



THE INCLUSIVE YOUTH WORK GUIDE

Practical tools, activities and facilitation guidance for youth workers

 Saulkrasti, Latvia

 13–21 April 2026

Training Course: Inclusive Youth Work for Tackling Discrimination and Promoting Equality

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How to read this guide:

This is not a theoretical publication. It is a working guide for youth workers who need ready-to-use methods, clear facilitation logic, debriefing questions and inclusion safeguards when addressing discrimination, equality and sensitive group dynamics.

▼ 1. Purpose of the guide and project context

This guide was created as a practical online output of the Erasmus+ training course “Inclusive Youth Work for Tackling Discrimination and Promoting Equality”, implemented in Saulkrasti, Latvia, from 13 to 21 April 2026. It translates the learning process of the training into a usable guide for youth workers, educators, facilitators and youth organisations working with diverse groups of young people.

The training addressed a shared need across the participating countries: youth workers frequently meet young people affected by exclusion linked to gender, ethnic background, migration experience, disability, rural isolation, economic barriers, language barriers or unequal access to participation opportunities. The project therefore focused on practical methods rather than abstract discussion only. Participants learned by experiencing activities, designing sessions, testing facilitation roles, reflecting on sensitive moments and developing methods that can be adapted in local communities.



Main aim:

To help youth workers design and facilitate inclusive activities that make discrimination visible, support dialogue, reduce stereotypes and strengthen equal participation in youth work settings.

What this guide offers:

- A clear framework for designing one-hour inclusion workshops.
- Step-by-step activity plans tested or developed during the training course.
- Adaptation notes for mixed international groups and local youth work settings.
- Debriefing questions that connect experience with learning and action.
- Safety and inclusion checkpoints for working with sensitive topics.
- Examples of participant-generated tools, flipcharts and feedback methods.

Who can use it:

The guide is intended for youth workers, trainers, youth leaders, volunteers, teachers using non-formal education methods, Erasmus+ project coordinators and civil society organisations. It can be used with young people from approximately 15 years old upward, but facilitators should adapt language, examples and intensity to the maturity and needs of the group.

Biedrība "Youth Line" (Latvia) coordinated this Erasmus+ project as the applicant organisation, together with partner organisations from Finland, Spain, Romania, Poland, and Germany.

 **United Vision ry** (Finland)

 **TERRA AVANZA** (Spain)

 **Asociatia MULTIKULTI** (Romania)

 **Youth Line Poland** (Poland)

 **EUth Wonders e.V.** (Germany)

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The participants, trainer, and facilitator whose experiences, reflections, and contributions helped shape this guide, Saulkrasti, Latvia, April 2026.

▼ 2. Core Youth Work Principles for Inclusion

Inclusive youth work is not only about inviting different young people into the same room. It is about designing participation conditions in which young people can contribute without being shamed, tokenised, forced to disclose personal experiences or positioned as representatives of an entire group. In

this sense, inclusion is a facilitation practice, a planning responsibility and an ethical commitment.

Principle	Meaning for the youth worker
Voluntary participation	Participants should be able to choose how deeply they engage. Sensitive activities should include observation, writing or silent reflection options.
Learning through experience	Non-formal education becomes powerful when participants feel, test, discuss and then connect the experience to real life.
Dignity first	No activity should make a participant carry the emotional burden of explaining discrimination because they belong to a targeted group.
Equal voice	The facilitator should actively watch who speaks, who is interrupted, who is silent and who takes informal leadership.
Reflection before action	Activities on discrimination require structured debriefing. Without debriefing, stereotypes can be repeated without being challenged.
Transfer to local reality	Each method should end with a realistic question: what can youth workers do differently next week with their own young people?



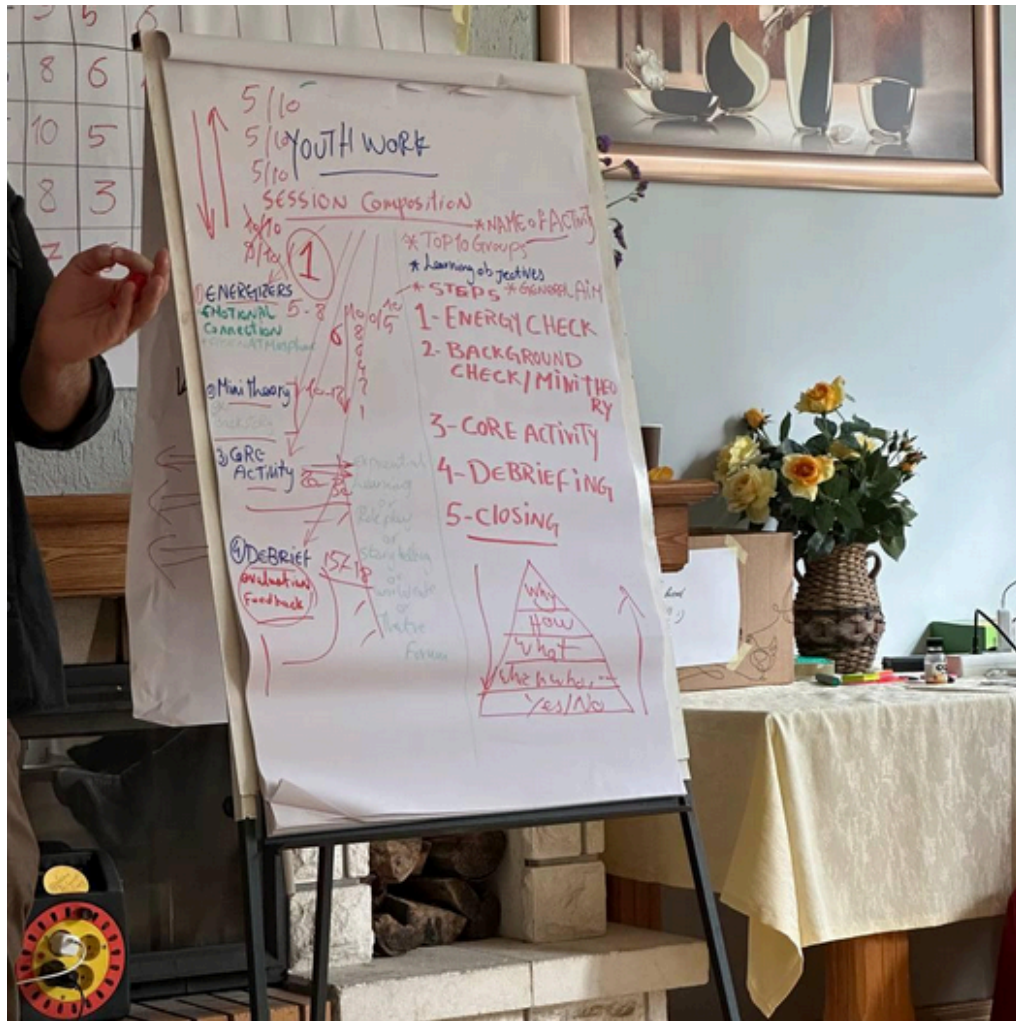
Using sensitive examples responsibly

The activities in this guide include examples of discrimination linked to gender, disability, social status, cultural assumptions, migration and power. These examples should never be used as entertainment. The facilitator's role is to transform them into learning material through framing, care and debriefing.

- Warn participants when a topic may be sensitive.
- Use fictional cases unless the group has enough trust for personal sharing.
- Do not ask participants to identify who in the room has experienced discrimination.
- Stop jokes or comments that reproduce harm, even when they are presented as "just humour".
- End with agency: what can we do, change, notice or challenge?

▼ 3. The 5-Part Session Design Model

During the training, participants worked with a practical session composition model. The model is simple enough for new facilitators, but strong enough to help experienced youth workers plan sessions that are coherent, participatory and safe. The model appeared clearly in the training flipchart: energy check, background check or mini-theory, core activity, debriefing and closing.



Training flipchart: session composition model used during the course. It translates workshop planning into a practical sequence for youth workers.

Element	Facilitation purpose
1. Energy check	A short activity to bring attention into the room. It may be playful, physical, verbal or silent. It should prepare the theme without exhausting the group.
2. Background check / mini-theory	One focused concept only. Examples: stereotype, privilege, power, discrimination, safe space, allyship or intersectionality. Keep it short and connected to the next activity.
3. Core activity	The main experiential method. It can be a role-play, simulation, discussion, body sculpture, case analysis, storytelling circle or problem-solving task.

4. Debriefing	The learning phase. Participants make sense of what happened, connect it to youth work and identify what they will do differently.
5. Closing	A short landing moment: one sentence, one word, one gesture, a written commitment or a final circle. It prevents abrupt endings after sensitive topics.



Planning rule for youth workers:

If the debrief is weak, the activity remains only an experience. If the debrief is strong, the activity becomes learning.

▼ 4. Safe Space and Feedback Practice

A safe space is not a conflict-free space. In inclusive youth work, disagreement, discomfort and emotional reactions may appear because participants are dealing with lived realities of exclusion and inequality. The goal is to create a structured learning space where participants know how to speak, listen, challenge and receive feedback without humiliation.

FEEDBACK

Ich gebe nur Feedback, wenn es helfen kann, die Dinge zu verbessern

FEEDBACK GEBEN:

Bestärken

Ich betone beobachtete Stärken, dann kann die Kritik auch besser angenommen werden

Genau
Ehrlich

Ich beschreibe die Situation möglichst genau
Alles was ich sage ist wahr. Aber ich sage nicht alles, was wahr ist

Aufbauend
Persönlich

Ich mache Verbesserungsvorschläge
Ich betone, dass es sich um meine persönliche Meinung handelt

FEEDBACK BEKOMMEN:

Zuhören

Ich höre mir das Feedback an und weiß, dass ich mich nicht direkt verteidigen muss

Nachfragen

Ich frage nach, wenn ich etwas nicht verstanden habe

Stellung nehmen

Ich entscheide, die für mich bedeutsame Kritik anzunehmen

Feedback hilft uns, unsere Wirkung auf andere zu verstehen. Dafür sollte es zeitnah gegeben werden und konstruktiv formuliert sein.

Participant flipchart on feedback practice. The key message was: feedback should help improve, be specific, honest, constructive and personal, while the receiver listens, asks questions and decides what to take forward.

Feedback method for youth workers

Feedback principle	How to apply it
Strengthen first	Name observed strengths before criticism. This helps participants remain open rather than defensive.
Be specific	Describe the situation, behaviour or decision as concretely as possible.
Be honest, but selective	Everything said should be true, but not everything true needs to be said in front of the group.
Be constructive	Offer a possible improvement, not only an evaluation.
Speak personally	Use "I noticed..." or "My perception was..." rather than presenting opinion as objective truth.
Receive actively	Listen, ask clarifying questions and decide which feedback is meaningful for your practice.



Ground rules for sensitive dialogue:

- Speak from personal experience, not on behalf of a whole group.
- Criticise ideas, behaviours and structures, not the worth of a person.
- Use curiosity before judgement: "Can you explain what you mean by that?"
- Allow silence after difficult questions.
- Use de-roling after simulations: participants step out of the character before discussing the activity.
- Close the session with reflection and grounding.

▼ 5. Activity Bank: The Power of Reaction - Musical Chairs and Discrimination Scenarios

This activity draws on the Light Blue presentation prepared during the course. It combines a simple energising method with case-based reflection on discrimination. It is useful when a youth worker wants to move from quick group energy into a structured conversation about unequal treatment.

Purpose	To help participants recognise different forms of discrimination and observe how quickly groups react to visible and invisible exclusion.
Duration / group	45-60 minutes 20-35 participants suitable for mixed experience levels
Materials	Chairs, music or a sound signal, printed scenario cards, flipchart, markers, optional projector.
Learning focus	Direct discrimination, accessibility barriers, gender bias, family diversity, reaction patterns, bystander awareness.
Step-by-step flow	1) Begin with a light round of musical chairs or a movement-based energiser. 2) Pause and ask who felt included, pressured or left out. 3) Introduce four scenario cards: Fatima is rejected for a doctor role because "local-born candidates" are preferred; Mario cannot access university classes on the third floor because there is no elevator; Sarah is interrupted in meetings and labelled "emotional" while male colleagues receive credibility; Marco's school task assumes every family has a mother and father. 4) Small groups identify what type of discrimination is present and what a youth worker could do. 5) Groups present responses in two minutes each.
Debrief questions	What happened to the energiser? Where did exclusion appear? Which scenario was easiest to recognise? Which one was more hidden? What would change if this happened in your youth centre, school or project? What is one reaction that helps and one reaction that harms?
Youth worker notes	Keep the musical chairs element short. The aim is not competition, but an emotional bridge into reaction, exclusion and fairness. Adapt scenarios to local realities and avoid turning any group into a target.

▼ 6. Activity Bank: Stereotypes Smasher / Power Girls Session

This participant-designed method was developed as an experiential workshop on everyday stereotypes. It is strong because it does not start with a lecture. Participants first experience how messages change, then analyse situations and perform short scenes.

Purpose	To identify common stereotypes, recognise subtle stereotyping behaviour and reflect on its emotional impact.
Duration / group	60 minutes 20-32 participants groups of 4-6
Materials	Prepared stereotype-related sentences for Chinese whispers, short mini-theory text, printed scenario cards, flipchart, pens, open space.
Learning focus	Gender stereotypes, disability stereotypes, social status assumptions, cultural stereotypes, empathy, personal responsibility.
Step-by-step flow	1) Energy check: play Chinese whispers using neutralised stereotype-related sentences to show how messages are distorted. 2) Background check: use a dictation race. One group member reads a short text for 20 seconds, returns and explains it; another takes notes. 3) Ask three comprehension questions. 4) Core activity: each group receives one scenario and prepares a two-minute scene in ten minutes. 5) The audience guesses the situation and names the stereotype. 6) Close with one written commitment.
Debrief questions	What was your character thinking? Which situation do you recognise from your reality? What made the stereotype visible? What was subtle? What is one concrete action you can take to reduce the negative impact of stereotypes?
Youth worker notes	Role-play can unintentionally reproduce stereotypes. Ask groups to show behaviour critically, not mockingly. After the scene, de-role participants by asking them to say their real name and one word about how they feel now.

Scenario Cards for Stereotypes Smasher

Use these cards as printed prompts. The facilitation focus helps youth workers keep the learning point clear during the debrief.

Scenario card	Facilitation focus
Job interview	A woman is asked about marriage or children while a similarly qualified man is not. Focus: gendered assumptions in recruitment.
Restaurant table	A waiter speaks only to the friend of a wheelchair user. Focus: speaking over people and denying agency.
Luxury shop	A casually dressed young person is followed suspiciously while a well-dressed customer receives warm service. Focus: social class and appearance bias.
Father at paediatrician	Staff assume the mother is the “real” caregiver. Focus: gender roles and care work.
Diplomatic meeting	A leader praises another leader’s English although English is their first language. Focus: cultural assumptions and microaggressions.

▼ 7. Activity Bank: Peaceful Swans - Power, Privilege and Exclusion

Peaceful Swans is a quiet but powerful activity on power inequality. It helps participants understand that exclusion is not always loud or intentional. Sometimes it appears through who moves first, who feels allowed to change the space and who stays silent.

Purpose	To explore power, privilege, positions of power, inequality and exclusion through non-verbal group behaviour.
Duration / group	50-60 minutes 20-32 participants circle format
Materials	One table, four chairs, one water bottle, four empty glasses, flipchart with the word POWER, sticky notes, markers.
Learning focus	Power over, power with, power to, power within, agency, non-verbal inclusion, silence, observation.
Step-by-step flow	1) Energiser: participants walk silently while the facilitator asks short questions about power and powerlessness. 2) Mini-theory: introduce four forms of power. Power over means domination. Power with means collaboration and shared action. Power to means the capacity to act. Power within means self-worth and agency. 3) Core activity: participants sit in a circle. A table with four chairs, a bottle and

	glasses becomes an "art exhibition". Talking is not allowed. Participants may change the exhibit one at a time to answer: What is power? 4) Observe who acts, who waits and how the group responds. 5) Debrief carefully.
Debrief questions	What did you notice? Was there a moment you wanted to act but did not? Why? Did anyone feel they had less power? What created that feeling? Did anyone feel excluded without anyone saying anything? What is one small action that creates "power with" instead of "power over"?
Youth worker notes	This activity needs silence. Do not rush it. The facilitator should observe body language, hesitation and informal leadership. Avoid interpreting too early; let participants name what happened first.

▼ 8. Activity Bank: Workplace Gender Inequality - Touching Colours and Balloon Debate

The Workplace Gender Inequality session combines a playful energiser, a mini-theory on workplace discrimination and a dilemma activity that reveals stereotypes in decision-making. It can be adapted for youth employability work, volunteer teams or leadership training.

Purpose	To analyse gender inequality in recruitment, pay, task allocation, promotion and organisational culture, while observing how assumptions influence group decisions.
Duration / group	60-75 minutes 20-32 participants groups of 5-6
Materials	Colour cards or objects around the room, timer, balloon dilemma role cards, flipchart, markers.
Learning focus	Gender bias, unequal pay, invisible work, leadership stereotypes, decision-making under pressure, justification of choices.
Step-by-step flow	1) Energiser: Touching Colours. A speaker calls a colour and counts down; participants quickly touch that colour anywhere in the room. Repeat five rounds. 2) Mini-theory: introduce workplace gender inequality through categories: recruitment and hiring, pay and benefits, promotion and career development, task allocation, harassment or inappropriate behaviour, organisational culture. 3) Core

	activity: Balloon Debate. Participants are told they are social workers in a hot air balloon losing altitude. With them are several role cards such as doctor, soldier, advocate, criminal and disabled person. The group must choose one person to remove and justify the decision. 4) Groups present decisions and arguments. 5) Debrief the assumptions behind the decisions.
Debrief questions	Which role was protected first and why? Which role was judged fastest? What stereotypes appeared in the arguments? Did gender, disability, profession, criminal record or perceived usefulness influence the decision? How does this connect to recruitment, promotion or leadership in real workplaces?
Youth worker notes	This activity can become sensitive because participants may use harsh reasoning. Frame it as an exercise about assumptions, not about the value of human life. Stop discriminatory language and redirect toward critical analysis.

▼ 9. Workshop Design Template for Youth Workers

Participants in the training were asked to design one-hour workshops for at least 20 participants on topics connected to inclusion, discrimination and equality. The following template can be reused by youth workers when developing their own sessions.

Part	Recommended time	Planning questions
Energy check	5-8 min	Does this energiser prepare the theme without forcing personal disclosure?
Mini-theory	8-12 min	What is the one concept participants need before the activity?
Core activity	25-30 min	What experience will help participants discover the issue themselves?
Debrief	15-20 min	How will you move from what happened to what it means and what to do next?
Closing	2-5 min	What sentence, gesture or written commitment will help participants leave grounded?

Inclusion checkpoint before implementation

- Does the activity allow participation at different confidence levels?
- Can someone with limited language skills still participate meaningfully?
- Is physical movement optional or adaptable?
- Are roles neutral enough that nobody is singled out?
- Could the activity unintentionally reinforce stereotypes?
- Is there space for silence, writing or observation?
- How might a participant from a marginalised background experience this activity?
- Does the debrief allow more than one perspective?
- Are materials accessible and free from cultural bias?
- Would a young person with fewer opportunities feel safe and included?



Advanced question:

Where might power dynamics appear in your workshop, and how have you designed for them?

▼ 10. Implementation Notes for Different Youth Groups

The same activity can have very different effects depending on the group. Youth workers should adapt intensity, examples and participation formats to the age, trust level, language capacity and lived experiences of participants.

Context	Adaptation	Risk to avoid
Mixed-language groups	Use visual cards, pair support, short sentences and body-based activities. Allow answers in small groups before plenary.	Do not evaluate intelligence through fluency in English.

Young people with fewer opportunities	Use low-cost materials and examples close to daily life. Build trust before personal reflection.	Do not ask participants to publicly describe poverty, migration or exclusion.
Groups with low trust	Start with fictional cases and observation roles before personal stories.	Do not open highly emotional sharing too early.
Experienced youth workers	Increase complexity by adding intersectionality, policy context and organisational change planning.	Do not stay only at awareness level; move toward practice change.
Local community workshops	Use examples from schools, youth centres, workplaces, transport, housing or volunteering.	Do not copy international examples without checking local relevance.

How to handle difficult moments

- If a participant makes a stereotype-based comment, pause and ask: "What assumption is behind this statement?"
- If someone becomes defensive, separate intention from impact: "You may not have intended harm, but let us look at how this could land."
- If one person dominates, invite written reflection or pair exchange before plenary.
- If the group laughs at a sensitive role-play, stop and ask what the laughter is doing in the room.
- If the discussion becomes too abstract, return to youth work practice: "What would you do if this happened with young people?"

Facilitator phrases that help in sensitive moments

Situation	Possible phrase
To slow down	Let us pause for a moment before we respond.
To clarify	Can you explain what you mean without using a label for a whole group?
To protect dignity	We can discuss the idea without placing anyone in the room under pressure to represent it.

To reopen participation	I would like to hear from someone who has not spoken yet, only if they want to.
To move toward action	What would a fairer response look like in a youth work setting?

▼ 11. Debriefing, Reflection and Evaluation Tools

Debriefing is the central learning mechanism in this guide. A youth worker should protect enough time for it, even if the activity itself feels successful. The debrief connects emotion, observation, analysis and transfer.

Debrief level	Questions
What?	What happened? What did you notice? What surprised you? What role did you take?
So what?	What does this show about discrimination, power, stereotypes or inclusion? Who had a voice? Who had less access?
Now what?	What will you do differently as a youth worker, peer, volunteer or organisation?

Facilitator observation grid

Dimension	Observe	Evidence	Follow-up question
Participation	Who speaks, who waits, who leads informally?	Names, patterns, group dynamics	Who still needs an entry point?
Inclusion	Were language, movement and confidence levels considered?	Accessibility, opt-out use, support given	What barrier can be removed now?
Learning	Did participants connect the activity to real youth work?	Examples, commitments, analysis	What practice will change?
Safety	Were jokes, pressure or stereotypes managed?	Interventions, emotional climate	What repair or clarification is needed?

Background evaluation rubric for participant-designed workshops

Dimension	Indicators	Score
Non-formal education principles	Learner-centred, participatory, voluntary, experiential, reflective.	1-5
Thematic relevance	Clear connection to discrimination, equality or inclusion.	1-5
Inclusion quality	Accessible design, safe roles, meaningful participation for different confidence and language levels.	1-5
Facilitation awareness	Clear timing, clear instructions, strong debrief, realistic materials.	1-5



Suggested feedback formula:

Start with the strongest element, name one concrete improvement, and close with one strength or implementation possibility. This mirrors the constructive feedback practice developed during the training.

▼ 12. Dissemination, Transfer and References

The value of this guide depends on whether it is used beyond the training room. Partner organisations and participants can adapt the activities for local workshops, youth exchanges, volunteer preparation, school cooperation, youth centre programmes, inclusion campaigns and Erasmus+ dissemination sessions.

Practical transfer actions

- Run one adapted activity with a local group within three months.
- Translate activity instructions into the local working language if needed.
- Collect short feedback from participants and improve the method.

- Share one implementation story through the organisation's website or social media.
- Use the guide as a preparation tool for future Erasmus+ mobility participants.
- Invite young people to co-design new scenario cards based on their realities.

Source base used for this guide

- Participant-generated session materials from the training course: Stereotypes Smasher / Power Girls Session, Peaceful Swans, Workplace Gender Inequality and The Power of Reaction / Light Blue presentation.
- Training flipcharts documenting the session composition model and feedback principles.
- Council of Europe, Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People.
- SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion and Diversity resources.
- Erasmus+ Programme priorities on inclusion, diversity, active participation and European cooperation.

Final note for youth workers

Inclusive youth work is built in small facilitation choices: the examples selected, the roles assigned, the time given to reflection, the language used in feedback, the way silence is treated and the courage to interrupt exclusion when it appears. This guide offers structures, but the responsibility remains with the youth worker to adapt them ethically and attentively to the people in the room.




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