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Disabilities as abilities

youth workers' attitudes and skills development for better understanding and support of intellectually disabled youth

**Erasmus + Youth workers
mobility Training program**

Info pack

by Foundation For Tomorrow

23rd June – 3th July 2025



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Introduction:

Ability is an individual's resources to perform well at something. On the other hand, disability means challenges and limitations an individual faces. Disability does not mean an inability to perform a task. Ability and disability diversity means having a variety of talents and limits in a daily life. Each person has a talent has his personal strength and power. In communication with intellectually disabled persons we very often forget that, very often they are labeled and excluded, because of some of their disabilities , without understanding hoe many abilities they have. A person can HAVE a disability, but actually have lots of ability in other areas. The individual just may not be “able” in a certain area, or might need to execute daily tasks or a specific task, differently. All youth workers should understand this and should be trained how to support abilities of intellectually disabled youth. One of the powerful instruments for informal education of youth workers for social and work inclusion of intellectually disabled youth are the theater and drama tools.

Theater tools serve as effective instruments for non-formal education of youth workers, equipping them with the skills and insights needed to support intellectually disabled youth. Improvisational activities foster spontaneity and encourage creative thinking. Youth workers learn to adapt to unexpected situations, which is crucial when supporting intellectually disabled youth. These exercises also promote quick decision-making and enhance communication skills.

The main goal of the youth workers training course “Disability as ability” is to prepare youth workers from at least 6 European countries to be ready to accept, understand and support intellectually disabled youth, by the methodology of sensory theater.

Sensory theater methodology is an innovative approach to theater that emphasizes immersive, multi-sensory experiences. It engages participants through a combination of sights, sounds, smells, sensations, and sometimes tastes, creating a holistic participatory environment. This approach can be particularly beneficial for young people with intellectual disabilities, as it caters to a variety of learning and communication styles beyond traditional verbal and visual methods.

In the realm of social and work inclusion, sensory theater offers a dynamic platform for empowerment and skill development among these individuals. Through participation in sensory theater productions, young people with intellectual disabilities can enhance their social interaction skills, boost self-esteem, and express creativity in a supportive and structured setting. The process often involves collaboration, where participants work together towards a common goal, fostering teamwork and a sense of community.



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Moreover, the methodology is tailored to be accessible and engaging, allowing participants to experience success and enjoyment in a theatrical environment. This can translate into improved social capabilities and increased confidence, aiding their integration into work environments and social settings.

During the training course all participants youth workers will create a sensory theater performance with the topic "Disabilities as Abilities". This approach will provide a unique and powerful framework for youth workers to better understand and support young people with intellectual disabilities. This approach emphasizes the strengths and capabilities of individuals, rather than focusing on limitations, allowing youth workers to see and appreciate the diverse potential within this community.

1. **Enhanced Empathy and Understanding:** By engaging in sensory theater, youth workers are immersed in experiences that mirror the sensory perceptions and challenges faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities. This exposure fosters greater empathy and understanding, helping workers to better relate to and support these young people.
2. **Appreciation for Diverse Communication Methods:** Sensory theater highlights the importance of non-verbal communication and the various ways individuals can express themselves. Youth workers develop skills to recognize and value these alternative communication methods, improving their ability to connect with and support young people who may not communicate traditionally.
3. **Encouragement of Creativity and Flexibility:** The dynamic and multi-sensory nature of this theater encourages youth workers to think creatively and adaptively. They learn to create inclusive environments that leverage the strengths of young people with intellectual disabilities, ultimately fostering a supportive atmosphere that celebrates diverse abilities.
4. **Promotion of Strength-Based Approaches:** By framing disabilities as abilities, youth workers are encouraged to focus on the skills, talents, and contributions of individuals with intellectual disabilities. This perspective shift can inspire workers to implement programs and activities that capitalize on these strengths, empowering young people and boosting their confidence.
5. **Development of Collaborative Skills:** Sensory theater often involves group participation and collaboration. Youth workers develop skills in teamwork, patience, and cooperation, which are essential for effectively supporting and guiding young people with intellectual disabilities.

Overall, sensory theater on this theme equips youth workers with valuable insights and skills, enabling them to create more inclusive, supportive, and empowering environments for young people with intellectual disabilities.



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Dates: 23th June – 3th July 2025

11 nights/days – 9 days program + 2 days for traveling.

Venue: Dolni Rakovets, Bulgaria



Dolni Rakovets is a village in Southwestern Bulgaria, situated only 50 km south from the capital Sofia. The village is quite, situated in the valley under a hill with mineral spring water and charming forest. In the village has high-speed Internet connection and easy connection by train (around 1 hour) to the city center of Sofia.

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How to reach Dolni Rakovets:

The closest Airport is Sofia. <https://sofia-airport.eu/en/>

The village has a direct connection by train to the central railway station of Sofia (only 70 minutes trip by train)

The hosting organization, Foundation For Tomorrow, will organize a shuttle cars to the village for all participants arriving in Sofia. Please send us your travel details to organize a certain time and place of the cars departure!



The place of accommodation:

House for personal development“Home OM”

The house for Personal development, “Home OM,” is a retreat house for organizing events for informal education and physical and spiritual development. In the calm and relaxed atmosphere of the village villa, the participants could feel at home and get closer to group dynamics, interaction, and peer-to-peer education. The house has all the necessary facilities for an enjoyable stay of a group of 20 persons – 7 bedrooms (double, triple, and quadruple), four shared bathrooms, a common kitchen and daily room, a big terrace, a 48 m2 training hall with all necessary training equipment, green yard with sports facilities, fireplace, swimming pool and own garden with fresh vegetables. The house and the village have mineral spring water.

During the program, participants will have fresh, homemade food from the local restaurant, but they could also participate in food preparation (especially for the cultural evenings) and learn some traditional recipes. Evenings are long and funny around the fireplace.

Next to the house, there is a charming forest with spring water and beautiful trails and views.



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Project summary:

- **Objectives:** Training program for youth workers to develop innovative skills for acceptance, understanding and support social and work inclusion of youth with special educational needs by the tools of sensory theater. The participants will be trained by interactive and informal methods of education by leading experts in psychology, informal education, theater, social and work inclusion, digitalization and etc. The focus will be on innovative sensory theater-based methods for informal education of intellectually disabled youth as an instrument for development of important personal abilities and social skills for their effective inclusion.

The specific objectives of the youth workers training course are:

- Develop acceptance and understanding of intellectual disabilities among youth workers.
- Enhance empathy and ability to communicate with intellectually disabled youth.
- Foster advocacy skills to promote the capabilities and rights of individuals with disabilities.
- Create an inclusive and collaborative approach to working with diverse groups.

This training program emphasizes experiential learning through sensory theater, promoting both personal and professional growth for youth workers, ultimately benefiting the intellectually disabled youth they support.

The main part of the training activities and the sensory theater performance will be outdoor, in the nature.

Key elements and topics in the training program:

The key elements included in the training program are:

➤ **Introduction to Sensory Theater and Disability Awareness**

- **Objective:** Familiarize participants with sensory theater principles and the concept of "Disabilities as Abilities."
- **Activities:** Icebreakers to build rapport, introductory workshops on sensory experiences, and discussions surrounding disability perceptions and biases.

➤ **Understanding Intellectual Disabilities**

- **Objective:** Develop a foundational understanding of intellectual disabilities, including challenges and strengths.
- **Activities:** Interactive sessions with experts, personal stories from individuals with disabilities, and group reflections on the impact of labeling and stereotypes.

➤ **Empathy Building through Role Play**

- **Objective:** Encourage empathy by immersing participants in the experiences of intellectually disabled individuals.
- **Activities:** Role-playing exercises in which youth workers simulate challenges faced by disabled individuals, followed by guided discussions on their feelings and insights.

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➤ **Creative Expression and Sensory Engagement**

Storytelling and Narrative Development

- **Objective:** Teach participants how to craft narratives that highlight the abilities of intellectually disabled individuals.
- **Activities:** Collaborative storytelling sessions where participants create stories that showcase strengths, followed by peer feedback.

➤ **Performance Techniques and Collaboration**

- **Objective:** Introduce basic theater techniques and the importance of teamwork in producing a performance.
- **Activities:** Group exercises in voice work, body movement, and ensemble building, with a focus on collaboration and listening skills.

➤ **Creating a Performance "Disabilities as Abilities"**

- **Objective:** Start developing a theatrical performance based on the theme "Disabilities as Abilities."
- **Activities:** Group brainstorming sessions, script development, and rehearsal processes that emphasize incorporating diverse abilities and perspectives.

➤ **Finalizing the Performance and Production Elements**

- **Objective:** Prepare for the final performance through rehearsals and technical arrangements.
- **Activities:** Final rehearsals, design and creation of production elements (sets, costumes, etc.), and discussions on the message and impact of the performance.

➤ **Performance and Reflection**

- **Objective:** Present the performance to an audience and engage in reflective practices.
- **Activities:** Performing the piece, followed by a debriefing session to discuss experiences, learnings, and emotional responses to the project. Evaluation of the overall training course and discussion of how to implement these insights and skills in participants' work with intellectually disabled youth.

➤ **Additional topics and activities in the program:**

- Exchange of experience and good practices in youth workers work for social inclusion of young people with special learning needs. Organizations presentations.
- Digital tools for support promotion of the sensory theater based tools for social and work inclusion.
- Digital tools for networking and promotion of the project results
- Europass **Recognition tool** for non-formal & informal **learning of youth workers**.
- Country cultural presentations and cultural evenings.
- Excursion for sightseeing of cultural and natural sights of the region



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Project venue: village Dolni Rakovets, 50 km – south from Sofia

Period of training program activities: 24th June – 2th July 2025

Arrival day – 23th June, Departure day – 3th July 2025

Expected participants: maximum 18 participants from Europe (*EU members and third neighbor countries non-associated with the program*), minimum 2 participants per country. Youth workers with experience or interest in informal education and support for social inclusion and work inclusion of young people with special educational needs. Especially we will give advantage of participants interested in inclusive work with intellectually disabled youth by using sensory theater methodology.

Information about the participants:

In the project is going to participate: 18 youth workers (*without age limit ,but with specific capacity, experience and motivation*).**from at least 6 European countries, at least two of them from third neighbor countries non-associated with the program.** Each organization should send at least 2 participants. All participants will be individually selected on the base of their experience and motivation. The final number participants from each country will be defined after preliminary evaluation of all applicants.

Stages of application and preparation for participation:

1. Preliminary application

All potential participant should apply for participation by filling online application form with a detailed description of their motivation and experience.

FOR SENDING YOUR APPLICATIONS, follow the next link:

<https://forms.gle/DL32aSKFBmvF1oAv8>

Deadline for all applications 12th MAY

2. Evaluation of application and approval of the final number and the list of participants – from hosting organization in collaboration with partner organizations

Deadline: 14th May

3. Signing declaration for participation from approved participants. Each participant must fill a form-declaration for confirmation of his/her participation.

Deadline: 18th May

4. Booking of travel documents. Each participants must book his/her tickets after approval from the hosting organization.

Deadline: 25 May

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- 5. Sending the detailed final program to all participants. Hosting organization will prepare and send detailed program of the training course, that could be discussed with all participants during the online preliminary meeting.**

Deadline: 5th June

- 6. Online preliminary meeting with all selected participants.** All participants will be invited for an online meeting to getting more in details with the venue and the program.

7th June 2025

The hosting organization will select the most motivated applicants ready to participate actively in each stage of the project implementation and to continue working for social and work inclusion of intellectually disabled youth.

Participants should have experience in creative workshops, education, training, consultancy, social work, volunteering and/or other activities for support social and work inclusion of youth with special learning needs. We especially looking for partners with experience related with the topic of the training course.

Participants must be ready to participate actively in preparation, implementation and follow-up activities. They must prepare and present during the training program presentation about experience, present and future activities of their organization in the area of the project topic. They must prepare and present the culture of their country – by presentation, games, music, dance, food and other cultural activities. Every evening will have cultural program of each partner's country.

The participants must be ready to multiply the results from the training program by public presentation of the training results and by implementation the new knowledge and methodology in their work with intellectually disabled youth.

During the program representatives of partner's organization should discuss and create plan for next common activities and long-term partnership in the area of social and work inclusion of intellectually disabled youth.

Host organization:

Foundation For Tomorrow – Blagoevgrad , Bulgaria <https://zautre.bg/en>

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