

INCLUSION IN ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH PROJECTS

GUIDE FOR YOUTH
ORGANISATIONS



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Source: Erasmus+ Programme Guide

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

More about the Erasmus+ Programme: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

More about the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy - in the field of Youth: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/inclusion-diversity-strategy_en.pdf

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Source: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/european-youth-foundation>

More about the Council of Europe themes and the priorities of the Youth Sector: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/european-youth-foundation/council-of-europe-priorities>



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— Foreword

As an international network, Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) organises many projects and provides various learning opportunities for young people. But are these opportunities reaching and are available for any young person? This is one of the questions that drove us to explore the topic of inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities through the project “YEE-include: inclusion in environmental youth projects”.

This publication is the follow-up of the training course “YEE-include”, therefore it makes references to some of the ideas, concepts and methods that were explored by trainers with the international group of participants. We also added new information after doing more research. It not only aims to help youth workers, youth and environmental organisations to understand the topic of inclusion better, but it also suggests some practical ideas for making projects and activities more inclusive.


The booklet includes several chapters, starting from the theoretical approach on concepts such as social inclusion and exclusion, youth work, fewer opportunities, inclusion projects. In the second chapter we have a look at different topics and tools that were many times present in YEE projects (either together or separately) and see how we can use them with a more inclusive approach in future projects. In the third chapter you can find some tips on how to make your work more inclusive and what to keep in mind when working with young people with fewer opportunities. Last but not least, we will learn from other youth and social workers’ experiences in inclusive work, especially in the environmental field.

We hope that this booklet will be an interesting and useful source of information for its readers, as well as a starting point for researching more on the topics presented on its pages.

Roxana Nica,

On behalf of the editorial team





— About the training course “YEE-nclude”

The training course “YEE-nclude: inclusion in environmental youth projects” was held from the 2nd to the 9th of April 2017 in the environmental educational center “PROUD” in Horažďovice (Czech Republic). The idea of the project came from the understanding of the difficulties to reach and include marginalised youth in projects. Following the idea that working with and in nature can be a good tool for inclusion, we wanted to explore methods and approaches to include young people facing different kinds of obstacles and or coming from disadvantaged backgrounds in environmental projects.

During one week, 28 participants from Albania, Armenia, Moldova, Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, Georgia, Hungary and Poland were involved in different activities prepared by trainers and experts. Throughout “YEE-nclude” participants were trained in inclusive communication, shared their experience in environmental education, discovered tips on how to use media as a tool for inclusion, tried their creativity and reflected upon the issues of inclusion during the Theatre of the Oppressed, realised the importance of nature cycles in our life and much more. Tools of non-formal education were used to provide youth workers with knowledge and practical competences for working with young people with fewer opportunities. We hope that the training course will be a starting point for YEE network and other youth organisations for having more inclusive projects and more inclusive local communities.





**THE DESIRE
TO MAKE
THE WORLD
A BETTER
PLACE
UNITES US**



“This training course gave me the opportunity to grow personally and professionally. I met wonderful people from all over Europe who are actively involved in youth work and interested in making our society more inclusive for everybody.”

OLGA, UKRAINE

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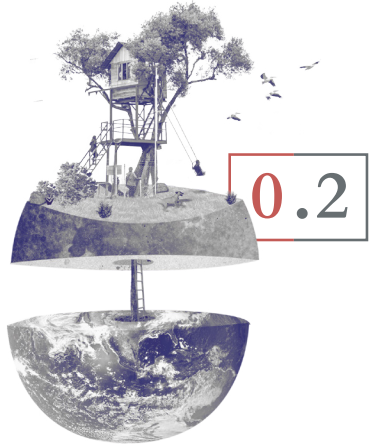
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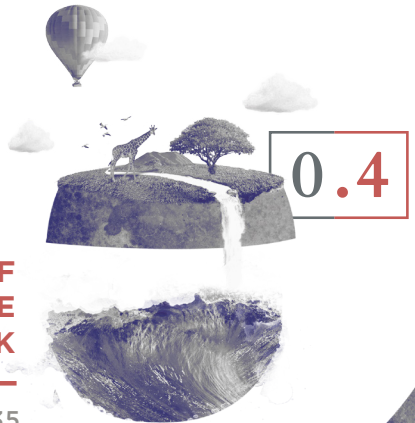
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INTRODUCTION TO INCLUSION



“Inclusive approach accepts and values heterogeneity of society, where all people are different and all equal.”

P.03 - DEFINITIONS

Inclusion (social inclusion), simply said, is creating an environment where everyone can participate, learn, contribute, and live a satisfying and useful life. It is based on a belief that everyone has strengths as well as needs and that everyone benefits from living in a diverse community.



— Definitions

To understand the roots of the idea of inclusion, we also need to mention social exclusion and social cohesion, and the way these concepts were shaped. Since the 1990s these terms have been dominating European social policy documents. From there they have been influencing policies of individual states and being put into practice by teachers, social workers, community workers, activists and others professionals. Many citizens also adopt the theory of inclusion into their general approach to life.

Social exclusion is a mechanism or strategy, by which one group protects their own privileges and benefits over the other group, by labeling them as undesirable and inconvenient and thus blocking their access to resources, positions, rewards and opportunities. In the 1970s this concept replaced the widely known concept of “poverty”. Suddenly, poverty became one of the aspects, but not the only aspect of social exclusion, next to ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability or geographical position, etc. In wider definition we can see social exclusion as a mechanism, which separates groups and individuals from the mainstream of society. This not only contains those who are excluded by the society, but also those who exclude themselves in an elitist way.

The concept of poverty is used to distinguish between rich people, who are “up” and powerful, and poor people, who are “down” and powerless. Nowadays, we have moved the focus of interest from this problem of wealth distribution to the weakening of social bonds. We now distinguish between those who are “in” and those who are “out”. Not every poor person has to be excluded and not every excluded person has to be poor.

Exclusive tendencies are nowadays considered undesirable, as they disturb integrity and **social cohesion** in society. So activities which lead to the reduction or elimination of sources of exclusion (or compensating its consequences), are not only based on solidarity, but also on a desire for social cohesion, which ultimately secures stability and peace in society. Social cohesion includes social relations, shared identities, trust, social control, solidarity, loyalty, and expectations towards each other. All these elements have origins in everyday interactions of people, who are stepping out of their individual anonymity, participating in public life and embracing co-responsibility for happenings out of their individual interests.

This leads us to **social inclusion**, which can also be defined as overcoming or eliminating social exclusion. Inclusion is not an ultimate state, it is a **process of change**. It is a movement towards the “ideal”, which may be far ahead of us, but already by aiming to be there, we are inclusive. We can see inclusion as an **endless process of striving for an equal approach in different areas of life** (education, work, services, etc.).

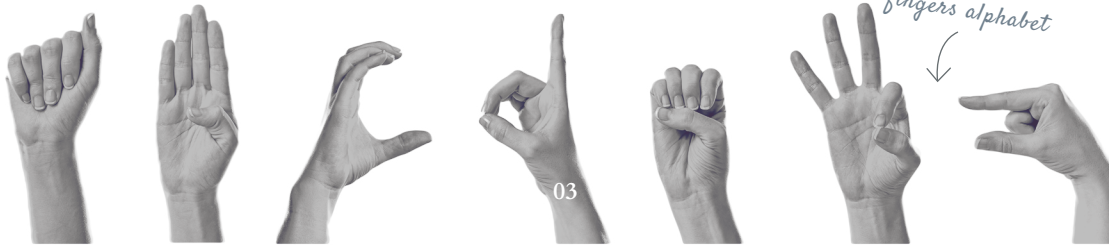
There is no clear borderline, which would decide if a person is excluded or included. That is why we do not label people or groups who are excluded and need help. Instead, we **focus on all members of society** and possible obstacles, which prevents them at that moment from participation in usual activities. **Inclusive approach accepts and values heterogeneity of society**, where all people are different and all equal. Inclusion is not meant to remove these differences, it is meant to offer equal approaches and opportunities, ideally even use the potential of diversity for common good. Next to respecting differences, inclusion also requires an action, from all those involved – those who are facing some obstacles at the moment as well as those who are in a more favorable situation.

— Inclusion and youth work

The inclusive approach can play an important part in youth work as well. Youth work can be defined as “a broad range of activities (e.g. social, cultural, educational, sports-related and political) carried out with, by and for young people through non-formal and informal learning. Youth work helps young people to reach their full potential. It encourages personal development, autonomy, initiative and participation in society.”¹

Youth work provides a lot of learning opportunities for young people where they can discover something new about themselves, gain new social and professional skills and boost their self-confidence. Youth organisations and centres are places where young people can meet others in a safe and supportive atmosphere. Youth work helps young people to express their needs and points of view and promotes active participation. Young people can learn more about democratic society and active citizenship through their participation in youth activities. Therefore, it is essential for youth organisations to incorporate an inclusive approach to their work and activities. With the help and support of youth organisations young people with fewer opportunities can face new challenges and opportunities.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/work_en.



BENEFITS OF INCORPORATING INCLUSION IN YOUTH WORK

0.1

Young people with fewer opportunities will have opportunities to become more open-minded, to broaden their horizons, to feel more confident to take on new challenges.

0.2

Young people can bring their knowledge and experience to a youth organisation. The organisation will get a better insight and understanding into the needs of young people with fewer opportunities and will be able to represent them better.

0.3

Youth work is the place where young people with very different backgrounds can meet together and learn more about diverse life realities. Such connections will help them develop feelings of empathy, understanding and respect for each other.

— Obstacles to the inclusion of young people

To learn where to focus our efforts, we present here 7 areas of possible obstacles²:

1 / Disability (i.e. participants with special needs) - young people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities, etc.

2 / Health problems - young people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions, etc.

3 / Educational difficulties - young people with learning difficulties, early school leavers, lower qualified persons, young people with poor school performance, etc.

4 / Cultural differences - immigrants, refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families, young people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, young people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties, etc.

² Classification retrieved from the "Inclusion and Diversity strategy" of the Erasmus+ programme: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/inclusion-diversity-strategy_en.pdf.

5 / Economic obstacles - young people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system, young people in long-term unemployment or poverty, young people who are homeless, in debt or with financial problems, etc.

6 / Social obstacles - young people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc., young people with limited social skills or anti-social or high-risk behaviours, young people in a precarious situation, (ex-)offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers, young and/or single parents, orphans, etc.

7 / Geographical obstacles - young people from remote or rural areas, young people living on small islands or in peripheral regions, young people from urban problem zones, young people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities), etc.”

It is not an exhaustive list, but it explains what we mean by obstacles and shows the large diversity of these obstacles. Often they appear in combinations, one causing or supporting another. Appearing in one or more of these situations can – and does not have to – mean we are excluded, however it also depends on the whole context. There are a few situations, where exclusion is always the case – when people’s fundamental rights are violated, they are always disadvantaged no matter how common this situation is in a particular context (for instance all people who are homeless, everyone who lives in poverty). Special attention should be given to groups for whom absolute exclusion factors apply.

— What is an inclusive project

There are 2 kinds of projects:

1 / A project which is inclusive itself and which removes possible obstacles in participation for people with fewer opportunities. Groups of participants in such a project are diverse and this diversity is valued and used for the common good.

2 / A project where inclusion is a topic, no matter who the participants are – they may be people with fewer opportunities or those who wants to develop and apply inclusive approaches in their activities.

Of course there can also be a combination of these two aspects in one project. With this in mind, in the next chapters we will continue exploring the topic of inclusion from both theoretical and practical perspectives. We will start by presenting a few concepts and tools that we can use with an inclusive approach...

... but before that, we invite you to first think about how your organisation understands inclusion and is prepared to work on inclusion projects. Below you will find a short checklist, where you can see how many points you can already 'check'.



**MY ORGANISATION'S
CHECKLIST FOR INCLUSION³**

- My organisation's mission reflects clearly what the organisation does, for whom, and why it is important.
- My organisation has clear goals and objectives for what it wants to achieve in terms of inclusion (are these expressed as SMART objectives?).
- My organisation has clear indicators by which it measures the impact of its inclusion work.
- The internal structure of my organisation is efficient and effective.
- The inclusion work done by my organisation is coherent - the different areas of work fit well with one another.
- There is staff in my organisation prepared to work with young people with fewer opportunities.

³ Most of the points were found in Salto Youth publication "Inclusion by Design": <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1674/InclusionByDesign.pdf>.

REFERENCES

Youth work: https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/work_en
Inclusion and Diversity strategy, Erasmus+ programme: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/inclusion-diversity-strategy_en.pdf
Inclusion by Design, Salto Youth: <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1674/InclusionByDesign.pdf>

0.2

MEANS FOR ADDRESSING INCLUSION



*“By observing and experiencing
natural happenings and laws, we
can get answers to our questions
and develop various qualities.”*

P.09 - NATURE

In the following pages we will discuss the possible connections between inclusion and concepts such as non-formal education, environmental education, participation, or games and gamification. For each section we suggest only a few starting points, which your organisation can use and develop further, based on the fields of activity and interest.

— Non-formal education and inclusion

Non-formal education (NFE) is one of the pillars of life-long learning, next to formal education (mainly school system) and informal learning (coincidental learning in everyday life situations).

It is an educational concept with the following main characteristics:

- it is voluntary,
- it aims to be accessible to everybody,
- it is an organised process with educational goals,
- it is focused on learners, their needs and learning process,
- it includes peer support – learning in/from the group next to individual learning,
- it is learning for life – competences which will be useful and used in life, preparation for active citizenship and participation in community life,
- it is holistic – focuses on knowledge, skills and attitudes, on developing whole personality, which includes emotional intelligence, values, etc.
- it is learning based on experience, its reflection and transformation into learning outcomes, thus it requires active participation,
- it is facilitated by a person who is offering space and guiding the process of learning (rather than delivering information in a frontal authoritative way).

NFE HAS A BIG POTENTIAL TO BE INCLUSIVE ON TWO LEVELS:

0.1

It offers chances for learning competences for social life, job market and can work for people who do not fit (for many different reasons) so easily into a formal educational system.

0.2


The NFE approach values diversity and focus on individual needs as well as potential and gifts of each learner, which is the core of inclusion. Therefore, NFE methods and values are more and more welcome in schools, where they are combined with methods more commonly found in formal education.

NFE METHODS AND ELEMENTS TO USE FOR INCLUSION

NFE methodology can be used during sessions in youth and environmental projects, in an inclusive way. Below you will find a few examples of methods and elements of NFE, which are supporting inclusion in the learning process and which you can adapt to your project's programme.

Most of these methods and elements were used during the training course "YEE-nclude":

Nature



Non-formal education uses the potential found in different environments and often happens in nature. It uses nature as a space where we can freely learn. There is enough space for everybody – on both a literal and symbolic level.

We can also see nature as a guide or teacher, which offers us symbols, metaphors and parallels for what is happening in us and in our society. By observing and experiencing natural happenings and laws, we can get answers to our questions and develop various qualities. For example, we could observe biodiversity in a natural forest and the way different species co-live there, support each other and create balance together. Another example might be to consider what happens in places where we plant monocultures. How do we feel there? What do these environments offer? What do they look like? How sustainable are they? Where would you choose to live and why?

More about nature-based learning and environmental education can be found in the next subchapter.





Circle

A very common setting in non-formal education is a circle, an archetypal shape, like when our ancestors were gathering around the fire. When there is no setting prepared, people have a natural tendency to gather in a circle, where the energy can freely flow. In a circle, everybody can see everybody else and there is no hierarchy or differences stated by the position. The circle gives everybody an equally good starting position to share their own story or point of view or to start an action. Circles are inclusive and they open the door for better understanding of social, linguistic and cultural diversity. Therefore, circles are great as a tool to deal with heterogeneous groups as well as to show diversity within a seemingly homogenous group. When this less hierarchical form of communication is used in communication between a youth worker and a young person, it creates a space where the self-esteem and responsibility of the young person can flourish. Settings with less hierarchy also enable age differences to vanish in the sense that everyone is equal and elders can learn from the young as well as the young from the old.

The circle setting naturally supports:

- interest in one another,
- respect and appreciation of diversity,
- self-awareness and responsibility for our own boundaries,
- truthfulness with ourselves,
- freedom.



Way of Council

Way of Council is a practice of non-hierarchical and violence-free form of communication, based on traditional ways of sharing and governing in a circle, which was developed in the Ojai Foundation in California. It is often used for community building, sharing and learning through life stories, decision making and honouring achievements. It also helps to explore crisis and conflicts and supports peace and reconciliation work.

By sharing personal stories in a circle we learn about each other, we develop understanding, compassion and connection, and we grow to respect and value diversity. We create space, where everybody can speak up and be listened to.

Way of Council is a complex practice with many different forms, but explained in the essence: we sit in a circle, focus on the principles mentioned above, and bring in a topic. We use a talking piece, which is passed around or taken from the center, to mark who is the only one speaking at that moment. Others are attentively listening. We explore the topic and possible outcomes in a non-reactive peaceful way, calling in the collective wisdom and aiming to bring what serves – to myself, to the community, to the higher good.

In environmental projects you can use this practice especially for:

- Sharing to learn about/from each other (e.g. Story of a moment when you felt connected with nature, story of a person from your region who you consider to be a sustainable entrepreneur).
- Reflecting (e.g. What are the learning outcomes you are taking home from here?).
- Collecting wisdom around burning topics and problematic issues (e.g. How do you manage the dilemma of focusing a project on inclusion? Which approach do you use to raise environmental awareness in communities “untouched” by this topic?).
- Making decisions (e.g. Do we accept a financial donation for our project from a company with controversial environmental behaviour? Do we switch our focus onto a newer topic which is interesting and useful for many people or do we stick with our original plan?).



Further readings about the Way of Council:

- European Council Network: <http://www.council-network.eu>.

- Council in Schools: www.cis.ojaifoundation.org.

- Jack Zimmerman, Virginia Coyle "The Way of Council. 2nd Edition", Bramble Books, 2009.

The Hero's Journey

The Hero's Journey is a pattern of personal growth and transformation, which was introduced by Joseph Campbell, an American mythologist, writer and lecturer. He has studied myths and fairytales of different cultures from all over the world, and discovered that they all follow the same pattern which we call today The Hero's Journey or The Monomyth. It is possible to apply the same pattern to many situations in our lives. The word "Hero" might seem to refer to men only, but it also applies to women: "Heroines". We can use the concept as a map of our inner and outer life journeys, reflecting on where we are and planning how to continue.

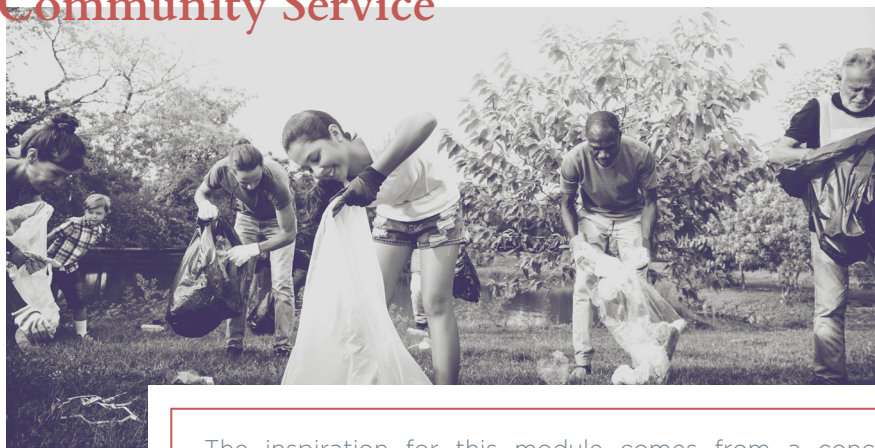
In your projects you can explain the model by simply showing the participants the methodology, or taking a group walk in nature with stops focusing on different stages. You can use myths and fairytales of cultures, modern movies, or situations from our life to deepen understanding of the model and to connect with it. Then you can use it for orientation in our current situation – in life, in work, in your project: Where are we? Who is our mentor/guide? What are the obstacles on the way? What is the dragon/the big ordeal we are fearing? What is the reward? Do we use our reward in service of the community? Are we stuck somewhere? Is it time to move? Are we accepting the calls for adventure or rather refusing? Are we accepting challenges, which can create a space for learning and transformation?



Further readings about the Way of Council:

Joseph Campbell "The Hero with a Thousand Faces. 3rd Edition", Pantheon Books, 2008.

Community Service



The inspiration for this module comes from a concept “**Service and Care**”, developed by a collective of trainers called LPCS (Learning Partnership for Creative Sustainability). Community Service is time dedicated to focus on needs – the needs of our community, of the environment, of where we are and my own personal needs. It is a time to understand what these needs are and partaking in a service to fulfill them. Community Service cultivates our sense for contributing to the whole, being sustainable on all levels and also do work out of our own wishes, rather than out of obligation.

It also creates a great space for teambuilding and is an opportunity for people of very different skills and talents to contribute – it easily includes everybody. On projects that are more “mind and soul” focused, it is also a good chance to get your hands dirty, to move and to do something practical.

During residential environmental projects you can dedicate an hour in the morning to Community Service. People can work in small groups on different things like preparing the wood, gardening, cleaning and beautifying common spaces, helping in the kitchen, making media reports, focusing on the wellbeing of the group, self care, etc. Groups and tasks should change every day.

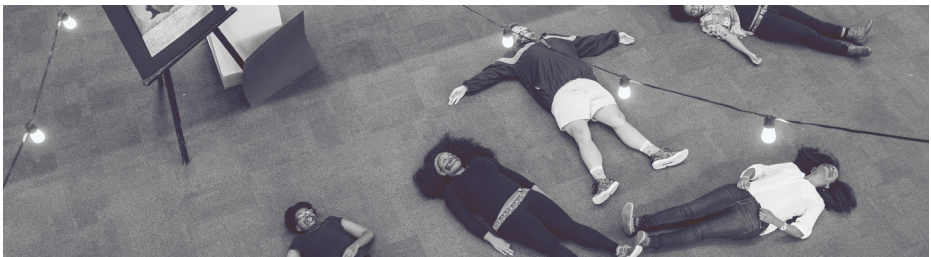
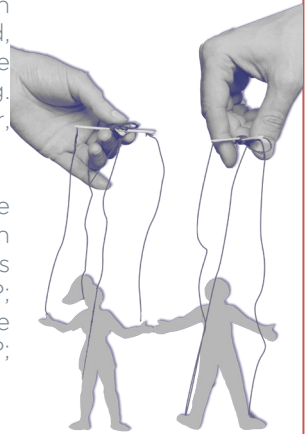
We use this method also as an opportunity to tune-in to the day in smaller groups, to share how we are and exchange conversations around different topics. After the Service we meet as a whole group, share a few pearls and impressions and also some practical information/outcomes from the groups. We are energised and relaxed, ready to start the common day, while the “duties” are done.

Theatre of the Oppressed

This is a great tool to explore someone's experience from other people's perspectives. You can use Theatre of the Oppressed as a way to encourage the expression of ideas, beliefs and feelings, in a creative and interactive way. When used in inclusion projects, this method can encourage positive societal changes towards various disadvantaged collectives of young people.¹

For example, at a training course on inclusion, you can explore the 7 types of obstacles to inclusion (that we mentioned before) with your group of young people. Divide the participants into groups and invite them to create a scenario on a situation of exclusion (e.g. the case of a young person feeling excluded because of learning difficulties in school). Then, each scenario will be acted out and, for each play, everybody will be able to intervene in the play, changing the course of action (e.g. complicating the situation, adding a character, finding a solution, solving a conflict, etc.).

There are, of course, several ways to conduct the Theatre of the Oppressed, but one of the main questions in the discussion with participants afterwards can be: What was the Oppression?; Who was the Oppressed; Why? And even more relevant to our topic: What was the exclusion?; Who was excluded; Why?



Further readings about the Theatre of the Oppressed:
Augusto Boal "The Theatre of the Oppressed", New York, Urizen Books, 1979. Republished by Routledge Press in New York/London, 1982.

¹<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools-toolbox/tool/theater-of-the-oppressed-as-a-tool-for-inclusion-of-young-people-with-disabilities.1444/>

— Environmental Education (EE) and inclusion

For the purposes of this section we would like to include both Outdoor Education and Nature-based learning into the description of **Environmental Education**. Nature-based learning can include a range of focus and activities from simply running sessions outside (instead of inside) to deep ecology exercises that strengthen our awareness of ourselves, each other, and the environment around us. Many of these activities can even be run in cities where there are very few outdoor natural spaces and can be just as beneficial with the right techniques and imagination.

The environment is a great leveller and bonder. It is something that we all inhabit and all have a vested interest in. It is also something that most children and young people know relatively little about, especially in terms of a natural way of living, the growing of food, what uses plants have, survival skills, nature connection and of course, the importance of saving our environment for future generations.

Using the outdoors as a classroom is something which is increasingly being used in a more focused and conscious way. From ancient practices of Rites of Passage, through the Guides & Scouts movements, to modern day Forest Schools and outdoor nurseries, the use of the environment as a learning venue is becoming increasingly valid and also essential, especially in these very recent modern times where most activity for children and young people is focused inside.

What benefits does Environmental Education have for young people?

The benefits of being outdoors, in nature, are widely known and most of us have experienced them at some time in our lives. There is also the flip-side of this, and we have all no doubt experienced the detrimental effects of not getting outside enough. Nature Deficit Disorder is a term coined by Richard Louv in his book "Last Child in the Woods", and is something most people will experience in their lives at some point, and can often go unnoticed if you are not aware of the symptoms. This unofficial 'condition' refers to the critically decreasing amount of time that children (and all of us) spend outside in nature and the negative effects of that on health & wellbeing on all levels.

It can be relatively easy to reverse this condition through Environmental Education, and there are hugely positive effects of being outside, especially for prolonged periods of time. For example, being in nature can reduce stress levels; increase vitamin D (= good bone health); increase empathy and altruism; increase serotonin; increase oxygen levels; improve short term memory; reduce symptoms of depression; reduce levels of cortisol (stress hormone); increase immunity; reduce inflammation in the body; produce melatonin (helping you sleep at night); reduce blood pressure; reduce adrenaline in the blood, release endorphins and many more.

How can Environmental Education be a means for addressing inclusion?

It can be easy to work with young people in Environmental Education who are already interested in being outdoors, are very keen and motivated to learn. Inclusion comes into play when a group includes any “marginalised” young people. How do we make everyone, with their hugely varying strengths and support needs, come away from a session feeling like they achieved something?

Universal Design

Universal design is not about designing a project that everyone can do, it is about designing a project in which everyone is included. Skilled Environmental Education practitioners will know this well, for example some young people will get a lot more out of helping with the ropes on the ground instead of climbing the tree, and as long as they have a meaningful task which is part of the overall activity, they will feel included.

When working with disabilities, designing a project may include adaptive equipment, assessing the appropriateness of the outdoor site and considering the sensory aspects of an activity.

An important aspect of Universal Design is looking at the activity and have varying different tasks up your sleeve, so every young person can engage to the best of their ability. This is something that often requires the support of additional staffing, training and experience. Being able to think on your feet and be creative is crucial.

Risk

A shared experience where there is some small “risk” can really promote inclusion within groups of young people. Being out of your comfort zone and experiencing a collective risk – or fear – can be very powerful. It can create a level ground where participants can realise they are all essentially the same. It can promote dialogue, the improvement of social skills, trust, group building and team work. In addition, more seemingly risky activities (or those that require more responsibility) can especially engage more hard to reach young people. These activities can include fire making, whittling using knives, etc, and of course require specific training.

Find out more information and definitions of environmental education in YEE's publication : http://yeenet.eu/images/stories/PUBLICATIONS/Booklets/Environmental_education_for_sustainability/Environmental_Education_for_Sustainability_booklet.pdf.

Further readings on Universal Design:

“Universal Design for learning theory and practice” book by Anne Meyer, David H. Rose and David Gordon; National Centre on Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.udlcenter.org>.



Shared Experience

By having a shared experience people bond, build trust and are more able to share with each other. If everyone has spent the day together at a climbing wall, no matter if some people climbed to 50 metres and some to 1 metre, they were all included, and their backgrounds and varying abilities have dissolved away.

These outcomes are multiplied the longer the experience lasts. For example, week long residential projects usually create a very deep, shared experience and bond that people remember for the rest of their lives. For many young people, being outside for a prolonged period of time, especially over the period of a week for example, is outside of their usual experience. It provides a shared journey out of the comfort zone, into the learning zone and then into a new comfort zone. It is of course essential to make time to reflect, and share the experiences with other people in the group, in order to complete the learning/experiential cycle.

Peer to Peer learning

Having activities where participants work in pairs is effective. The two will be tasked with helping each other – empowering them – and they will learn something about the reality of that other person. Also older participants can be encouraged and empowered to do the same for those who are younger or less experienced.

An example that worked in practice in a group of young people with epilepsy and mixed disabilities, happened when the group were paired to complete an obstacle course in the woods. A younger boy with the use of only one arm was paired with an older boy who had epilepsy but was very physically able. After supporting each other through the obstacle course, the youth worker suggested that the older boy should try doing the course with one hand tied behind his back, to directly experience what his partner had just been through. As the older boy was doing the course with only one arm, the younger boy was actually giving him advice on how to manipulate his body to compensate for the loss of one arm. Both young people benefitted hugely from this peer to peer learning experience. The younger boy felt useful and empowered by being able to offer advice. He also felt more understood because the older boy was empathising with his disability. The older boy who found the course very easy himself, suddenly had an extra challenge, and caused him to greatly empathise with his partner. The conversation that took place after the activity around how his disability affected him every day was clearly very therapeutic for both young people involved.

Individual goals

It is also good practice to set individual/personal goals. Each person is different and has different abilities and interests. If you get each participant to set their own personal goal for an activity, then they do not need to compare themselves with others in the group. Each person focuses on their own, and as a leader you can celebrate them reaching their goals and if appropriate, push them a little further. Failing is fine. No matter what the personal goals that have been set, it is good to create a culture where 'failing' is ok, and even celebrated! Humour and laughing at ourselves is a fantastic way to bond a group together.

If you are working with a diverse group of young people, it is good to have extra staff there who know them, know what they can do, where their edges are (to learning, experience and engagement) and where you can push those edges with each individual. There is always a danger here of not empowering people to go into their challenge/learning zone, by fear of giving someone something outside their ability. However, by knowing and understanding your group you can increase the self-esteem of each individual by knowing what they will find specifically challenging. If they all feel empowered after the session no matter their "achievement" (even if it was simply a young person encouraging another young person but not participating in the actual activity), then you have created a shared experience.

At the end of a session, it is valuable to have time to informally discuss what the participants got out of it, and if the young people struggle to find an "achievement" themselves, then we can point out the tasks they did, no matter how small, that contributed and included them in the experience.

Team Work

In some instances it can be effective to engage everyone in ensuring individuals reach their goals. For example if one person is finding it hard (or impossible) to complete their goal, the whole team can be engaged to make it happen. As an example, on a residential outdoor activity weekend, a young person who was unable to use one half of his body could not complete his goal of reaching 2 metres up the climbing wall. The educator created a team atmosphere by bringing everyone together to be a part of getting that young person to the top of the wall. Everyone had their task and they achieved it, empowering the young person, themselves, the whole team and creating a shared bonding experience they have and will remember for years.

— Active participation and inclusion

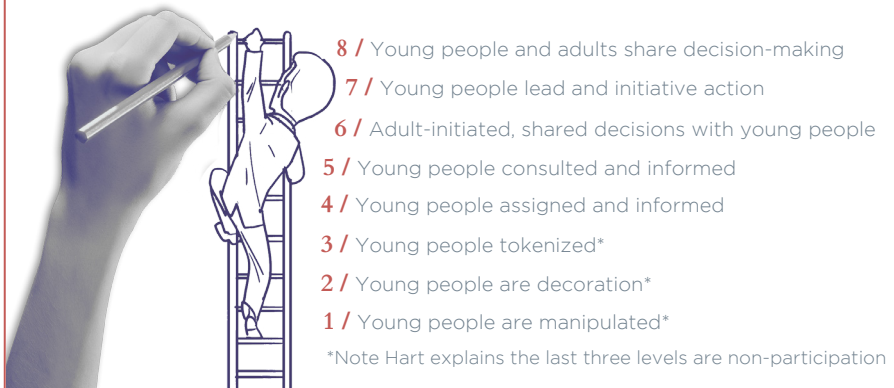
“Active participation” in an educational activity should be a direction to follow, an intention to keep constantly in mind.

The term “inclusion” itself generates a contradiction: “to include” necessarily implies that somebody “outside” has to be invited “inside”. This means that there is an “inside” and an “outside”. But maybe, to really activate participation, sometimes we need to stop worrying about inclusion, and aim at a model of shared creation and management of our events (of any kind). In this article we will of course focus on youth events.

The youth participation ladder

Many readers will be already familiar with the “ladder of youth participation”, the model developed in 1992 by Roger Hart². It followed Sherry Arnstein’s work on citizen participation on political decision making process, published in 1969, and there are many similarities between the two scenarios.

According to Hart’s model, the inclusion of young people in events and political life can be measured as if following the degrees of a metaphorical ladder, as seen in the following picture.



The lowest end represents “manipulation”, which is the opposite of participation. Adults take all the decisions, and later (if ever) they inform youngsters about what they think is the best for them. The process goes through a number of steps. “Tokenism” can also be mentioned: young people are there, they are given no real decision-making power over relevant issues, but they can choose marginal or cosmetic details such as what gadgets to make, or what font type to use in the promotion material. Hart believed that this was not participation at all.

² https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf.

As this kind of over protective parenting style is abandoned, in favour of a more peer based approach, new styles emerge – starting from “Assigned and Informed” (young people are told what to do, but at least they are also told why) and continuing with intermediate degrees such as “adult-initiated process, but shared decisions with young people”.

The top rung of the ladder is “fully shared decision making process”, meaning that young people and adults share all the stages of the decision making process, in every step. This is the ideal scenario in which there is no hierarchy and full, inclusive participation is achieved.

APPLYING HART’S MODEL IN DESIGNING EDUCATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Young people are naturally interested in protecting the environment. Having most of their life still ahead of them, it only makes sense that they are interested in living it in a healthy, beautiful and lush place.

It is indeed very rare to find young people that are insensitive to environmental issues, and all the topics (social, political, economical, etc.) that are connected with them. Sometimes they may lack awareness or information about specific aspects of the issue, but when they get informed and involved, they fight for their cause with authentic passion.



A few words of comment:

Of course, not all approaches are perfectly adequate in every situation. There are settings in which “adults” (used as “experts, competent and responsible people” although this is not always the case) should still obviously take the lead. But still, it is possible to reserve a place for young people to be more than a nice, smiling decoration in the room. Give them the floor, really listen to them, and then take decisions and act accordingly.

For this reason, it seems natural that anyone interested in environment should try to engage and involve young people in the process, at the highest possible level. City and local councils, schools and NGOs should all include youth boards in their structure, and involve them in a relevant way in their decision making processes, on all matters regarding environment. After all, “we didn’t inherit the earth from our ancestors. We borrowed it from future generations ”. ³

So how do we include them? A typical, logical approach would suggest that in every campaign, the first step should always be to raise awareness.

I want to bring your attention to this part. It is tricky to raise awareness, since it can create the “good doctor” effect: “We – the adults, the professionals – know what is better for young people. Their role is to listen to our advice, and take our medicine when we prescribe it”.

To avoid this risk, it may be better to start from a solid “needs” analysis, and to include young people from the earliest stage of the campaign or project design, and include a discussion of the topic of the campaign.

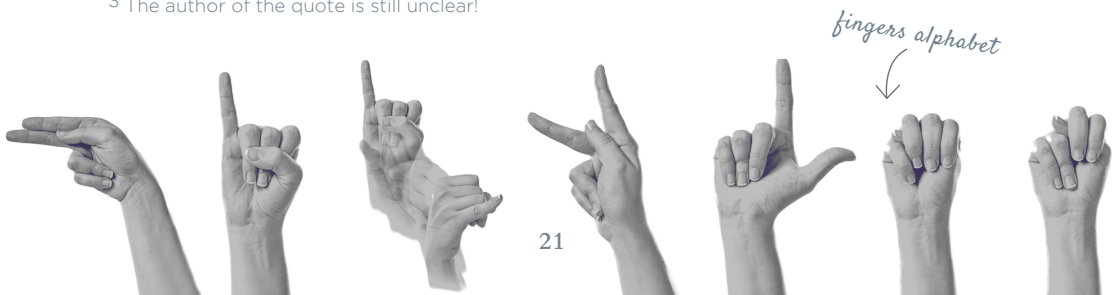
How? A good idea could be to organise a meeting, invite a few representatives (if the right influencers are chosen and the organisation has a good reputation or a fresh face, more will come naturally), and simply ask the question: “The focus of our organisation is the environment. Is there any aspect you would like to develop with a campaign? Anything we can do together?”.

Of course, opening the door to participation can (and should, really) bring unexpected results. Consider this: are you really ready to give away some of the ownership of your idea?

What if your passion is water protection and recycling, and the meeting shows that young people would prefer working on creating an animal shelter? Will you still be happy to dedicate your time and resources to that project? Even if the support of the youngsters will fade away over time, leaving you to deal with the last stages of the project?

Adopting a more participatory approach will naturally open the way for a more inclusive decision making process. Maybe the word “inclusion” will not even come up once. But it will be just as well: since “inclusion” will already be at work.

³ The author of the quote is still unclear!



Of course, wise organisations and youth workers will make sure that an inclusive approach is followed in the process of organising every stage of the process, starting from the preliminary meetings. Meaning: do not project the idea that your action is focusing only on some specific or dominant groups, keep your communication open and as free of bias as possible, use tools and choose your representatives in order to reflect this idea (with a mix of gender, cultural and ethnic groups that reflect the target groups you want to engage, for example).

The same philosophy can inspire every following stage of your project design. If the steps are taken correctly, this should be enough to guarantee that equal opportunities to participate are created. We live in a specific time in which opportunities are everywhere, so rather than talking about “equal opportunities”, it could be more interesting to discuss “access to opportunities”.

What happens if people from a particular group or background do not take part to your activities? Should you start worrying?

You can discuss the possibility to “encourage” specific target groups (for example assigning quotas), but “forced participation” is rarely welcome, and can actually generate the opposite effect. Read some of the vast research on the topic, and consider this aspect very carefully. When making strategic decisions, carefully consider the political and cultural climate of the area in which you are organising your activities and keep an open mind. Do not be afraid to learn from mistakes, because several will no doubt be made. There is overwhelming evidence that in education, removing barriers to access and creating the natural conditions for inclusion and participation leads almost naturally to better results. ⁴

If we keep focusing on “quality” (defining quality with “correct answers to standard tests”) and large scale, we will end up losing sight of what the main purpose of education and learning should really be: to support people to realise, unlock and achieve their best potential in life.

⁴ http://www.openculture.com/2017/05/how-finland-created-one-of-the-best-educational-systems-in-the-world-by-doing-the-opposite-of-u-s.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+OpenCulture+%28Open+Culture%29

— Games for inclusion

Games are increasingly used as tools for education, and their impressive potential as learning opportunities is now beyond any doubt. Role playing has been used in the educational context already for quite some time, but more and more aspects of the “gaming” universe (and culture) are making their way into the classroom.

The emerging of disciplines like Game Based Learning⁵ and studies on gamification helped to pave the way for this development. More and more commonly, boardgames, card games, social games or digital games are being used in classes or training courses, with positive results.

We will now focus on the potential of games to foster a more inclusive approach to learning.

How can games be more inclusive?

First off, if we want to use games in a learning environment, we want to make sure we use the tool at its best potential. Games come in many types, so it may be a good idea to reflect on what game elements⁶ can make an experience more inclusive.

1 / Use of language - Some games rely heavily on language, some do not. In instructions and game materials, icons, drawings and pictures do an excellent job delivering messages. Use basic keywords whenever possible. When more information or explanations are needed, they can be added on a separate rulebook or sheet and are easy (and cheap) to translate in as many languages as necessary.

2/ Intelligence type - Roughly 60% of people have a dominant visual intelligence. Make sure this is reflected in the game you are designing, or if you are using an existing one, try to adapt it so that it becomes more visual. But what about everybody else? Games that include talking, non verbal communication, visual aids, physical tokens, actions and movement represent a perfect mix that can result in an enjoyable experience for everybody.

3/ Experience, education and cultural background - Use games very carefully and make sure the content matches the abilities and experience of the group, or the experience will turn out to be very unpleasant for some of your players. Remember that everybody likes a fair game.

4 / Outdoor vs indoor - Some people are really into outdoor games and sports; some prefer indoors, or more sedentary ones. Try to consider that, when choosing what to play. At the same time, it may be a good idea to push your group a little bit out of their comfort zone. So, a group that loves board games or videogames can be challenged with an outdoor treasure hunt for a change – or a group of sports enthusiasts, introduced to videogames based on problem solving. This can create some very interesting learning opportunities.

⁵ <http://www.newmedia.org/game-based-learning--what-it-is-why-it-works-and-where-its-going.html>

⁶ A game can be defined according to these characteristics: SOMETHING, dynamics and mechanics.

5 / Modern vs traditional - For example, people may have a long experience playing role playing games, but very little in board games, construction games, or party games. These are all dimensions worth exploring. From an inclusion standpoint, make sure everybody has the same conditions to access the game.

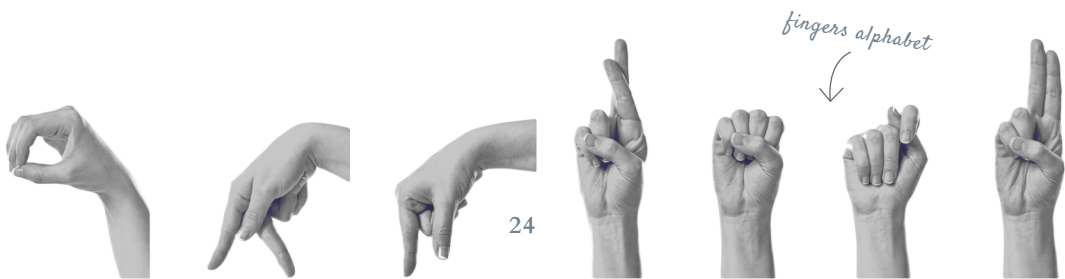
6 / Social vs individual - A lot can be said on the social component of playing. A big component of our “socialisation” is learned through games of various kinds (from playing “family”, to “Monopoly”). Games that have an emphasis on human interactions can create great opportunities to develop social competences. However, the skills and abilities we need in the 21st century are very different from those people needed in the early 20th. Our society is much more mixed and interdependent - that is why cooperation and empathy should be encouraged through games. Plus, new challenges like climate change are emerging - which means we should develop games about limited resources problem solving (which “Minecraft” does perfectly), or how to lower our energetic footprint, rather than reinforcing consumerism and its patterns with shopping games, “Monopoly” and similar.

In any case, expect conflict, and be ready to manage it: especially if working with a group from challenging backgrounds or which includes big cultural differences.

A very good and balanced game can also provide a rewarding experience for the more introverted players by including different roles, goals that can be achieved by a single player, or rewards for very specific skills or behaviours (such as map reading, mathematics, logical puzzles, and so on).

7 / Cooperative vs competitive - This is one of the classic distinctions. Traditionally, most games tended towards competition (think about the vast majority of sports, for example; or more recently, titles like “Risk” or “Monopoly”). But games can also teach cooperation, mutual understanding, empathy and negotiation - through role playing games that rely on teamwork, for example, or board games such as “The Lord of the Rings”, “Pandemic” or “Dixit”. In some cases, like before, a good facilitation is necessary, to moderate conflicts and help resolve them in a constructive way.

8 / Access and disability - Gaming experiences can be designed in order to be gratifying to as many people as possible, and with as much diversity as possible. For example, it is possible to design movement and outdoors games that do not necessarily exclude participants with a physical disability or reduced mobility.



You can have energisers and ball games, and the group will get even more reward if they feel that everybody is involved. In that sense, think about it: Are there steps or slippery surfaces? Will people have to move fast or slow? Is it a standing or moving game? What level of eye-hand coordination is required? Can it be played with one hand? Or are hands even necessary?

Games can be made more inclusive with simple tricks such as: always having written handouts with the instructions (better if with pictures, see above); avoiding background noises or unnecessary talking while playing (can be really distracting, and even more if people need to focus on their hearing); using primary colours and avoiding using too many of them (10% of people do not perfectly experience all colours, red and green especially).

Designing inclusive educational activities – the Bartle taxonomy

Until now, we have discussed how to make access to our games – or activities – easier. There is another aspect that is worth considering however, and it is answering the question: **how can we make our games engaging for everyone?**

An answer was provided by Richard Bartle in 1996. Studying the earlier kinds of online multiplayer games, he observed that players could be divided into 4 categories, according to their behavior. His “Taxonomy” is the result of that research.

So ideally, if you wanted to create a game that involves as many different people as possible, and keep them engaged long term, it could be a good idea to follow this model. Keep in mind that the original research was intended for online games, so do not take it as an absolute truth!



Further reading about the Bartle Taxonomy:

Bartle's Taxonomy of Player Types: <https://gamedevelopment.tutsplus.com/articles/bartles-taxonomy-of-player-types-and-why-it-doesnt-apply-to-everything--gamedev-4173>.

Since this model was created to support game design, when applying it outside from that specific context we have to be aware that it may work, or not.

That said, some suggestions to design educational activities in order to respect Bartle taxonomy could be:

- Leave space for people to emerge (and even show off, a little) and express their leadership or individual capacities, if they want to do so. This does not have to be in a competitive setting; it can happen in a cooperative game as well.
- Design “skill or challenge levels”, ideally within the same experience. So players who want a higher or tougher challenge, can have it – without pushing everybody else. An example could be having parallel workshops, or different corners in a learning space dynamic, intended for people with different levels of expertise in a specific topic.
- Implement the “challenge by choice” principle. Games and activities can get really tough: sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally, or both. Let everybody feel safe by having the opportunity to step out of the process, at any time. They will be much happier to explore the boundaries of the activity, if they know there is an “emergency exit” available to them.
- Leave space for people to chill out, relax and socialise while still being in the environment you created. These spaces should feel really safe (that is why smaller groups are usually a better idea), and allow people to get to know each other, share stories and opinions. Ideally, without being forced to do so, people can choose between different ways to share. Verbal communication is fine, but from time to time include other communication channels, such as body work (pantomime, dancing), visual arts, music and sound.



Throughout this chapter we had a look at a few non-formal and environmental educational methods that youth workers can explore more in youth environmental projects. We also tackled why active participation is important for promoting inclusion and discovered how games and the idea of gamification can be more inclusive.

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0.3

TIPS FOR INCLUSIVE PROJECTS



“The personal pathway is a way to help place an inclusive project in a clear context and also help young people move forward in their lives.”

P.30 - MAKE [...] LIFE.

We think that all organisations should aim for their projects to be more inclusive. Here are a few tips for designing and delivering inclusive projects in your organisation.

Think about benefits for young people

Before organising an inclusive project try to think together with your team what kind of change the project will bring, especially for disadvantaged youth. Do some brainstorming in your team, focusing on how young people with fewer opportunities can benefit from your environmental project. You can just sit together and discuss it or you can use a creative brainstorming method. Creating a list of potential benefits can motivate you even more to organise the project, discuss what a great learning experience it can be and also analyse more in depth the goals of your project.

Among the many possible benefits, you may find these on your list:

- **intercultural learning** – getting to know new people, cultures, places and observing other ways of living and doing things;
- **improving hard and soft skills** – for every person these can be different, but during international projects young people can learn for example: working in a team; planning; communicating in a foreign language; communicating their ideas; patience and independence etc.;
- **having a break from normal life** – young people put in a new situation and in a new group can have a break from their usual (sometimes problematic) background and observe new ways of acting and interacting. It can help them to have a fresh start when they return back home.
- **gaining a sense of belonging** – working with other young people on a common task can be rewarding and bring a feeling of belonging to a new group. It can also help young people to feel useful and empowered.

Your team will no doubt name many more positive changes and learning points that your project can bring to disadvantaged youth. Just always remember, during your brainstorming session, to focus on the specific group of young people that you want to invite to your project.

There are also many benefits for your organisation and your team. Try to name them as well as it can help you to get more motivated for organising a project and understanding the importance of it.

Analyse potential obstacles and find ways to reduce them

For many young people it may be difficult to take part in an international project for a wide range of reasons. Young people often face different obstacles (in some cases more than one) due to their personal situation or their own decisions. These obstacles may have an impact on the decision making process of a participant, if they take part in the project or not.

Besides the types of obstacles mentioned in Chapter 1 (economic obstacles; education differences; health problems and disabilities; geographical obstacles; social obstacles and cultural differences), there are also personal obstacles that can contribute to a participant feeling excluded.

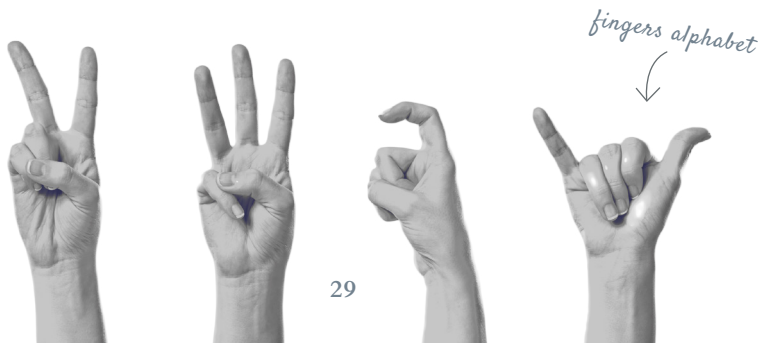
This can affect a participant in a negative way. **It is also important to take into account this kind of obstacles, such as:**

- fear from an unknown environment and situation (lack of self-confidence);
- lack of experiences on an international level;
- low level of English;
- lack of support;
- lack of information about projects and many more.

The role of the organisations and youth workers in the overcoming of obstacles is very important. For youth workers it is essential to know what obstacles participants are facing and why they feel blocked.

Think about how to reduce and overcome obstacles for your group:

- Make sure there is good communication between an organisation and participants;
- Provide support for participants (language support, financial support, etc.);
- Understand their needs and include them in your project planning;
- Motivate people in active participation.



Try to identify the needs of young people

In the preparation phase of a project you have to identify the target group as well as the needs of the group. You should try to make clear the different ways an inclusive project can bring new skills for young people or what the best way is to encourage them to build new friendships and learn as much as possible.

Young people should have the opportunity to express their ideas, needs, thoughts etc. They want to be active and the role of the youth worker is to create the space for this.

You should be aware that for some people it is very hard to express their needs, wishes, expectations or fears. Use some creative activities to make young people reflect on and share their needs and expectations.

Make young people understand the importance of the project in their life

Participants take part in international projects for many reasons. For some people it can be: a new challenge; a way to meet new people and experience a new culture; make international friends; improve language skills; visit a new country and so on. On the other hand there are people with fewer opportunities, who have more challenges and can be scared of such situations, such as being alone in another country.

A good example of how to help young people with fewer opportunities is showing them how to make links between daily life and inclusive projects through an exercise called “Sketch personal pathway”. They will be able to reflect on what part of their life they are in right now, what changes the project can bring and what paths they may be able to choose after the project.¹

In this exercise the main task for participants is to draw their “life pathway”, which should show:

- **past situation** – where they have come from;
- **present situation** – where they are today;
- **future situation** – where they want to go in the future.

Afterwards, invite participants to present their drawing to others, in small groups. The group should try to think how the inclusive project can help them to reach each of their future situations. The personal pathway is a way to help place an inclusive project in a clear context and help young people move forward in their lives. You can of course use another exercise to make young people reflect on their situation and future possibilities.

¹ <http://www.eplusifjusag.hu/public/files/press/inclusionatoz-inclusionatoz.pdf>

Remember about confidentiality and try to build trust

Confidentiality and trust building are an extremely important and necessary part of an inclusive project. Some information might be easier to talk about for some people (e.g. educational background), but other information can be more sensitive (e.g. family situation, economic status, living conditions).

Confidentiality is also directly connected to respect for others. We should respect that not everybody wants to disclose sensitive information. Even if you want to know the answer to a question, everyone has the right not to share.

We should be aware of the fact that sensitive information can only voluntarily be shared in an environment which is full of trust. However, sometimes during short-term projects it is not easy to build space for trust and confidentiality. In some cases the participants can feel more excluded than included.

In all cases we should accept that everybody has a right to privacy and youth workers are not allowed to force anybody to disclose sensitive information.



Think about inclusion in environmental projects

The environment itself provides a wide range of opportunities for inclusion. The ability for everyone to play their part in positive action for environmental sustainability is also an inclusion point. Try to involve a wide range of young people with fewer opportunities in your environmental projects. It can be a really rewarding experience for everyone involved. If you plan to organise an inclusive project, try to add some environmental aspects to it – organise some activities outdoors, give young people an opportunity to be in nature and observe it. More tips on how to do this can be found in Chapter 2.

Keep language in mind

One of the struggles that youth workers might have is how to address young people without causing offense. Language, in general, is a very important tool to reduce stigma. Inclusive language should be all about promoting diversity, equal chances and understanding differences.²

This is essential, and below you can find a few recommendations to start with:

- **Avoid labelling;** always identify a person as a person first, who is then facing a certain obstacle or condition, rather than simply being the condition itself. For example, say “person with disabilities” instead of “disabled person”. When young people do not identify themselves with their obstacles, their self-identity and confidence in making life choices become stronger.
- **Ask the young person** with the disability how they would like their disability to be described.
- **Support the young people** to ask each other questions about the obstacles that they are facing using non-judgmental language. Supporting healthy conversations and helping young people with their own language to describe their experience of having a disability or facing a certain obstacle is an incredibly useful and positive tool for them to use both in the youth group and in so many other situations too.
- **Try to do a research on acceptable language used in your country,** with regard to inclusion. Coming up with a list of ‘correct terms’ might be difficult, as there can be different regulations in every country or culture.



² <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/content/guidelines-inclusive-language>.

Try to help young people with reintegration after a project

Reintegration is part of the follow-up of an inclusive project, alongside the evaluation of the activities and dissemination of the project outcomes. Many times when the inclusive project is finished, participants will return to their usual reality, but the end of the inclusive project does not mean that the process of inclusion is over. During international inclusive projects, the attitudes, values and opinions of a participant can change, and upon returning back home the relationships between friends, schoolmates and parents can become more challenging than before. The reason for this is that even if the participant's opinions and ideas have changed, the home environment is still the same. The main aspect of the process of reintegration after a project is the provision of support for young people to help them make sense of all their experiences, show them how to use their new skills and plan their next steps and goals for the future.

For the youth workers and organisations it is really needed to support participants after inclusive projects, not to leave them without any help and not to let them feel excluded again.

Think about an inclusion strategy for your organisation

Is your organisation keen on knowing more about how to make its activities more inclusive? Has it already tackled the topic of inclusion with some projects, but the objectives regarding the inclusion of youth are/were still not clear or well-defined?

If you would like to start creating an inclusion strategy, be aware that this will be a complex process, most probably involving a lot of effort from your organisation. However, to be inclusive, this is needed.

Here are a few things that you can keep in mind and explore more before creating the strategy:

- **Try to involve more people in the process.** The more contributions you have, the stronger the foundation of your strategy will be.
- **Think of young people.** If you plan to make an inclusion strategy in order to know how to work with young people with fewer opportunities, then their views should be reflected in the strategy, so you should include them in the process. In addition you could spread questionnaires among different groups or organise discussions on the topic of inclusion etc.
- **Think of four stages when developing the strategy:** analysis, planning, implementation, evaluation. It is very important to know what tools you can use for each stage (e.g. making a needs or stakeholders analysis in the first stage; setting SMART objectives in the planning stage; making an action plan for the implementation; reviewing results in the last stage).³

³ <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1674/InclusionByDesign.pdf>, <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3141/InclusionAtoZ.pdf>.

Co-operate with professionals

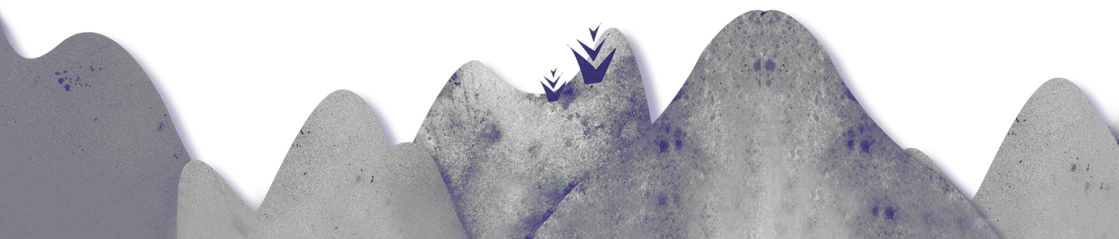
In the preparation phase of a project you have to think about your own knowledge and skills. If you have a lack of skills, you must be aware that it could bring more harm to people with fewer opportunities. Do not be afraid to ask for help from any professional (teacher, trainer, skilled youth leader) from the field of youth work. Professionals, who work with young people with fewer opportunities, know that inclusion is a long-term process. They are aware of the needs of individual young people and also the needs of the whole group, taking both aspects into account when designing and delivering a project or activity. In most cases it is vital to have staff and volunteers that are trained and experienced in this field and the field of the target groups you are working with.

If you are working with inclusion it is good to provide training in your organisation in order to improve the competences of youth workers in this area. Youth workers should also develop their skills during trainings, seminars and other activities.

We hope that all these tips will encourage you to organise more inclusive projects and help you to make them meaningful.

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0.4

STORIES OF INCLUSIVE WORK



“The environment is everyone’s concern and we all need to connect with the issues. People from different backgrounds genuinely know different things and have different experiences.”

P.38 - JESSICA MASSUCCO



Barbora Michková, Czech Republic

Tell us a bit about ENVIRA and about its inclusive environmental projects.

The social enterprise ENVIRA was established by separating from the original organisation Toulcuv dvur in January 2014. Toulcuv dvur provided jobs for few persons who work there in terms of job rehabilitation. However, the legal form was not convenient for the social enterprise and employing disabled people. After an administratively demanding period of transformation, ENVIRA and Toulcuv dvur became 2 different organisations.

ENVIRA focuses on 4 activities: healthy canteen, ceramic workshop and environmentally friendly maintenance of the natural site of the ecological center (10 hectares) and currently a new eco-friendly garden center where we grow herbs and vegetables.

Our target group consists of people with disabilities – physically, psychically and mentally. They participate in all our projects and work in all 4 departments.

Our main aim is creating sheltered jobs for people with disabilities on a long term basis.

When and how have you started to work in ENVIRA? Tell us a bit about your experience.

I have been working in ENVIRA since September 2015 as a coordinator of employing our target group.

Can you share with us the most important experience from a project involving people with fewer opportunities?

Every day brings new experience in a social enterprise. We have to be flexible and able to cope with unpredictable situations that can appear when employing people with disabilities. We always have to balance the social and business pillars of social enterprise, which is sometimes very tough. We have to reflect sensitively our employees' possibilities and competitiveness.

Why do you think inclusion is important in youth projects?

We contribute to the reduction of unemployment of people with disabilities and to their social integration. We offer sheltered jobs in a variety of professions: cook, helping cook, bar tender, administration, ceramic workshop worker, gardener. During our work we may see that steady supported job has a positive influence on amelioration or at least stabilisation of a health condition.

What can inclusion bring into environmental projects?

It can bring a new and different perspective, pace, inspiration and the results have another added value.

What would you advise to organisations who want to organise more inclusive projects?

Prepare for a different way of work, schedule and results. You need to have capable and empathetic middle management because employees with fewer opportunities usually require more assistance, control, motivation and some of them may even lack work habits since they possibly have not been employed before.

ENVIRA o.p.s. is a social enterprise with activities in the field of Environmental Education. The organisation aims to integrate people with disabilities into the labour market and the society. More information about ENVIRA: www.setrnepocitive.cz.



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Jessica Massucco, United Kingdom

Tell us a bit about an inclusive environmental project that you have been involved with.

I supported a food growing project¹ for just under a year that included young offenders. The project managed an urban allotment that grew all sorts of healthy fruit and vegetables for a local refugee centre. The young offenders helped to sow, grow and harvest this food, bringing them closer to their community and providing them with an opportunity to support others. Importantly, the project also got them outdoors and engaged with nature.

Can you share with us an important experience from this project?

These young people had committed crimes and routinely came with profile statements advising on their challenging behaviour. However, I experienced none of this. Instead, the young people were often positive, calm and helpful. Some of them said they enjoyed the practical work and learning new skills. Others just appreciated being outdoors in a beautiful garden. I think nature can have a positive effect on anyone, especially when partnered with a social project such as this. It was clear to see how the garden helped the refugee centre by providing free, healthy food and this was a very positive message.



¹ Due to privacy reasons, we have not included photos from this project.

Why do you think inclusion is important in youth projects?

We all live in diverse and complicated societies. If we do not get the opportunity to meet others outside of our bubble, then we will never understand what is going on. Youth projects generally try to bring young people together to inspire them and set them new goals. Without diversity, the conversations will not travel far. Inclusion is also important in youth projects because it obviously provides opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities. That sounds absurd but unfortunately it stands to be said.

What can inclusion bring to environmental projects?

The environment is everyone's concern and we all need to connect with the issues. People from different backgrounds genuinely know different things and have different experiences. Bringing them together sparks fresh conversation about environmental problems. It can also create a sense of unity.

What advice would you give to organisations who want to organise more inclusive projects?

I am not sure, but focusing on accessibility around the venue, differentiated materials and general logistics seems far more important to me than trying to frame activities around what you might expect people to say or do. Provide an inviting and accessible space and let young people lead.

Jessica is currently working for Trees for Cities - an urban tree planting charity that also delivers inclusive environmental projects. You can read more about Trees for Cities and their activities: <http://www.treesforcities.org/>.





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Kateřina Trnková,
Czech Republic

Tell us a bit about PROUD and its inclusive environmental projects.

Environmental educational center PROUD is a part of “DDM Horažd’ovice”, a leisure time organisation which works mainly with school children. So far we have not realised projects that are solely aimed at inclusion in environmental education. However, people with fewer opportunities are an inseparable part of our target group, school children and youth, and we work with them on a regular basis. For example school classes for children with special needs (autism, hyperactivity, intellectual disability) are regular visitors of our programs both in PROUD and at the Educational farm. We offer them guided tours to animals and practical educational programs. Every year we mediate the contact of children with vision impairment from Jaroslav Jeřek school in Prague with our farm animals. Last year we became a partner for Kotec o.p.s., an organisation which works with children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

When and how have you started to work in PROUD? Tell us a bit about your experience.

I started to work at the Educational farm (which is part of PROUD) two years ago, when I finished my maternity leave. Before I worked in an environmental NGO but I wanted to try something different, so I applied to be a lecturer and farm manager in PROUD. Since then I have gained a lot of experience, often totally unexpected. I have learned how to work with children from nursery school to teenage, I got familiar with more than 30 animal species we keep at the Educational farm and I met many interesting people. This job brought me enrichment both in professional and personal areas.

Can you share with us the most important experience from a project involving people with fewer opportunities?

I remember the first time, when we hosted a special guided tour for children with visual impairment from Jaroslav Ježek school. The reactions of these children were a surprise for me. They were so keen to touch animals, to feel them, cuddle them... They were very curious and excited about the farm visit. One boy with very thick glasses put his face just inches from the pig's mouth, I was scared what could happen, but the children were absolutely not afraid. The animals somehow felt it and not a single accident happened so far.

Why do you think inclusion is important in youth projects?

I believe everyone deserves the same opportunities. Especially in the case of youth. They should have an equal chance to develop themselves. These days you can often feel that the children do not appreciate what they have, they simply have everything they ever wish for and they take it for granted. But when you meet kids for example from a poor social environment you feel how much grateful they are for each little thing you give them.

What can inclusion bring into environmental projects?

Environmental projects naturally give a chance to people with fewer opportunities, who may have problems to find a work in other areas. For example at the farm we give a job to two people from the unemployment office. Both of them had been without a job for a long time before because they face diverse obstacles and have certain work limitations. At the farm they help us a lot. We also employ a lady with physical disabilities as a cleaner.

What would you advise to organisations who want to organise more inclusive projects?

It is a good idea to meet with someone, who already organises inclusive projects. Sharing ideas is very important at the beginning, the personal experience and advice is a thousand times more valuable than anything you can read in books or guidelines. This way you can avoid common mistakes and make the most of your project for both your organisation and the people in need.

PROUD is a centre for environmental education that organises environmental educational programmes for children and young people. More details about PROUD: <https://www.envicentrum.eu/en>.

We will close this chapter with two ‘good practice’ examples of inclusive projects connected to the environmental field.

The first inclusive greenhouse in Armenia²

Oxfam in Armenia with its partner OxYGen Foundation for Protection of Youth and Women Rights is implementing “Supporting Community Resilience in the South Caucasus” Disaster Risk reduction programme, which is funded by European Commission under DG European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Programme (DG ECHO).

In the frame of the project an inclusive green lab was created. The greenhouse is accessible for children with disabilities and gives opportunity for them to learn the secrets of agriculture production and to grow vegetables with their own hands. It supports integration of children with disabilities, provides new skills for future economic opportunities for them.

The 66 m2 greenhouse is divided into two parts. The first part is constructed with concrete flooring, according to Universal Design standards and allows access to the plants for people with mobility limitations, including people who use wheelchairs. The second part of the greenhouse is regular soil and allows the plants to grow to their full potential.

The green house is a replicable model that can be used for Climate Change Adaptation education for children and youth through practical workshops and trainings. All activities can be done in an inclusive environment. The Greenhouse was given to Bridge of Hope NGO, which is a lead player in Armenia in providing services/support to people with disabilities.

OxYGen is an independent advocacy and development foundation in Armenia to empower youth and women for change. Read more about OxYGen: <http://oxygen.org.am/index.php/en/>. You can also find out more about the green lab here: <https://goo.gl/Pyr2RZ>.



² This example was provided by Lilit Kochinyan, Communication and Campaign Officer at OxYGen Foundation for Protection of Youth and Women Rights.

Mountains are for everybody³

Montaña para todos (Mountains are for everybody) is an NGO based in Tenerife, whose objective is to make leisure activities in the mountains accessible for people with physical disabilities.

Their inclusive project works in three ways:

- **Inclusion of persons with physical disabilities** - Montaña para todos' main goal is social inclusion of people who face physical disability obstacles. The NGO's main aim is to take people to places where they cannot go on their own – for example, on Mount Teide, which is the highest mountain of Spain (3718 m). This is done with a special chair called Joëlette.



- **Fostering inclusion through teamwork**



³ This example was provided by Javier González Expósito, Chief Executive Officer at Desaplatánate Association: <http://desaplatanate.org/en/>.

All participants must work together in order to overcome obstacles. The person who is sitting in the chair needs to give instructions in case he/she feels uncomfortable. The pilots have to create trust so that the person in the chair feels comfortable. Of course, after cooperating and hiking together for a couple of hours, you make new friends, can widen your horizon and enjoy nature.


■ Inclusion of people with a low income

All the volunteering activities of Montaña para todos are for free so that people with a small income can participate. The NGO wants to include people regardless their financial situation. Everybody who wants to volunteer is welcome and can absolve a course to become a Joëlette pilot.



In this project, different people with different backgrounds and experiences cooperate and can share their vision. This fosters mutual understanding and appreciation.

You can read more about Montaña para todos: <http://www.mptodos.org/>.



This publication is the follow-up of the training course “YEE-nclude: inclusion in environmental youth projects”. It not only aims to help youth workers, youth and environmental organisations to understand the topic of inclusion better, but it also suggests some practical ideas for making projects and activities more inclusive.

For further inspiration, the booklet also includes interviews and examples of inclusive projects connected to the environmental field.

This publication was created by Youth and Environment Europe.

Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) is a network of many youth non-governmental organisations coming from European countries. YEE’s activities aim to promote sustainable development, environmental protection and nature conservation. All our activities are organised and carried out by and with the involvement of young people under the age of 30. YEE encourages all activities that can increase the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of nature and the awareness of environmental problems amongst young people in Europe.

www.yeenet.eu

