Steps for making your activities more accessible for everyone
4. Exercises to develop your own understanding
5. Tips and reflection for practical support
6. More information (and literature)

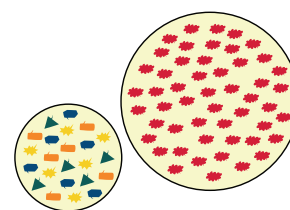
The guide was developed together with the Citizen's Forum, who supported its publication financially, as well as the Finnish Peace Education Institute, who consulted the content.



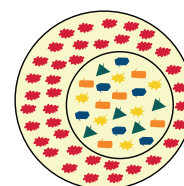
INCLUSION



EXCLUSION



SEGREGATION



INTEGRATION

Implementing the guide in practice

When you start planning for more inclusive practices, ask yourself the following:

- 1** On whose terms do I work?
- 2** What are the key values that guide my work? How do they relate to the Equality Act, the Youth Act, and the professional ethical principles of (cultural) youth work?
- 3** Do I support the specialty in the young person, or do I reinforce the normative behavior to which the participants “adapt” to?
- 4** How do I feel about something unfamiliar to me?
- 5** Do I recognize racism, gay and transphobia, sexism, ableism, or cultural discrimination?
- 6** Do I have enough resources to deal with bullying or hate speech?

These are the guiding questions that will lead us to making our practices safer for everyone and more inclusive.

ACCESSIBILITY OF OPEN YOUTH WORK

Innovation plan “Integrating teenagers with visual, hearing and mobility impairments in Tartu into the activities of youth centres with the support of nature education” by Tartu Youth Work Center.

Did you know: It is estimated that 16% of the global population has a significant disability (WHO).

Overview of the innovation plan

From 19.09.2019 to 30.11.2021, Tartu Youth Work Center implemented the innovation plan “Integrating Tartu teenagers with visual, hearing and mobility impairments into the activities of youth centres with the support of nature education”. The innovation plan was part of the Republic of Estonia Ministry of Education and Research’s comprehensive plan “Involving youth at risk of exclusion and improving youth employment readiness”, which was funded by the European Union.



The objectives of the innovation plan:

- to integrate young people with additional needs into youth work in Tartu, so that they feel like an equal part of society.
- to increase the participation of young people with additional needs in community activities (outside special schools).
- to increase the tolerance and awareness of so-called ordinary youth towards young people with additional needs.
- to make the youth centres of the city of Tartu accessible and user-friendly for young people with additional needs.
- to educate youth work specialists in Tartu to increase their competence in working with young people with additional needs and to create guidance material.

Activities that took place within the framework of the innovation plan

1. Conducting research in schools for young people with special needs and associations that bring together their parents.
2. Adaptation of municipal youth centres to be accessible and autonomously usable for young people of the target group.
3. Changing the attitudes of young people with visual, hearing and mobility disabilities in Tartu and their parents through an information campaign and involvement.
4. Development of Tartu Youth Work Center as a competence centre for other institutions working with young people.
5. Realization of the plan of nature education initiatives.

1. CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND ASSOCIATIONS THAT BRING TOGETHER THEIR PARENTS.

The Tartu City Government ordered two studies. The first was carried out in schools for young people with special needs and associations that bring together their parents at the beginning of the project in order to get information from the target group regarding expectations and obstacles and to find out the percentage of young people with visual, hearing and mobility disabilities participating in youth work out of all young people with visual, hearing and mobility disabilities. The study was also an input for the preparation of a more detailed action plan. The comparison study among the same target group took place at the end of the operational period of the innovation plan.

2019 survey results (in Estonian)

2021 survey results (in Estonian)

2. ADAPTATION OF MUNICIPAL YOUTH CENTRES TO BE ACCESSIBLE AND AUTONOMOUSLY USABLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE TARGET GROUP

All the youth centres of Tartu Youth Work Centre were adapted according to the possibilities:

For example:

- In the Lille youth centre, light signals were installed for persons with hearing impairment, which signal when there is an emergency in the building.
- In the youth centres of Anne and Lille, special tapes were installed on the stairs, which help persons with visual impairment to distinguish the steps.
- Ramps for wheelchairs were installed in the Anne and Lille youth centers. In addition, the surface of the Anne youth center's yard was improved so that it can be passed by a wheelchair.
- In the Anne youth centre, one of the toilets was adapted for wheelchair access.
- Activity tools suitable for young people with visual, hearing and mobility disabilities were purchased for all youth centres. When acquiring the tools, the results and analysis of the study were used to find out which tools are needed for the work of the centre and to achieve user-friendliness. For example, adjustable basketball hoops and wheelchair-accessible table tennis tables were purchased in the courtyards of all centres, shelves were placed in the youth rooms so that also persons in wheelchair can access the things there, blackout curtains were installed in the centres to reduce shadows caused by daylight for persons with visual impairment, and carpets were purchased to reduce the echo for young people with hearing impairment, Braille labels were placed on the board games, and more games were purchased that would be easier to play (for young people with both visual and hearing impairment).
- The social media content of the youth centres was adjusted to be more accessible to all young people (e.g. subtitles for videos, image descriptions for posts, designs with contrasting colours).
- At city-wide events, sign language interpreters were involved, who translated both the workshops and the stage program. Information about some events was also sent out in sign language.

3. CHANGING THE ATTITUDES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH VISUAL, HEARING AND MOBILITY DISABILITIES IN TARTU AND THEIR PARENTS THROUGH AN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN AND INVOLVEMENT

- Schools for young people with special needs and organizations of people with disabilities were introduced to the possibilities of youth centres.
- Training programs for youth workers were also held in cooperation with specialists, which increased parents' sense of security and confidence in the activities and services of youth workers.

For example, all the youth workers of the Tartu Youth Work Center completed the initial sign language course. In addition, meetings were held with representatives of professional associations and trainings were held by them (e.g. what should be considered when planning the activities of young people with additional needs).

4. DEVELOPMENT OF TARTU YOUTH WORK CENTER AS A COMPETENCE CENTRE FOR OTHER INSTITUTIONS WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

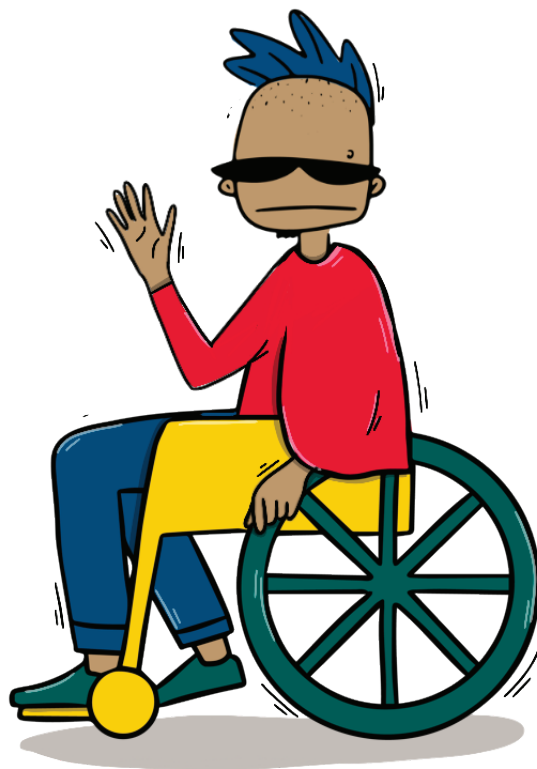
- As part of the innovation plan, a separate website was created that deals with work with young people with additional needs (descriptions of various additional needs that must be considered when planning activities and other important information).considered when planning the activities of young people with additional needs).

5. REALIZATION OF THE PLAN OF NATURE EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Since the implementation of the innovation plan took place mainly during the covid-19 pandemic, nature education activities with young people with additional needs were implemented rather few. But still, for example, there was a camp for young people, during which various nature education workshops took place, they went on a hike and learned the tricks of survival in nature.

RESULTS OF THE INNOVATION PLAN

- Cooperation and communication with schools for young people with additional needs continues. For example, Tartu Youth Work Centres information is sent weekly to the school of young people with visual impairment and joint activities are organized for groups in youth centres.
- Sign language interpreters are continuously engaged to translate the workshops and stage program of city-wide events.
- In the new season, a sign language translation will be added to the TNTK podcast “Noorteaken”.
- In the summer, there is a separate work camp group for young people with additional needs.
- TNTK employees continue to share their knowledge and skills with other colleagues working with young people.
- The access detection of the centres is improved every new fiscal year.



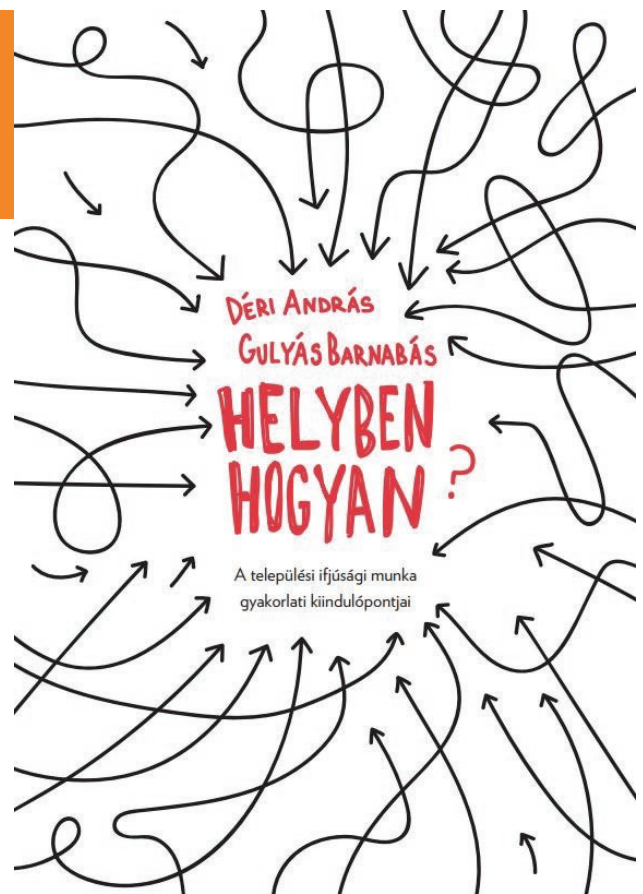
ACCESSIBILITY OF YOUTH COUNCILS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

A guide for running youth councils and improving decision-making processes by Federation of Children's and Youth Municipal Councils.*

How are youth included in decision-making in your area? What is the rate of youth representation in politics in your area?

The Children's and Youth Municipal Councils operate locally, consisting of democratically elected young individuals chosen by their peers (residents or students) in the settlement. Their mission revolves around organising local youth events, advocating for their interests before the municipal government, and fostering intergenerational connections within the community. This non-political organisation seeks to instil a sense of civic responsibility and participation in the youth from an early age.

* Find the original version of the publication here (in Hungarian): [Helyben hogyan? A települési ifjúsági munka gyakorlati kiindulópontjai](#)



The inception of the first Children's and Youth Municipal Councils in the early 1990s is attributed to the dedicated efforts of Pál Beke, a passionate community development professional advocating the cause. Following his experience in community education in France, he stumbled upon a French publication on Children's Municipal Councils. Inspired, he shared his insights, sparking a movement for study tours. An adventurous minibus journey to France ensued, with community development professionals, cultural managers and municipal leaders exploring villages and meeting local organisations, leaders, and mayors. During this trip, they, as adults, established a support association for Children's and Youth Municipal Councils. Upon returning home,

the movement took root, establishing the first Children's and Youth Municipal Councils in 1992.

Our organisation, Federation of Children's and Youth Municipal Councils (GYIÖT), was established in 1996 as an umbrella organisation for the Children's and Youth Municipal Councils of Hungary. Over the years, the organisation's structure and objectives have undergone significant changes. However, one of the most crucial goals remains constant: supporting young people in participation and active citizenship, with a particular focus on the local level.

Over time, we recognised that it's not only young people who require support in comprehending the concepts of participation and active citizenship. Equally important is the need for municipal government decision-makers to grasp the significance of youth participation. As a response, we expanded our efforts to collaborate with decision-makers, fostering opportunities for local discussions between young individuals and decision-makers. This interaction facilitates the convergence of opinions and needs, fostering a deeper understanding of participation.

We have developed publications and various tools addressing this theme, specifically designed to foster a dialogue between young people and local decision-makers.

What is the guidebook for running youth councils and improving decision-making processes?

The guidebook titled "Helyben Hogyan? A települési ifjúsági munka gyakorlata kiindulópontjai" (in English: How to do it locally? Practical Starting Points for Youth Work in Settlements) serves as a comprehensive resource for enhancing youth councils and decision-making processes. It addresses key aspects of local youth work, offering insights into defining youth work, exploring various directions for its implementation, and emphasising the role of youth policy in realising effective practices. The guidebook aims to guide decision-makers, municipal staff, and anyone interested in promoting youth engagement and participation.

The concept of local youth work encompasses a multitude of elements that inherently raise numerous questions and points of contention. These debates and inquiries stem from a wide array of interpretative frameworks. To comprehend the "local" aspect, one must be familiar with the characteristics of settlement structures and regions. In the case of youth, it is essential to discern the motivations behind various definitions and their overlapping and distinct features and to remain attuned to the current trends and demands concerning youth work.

About youth councils and how they can be more inclusive - Some important aspects and principles

Youth councils serve as vital platforms for young individuals to voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making processes.

Ensuring the accessibility of these councils and their associated decision-making procedures is of importance. Accessibility encompasses not only physical entry but also the removal of any socio-economic, cultural, or psychological barriers that may hinder the participation of diverse youth.

- Firstly, physical accessibility applies to providing spaces where youth councils are held. These spaces must be inclusive, accommodating individuals with disabilities, and situated in locations accessible by public transportation. Moreover, the timing of meetings should be considerate of young people's schedules, including school and work commitments.
- Secondly, socio-economic barriers must be addressed to enhance the inclusivity of youth councils. Financial constraints should not prevent any young person from participating. Scholarships, subsidies for transportation,

and opportunities for remote engagement can significantly relieve financial burdens.

- Cultural inclusivity is equally crucial. Decision-making processes within youth councils should celebrate diversity, acknowledging the various backgrounds and perspectives that young people bring. Language barriers should be overcome, ensuring that discussions and materials are accessible to non-native speakers.
- Psychological barriers, often overlooked, can dissuade youth from engaging in decision-making. Fostering a supportive and respectful environment where young voices are valued can encourage participation. Mentorship programs, training workshops, and accessible information about the council's activities can allay feelings of intimidation or inadequacy.

In conclusion, youth councils stand as valuable mechanisms for inclusive decision-making. Their effectiveness is contingent upon accessibility in its various dimensions: physical, socio-economic, cultural, and psychological. Upholding accessibility ensures that the voices of all young individuals, regardless of their circumstances, are heard and integrated into decisions that shape their communities. As we move forward, we must continue to refine

and expand the accessibility of youth councils, enriching our communities with diverse perspectives and fostering a culture of participation.

PRINCIPLES OF MUNICIPAL YOUTH POLICY WITH THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Involvement

Involvement is always voluntary, guided by clear and open communication conditions and rules. It's essential to clarify how much influence young individuals have, who supports them, and what happens with their suggestions and opinions.

The purpose and extent of their inclusion must be well-defined. Ideally, this involvement should fit into an established, continuous system based on mutual relationships. The nature and function of this relationship depend on local needs and possibilities. It's crucial to focus on making access to decision-making processes as widely available as possible, primarily for young people but also for the entire population, rather than aiming for quantifiable "inclusion." Inclusion serves as a positive example for the youth, mirroring what adults exhibit.

Additionally, involvement empowers young people to understand their rights, responsibilities, and roles in local society and public affairs. Civic education stimulates their participation in community matters, particularly extracurricular activities, as evidenced by our experiences. Before commencing inclusion efforts, one of the most crucial steps is determining our goals: what we aim to achieve through involving the target group.

Relationships / collaborations

When designing local youth policies, collaboration is recommended as it enables efficient resource utilisation and ensures the best measures for the youth. There are various options for establishing relationships, and creativity is the only limit to how local authorities and decision-makers can foster connections not only with young people but also with the entire population. It's important to strive for a broader context when building relationships and not restrict it solely to electoral authorization. Partner-based communication, relationships, and cooperation have a future-building and community-developing impact on the municipality.

A well-functioning local youth policy:

- Identifies the most essential needs of local young people.
- Provides the most effective municipal solutions for these needs.
- Addresses the improvement of young people's life situations and quality of life in a relevant manner.
- Ensures that youth matters are considered by other sectors when planning their guidelines.
- Establishes cross-sector collaboration with those working for and with young people, forming a strong foundation for achieving shared goals.
- Coordinates and channels various local youth initiatives and activities to the municipality.
- Implements a transparent and clear resource allocation system that satisfies the needs of young people and supports the work of organizations beneficial to them.
- Uses diverse means to recognize the contribution of the youth demographic to the local community's development.
- Encourages young people to take an active role in various aspects of community life.
- Creates a framework that guarantees the consideration of young people's needs in the future.
- Strengthens intergenerational dialogue and collaboration at the local level.

INCLUSION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION GROUP MODEL

Citizenship Education Group model to promote inclusion in the field of active citizenship co-developed by Le Discipline.

How would you describe the relationship between social inclusion and active citizenship?

In Italy, particularly in our city Florence, there are several organisations engaging young people in diverse recreational activities. Additionally, given the city's robust political tradition, there are many student unions in both schools and universities where one can convene to discuss current affairs and politics.

However, our organization has identified a need for something different: a space that harmonizes both these aspects and serves as a safe and inclusive environment.

What we are referring to is both:

- a physical space: because all meeting places are locations where to “consume” something (food, beverages, training courses).
- a mental space: because the available political spaces in the city demand a form of allegiance to a well-defined ideology and often resist open dialogue and diversity of opinions and perspectives.

Hence, the primary goal of our organization is to establish such a space serving as a tool available to anyone desiring to use it for presenting their own content, projects, and initiatives.

THE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION GROUP (“GEC”) MODEL

To make active citizenship as inclusive as possible, Le Discipline developed together with the WeCare network, the so-called “GEC” model which is now at the core of the educational experience provided by the organisation. GECs—from the Italian acronym of “Citizenship Education Group”—are groups of at least 10 young-sters who come from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Their interest arises because of activities carried out by the organization. These include workshops on European civic education, sessions addressing discrimination and hate speech, as well as initiatives promoting social justice.

Moreover, some youngsters come from the experience of summer camps held in assets confiscated from criminal organizations. Here they delve into a deeper understanding of the mafia phenomenon; then the focus extends to fostering the ability to reflect on one’s daily behavior and the contribution everyone can make to society by acting as a responsible citizen. These youngsters have chosen to take a step forward and commit themselves to their local community by engaging with our organization.

They meet once a week to learn and grow collectively for several years, guided by a slightly older youth leader referred to as “uncle” or “auntie”. They support the youngsters during their meetings, enabling them to train, discuss and implement awareness raising and community development activities. The uncles and aunties also guide them in understanding how to actively participate in the political and democratic life of their territory.

The GECs provide a training ground for personal growth and active citizenship, as well as a platform for peer-to-peer sharing. All the groups are composed of young individuals aged 16–22 and with diverse social backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities, origins, and cultural backgrounds.

What have we done to promote participation of diverse youth? Le Discipline agrees upon an inclusive and comprehensive approach to commitment and engagement. The organisation actively fosters an environment that values and celebrates diversity:

- By establishing open channels of communication: We use free of charge and user-friendly social media such as WhatsApp and Instagram. These platforms enable young individuals with disabilities, social barriers, and limited technological

competences to engage with us, stay informed about our initiatives, and keep in touch.

- By making all the activities free of charge: We apply for local and regional fundings to support our activities and cover expenses (stationary materials, etc.). As for the youth workers who oversee the activities of the groups—the so called “uncles”/ “aunties” –they dedicate their time on a voluntary basis.
- By creating spaces for dialogue where each person’s unique perspective is not only acknowledged but also encouraged. We always sit in a circle to foster horizontal interaction, allowing everyone to make eye contact with others. Within the circle everyone has the right to speak and express themselves; furthermore, to promote active listening, we sometimes adopt a free-sharing policy. During this time, individuals can speak and share their own perspectives or reflections, and no one should interfere.
- By organizing the meeting within our venue, which is fully accessible, we ensure that even people with disabilities can participate.

The added value of GEC is that it represents a model adopted by all the organisations within the WeCare national network. Each year, as a network, we propose a citizenship campaign, which entails a central theme inspiring the activities and reflections throughout the year.

This approach fosters moments of exchange among different GECs, allowing the youngsters to engage with peers from other cities who share a similar experience. This exchange culminates in a 4-days summer camp where GECs from all the organisations come together and meet.

CONCLUSION

Through GEC, we aim to present a model of volunteerism that is inclusive, devoid of a paternalistic perspective, where young individuals are not mere recipients but active protagonists. This is not merely about an inclusive and open participation model; it represents an opportunity, an initial step towards engagement and political activism. For us, education is inherently political, and raising awareness translates into taking action. This embodies our understanding of active and inclusive participation.

ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY OF UNIVERSITY EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Unlocking Opportunities: Enhancing Accessibility of University Extracurricular Activities for Youth in Difficult Situations by Radio R.

Did you know: Students who participate in extracurricular activities often struggle with time commitments, but generally have more positive educational experiences.

In Radio R, we take pride in giving opportunities to everyone who shows motivation to improve their skillset. As mentioned earlier, our organisation consists of volunteers only, which means we have to treat our members knowing they participate as a hobby. Accessibility is very important aspect as we need to give every youngster same opportunity to join our program of free-time activities.

The importance of free-time activities for youth cannot be overstated, as they contribute significantly to personal development, well-being, and a sense of community. However, youth facing difficult situations such as socio-economic challenges, discrimination, or mental health issues often encounter barriers that limit their access to these enriching experiences.



The impact of free-time activities on youth development

Free-time activities play a pivotal role in shaping the holistic development of young individuals. Engaging in extracurricular pursuits fosters creativity, builds self-confidence, and provides opportunities for skill acquisition. Moreover, participation in recreational activities contributes to improved mental health, social integration, and the development of a strong sense of identity.

Unfortunately, youth facing difficult situations often find themselves on the sidelines, unable to access the myriad benefits of these activities. Whether it be financial constraints, societal prejudices, or inadequate support systems, these barriers impede the potential positive impact that free-time activities can have on their lives.

IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGES

To address the accessibility gap, it is imperative to understand the multifaceted challenges that hinder youth in difficult situations from participating in free-time activities.

- **Financial barriers**

Economic disparities often restrict access to extracurricular activities. Costs associated with equipment, memberships, or participation fees create a significant hurdle for youth from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

- **Social stigma and discrimination**

Youth facing discrimination, be it based on race, gender, or other factors, may encounter exclusion and prejudice in traditional recreational spaces. This social stigma acts as a deterrent, limiting their willingness to engage in free-time activities.

- **Mental health struggles**

Those grappling with mental health issues may find it challenging to participate in group activities due to anxiety, fear of judgment, or a lack of understanding from peers and organizers.

- **Limited access to information**

In many cases, youth in difficult situations may not be aware of the available free-time activities due to a lack of information or outreach efforts.

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY

- **Financial support programs**

Implementing financial assistance programs, scholarships, or subsidies for participation fees can help alleviate the economic burden on youth from financially constrained backgrounds.

- **Inclusive spaces and programs**

Creating inclusive recreational spaces and programs that actively combat discrimination and promote diversity fosters an environment where all youth feel welcome and valued.

- **Mental health awareness and support**

Establishing initiatives that raise awareness about mental health and offering support services within recreational settings can encourage youth facing mental health challenges to participate more comfortably.

- **Community outreach and partnership**

Collaborating with community organizations, schools, and local authorities to disseminate information about available free-time activities ensures that youth in difficult situations are aware of the opportunities open to them.

- **Flexible scheduling and remote options**

Recognizing the varied schedules and responsibilities of youth, providing flexible timing for activities, and exploring remote participation options can enhance accessibility.

Ensuring the accessibility of free-time activities for youth facing difficult situations is not only a matter of equity but an investment in the collective well-being and potential of our society. By dismantling barriers through targeted strategies and fostering inclusive environments, we empower these young individuals to thrive, contribute, and shape a more resilient and compassionate community. It is through such concerted efforts that we truly unlock the doors to a brighter future for all.



NEW TOOLS

Five out of seven partner organizations made use of the innovation model to create a new tool corresponding to their own context and needs. This chapter presents these five tools, which can be freely used by anyone interested in applying them to their work.

WHILE YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:

- What kind of thoughts does the tool raise in you?
- Do you have anything in mind you would like to add on the tool?
- How would the tool or parts of it fit to your own work?
- Do you have some other similar kind of tools in mind?



FINNISH YOUTH ASSOCIATION: PLAN TO HIRE EMPLOYEES WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TO SAFER SPACES

Problem: How to ensure all our workers understand safer space principles. The principles of a safer space are the default in all events of the organisation but there are still people both on local level and in the association who do not have a complete understanding of the meaning of these principles and their practical implementation. Safer space principles are not used often enough in events, projects, etc.

Cause: Materials exist but people are not familiar with them. The principles of safer space can also seem difficult and laborious from the point of view of a person who is not familiar with the subject in advance. It is important to help them and explain where to start and that it is possible to fix things piece by piece. It has been hoped that these questions would be clarified throughout the organization.

Consequence: There is a need for training on the safer space principles, practical instructions to comply with the principles and method training taking into account the target group. The most important actors here are managers and people acting as front-line employees in the association. Orientation is a particularly important step.

Solution: A 3-step hiring process plan to ensure new employees have the right attitude to safer space principles. As a result of the advocacy work of the employees, safer space principles spread to the awareness of members of the organisation, too.

1. BEFORE HIRING

- Put the values of the organisation in the job announcement.
- Put notice that the organisation follows safer space principles in a job announcement.
- Ask for an essay on these values and what they mean to the job seekers.

2. HIRING PROCESS / JOB INTERVIEW

- Use safer space principles in a job interview.
- In the beginning of the interview, tell the safer space principles and ask if the principles are familiar to the job seeker.
- Ask questions about values and safer space principles e.g.:
 - » What is the most important value for you?
 - » How would you explain our values to volunteers?
 - » How would you create safer space in associations work?

3. AFTER HIRING / DURING EMPLOYMENT

- When new people start their job, talk about the safer space principles to them. Make sure that this is part of the introduction process.
- Organize (an introduction) workshop for staff members about themes of diversity, equity, and equality.
 - » As a material use
 - Our doors are open for everyone – the Finnish Youth Association’s guide to more inclusive practices.
 - Project tools and materials of Inclusion is On.
- Focus on preventing problems.
 - » Use safer space principles throughout the organization and in the actions.
 - » Appoint and use harassment contact persons in activities.
- Create and implement a workshop for all employees on the implementation of these themes in activities with volunteers.
- Regularly train staff in these issues, deepening their basic knowledge.

TARTU YOUTH WORK CENTER: PLAN TO INCREASE THE REPUTATION OF YOUTH WORK

Problem: The main problem is that people have little awareness of today's youth work and its possibilities.

Cause: People have the impression that only young people with fewer opportunities or problems take part in youth work. This probably stems from the earlier times when youth work was not so developed. At the same time, the image can also be affected by people's own contact with youth centers, where youth workers with specialized education may not work, or the purpose of the youth worker is only to keep the center's door open.

Consequence: If young people do not get into youth work, there is a risk that decision-makers will not see a reason to invest money in youth work, and the local government will not support youth work sufficiently.

Solution: The solution to the problem is an image design plan for youth work to improve the image of youth work among the target group, community, and society.

YOUTH WORK REPUTATION DESIGN PLAN FOR SOCIETY:

- Opinion pieces and articles in newspapers and social media: Youth workers must make their voices heard. Therefore, they should write more opinion pieces and articles about youth work in newspapers and social media.
- Nationwide campaign: Youth work is generally introduced by posters at bus stops, in shopping malls and on digital screens.
- Campaign on television: Short advertisements on television introduce youth work or the profession of youth worker.
- Merch: To distribute merch that carries messages related to youth work to, for example, young people and cooperation partners.
- Articles on Wikipedia: Comprehensive articles explaining what youth work is, who a youth worker is, where you can learn youth work, what youth work offers to young people, etc.

YOUTH WORK REPUTATION DESIGN PLAN FOR DECISION MAKERS:

- Roundtables with decision-makers to discuss topics related to youth work.
- Involve decision-makers in various youth work events, both city-wide and inside youth centers.
- Active communication and cooperation with decision-makers; asking for feedback, expressing one's opinion, etc.

YOUTH WORK REPUTATION DESIGN PLAN FOR TARGET GROUP:

- Newsletters: Information about the activities of youth centers for both young people and parents
- Social media: It is important to be in those environments where there are young people and to share information about youth work opportunities there according to the nature of the social media environment.
- Podcasts: Share opportunities about youth work and involve young people themselves in creating podcasts.
- Visiting schools: An opportunity to reach young people in their usual environment.
- City-wide events: To introduce the possibilities of youth work through entertainment.

GYIOT: INITIATING DIALOGUE ON INCLUSIVITY AND CRAFTING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ENHANCED INCLUSIVENESS

Problem: In our organisation, the absence of a written inclusion strategy poses a challenge. This lack of strategic direction leaves us without a clear plan on how to make our programs and projects more open and inclusive, as well as determining the target groups we should prioritise for greater involvement.

Cause: Our organisation is highly attuned to specific needs, including dietary requirements, and actively involves and supports young people and youth workers from rural areas. We thoroughly address these needs in our programs and organizational operations, drawing from our personal involvement in these matters. This personal involvement equips us with the knowledge and experience needed to navigate these needs effectively. However, the spectrum of special needs is vast, and our knowledge is limited in some areas where we lack direct experience or connections. While we are diligent in ensuring program inclusivity for participants with special needs, this is happening only if they have already applied. But we lack the capacity to actively reach out and involve young people with special needs.

Solution: We consistently prioritize organisational learning processes. Throughout this project, we successfully

collaborated with an organisation specializing in young people with special needs, and included incorporating blind young individuals into our LTTA. We aim to share the learning outcomes from this experience with our colleagues and integrate them into the organisational workflow. This experience has enlightened us on the next actions required for greater inclusivity. We aim to gain insights into special needs, drawing from the experiences of seasoned youth workers. While our organization already boasts an extensive network of Hungarian youth workers, we aspire to diversify it by actively engaging those who specialize in working with young people with special needs. This strategy ensures that we have a pool of experts to consult when questions about special needs arise. To instill inclusion as a shared organisational value, we aim to initiate discussions within our members. This involves gathering meetings dedicated to this topic and sparking dialogues throughout the organisation.

THE INITIAL STEPS TOWARDS INCLUSIVITY AND TO HAVE ITS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

- We are set to kick off discussions on inclusivity within the organisation, marking the opening step in fostering dialogue, establishing shared understanding, and cultivating it as a core organisational value. These meetings will harness non-formal methods to actively engage and explore thoughts and interests surrounding the topic.
- We seek to specifically include in our network youth workers dedicated to supporting young people with special needs. Although we already have some connections, our goal is to expand this network, ensuring that we can reach out whenever we have questions about specific needs.
- We aim to extend invitations to these experts for a thorough discussion on specific special needs. The objective is to deepen our understanding of the topic, build connections among ourselves, and tap into each other's expertise. Envisioned as a 'Discussion Series with Experts,' these events will be open to both our expert network and youth workers outside our organisation who express interest. To enhance accessibility, we contemplate hosting some of these events online, particularly to accommodate youth workers from rural areas.

While our organisation is at the initial stages of becoming more inclusive, we are wholeheartedly open to the journey ahead. We believe that engaging in conversations within the organisation and discussions with experts will enhance our organisation members' understanding of special needs. It will provide insights on how to effectively address these needs and facilitate inclusive engagement. This approach ensures that all members acquire a knowledge base and establish connections to turn to when questions arise. These initial steps lay the groundwork for crafting a comprehensive strategy for inclusion in the future.

LE DISCIPLINE: PLAN FOR CREATING A SAFER SPACES POLICY IN OUR ORGANIZATION

Problem: In our organization and similar ones with the same topics and values, there is limited awareness of what constitutes safer spaces, resulting in insufficient consideration of how to ensure them. This project has prompted deep reflection on the importance of adopting an internal policy within the association, directed towards both its members and those who engage with us for projects, events, and initiatives.

Cause: Inclusion and accessibility are often taken for granted; we believe our doors are open to everyone. However, this assumption arises from a lack of training among our volunteers and youth workers on the subject. The organization, in turn, has not embarked on a collective reflection process on the topic.

Furthermore, our understanding of the concepts of “inclusion” and “accessibility” is slightly different from what we have delved into through the IncOn project. In Italy, we frequently associate these terms primarily with disabilities (especially physical) and socio-economic vulnerabilities, inadvertently excluding a range of other diversities that we assume are integrated into our environment but may not necessarily feel that way.

Consequence: We have limited awareness of how genuinely welcomed and included individuals feel during our activities.

Solution: We developed a sort of “active plan”, presented below.

1. NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS ASSESSMENT:

- Initiate a comprehensive assessment of needs and requirements from individuals within our organization, including volunteers, youth workers, the board of directors, and young members of informal groups.
- Extend the assessment to individuals who have participated in our past initiatives to understand their perspectives and experiences.

2. TRAINING AND AWARENESS:

- Launch training programs for volunteers and youth workers on the significance of safer spaces, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Collaborate with external experts or specialized organizations to provide targeted educational sessions.

3. COLLECTIVE REFLECTION:

- Organize collective reflection sessions within the organization to discuss and define what safer spaces mean in our specific context.
- Actively involve members in analyzing current practices and identify areas for improvement.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNAL POLICY:

- Draft a clear and detailed internal policy on safer spaces, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Ensure that the policy reflects the diversity of perspectives and experiences within our organization.

5. PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION:

- Integrate safer spaces principles into the organization's day-to-day activities.
- Provide practical resources and tools to effectively implement the policy.

In this regard, the youth workers who have undergone training through the Inclusion is On project have already developed a workshop that has been implemented for the past year prior to each community initiative (Community Week of Citizen Education Groups, summer camps, multi-day training, etc.). The workshop incorporates some of the activities conducted during Inclusion is On meetings and is designed to formulate an ad hoc safer spaces policy specific to that particular experience and those participants.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

- Implement monitoring systems to assess the effectiveness of the policy.
- Collect regular feedback from participants, volunteers, and members to identify any areas for improvement.

7. CLEAR COMMUNICATION:

- Communicate the new policy openly to members and those interacting with the organization.
- Ensure that all information about the policy is easily accessible to everyone.

8. ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT:

- Conduct periodic surveys to assess the organizational climate and gather feedback on the perception of inclusion.

9. CONTINUOUS ADAPTATION:

- Be willing to modify and adapt the policy based on evolving needs and new understandings.

By including this initial point, the organization can gather valuable insights and tailor the safer spaces policy to address the specific needs and expectations of its diverse stakeholders.

RADIO R: PLAN TO INCREASE MOTIVATION AND PARTICIPATION LEVEL OF VOLUNTEERS INSIDE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Problem: Within our organization, the priority is to face the challenge of motivating our younger members to actively engage in group projects and ensuring accountability for their assigned tasks. To address this, we are actively implementing strategies to inspire participation and instill a sense of responsibility. Our organization's structure tends to struggle in this department, trying to find ways to make our volunteers equally utilized in the projects.

Cause: All members, including those in management positions, serve as volunteers in our organization. Motivating and holding them accountable can be challenging given their diverse commitments such as school, part-time jobs, and personal time. Cultivating a healthy community is paramount. We aim for our members to find fulfillment in their volunteer work, prioritizing enjoyment over a checklist of tasks. Ensuring their comfort, active participation, and a sense of safety is crucial. Failing in this regard is a managerial shortcoming that hinders community effectiveness. Our commitment to member well-being is fundamental to our organization's success.

Consequence: Our organization currently operates with a structural framework comprising 10-15 proactive members who bear a disproportionate workload in the execution of organizational projects. Regrettably, there has been a tendency to favor this approach rather than instituting a more equitable distribution of responsibilities among the membership. This operational paradigm has resulted in a deleterious lose-lose scenario. Specifically, it has precipitated a burnout effect among our most active volunteers, concurrently impeding the cultivation of meaningful experiences for our younger members—critical for nurturing the next generation of dedicated volunteers.

This unequal distribution of tasks not only places undue strain on our more engaged members but also hinders the organic sharing of knowledge and experiences that is fundamental to the development of a robust volunteer base. Therefore, we are confronted with the risk of members resigning from their roles within the Radio, often attributable to insufficient communication during their initial engagement. The lack of a sense of belonging to the community from the outset leads them to perceive their involvement as an imprudent allocation

of their time, thus undermining the retention of valuable contributors. Addressing these systemic challenges is imperative to ensure a sustainable and flourishing organizational environment.

Solution: Acknowledging the imperative nature of cultivating an environment conducive to enthusiasm, our organization is resolutely dedicated to fostering a collaborative atmosphere that ignites creativity. The establishment of clear expectations and milestones, coupled with systematic check-ins and feedback mechanisms, serves to construct a framework fostering individual accountability within the team.

Additionally, we maintain a steadfast commitment to providing avenues for skill development and personal growth, aligning individual aspirations with the overarching objectives of our projects. The implementation of mentorship programs and workshops serves to augment collaborative learning, underscoring the principle that success is a collective endeavor.

PLAN TO IMPROVE

In recognizing the need for refinement in our internal operations, we identify key areas for improvement:

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Amidst the challenges posed by the Covid-19 crisis, our organization has endeavored to enhance internal communication. Utilizing a bespoke tool, namely a Google form, we solicit feedback from our volunteers and members regarding their preferred mode of communication. This feedback informs our practices, enabling us to tailor our approach to better suit the preferences of our stakeholders.

FACILITATING IN-PERSON ACCESSIBILITY FOR VOLUNTEERS

To address the issue of accessibility, particularly in relation to missed meetings, we have instituted dedicated office hours. Both the off-air and on-air managers have allocated specific times during the week to be physically present in the radio spaces, affording members and volunteers the opportunity for in-person interactions and discussions.

CULTIVATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY ONLINE

To fortify our sense of community in the digital realm, we have implemented a curated close friends list on our official Instagram platform. This strategic initiative allows us to share more informal and engaging content with our members, fostering a deeper sense of community, as we understand humor is an important part of teambuilding, just like freedom of coming up with personal projects.

STRENGTHENING INTERNAL STRUCTURIZATION

Lastly, recognizing the paramount importance of internal organization and management, we have undertaken a concerted effort to streamline our processes. This involves meticulous tracking of management positions, ensuring appointments are made exclusively with responsible and actively engaged individuals who demonstrate a genuine passion for dedicating their free time to our radio endeavors.

