

# GUIDE ON INCLUSIVE DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN YOUTH INFORMATION SERVICES

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## Foreword

The Eurodesk Network is the result of an **inspiring idea** that materialised in 1990: **all young people should have access to quality information about opportunities** to learn, volunteer or work abroad. Each year, it informs over 2 million young people through online and face-to-face activities.

Eurodesk's ambition is to make information on EU and international opportunities visible and accessible to all young people thanks to its information activities, and more particularly through its **diverse network of local multipliers and ambassadors** (local youth information points, youth centres, libraries, municipalities and other structures in direct contact with young people). In addition, Eurodesk implements a strong **digital strategy** aimed to reach out to young people throughout Europe via its websites, digital tools and social media channels.

Inclusion is one of the priorities of the Eurodesk 6-year strategy. It aims to involve young people from all backgrounds in EU policy processes and mobility programmes, with a specific focus on those with fewer opportunities. Eurodesk is committed to **creating inclusive content as part of its brand commitment to social change and social inclusion**.

**Social inclusion** means improving participation for all in society through enhancing opportunities, equal access to resources, and having a voice and respect for everybody's rights. It requires the distribution of opportunities and resources in a way that minimises disadvantage and marginalisation.

**Accessible and inclusive information** is about reaching more people, including, but not only, young people with disabilities, from disadvantaged areas and socio-economic backgrounds. Eurodesk messages, visuals, designs and websites all play a part in encouraging more people to take part in European opportunities.

If information is not accessible, a young person may miss opportunities or services, not attend our information events/sessions and/or ask a lot of additional questions. On the contrary, accessible and inclusive information offers excellent opportunities to communicate without barriers, even if such information does not guarantee that all people will understand it equally.

This guide aims to support Eurodesk coordinators and multipliers, as well as all those working with/for young people, in designing inclusive digital communication plans. It provides guiding principles and case studies to improve little by little their outreach to a broader audience.

By adopting clearer guidelines on designing inclusive and accessible youth information services, Eurodesk contributes to making the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (2021-2027) a reality.

Audrey Frith,  
Eurodesk director

## About Us

Created in 1990, Eurodesk is a European youth information network specialised in the promotion of international mobility (studying, volunteering and learning abroad) and participation (European youth events, consultations, etc) for young people and those working with them. Eurodesk is recognised as a support structure of the Erasmus+ programme and EU Youth Strategy. Eurodesk-specific know-how relates to working with young people (informing, counselling and engaging youth), offering a wide range of European opportunities (Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, international programmes, etc.), and delivering strong digital outreach, while being present at grassroots level through a wide and diverse network of local multipliers and ambassadors. Eurodesk operates at European level with a network of 39 Eurodesk Centres, connecting over 3,000 local information providers (e.g. youth information centres, municipalities, youth organisations, educational institutions) in 37 countries. Eurodesk Brussels Link (EBL) is in charge of coordinating the network.

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## The Added Value of the Guide

By making your information accessible and inclusive, you will allow more people to discover European opportunities, encouraging them to take an active step and grow from this experience. It will allow you to target different audiences and for that, it is essential to include it in your long-term strategy and communication plans. This will contribute to ensuring your management commits to producing accessible information and allocating resources to it.

Designing a plan for implementing inclusive information can help you clarify your goals, with defined actions and milestones. This plan should come with concrete implementation measures, such as:

- Defining concrete checklists or indicators when designing/evaluating activities or services (the list of principles below can serve as a good basis)
- Having a person/team responsible for it (with financial resources) especially in big organisations
- Informing/training all new team members about the plan
- Making sure you train your team members in their field of competence (e.g. copywriters on inclusive language, IT specialists on accessible UX/UI, graphic designers on visual impairments... and so on)
- Highlighting the measures to develop and sustain in-house knowledge about accessibility and how to implement it
- Mapping and cooperating with relevant actors (e.g. inclusion officers in the Erasmus+ National Agencies, specialised public services and organisations)
- Making sure accessibility requirements are addressed and checked out when outsourcing services (e.g. website development, translation, social campaigns).

**Ambitious objectives and small steps** over time are certainly the most efficient approach towards making your organisation an inclusive one. It is important to map the direction you aim to go in.

This guide covers the **general principles** relevant to building inclusive and accessible information based on best practices from organisations striving for a more inclusive world, not only in the communication field, but also in real life. This is why their perspective is key when elaborating on these guidelines.

“Diversity is not a problem to fix. Diversity is the solution”

*Karen Blackett, OBE*

## The 7 Key Principles

Here are a set of **7 key principles** to make your youth information services more inclusive. They aim to support you in building your plan, as well as designing new activities. The principles are not exhaustive and aim to support a reflective process.

**Principle 1** - Create and follow your own inclusive information and communication strategy

**Principle 2** - Understand your audience and be aware of communication barriers

**Principle 3** - Focus on what you communicate

**Principle 4** - Make your content more accessible

**Principle 5** - Be inclusive with your language

**Principle 6** - Use different channels to reach broadly

**Principle 7** - Keep monitoring and adjusting to your audiences.

## How to use this guide

Welcome to this comprehensive guide designed to enhance your understanding and application of inclusive digital communication. It is divided into two parts, each serving a specific purpose to enrich your knowledge and empower your communication practices.

### Part 1: Towards Belonging (Conceptual Elements)

Here, we explore the core principles and theoretical frameworks that underpin Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB). You will gain the foundational knowledge needed to understand the importance of fostering a sense of belonging in digital spaces.

### Part 2: Principles of Inclusive Digital Communication (Practical Implementation)

This extensive section presents the "7 Principles of Inclusive Digital Communication" developed by Eurodesk. Each principle begins with a "Time for Reflection" section, allowing you to assess your readiness and reflect on your current practices. You'll find practical examples, tools, and case studies from Eurodesk national coordinators and multipliers, offering inspiration and guidance for implementation.

To make the most of this guide:

1. Start with Part 1 to grasp the conceptual elements.
2. Dive into Part 2, engaging in the "Time for Reflection" sections, and explore practical examples and case studies.
3. Navigate based on your needs, using the table of contents and index.
4. Actively engage, take notes, and reflect on the provided questions for self-reflection.

**Remember**, this guide is a valuable resource designed to empower you with the knowledge, inspiration and tools to create inclusive and impactful digital communication. Embrace the practical examples, learn from the members of the Eurodesk network, and embark on a journey towards fostering a sense of belonging through your communication efforts.

Enjoy exploring and applying these principles, and may your inclusive communication endeavours make a lasting impact.



# Chapter One: Mindset towards belonging

Here, we explore the core principles and theoretical frameworks that underpin Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB). You will gain the foundational knowledge needed to understand the importance of fostering a sense of belonging in digital spaces.

## **Subchapters:**

1. Embracing Inclusion: A Journey Towards a Culture of Belonging
2. The Path to Inclusion: Commitment and Mindset Shift
3. Navigating the Path: Understanding and Empowerment
4. Reaching the Ideal State: Culture of Belonging
5. Diving into Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

## 1 - Embracing Inclusion: A Journey Towards a Culture of Belonging

In today's ever-changing world, fostering inclusivity has emerged as a critical goal for societies, organisations, and communities alike. While many people strive to treat others with respect and fairness, true inclusion is not automatic. Despite our best wishes, inclusivity does not occur naturally; it requires persistent and deliberate efforts. There are many reasons for this: deeply ingrained implicit biases, societal conditioning, fear of the unfamiliar, power dynamics, and the unconscious perpetuation of privilege. Even with the best intentions, well-meaning individuals may exclude certain people without meaning to. Achieving genuine inclusion requires ongoing work, self-awareness, and a willingness to challenge the status quo.

With some guidance on inclusion and diversity, it is possible to transform an organisation into a place that nurtures a genuine culture of belonging. This journey does not offer a one-size-fits-all solution, but is an ongoing process that requires commitment, understanding and adaptation, as the theories and practices related to inclusion continue to evolve.

The journey begins with a crucial yet fundamental step: committing to change and shifting one's mindset. Initial steps at the individual level include cultivating self-awareness and, for some, acknowledging marginalised aspects of identity (characteristics or traits of an individual's identity that have been pushed to the margins or overlooked in society). Meanwhile, at the organisational level, the first steps involve empowering marginalised groups to enhance diversity within the organisation and enabling those already present to speak up. Encouraging open discussions can help identify internal challenges, assess the current situation, and address previously unexplored topics.

After completing the initial process and taking the first steps, the focus shifts to fostering belonging by improving the accessibility of work, products and information (inclusion activities), ensuring better representation in leadership, and involving a more diverse group of people in activities (diversity). Sharing power or empowering individuals is also essential. Power dynamics can be demonstrated in different aspects of running an organisation, such as through the decision-making authority, financial resources, time and influence. For instance, sharing power could involve allocating financial resources to make an organisation's space more accessible, thereby proactively including members from marginalised groups.

## 2 - The Path to Inclusion: Commitment and Mindset Shift

Your organisation's journey begins with a symbolic decision for change and a commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. This **path towards an ideal state** – where belonging, the sense of acceptance, connection, and inclusion that an individual experiences within a group or community is integrated within your organisation's culture – will be marked by twists, turns, and milestones.

The key to progress is not only implementing inclusive communication principles, but also **changing the mindset of the people within your organisation**. Much exclusion, or lack of inclusion, occurs unconsciously, so it's essential to raise awareness about our role in promoting inclusion. By shifting the way people think, you create a sustainable foundation for ongoing changes and the integration of inclusion into your organisation's culture.

As stated in the book *Subtle Acts of Exclusion*, "All work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion begins with oneself. You must take on the task of understanding the role you play in perpetuating bias."

### 3 - Navigating the Path: Understanding and Empowerment

Embarking on the journey to create an inclusive and diverse environment requires deliberate intention and effort. While various approaches may be suggested, they all emphasise the significance of understanding and empowerment in fostering inclusion.

Here are four key initial strategies which can lead towards a more inclusive organisation:

1. **Empower disadvantaged groups:** Promoting diversity in the organisation involves empowering disadvantaged groups. By providing opportunities, resources and support, an environment is created where everyone can thrive and contribute to the organisation's success.
2. **Cultivate self-awareness:** Emotionally intelligent behaviour stems from self-awareness. Recognising one's feelings, biases, and the impact of one's actions on others is crucial. Fostering self-awareness enables people to navigate interpersonal relationships more effectively, resulting in a more inclusive atmosphere.
3. **Encourage open discussions:** Addressing any acts of exclusion openly and constructively when they occur is vital. Fostering a culture of open dialogue raises awareness about unconscious biases, microaggressions, and other subtle forms of exclusion, allowing the organisation to learn and grow collectively.
4. **Connect with marginalised and/or privileged aspects of identity:** Preparing for change involves connecting with the marginalised and/or privileged parts of one's own identity. By understanding personal experiences of exclusion, it is easier to empathise with others and collaborate to create a more inclusive environment.

## 4 - Reaching the Ideal State: Culture of Belonging

The end game of any Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) activities are establishing a culture of belonging, an environment where individuals feel valued, included and accepted, regardless of their background, identity, or personal characteristics. In such a culture, **everyone feels a sense of connection, psychological safety, and the ability to express themselves authentically without fear of judgement or discrimination.**

A culture of belonging promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion within an organisation or community, fostering collaboration, innovation, and overall well-being among its members. It is built upon mutual respect, empathy, open communication, and a genuine commitment to embracing differences and supporting the personal and professional growth of each individual.

**In the context of youth information, a culture of belonging is one where all internal and external communication is accessible and used equally by everyone. All young people feel empowered to participate in any of the activities proposed, experiencing comfort and a sense of belonging. For those working with young people and providing youth information, there will be no need to label or single out specific excluded groups and think about how to reach out to and include them. Recognising distinct needs and barriers to participation will no longer be necessary, as those barriers will cease to exist. Sounds tempting? Well it is in our hands to make these steps towards the culture of belonging a reality.**

The path towards belonging leads us through diversity, equity, and inclusion. All of these elements are equally important, and can be implemented through improved representation of diverse groups, ensuring accessibility and sharing power.

An ideal state of the organisation, among others, is one where:

- Inclusion processes are understood and practised.
- Internal and external actions are coherent and accessible to all groups.
- Communication is effective, inclusive, and adapted to the needs of diverse communities, making a tangible difference to the lives of young people benefiting from youth information.

In this ideal state, everyone within the organisation feels that they belong and live the culture of inclusion and belonging, continuously learning and taking responsibility for their actions.

## 5 - Diving into Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

“Belonging is your sense that you are part of something greater than yourself that you value and need and that values and needs you back. In other words, belonging creates a strong sense of connection, reciprocity, and shared value”.

*Alida Miranda-Wolff, Cultures of Belonging*

In order to navigate the path towards more inclusive youth information, it is essential to understand the key concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. These terms, while interconnected, have distinct meanings and implications.

**Diversity** refers to the variety of differences among people, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic background, religion and abilities. A diverse institution recognises and values these differences, striving to create an environment where people from all walks of life can contribute their unique perspectives and experiences. Diversity in youth information refers mainly to broader representation of different groups, information designed taking into account specific needs of different groups and this information being fully accessible.

**Equity** is about ensuring fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all individuals while identifying and eliminating barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalised groups. This concept goes beyond equal treatment and addresses the systemic imbalances and biases that may exist within an organisation, aiming to create a level playing field for everyone. In the case of youth information, it might be expressed by investing more time and money to design content in a variety of formats so more young people will have equal access to it.

**Inclusion** is the process of creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and able to fully participate in an organisation's activities and decision-making processes. Inclusion is about ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute their skills, knowledge, and perspectives, without expecting them to compromise their identity.

Inclusion in youth information refers to the intentional efforts made by organisations and professionals working with young people to create and provide information, resources, and services that are accessible, relevant, and engaging for all youth, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, religion, abilities, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic. Inclusive youth information practices aim to ensure that all young people have equal opportunities to access information and benefit from that access by taking part on an equal basis with their peers.

**Belonging** is the emotional experience of feeling connected, accepted, and valued by others. It goes beyond inclusion, capturing the essence of *Mary McGuire's* quote: "Belonging is dancing as if no one is watching." When people feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to the organisation, leading to improved performance and overall success.

In relation to youth information, belonging refers to fostering an environment where young people from all backgrounds feel that they are an integral part of the community, and their unique experiences, perspectives, and identities are acknowledged, respected, and celebrated.

"Equity is the relation between power and fairness"  
*Alida Miranda-Wolff*

# Chapter Two: Principles of Inclusive Digital Communication

Welcome to this section of the guide! Here, we will explore the seven principles that the Eurodesk network strives to uphold in their information and communication practices. Discover how these principles pave the way for inclusive communication for all. Delve into each principle to uncover a wealth of practices, recommendations, and valuable knowledge that will empower you to communicate effectively and inclusively.

## Principles:

1. Create and follow your own inclusive information and communication strategy
2. Understand your audience and be aware of communication
3. Focus on what you communicate
4. Be inclusive with your language
5. Make your content more accessible
6. Use different channels to reach broadly
7. Keep monitoring and adjusting to your audience



## Principle 1 - Create and follow your own inclusive communication strategy

### Time for reflection

As an introduction to the principle, we invite you to reflect on and evaluate the following statement:

My institution and I consistently create and adhere to my own inclusive communication strategy to reach and engage with a diverse audience.

Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### Supporting questions

*You don't have to answer them all in writing, but use them to reflect on and evaluate the main question:*

- Did I establish a clear inclusive communication strategy that considers the diverse backgrounds and needs of my audiences?
- Do I regularly review and update my communication strategy to ensure it remains effective and inclusive?
- How do I measure the success of my inclusive communication strategy? Am I reaching the diverse audience I intend to engage?
- Do I actively seek feedback on my communication strategy from a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure inclusivity?
- Are there any groups or individuals who may not be effectively reached or engaged by my current focus? If so, how can I adapt my strategy to better include them?
- How well does my current strategy align with the principles and practices of inclusive communication?

List one thing that you would like to improve (if needed):

## Building awareness / context

### Inclusive communication needs a strategy

If you don't know where to begin, start with an **assessment or audit**. The **time for reflection** table can help you to figure out why being inclusive in your communication is important to you and what could be possible steps to move forward. Then move to the planning part, which will help you to understand where you are as an organisation in the context of inclusive information and communication and where you want to be.

It all starts with being aware that the way our organisation is currently communicating may not be inclusive to its full potential. It's when we realise that by improving the way we communicate - internally and externally - we can respond better to other organisations and young people in all their diversity, and through that, involve them, increase their engagement and representation.

We need an inclusive communication strategy because **it sets the foundation for change and improvement**. By recognising the need for improvement, an organisation acknowledges that there may be biases or gaps in its current communication practices that exclude some of their target audiences and that by taking a proactive and intentional approach, they can address those issues.

We shouldn't be scared of the word "strategy", which may sound a bit intangible. In reality it's about mapping our goals, our audiences, looking at the channels that we communicate with and our internal communication. It's simply planning:

- A. Where do we want to go?
- B. Who do we want to involve?
- C. Who is missing in our activities/events?
- D. What do we want to achieve?
- E. How are we planning to get there?

A strategy provides a framework for transforming our motivation into action and is a drive to implement change and create a more inclusive communication culture. It doesn't need to be complex and it's also not set in stone; it can be adapted and adjusted as we go along.

The plan on how to communicate better and share information so that everyone feels included should match the organisation's beliefs and build a positive and supportive environment within the organisation, while also externally supporting their inclusive image.

**Benefits of having an inclusive communication strategy:**

- Ensuring coherent communication practices across the organisation,
- Maintaining sustainability during staff transitions,
- Raising awareness among all individuals involved,
- Promoting equitable and respectful communication practices to other organisations,
- Tracking progress regarding representation and inclusion of people from marginalised groups.

Self-awareness about where your organisation currently is and who is missing in your existing communication helps identify potential barriers to inclusivity, challenge assumptions, and become more conscious of the impact communication has on different individuals and communities. It provides the motivation and drive to implement change and create a more inclusive communication culture.

An Inclusive Communication Strategy document can be developed internally or incorporated into an organisation's other relevant documents during a strategy development workshop that can cover several aspects and steps such as:

**Step 1: Define within your team the purpose and benefits of an inclusive communication strategy**

- Outline the importance of having an inclusive communication strategy to ensure coherence, sustainability, and alignment with your organisation's vision and values.
- Brainstorm on the opportunities and benefits that an Inclusive Communication Strategy can bring to your organisation.
- Determine your vision for the organisation: *What kind of organisation do we want to be when it comes to Inclusive Communication?*

You can define this by statements written in the present tense, for example:

*We are an organisation that communicates in a way that is accessible to diverse groups of young people.*

**Step 2: Define the goals you want to achieve through the inclusive communication strategy**

- Determine the time frame for your strategy; usually strategies are planned for 2-3 years so that the effects of the implementation can be seen and evaluated.
- Set goals and the SMART objectives (see definition below) you want to achieve within your inclusive communication strategy.

Examples of goals your organisation may want to achieve:

- **Fostering inclusivity:** To create an inclusive and welcoming environment where young people of all backgrounds, identities, and experiences feel valued and included.
- **Promoting diversity:** To celebrate and embrace diversity by ensuring that communication practices reflect and respect the diverse perspectives, cultures, and identities within the organisation and the communities it serves.
- **Enhancing collaboration and participation:** To increase active participation, collaboration, and engagement among partners by providing clear and inclusive communication channels and opportunities for everyone to contribute.
- **Addressing biases and stereotypes:** To challenge and address unconscious biases and stereotypes in our communication, promoting fairness, equality, and representation.
- **Improving stakeholder relationships:** To build strong and meaningful relationships with stakeholders, partners, and the wider community by engaging in transparent, respectful, and inclusive communication practices.
- **Amplifying marginalised voices:** To give voice to marginalised groups of young people, ensuring that their perspectives and experiences are acknowledged, respected, and represented in communication efforts.
- **Increasing awareness and understanding:** To raise awareness and promote understanding of social issues, diversity, and inclusion through our communication initiatives, helping to educate and inform both internal and external audiences.
- **Building a positive organisational culture:** To cultivate a positive and inclusive organisational culture where open dialogue, empathy, and respect are fostered through effective communication.

Goals are a framework for setting SMART objectives that are: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

An example of a SMART objective:

*By the end of the next quarter, the organisation will implement a series of workshops and activities that promote inclusivity and create an environment where at least 90% of young people, regardless of their background, identity and experiences report feeling valued and included based on post-event feedback surveys.*

The acronym stands for:

- **Specific:** Objectives should be clear and well-defined, avoiding vague or ambiguous language. They should answer the questions of who, what, where, when, and why.

- **Measurable:** Objectives should be quantifiable or have a way to track progress. Establishing concrete criteria or metrics helps evaluate success and provides a measure of achievement.
- **Achievable:** Objectives should be realistic and attainable given available resources, skills, and time. They should challenge individuals or organisations, but still be within reach.
- **Relevant:** Objectives should align with the broader objectives, vision, and priorities. They should have relevance and significance to the individual or organisation pursuing them.
- **Time-bound:** Objectives should have a specific time frame or deadline for completion. This helps create a sense of urgency, sets a target for accomplishment, and provides a timeline for planning and execution.

Using the SMART framework when setting objectives helps ensure that they are well-defined, focused, and actionable. It enhances clarity, motivation, and accountability, increasing the likelihood of achieving the desired outcomes.

### **Step 3: Map your stakeholders considering internal and external communication**

**Internal communication** refers to the exchange of information, messages, and ideas within the organisation among its members, employees, volunteers, and other internal stakeholders. It involves communication channels and processes such as staff meetings, emails, internal newsletters, intranet platforms, and team collaboration tools. Internal communication focuses on sharing updates, promoting teamwork, disseminating organisational values and goals, and fostering a sense of belonging and engagement among the internal community.

**External communication** refers to the communication efforts of the organisation that are directed towards external stakeholders and audiences. These stakeholders can include youth organisations, young people, partners, donors, community members, government entities, media, and the general public. External communication channels the organisation's mission, services and initiatives, accomplishments, and impact to the wider community. It involves various channels and formats such as press releases, social media, websites, public events, outreach campaigns, and partnerships. The goal of external communication is to build relationships, attract support, raise awareness, and promote the organisation's work to external audiences.

**Step 4: Plan HOW you want to achieve your inclusive communication goals**

- Looking at the goals defined in **Step 2**, define and write down concrete ways in which you want to achieve them; throughout the next few chapters you will find inspiration for concrete actions on how to be more inclusive in your communication.
- You can use the principles of this guide as your point of reference in planning your initiatives.
- It may be useful to divide the services and activities that will be achieved either through internal or external communication channels (some may overlap).
- Make sure that you focus both on external and internal communication and that you keep them aligned. If you communicate externally in an inclusive way but your internal communication is far from that, you're not really building an inclusive environment where everyone feels safe and that they belong.

**Step 5: Develop an implementation plan for your inclusive communication strategy**

- Look at your plan as a journey towards the ideal state of your organisation's communication being fully inclusive.
- Use the Principles in this guide to verify and plan the steps towards achieving goals such as: inclusive language use, visual representation, accessibility, and engagement with diverse audiences.

**Step 6: Include monitoring and evaluation**

- Integrate a monitoring and evaluation component into the strategy to ensure its effectiveness.
- Establish indicators that will help you to measure progress towards inclusive communication goals. For example, if you want to increase the participation of young people from marginalised groups in your services, you need to collect data on how many people from these communities participate in your services currently and how that number changes once the strategy has been implemented.
- Regularly assess and review the strategy to make adjustments based on feedback and changing organisational needs.

**Step 7: Consult the draft of the inclusive communication strategy with your stakeholders**

- Develop a short document gathering your ideas regarding the strategy.
- Conduct consultation sessions with your stakeholders, especially young people and other NGOs, who can give you valuable insights into the strategy.

- Plan training sessions or workshops to introduce the strategy, explain its principles, and provide practical guidance for implementation within your team and networks.
- Foster a culture of inclusivity by encouraging open communication, feedback, and continuous learning.

**Step 8: Regularly review and update the strategy**

- Establish a system for periodic reviews of the strategy to ensure it remains relevant and effective.
- Encourage ongoing feedback and suggestions from staff members and stakeholders to continuously improve the organisation's inclusive communication practices.

By following these steps and involving a diverse team in the writing and implementation process, your organisation can develop an Inclusive Communication Strategy that promotes respectful and effective communication internally and externally with a clear plan on HOW you will achieve this.

## **Case study: 8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work - Promoting Best Quality Inclusive Practice in Youth Work Settings**

### **Principle**

Create and follow your own inclusive information and communication strategy

### **Background**

Eurodesk Ireland's cooperation partner, the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), has provided guiding principles to challenge all forms of discrimination against young people in youth work settings. The principles are part of the NYCI vision 'where all young persons are empowered to develop the skills and confidence to fully participate as active citizens in an inclusive society'. NYCI offers training programmes, resources, policy development, advice, and networking opportunities.

### **Challenge**

NYCI supports the youth work sector in embedding equality, inclusion, diversity and interculturalism in their settings. Although youth organisations support and share the NYCI vision, it is sometimes difficult for them to evidence how their practice ensures and promotes inclusion, diversity, and equity. Some of the challenges identified are the following:

- Lack of set indicators or measures on equality and inclusive work
- Different approaches by individual organisations

### **Solution**

To address these challenges, the "8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work" was developed. It provides:

- Tools and templates to support inclusive youth work,
- Examples of inclusive practices,
- A checklist of key indicators for assessing equality and inclusive youth work,
- Self-reflection and context sections.

The resource helps youth workers and their managers put their current practice into a framework that will directly help them in their reporting and in further developing their inclusive practice.

### **Results**

By using the "8 Steps", the organisations will develop their capacity to:

- Evidence their promotion and provision of inclusive, diverse and responsive services,
- Comply with equality legislation,
- Achieve specific outcomes for young people from minority and marginalised identities.



**Key Takeaway:**

It is important to:

- Listen closely to young people who experience exclusion in their everyday lives and reflect on how the youth work sector can best adapt and respond to meet their needs and support them to fulfil their potential.
- Develop tools and resources that respect and follow the principle of quality youth work and are grounded in the reality and demands of youth work provision.

**Credit:** National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), Dublin, Ireland

**Links:**

- 8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work, NYCI, Anne Walsh and Amel Yacef
- e-Learning module on Social Justice as a Core Principle, NYCI
- Manual on Transforming Hate in Youth Work Settings, NYCI
- e-Learning course on Transformative and Compassionate Practice, NYCI

## Principle 2 - Understand your audience and be aware of communication barriers

### Time for reflection

As an introduction to the principle, we invite you to reflect on and evaluate the following statement:

My institution and I consistently create and adhere to my own inclusive communication strategy to reach and engage with a diverse audience.

Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### Supporting questions

*You don't have to answer them all in writing, but use them to reflect on and evaluate the main question:*

- Who is your audience?
- Are there any specific groups that could benefit from your youth information but are not currently?
- How do you reach out to these specific groups?
- Which platforms are used by the young people whom you want to reach?
- What outreach methods have been successful and what methods have not worked as well?
- What can you do to improve outreach to specific groups and ensure that they are aware of your services and resources?
- Do you have a system in place to receive feedback from your users?

List one thing that you would like to improve (if needed):

## Building awareness / context

"There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives"

*Audre Lorde*

### Step 1: Identify your target audiences

Your communication strategy must begin by identifying your target audience. While it's tempting to say our audience is "everyone," this vague answer is insufficient. To select the best communication channels and tailor your content, you must understand the specific needs and characteristics of the audience, particularly those who are often overlooked. This is especially crucial in digital communication, where the consequences of exclusion are less visible and may result in the underrepresentation of diverse groups in your activities.

There are well-known factors of exclusion, such as gender, skin colour, or ethnic status, but there are also frequently overlooked aspects (e.g. young people with mental health issues or those who have experienced abuse or neglect), which may vary depending on the context.

You may encounter several challenges when determining your audience:

- **Invisible aspects of a person's identity** - not all aspects of one's identity that contribute to exclusion are visible, meaning we might not be aware of the unique needs of these young people (like trauma, educational level or economic status).
- **Legally not recognised grounds of discrimination** - some factors of exclusion are not recognised in official documents, so although these groups may face stigmatisation, they are not legally considered to be experiencing discrimination (for example, diverse body shapes and sizes).
- **Intersectionality** - individuals can possess multiple intersecting identities that collectively shape their experiences and social position, a concept known as intersectionality. This can mean that more than one aspect of a person's identity can create challenges in engaging with our content or participating in our activities.

If we don't have a clear understanding of your audience, you must ensure your communication is highly accessible and caters to the diverse needs of young people from all backgrounds.

To help with this, let's discuss elements of identity and background. In the visual below, you will find various aspects of a person's identity divided into three categories: those that are generally visible, those that are sometimes visible and sometimes not, and those that tend to be invisible. Invisible aspects of identity are often more easily overlooked.

Visible Elements of Identity	Sometimes Visible, Sometimes Not	Invisible Elements of Identity
Physical appearance (e.g. height, build)	Socioeconomic status (often inferred from visible elements like clothing, but not always accurate)	Sexual orientation (unless explicitly expressed or displayed)
Age (to a certain extent)	Gender identity (if not conforming to typical gender presentation)	Religious beliefs (unless signified by visible symbols)
Ethnicity (often assumed from physical traits, but not always accurate)	Disability (if it's not physical or immediately apparent)	Political beliefs (unless signified by visible symbols)
Clothing style (can indicate aspects of personal style, culture, or socioeconomic status)	Mental health status (can sometimes become visible through behaviour changes, but typically not immediately apparent)	Personal values and moral framework
Tattoos, piercings, or other body modifications	Emotional state (can sometimes be deduced from facial expressions or behaviour, but often not fully visible)	Education level (unless indicated by visible symbols like academic attire or awards)
Language or accent (can sometimes indicate regional and social origin)	Cultural background (if not immediately apparent from physical appearance or clothing)	Introvert/extrovert tendency (can sometimes become visible through behaviour, but typically requires some level of interaction to discern)
Physical abilities or disabilities	Physical health status (certain illnesses can become visible at times, but others remain invisible)	Personal history and life experiences
Gender (often assumed from physical traits, but not always accurate)	Dietary habits/preferences (can become visible during meals but otherwise typically invisible)	Thoughts

	Substance use habits (can become visible in certain contexts, but typically invisible)	Personal aspirations and fears
	Language proficiency (visible when the person is actively using the language, otherwise typically invisible)	Deep-seated insecurities or trauma
		Migration status

This table is by no means exhaustive, and these are broad categories that may not perfectly represent the nuances of individual identity. However, it provides a basic understanding of how different elements of identity can be more or less visible.

### Conscious and unconscious

In addition to considering visible and invisible factors that contribute to exclusion, we can also categorise them as conscious and unconscious. However, it is difficult to establish concrete classifications since it is subjective and varies depending on overall societal awareness and individual understanding. What's crucial to remember is that no one possesses complete awareness of marginalised groups, making it essential to continuously learn and listen to the voices of socially excluded individuals and experts in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

## Step 2: Understanding communication barriers

### Groups at risk of exclusion

There isn't a single definitive list of all the groups that are at risk of social exclusion, and any attempt to create one will inevitably have limitations and may not be accurate in every context. The table below aims to collect all the groups which might be at risk of exclusion in the European context. Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider the various groups that may require additional attention when designing youth information activities. We encourage you to utilise this table as a tool for reflecting on your awareness and as a starting point for defining your audience and understanding their communication barriers.

Groups at risk of exclusion	Exclusion	Youth Information Support

Young people living in poverty or low-income families	Limited access to education and job opportunities, social exclusion, lack of resources for basic needs, stigma and potential shame	Information on financial support, job opportunities, scholarships, and access to basic services such as housing and food.
Unhoused or precariously housed young people	Lack of stable housing, limited access to education, employment and healthcare, social exclusion, stigma and discrimination	Information on emergency accommodation, housing support services, education and employment opportunities, mental health services.
Young people with disabilities or chronic health conditions	Physical and social barriers, discrimination, lack of accessibility, limited access to education and employment, <b>isolation</b> and stigma	Ensure accessible services, promote inclusion and support, information on accessibility, accommodation, education, employment, health and social services, advocacy and peer support.
Young people from ethnic or linguistic minority backgrounds	Discrimination, racism, prejudice, cultural barriers, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on cultural diversity, language support, education, employment, social services, advocacy and intercultural exchange opportunities.
Young people from migrant or refugee backgrounds	Discrimination, xenophobia, racism, cultural and language barriers, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Offer language support, cultural integration, legal aid, information on legal rights and procedures, education, employment, social integration, language and cultural support, advocacy and intercultural exchange opportunities.

Early school leavers and those with limited access to education and training	Limited access to education and training, low employability, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on education and training opportunities, career guidance, vocational skills, entrepreneurship and apprenticeship programmes.
Young people who have experienced trauma or adverse childhood experiences	Mental health issues, emotional difficulties, low self-esteem, poor social skills and risky behaviours	Information on mental health, trauma-informed care, therapy, counselling, peer support and positive youth development programmes.
Young people involved in the justice system or at risk of criminal activity	Stigma, discrimination, limited access to education and employment, limited access to internet, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on legal rights and procedures, education, employment, social integration, counselling and restorative justice programmes.
Young people with mental health issues or emotional difficulties	Stigma, discrimination, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on mental health, therapy, counselling, peer support, self-care and positive youth development programmes.
Young people with substance use disorder issues or addiction	Stigma, discrimination, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on substance abuse prevention, harm reduction, treatment, counselling, peer support and positive youth development programmes.

Young people who are survivors of abuse or neglect	Trauma, mental health issues, emotional difficulties, low self-esteem, poor social skills and risky behaviours	Information on child protection, legal rights and procedures, mental health, therapy, counselling, peer support and positive youth development programmes.
Young people who are or have been in care	Limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on care services, education, employment, mental health, counselling, peer support and positive youth development programmes.
Young parents or young people with caring responsibilities	Limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on parenting, childcare, education, employment, mental health, counselling and peer support.
LGBTQ+ youth	Discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion, lack of support or exclusion by family and friends and marginalisation	Information on LGBTQ+ rights, education, employment, mental health, counselling, peer support and positive youth development programmes.
Young people who have experienced cultural dislocation or displacement	Cultural and language barriers, limited access to education and employment, isolation and marginalisation	Information on cultural diversity, language support, education, employment, social integration, advocacy and intercultural exchange opportunities.



Young people who have experienced language barriers or have limited language proficiency	Limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on language support, education, employment, social integration, advocacy and intercultural exchange opportunities.
Young people who have experienced limited access to technology or digital exclusion	Digital literacy gaps, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Offer digital literacy programmes, access to technology, information on digital skills, education, employment, social integration and advocacy.
Rural young people	Geographical isolation, limited resources, limited access to education, culture and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Expand outreach to rural areas, offer access to resources, information on rural development, education, employment, entrepreneurship and social integration.
Young people who have experienced discrimination or prejudice based on their religion or belief	Discrimination, prejudice, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on religious and cultural diversity, education, employment, social integration, advocacy and intercultural exchange opportunities.
Young people who have experienced discrimination or prejudice based on their race or ethnicity	Racism, prejudice, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on racial and ethnic diversity, education, employment, social integration, advocacy and intercultural exchange opportunities.

Young people who have experienced discrimination or prejudice based on their social status	Classism, prejudice, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on social justice, education, employment, social integration, advocacy and youth participation.
Young people who have experienced discrimination or prejudice based on their physical appearance or body type	Body shaming, negative stereotypes, prejudice, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on body positivity, self-esteem, education, employment, mental health, counselling and peer support.
Young people lacking confidence to access some of the programmes proposed	Lack of confidence, low self-esteem, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on confidence building, self-esteem, education, employment, mentoring and peer support.
Roma communities	Discrimination, prejudice, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Information on Roma culture and history, education, employment, social integration, advocacy and intercultural exchange opportunities.
Unemployed youth	Skills gaps, limited access to education and employment, social exclusion and marginalisation	Offer skills training, job search assistance, networking, information on job opportunities, vocational skills, entrepreneurship and apprenticeship programmes, education, mental health, counselling and peer support.

### **Step 3: Collect feedback from your target audiences**

To better understand the young audience in your local community, you can actively participate in community meetings, get involved in open youth work activities that take place in the areas where young people gather, and conduct research on different associations and community leaders representing diverse marginalised groups.

A common characteristic among the groups mentioned above is the tendency to have lower self-esteem due to years of feeling excluded. One effective strategy to mitigate these consequences is to frequently communicate success stories of individuals who have experienced mobility opportunities and with whom young people can relate, creating a sense of connection and inspiration.

💡 Eurodesk has developed a training module on communication using service design; this methodology can really help you in better understanding your audience (see Eurodesk QTP Module on Communication). Asking young people what their communication preferences are, and consulting various groups, will help you in the long term. The Eurodesk **#YouthInformationSurvey** brings some responses, but going deeper in researching your national audiences will greatly help you in designing inclusive and efficient information campaigns.

## **Case study: Inclusive Volunteering at Europe Direct Algarve**

### **Principle**

Understand your audience and be aware of communication barriers

### **Background**

The Eurodesk multiplier, Europe Direct Algarve, a regional information centre in Portugal, recognised the need to include young people with less access to information or with various disabilities in their activities. They aimed to foster a more inclusive environment by involving these young individuals as volunteers in events

such as fairs, school sessions, the European Youth Week, Europe Day, and European Sports Week.

### **Challenge**

Youth workers and information practitioners often express their desire to include young people from excluded groups in their activities. However, they face the challenge of low or no participation from these groups. Several reasons contribute to this issue:

- Limited access to information,
- Unclear communication about accommodating specific needs,
- A lack of relatable role models who have previously participated in the activities.

### **Solution**

To address these challenges, Europe Direct Algarve implemented a strategy to involve young people from traditionally excluded groups in their activities. The organisation focused on enhancing visibility, relatability and communication to ensure that the targeted audience felt welcomed and supported.

### **Results**

By involving young people from excluded groups as volunteers, Europe Direct Algarve achieved the following:

- Young people from these groups could see their peers participating in activities, allowing them to better relate to the events.
- Participants shared their stories and experiences, inspiring others from their communities to join and engage in such activities.
- Increased awareness about the diverse needs and backgrounds of young people, leading to improved communication strategies and a more inclusive environment.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Understanding your audience is crucial for fostering inclusion.
- Be aware of communication barriers and adapt your strategies accordingly.
- Involving and consulting young people from excluded groups can help break down barriers and make activities more relatable and accessible.

**Credit:** Europe Direct Algarve, Faro, Portugal

## Principle 3 - Focus on what you communicate

### Time for reflection

As an introduction to the principle, we invite you to reflect on and evaluate the following statement:

My institution and I are thoughtful, deliberate and proactive in deciding what information to communicate to my audience.

Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

#### Supporting questions

*You don't have to answer them all in writing, but use them to reflect on and evaluate the main question:*

- How do you ensure that the information you communicate is designed to meet the needs of audiences who are usually marginalised or underrepresented?
- Do you consider the diversity of your audience when deciding what information to communicate?
- Are you proactive in looking for relevant information to communicate to your audience, especially information that may be relevant to marginalised or underrepresented groups?
- How do you ensure the information you share promotes social change and contributes positively to your community?
- How do you ensure that the information you communicate is designed to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, and address issues of social justice and systemic inequality?

List one thing that you would like to improve (if needed):

## Building awareness / context

As a Eurodesk mobility advisor, you have access to a treasure trove of information, ready to be shared with young people in your local community. Yet, youth information isn't simply about mindlessly resharing every piece of news that comes your way. There's more depth to it than that. We often say that information is power, and indeed, the empowerment of young people can often start with just a single piece of information.

### Step 1: Consider what should be communicated

Let's consider what we should be communicating in an ideal state where our communication is fully inclusive. Essentially, the information we share should **inspire real changes in the lives of all young people**. The range of information offered should **be tailored to meet the specific needs of the community and effectively respond to those needs**.

Ultimately, inclusive information should **strive to bring about social change**, regardless of the scale. Whether we're supporting an individual with a mobility opportunity, or launching communication campaigns to raise awareness on important social issues for the community, each action holds its own importance. In an inclusive environment, every bit of information shared can be a stepping stone towards making a meaningful difference.

### Step 2: Adjust to Eurodesk communication responsibilities

Eurodesk lays out key responsibilities for sharing information to various groups in its constitution, policy priorities and 10 Key Principles. The table below shows you examples of how to share this information, and things to think about to make sure everyone can understand it, taking into consideration that the channels of communication may vary depending on the target audience and context.

<b>Communication Responsibility</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples of Communication Channels</b>	<b>Why These Channels?</b>	<b>Inclusivity Considerations</b>
Providing information about opportunities	To offer accurate, current, and relevant information about a range of opportunities for young people across Europe.	Websites, newsletters, social media, messaging apps: tools like WhatsApp, Telegram or Signal	These platforms are widely accessible and can hold a vast amount of information.	Language accessibility, digital literacy, internet access, diverse needs and interests of the audience.
Promoting mobility opportunities	To actively encourage and support young people in exploring mobility opportunities, including volunteering, studying and training abroad.	Webinars, websites, social media, information sessions, messaging apps: tools like WhatsApp, Telegram or Signal	These methods allow for detailed explanations and direct interaction with the audience.	Understanding of programme requirements, language barriers, financial concerns. Consider language barriers, and digital access for online events.
Supplying information about European funding	To share detailed and accessible information about European funding opportunities that support youth mobility and active citizenship.	Websites, newsletters, social media, webinars, events, info sessions, etc.	These channels can offer comprehensive and timely information about funding, eligibility, application processes, deadlines and benefits.	Complexity of funding information, language accessibility, understanding of the application process.

Raising awareness on important issues	To inform and educate young people about significant issues affecting them and their communities.	Social media campaigns, blogs, podcasts, webinars, events, webinars	These platforms allow for engaging, interactive, and shareable content that can reach a wide audience.	Sensitivity of topics, diverse views and opinions, potential misinformation. Ensure content is relatable and respectful to all backgrounds and abilities.
Encouraging active citizenship	To inspire young people to participate in their societies and shape their future through democratic engagement.	Social media campaigns, community meetings, workshops	These channels offer platforms for discussion, engagement, and mobilisation.	Civic education levels, political apathy, diverse views on societal development
Promoting European awareness	To increase awareness about European identity, rights, culture and values.	Websites, social media, virtual events, webinars, Euroclasses/ workshops	These channels can provide comprehensive, engaging and frequent communication about European institutions, processes and benefits.	Limited knowledge about European institutions, language barriers, diverse cultural perspectives. Simplify complex information, consider diverse cultural perspectives and backgrounds.
Providing testimonials and true stories	To share real-life experiences and testimonials that can inspire and guide young people, showcasing the potential of	Blogs, social media posts, podcasts, video testimonials	These channels can create engaging, relatable content that can inspire and motivate.	Privacy concerns, language barriers, ensuring diversity of experiences.



	mobility opportunities.			
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Below you'll find a table which details how Eurodesk should approach the communication of their responsibilities. It provides guidance on tailoring messages to individual needs, ensuring information is accessible and comprehensive, and providing support to young people. These guidelines are essential to maintain an inclusive and effective communication strategy.

<b>Communication Responsibility</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples of Communication Channels</b>	<b>Why These Channels?</b>	<b>Inclusivity Considerations</b>
Taking into account individual requirements	To ensure the provision of personalised information that considers the specific needs, interests and circumstances of each individual.	Personalised emails, one-on-one sessions, messaging apps, targeted social media ads	These channels allow for customised communication.	Consider the diversity of needs, preferences and circumstances in your audience.
Making information on learning mobility comprehensive and accessible	All information related to learning and mobility should be easy to understand, comprehensive and readily available.	Websites, social media, infographics, videos, webinars, guides	These channels can present complex information in a clear and accessible way.	Use clear, jargon-free language and organise information effectively on the website. Follow the accessibility principle.

Supporting young people	Eurodesk should communicate in a way that supports and empowers young people, being responsive, providing guidance, and maintaining an encouraging tone.	Email support, one-on-one counselling sessions, messaging apps, social media	These channels allow for personalised support and direct communication.	Consider confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, and accessibility of support channels.
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Remember, the effectiveness of a channel can depend on the specifics of your audience such as age and digital literacy, among other factors. Moreover, the nature of the content and the overall context play crucial roles. Thus, it's essential to remain flexible and continually reassess which channels are most effective for your communication.

However, keep in mind that this list, particularly the suggested communication channels and inclusivity considerations, can be further developed and refined. Indeed, what works well in one context may not work at all in a different context.

Moreover, the dynamics of communication channels are ever-changing. New platforms emerge, existing ones evolve, and older ones may become obsolete. Therefore, continuous evaluation and adaptation are vital to ensure that your communication strategy remains effective and relevant.

Remember the power of mixing channels to reach a wider audience and enhance communication effectiveness. Check principle 6 for more details.

### Step 3: Reflect on some aspects of inclusiveness in your message

When planning the content of your message (the "what"), to be more inclusive, it's important to consider several elements:

#### Relevance:

Confirm that the information you disseminate holds value and applies to every member of your audience. Avoid making assumptions that one group's interests or needs embody those of everyone else. If your information targets a particular segment (like a specific age group), make it explicitly clear. At the same time,, ensure you're not excluding key sections of your audience by providing appropriate information for all groups.

#### Representation:

Aim to represent diverse voices, experiences and perspectives in your content. This could mean showcasing stories from various demographic groups or discussing issues that affect different communities. Showcase the successful stories of people from marginalised groups.

#### Proactivity:

Look for and create information which is relevant to your target audience. If certain information has been asked about several times, reflect on developing the content and share it with a bigger group of young people. Or, if you see certain challenges in your community, together with your team, think about how you can contribute to bringing positive change through youth information.

#### Feedback:

Encourage and be open to feedback on your content to ensure that it's landing as intended and to understand if certain aspects may need to be adjusted to be more inclusive, or better adapted to the target group's needs. Ask explicitly for feedback and encourage them to ask you follow up questions.

#### Transparency:

According to the Eurodesk YouthInfoSurvey, the three main obstacles young people face during their mobility periods abroad are in the domains of **finance, housing and travelling**. Being clear about the conditions related to those areas can help make the programmes more accessible.

It is recommended to add the inclusivity disclaimer to all of your opportunities. Your communication material should address all the young people you want to reach. A single sentence that openly invites applications from people with disabilities can make a huge difference, as it opens people's minds to the fact that these opportunities are theirs to pursue, and their participation is welcome.

Use sentences like: “Persons with any kinds of disability/ access needs are welcome to apply and take part in the event. Organisers are committed to adapting the programme and environment to make them inclusive and accessible” (*Chupina, K., 2020, in IJAB (ed.), p. 26*).

## **Step 4: Contribute to social change**

### **What else to communicate to bring about social change?**

Think of learning as a journey in four stages:

1. 'Don't know you don't know': you're unaware you lack certain skills or knowledge.
2. 'Know you don't know': you realise you're missing specific skills or understanding.
3. 'Know you know': you've gained the skills, but you still need to concentrate to use them. It's like when you've just passed your driving test but still need to think hard while driving.
4. 'Don't know you know': you've mastered the skills to the point they're second nature. It's like driving a car without having to think about each step.

This model shows us going from not knowing to doing things without thinking. As people who share information with young people and have lots of ways to talk to them, we can think about what to say to help our followers learn more about being inclusive. This is a powerful thing to do because sharing information can change things. We can take three main steps to make lasting changes towards more inclusive societies: raising awareness, learning and practising.

### **Raising Awareness**

This step helps us move from not knowing what we don't know, to realising there's something we need to learn. In other words, it's about waking up to the facts. Awareness-raising activities help highlight the challenges faced by groups who often get overlooked. This can show us that some things we think are normal may actually be causing harm. Once we see these issues clearly and realise they're not just 'how things are', we can start to tackle them.

### **Learning**

This is the stage where we transition from knowing that we lack certain knowledge or skills, to mastering them. As a provider of youth information, you can offer relevant learning content. Additionally, by demonstrating inclusive communication in action, you're showcasing best practices that others can adopt in their own work. Keep in mind, learning is more of a marathon than a sprint — it takes time, persistence, and a fair bit of motivation.

## Practice

This stage is all about embedding our learning into our everyday activities until it becomes second nature. Practising inclusive actions until they're just a normal part of our lives. This requires a good deal of effort and repeated practice. But as a provider of youth information, you can support this process by demonstrating best practices. The more people are exposed to content that promotes accessibility and inclusion, the more they'll internalise these practices, ultimately reflecting them in their own work.

Here are some tangible steps you can take as a youth information worker to strengthen the message of inclusion:

- **Promoting Inclusive Events:** Disseminate information about youth-friendly events or activities that prioritise inclusivity. Emphasise essential accessibility features, such as wheelchair access, sign language interpretation, or sensory-friendly options.
- **Informing about diversity-related dates:** Acknowledge international days or events that commemorate the richness of cultures, identities, and experiences.
- **Providing resources for marginalised groups:** Disseminate information on LGBTQ+ rights, resources, and support groups. Generate posts detailing resources and services for mental health support. Emphasise that these services are accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances.
- **Promoting Local Activists:** Give a platform to local activists working towards inclusive societies. Their stories can inspire others and create dialogue about important issues.
- **Rights and Resources Information:** Educate your audience about the rights of specific groups. For example, share information about disability rights and laws, as well as resources and services that assist people with disabilities in their day-to-day lives.

In the case of Eurodesk, it is for example important to communicate on the inclusiveness of youth opportunities, highlighting the fact that they are open to young people (through visuals, concepts, etc.) and the concrete inclusive measures of programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.

## Case Study: Las Niñas del Tul Association - Adapting Communication for Inclusion

### Principle

Focus on what you communicate

### Background

The Eurodesk multiplier Las Niñas del Tul Association sought to provide information and opportunities about European programmes, such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, to young people with fewer opportunities. Their target audience included young people deprived of their liberty (in prison).

### Challenge

The main challenge faced by Las Niñas del Tul Association was their communication approach. Many Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects are mobility-based, which is not possible for young people in prison. Secondly, there is no internet access, so an alternative way to reach these young people needed to be found. Thus, it was crucial to reflect on what they communicated, as the usual youth information channels might not be accessible to everyone.

### Solution

To overcome this challenge, Las Niñas del Tul Association decided to support young people in preparing their own solidarity projects. Firstly, with the support of the Spanish National Agency (ANE), they implemented a training course that allowed them to work with young people on cross-cutting topics that could spark their personal interests, and provide them with content on how to develop solidarity projects that were later submitted. This approach allowed them to adapt their communication and focus on opportunities that were both feasible and relevant for their target audience.

### Results

By shifting their communication approach and supporting young people in developing their own solidarity projects, Las Niñas del Tul Association achieved the following:

1. The young people proposed to create a musical. Thanks to this idea, more than 30 individuals from different parts of the prison benefitted. They have been rehearsing a play about emotions, which has involved the participation of the prison's music group, the team responsible for audiovisuals, and a painting workshop.
2. Empowerment of young people by providing them with tools and resources to create their own projects.
3. Increased awareness of the unique challenges and needs faced by their target audience, leading to a more inclusive and tailored communication strategy.
4. Expansion of opportunities within European programmes to young people who would otherwise have been excluded due to their circumstances.

5. Establishment of networks with the local prison and other European organisations working with the target group.

**Key Takeaways**

- Focusing on what you communicate is essential for fostering an inclusive environment.
- Reflect on the accessibility of your information and adapt it to the needs of your target audience.
- Supporting young people in creating their own projects can empower them and provide them with more opportunities.

**Credit:** Las Niñas del Tul Asociación, Granada, Spain

## Principle 4 - Be inclusive with your language

### Time for reflection

As an introduction to the principle, we invite you to reflect on and evaluate the following statement:

In all the languages that my institution and I communicate in, we are familiar with and apply inclusivity rules, ensuring the communication is gender-sensitive, stereotype-free, and promotes diversity and inclusion.

Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### Supporting questions

*You don't have to answer them all in writing, but use them to reflect on and evaluate the main question:*

- How do you ensure that your language is inclusive and avoids stereotypes?
- Do you use gender-sensitive language?
- Do you use language that promotes diversity and inclusion? How?
- How do you ensure that your language is free from micro-aggressions, which are subtle and often unintentional expressions of bias or discrimination?
- How do you ensure that your language is sensitive to people with disabilities or other marginalised groups?
- Do you use language that is respectful and mindful of people's identities and experiences?
- How do you stay up-to-date on best practices for inclusive language and diversity and inclusion in communication?

List one thing that you would like to improve (if needed):



## Building awareness / context

### Step 1: Learn about inclusive language

Inclusive language is a conscious form of communication.

We can compare learning an inclusive language to studying a foreign language. Language, or more generally communication, is the way we narrate about the world.

By getting to know an inclusive language, you're opening the door to another world for yourself and once you're more familiar with it, three things happen:

- **You are able to describe the world in all its diversity**

Our regular, daily language doesn't reflect the diversity that surrounds us. It often simplifies it and reduces people to a very narrow norm of gender, age, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc.

Inclusive language enables us to describe the world more accurately and to gain a tool to describe something that exists but that we haven't had the words for before, like non-binary. By getting to know inclusive language, we are able to name certain experiences, both other people's and our own, and consciously acknowledge diversity.

- **You let a different perspective into your thinking**

By noticing and expressing the diversity around you, you start to look at yourself from a different perspective as well. Your notion of the norm expands and you begin to notice different genders, ages, abilities, religions, ways of thinking etc. and needs that are connected with them.

Example:

When you organise a coffee break during a workshop and mark milk as "regular milk" [sometimes even referred to as "normal milk"] and "oat milk", you may consider expanding that norm and simply use "cow milk" / "oat milk".

- **You're creating space for people who previously had no voice to express themselves and self-define**

People with non-dominant identity characteristics still lack proper representation, visibility and space to self-identify and be referred to as they would like.

As youth information workers, we can keep on creating these spaces in language, where all young people feel seen and invited to contribute because, by broadening the norm, we are making space for everyone to fit in it.

## Characteristics of inclusive language

**Sensibility** - Inclusive language respects self-identification and amplifies the voices of those spoken about/to.

**Impact over intention** - Focusing on how communication affects others, rather than just intentions, fosters inclusivity.

**Accountability** - Inclusive language involves taking responsibility for perspectives and committing to ongoing learning.

**No perfection** - Inclusive language evolves rapidly and isn't about perfection, but continuous education.

**Accessibility** - Inclusive language ensures both structure and accessibility for true inclusivity.

## Step 2: Changing language to be more inclusive

Inclusive language is a complex issue, and there are still discussions around what is "allowed" and what is not. It is possible that the same word for one person will be a source of pride, and for others offensive. A lot depends on the national context, and inclusive language cannot be literally translated. And since there is no one dictionary, below you will find approaches and recommendations on the logic to follow to make language more inclusive.

- **Use gender-neutral terms instead of gender-related words**

Examples:

1. Instead of focusing on "mother / father" try using gender-neutral words like "parents".

The term "parents" acknowledges that families come in diverse forms and may include different combinations of caregivers, such as same-sex parents, adoptive parents, or co-parents. Using "parents" recognises and includes all individuals who fulfil parenting roles, regardless of their gender or biological relationship to the child.

The use of "parents" allows for non-binary and gender-diverse individuals who may identify outside the binary of mother/father to be recognised and respected.

2. Same goes for "mothering / fathering" which could be replaced with "parenting".

Using "parenting" avoids assuming the gender or marital status of caregivers. It recognises that caregiving and raising children is a shared responsibility that extends beyond gender-specific roles.

3. When speaking about gender identity, avoid using expressions like "they can't decide whether to be a man or a woman".  
Gender identity refers to a deeply held sense of one's own gender. It is a person's internal and personal understanding of themselves as male, female, both, neither, or another gender identity. Gender identity may or may not align with the sex assigned to a person at birth.

- **Use "person-first language" when not requested otherwise**

Using person-first language promotes dignity and respect by focusing on the individual rather than reducing or defining them solely by one of their characteristics.

Examples:

1. Use "people with disabilities" instead of "the disabled, the handicapped"  
Disability is a characteristic of a person, not their entire identity; by using a person-first approach, we emphasise that. As mentioned before, it's important to check with an individual on their choice of self-identification. Some people with disabilities use the expression "disabled" to demonstrate how they are disabled by the environment and by the systems we function in.
2. Pay attention to the use of terms such as "normal people, healthy people, able-bodied" as opposed to people with disabilities. It's better to say "people without disabilities".  
Using terms like "normal people" or "able-bodied", we imply that individuals with disabilities are abnormal or lesser in some way, perpetuating ableist attitudes and reinforcing a hierarchy of abilities.
3. Use "people who are blind, people with visual impairments" instead of "the blind". People that have a specific characteristic in common are still a diverse group in many other aspects; focus on the person first.
4. When speaking about mental illness, avoid using "mentally ill", use "a person with a mental illness" or who "has a mental illness".  
Describing someone as "a person with a mental illness" emphasises their identity as an individual first and recognises that their mental illness is just one aspect of their overall being. It humanises the person and helps to avoid defining them solely by their condition.  
Mental illness is a health condition that a person experiences rather than defining their entire identity.

- **Use descriptive adjectives**

Describing a certain characteristic is not always necessary, and it's good to consider if it's possible to use other features that are not related to appearance if looks are not relevant to the conversation.

However, sometimes being inclusive means naming specific groups and it's important not to be scared to use words that are descriptive if they don't have a stigmatising connotation.

Inclusive communication also aims at destigmatising descriptive words. This approach can be very empowering.

Examples:

### **1. Black/Brown**

When needed, it's ok to use the term Black/Brown. Be specific and use the appropriate racial or ethnic identifiers when referring to a particular group. Using terms like "Black people," "Asian people," "Indigenous people," etc. acknowledges and respects the diverse identities and experiences within communities of colour.

There are differences in the usage of terms in different countries so it's always good to consult regional inclusion experts and guidelines. In some countries, the term used would be "visible minorities" or "ethnically diverse" or BIPOC - Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC includes Asian and Latino as well). It's advisable to use the term "people of colour" (POC) instead of "coloured people" but if possible, be specific and consult the person.

Don't use "Mixed race" and "Half-caste" or "Exotic". Instead use "Biracial", which highlights the specific combination of racial backgrounds that an individual has inherited, providing a more accurate description of their heritage.

Describing someone as "exotic" based on their racial background can objectify them, reducing their identity to a superficial and fetishised notion of otherness. It can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and treat individuals as exotic commodities rather than recognising their humanity and diversity.

### **2. Minority**

Be careful also with using the word "minority"; it may be more accurate to use the term "underrepresented" as it encompasses people who are not necessarily a minority but they are marginalised and face systemic barriers.

The term "minorities" often emphasises numerical representation and positions certain groups as less significant or subordinate. "Underrepresented groups" shifts the focus to the structural and systemic factors that contribute to unequal representation, allowing for a broader understanding of the issue beyond sheer numbers.

### **3. Fat**

While the word "fat" is descriptive, it often carries strong negative connotations due to societal perceptions that being fat is undesirable or even insulting.

It is important to note that when referring to individuals, it is advisable to avoid specifically labelling someone as "fat," particularly if it is out of context. This is to prevent any unintended misinterpretation or hurtful implications that may still be associated with the term as an insult. By using "fat" in an empowered and inclusive manner, we contribute to reshaping societal perceptions and challenging fatphobia.

Within the fat activist community, there is a strong push to reclaim and de-stigmatise this word, with many activists using it as a self-descriptive term.

- **Use specific terms for LGBTQ+**

The terms "gay" and "lesbian" emphasise the human aspect of an individual's sexual orientation, putting the focus on their personal identity rather than reducing it to a clinical or technical term like "homosexual."

Avoid using the term "transsexual", which was used in the past and emphasised the medical aspect of transitioning, often framing being transgender as a medical condition.

Instead, use the term "transgender" which refers to an individual whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Use "transition" instead of "sex change" as well. Gender transition is a complex and diverse experience, and focusing solely on physical changes can overlook the social, emotional and psychological aspects of transitioning. The term "transition" encompasses the multifaceted process that individuals undertake to align their gender identity with their physical appearance and social presentation.

- **Use person or human where usually "man" is used as a default to describe everyone**

1. **Humankind instead of mankind**

Avoid referring to experience from the perspective of men; it seems to be neutral on the surface but it is not.

By using "humankind," we recognise and include people of all genders, ensuring that the language we use does not perpetuate gender bias or reinforce traditional gender roles.

2. **"Best person for the job" instead of "best man for the job"**

Expressions that are meant to be directed at all people but focus only on "man" are not inclusive; in order to promote gender equality and include non-binary people, use "person" instead.

3. **"Hi all, folks, team, friends, everyone" instead of "Hi girls, guys, ladies, gentlemen"**

Some expressions, especially those connected to gender, can be perceived as non-inclusive by people who don't identify with a specific gender or those who have historically been underrepresented in language; use more general terms to avoid excluding anyone.

- **Use non-stigmatising expressions**

Some expressions may not seem harmful at first glance, but when we analyse them more carefully, we notice that there is room for making them more inclusive and not perpetuating stereotypes:

1. **“Sexual orientation/sexuality” instead of “sexual preference”**

In order to more accurately reflect the nature of a person's sexual identity and avoid implying that it is merely a matter of personal choice, avoid using the word “preference”.

2. **“They are indecisive or unpredictable” instead of “they are bipolar”**

To avoid perpetuating stigma surrounding mental health, it's better not to use mental health conditions as casual adjectives.

3. **“Block list, safe list, allow list, deny list, approved list” instead of “blacklisted, white lists”**

Expressions like “blacklisted” and “white lists” should be avoided because they can perpetuate racial bias and reinforce harmful stereotypes. These terms draw a parallel between blackness and negativity, while associating whiteness with positivity or approval. This reinforces racial hierarchies and can contribute to systemic racism.

4. **“Socioeconomic status” instead of “class”**

Using “socioeconomic status” instead of “class” helps to reduce the potential stigma or judgement associated with the term “class.” It shifts the focus from a hierarchical division to a recognition of the multifaceted nature of people's circumstances, acknowledging that socioeconomic status is influenced by a range of factors beyond personal choice or merit.

5. **“People who misuse alcohol” instead of “alcoholics”**

The term “alcoholic” can carry stigma and negative connotations. It may oversimplify and label individuals based on their alcohol use, potentially leading to judgement, shame, or stereotyping. Using person-first language helps reduce the stigma.

Describing individuals as “people who misuse alcohol” focuses on their behaviour rather than their identity.

6. **“Older person/people, elderly person/people” instead of “the elderly, old man/woman”**

Referring to someone as “an elderly person” emphasises their identity as an individual first and recognises them as people beyond just their age.

The term “the elderly” can contribute to generalising and stereotyping a diverse group of individuals based solely on their age. It may overlook the wide range of experiences, abilities and backgrounds among older adults.

7. **“Unhoused” instead of “homeless”**

We usually understand home as a broad term, but in this case we want to describe people who lack a house. The term “homeless” can sometimes carry negative connotations or stereotypes that perpetuate assumptions about individuals' characteristics or circumstances. Using “unhoused” helps to

challenge those stereotypes and encourage conversations on policies that aim to provide stable and affordable housing options, tackling the root causes of homelessness.

#### 8. **“Substance use disorder” instead of “substance abuse disorder”**

The term "substance abuse" can carry negative connotations and contribute to stigma. It may imply moral judgement or a lack of empathy towards individuals going through substance use issues. "Substance use disorder" reduces the blame and shame often associated with addiction and promotes understanding and compassion.

#### ● **Emphasise the resilience and ability to overcome the experience rather than the experience itself**

##### 1. **Survivors instead of victims**

Describing individuals as "survivors" emphasises their strength, resilience and ability to overcome adversity. It recognises their agency and focuses on their journey towards healing and recovery, rather than solely on the negative experience they endured.

"Survivors" puts the focus on the individuals themselves, emphasising their identity beyond the traumatic event or experience. It acknowledges the trauma or harm they have experienced while avoiding retraumatization or perpetuating a sense of helplessness or powerlessness that can be associated with the term "victims."

##### 2. **“People facing barriers” instead of “people struggling”**

Using "people facing barriers" demonstrates respect for individuals' experiences and acknowledges the potential systemic or societal factors that contribute to those barriers. It avoids judgement or stigmatisation that may be associated with the term "struggling," which can carry negative connotations or imply personal failure.

### **Step 3: Consider gender and pronouns when communicating**

#### **Gender:**

Gender refers to the social and cultural roles, behaviours, expectations and identities associated with being male, female, or non-binary. It encompasses a broad spectrum of identities beyond the traditional binary understanding of gender as solely male or female. Gender is distinct from biological sex, which refers to the physical and physiological characteristics that typically distinguish males from females.

The concept of gender is diverse and complex, and individuals may identify with different genders that may not align with the sex assigned to them at birth. Here are some commonly recognised gender identities:

1. **Male:** Typically associated with individuals who identify as men or boys.
2. **Female:** Typically associated with individuals who identify as women or girls.

3. **Non-binary:** Individuals who identify outside of the traditional male/female binary may identify as non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, or other terms.
4. **Transgender:** Transgender individuals have a gender identity that differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. For example, someone assigned female at birth but who identifies as male is a transgender man.
5. **Genderqueer:** Genderqueer individuals have a gender identity that falls outside the traditional binary of male or female. They may identify as both, neither, or a combination of genders.

These are just a few examples of the diverse range of gender identities that exist. It's important to note that gender is personal, and individuals may have unique ways of understanding and expressing their gender identity. Respecting and validating an individual's self-identified gender is crucial for promoting inclusivity and affirming the diversity of human experiences.

## Pronouns

Pronouns are words that replace nouns. Using pronouns is part of inclusive language and it is important because it respects and validates a person's gender identity. Pronouns are words used to refer to someone in the third person (e.g. he, she, they) and are typically based on gender. However, it's essential to recognise that not everyone identifies within the binary gender system (male/female) or uses traditional pronouns.

Using pronouns is important because it:

1. **Affirms gender identity:** Using the correct pronouns for someone affirms their gender identity and shows respect for how they identify themselves.
2. **Reduces misgendering:** Misgendering occurs when someone is referred to using incorrect pronouns, which can be hurtful and invalidating.
3. **Fosters inclusivity:** By sharing and respecting pronouns, we create an inclusive culture that acknowledges and embraces diverse gender identities. It helps to create a safer space for transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals.

## Commonly used pronouns include:

1. He/Him/His: Typically used by individuals who identify as men.
2. She/Her/Hers: Typically used by individuals who identify as women.
3. They/Them/Theirs: Used by individuals who identify as non-binary, genderqueer, or prefer gender-neutral pronouns.

It's important to note that gender pronouns can vary among individuals, and it's best to ask and use the pronouns chosen by each person. Some individuals may use pronouns such as ze/zir, xe/xem, or other neopronouns. In the case of digital communication, when we address big groups covering many genders, it is best to use the gender neutral pronouns They/Them/Theirs, and expressions such as "this person" and "everyone" are also considered inclusive.

## Gender-coded language



Inclusive language goes beyond the non-stigmatising names of different identity characteristics. When we delve a bit deeper into our regular communication, we notice that some expressions, even when seemingly not exclusive, can be biased.

Gender-coded language refers to words or phrases that are associated with a specific gender or perpetuate gender stereotypes. These words may imply that certain traits, roles, or behaviours are more appropriate or typical for one gender over another.

Here are a few examples of gender-coded language:

Masculine gender-coded words: strong, lead, individual, decision, driven, competitive, objectives, principles

Feminine gender-coded words: support, share, responsible, understanding, together, committed, interpersonal, feel, collaborate, connect

When creating information, pay attention to the usage of these words as they may be more associated with one gender than the other.

### **Microaggressions**

Another aspect related to inclusive language are microaggressions.

When we talk about microaggressions, we refer to the harmful behaviours and expressions which are considered normal and accepted by society.

Microaggressions often reinforce stereotypes and power imbalances. They perpetuate harmful biases and prejudices by reinforcing existing social hierarchies and marginalising certain groups. Even if the intention behind a microaggression was not malicious, it can still reinforce stereotypes and contribute to systemic inequalities.

That's why, just as with inclusive language in general, the impact of the microaggressive behaviour or comment is considered more important than the intent behind it. This is because microaggressions can be harmful and hurtful regardless of the intention of the person delivering them. Understanding the impact versus intent is crucial for recognising and addressing microaggressions effectively.

### **Step 4: Start implementing changes**

Becoming proficient in inclusive language is a journey that requires dedication and consistent effort. To embark on this path, here are a few steps to initiate your progress:

#### **At the individual level:**

1. **Add pronouns to the footer of your email and in the Eurodesk Profile Directory** (<https://map.eurodesk.eu/>). This shows respect for individual gender identities and encourages others to do the same.
2. **Avoid describing people solely by their appearance.** Focus on their skills, accomplishments, or other relevant aspects when referring to individuals.

#### **At the team level in your organisation:**

1. **Ask people in your team how they want to be addressed**, including their name, pronouns and any other important considerations. Respect their preferences and use the chosen identifiers consistently.
2. **Make sure that the diversity of your colleagues is reflected in the language you're using.** Create an inclusive environment that gives space for everyone to speak and actively encourages diverse perspectives. Ensure that all team members have the opportunity to contribute.
3. **Lead by example in using inclusive language.** Model inclusive language in your own communication and encourage others to do the same. This helps create a culture of inclusivity within the team.

#### **At the organisational level:**

1. **Review and revise all documents in your organisation** to ensure they use inclusive language. This includes policies, guidelines and any internal or external communication. Avoid assuming gender, and use gender-neutral terms whenever possible.
2. **Incorporate diverse and accessible visual communication in your organisation's materials.** Consider representing people from various backgrounds, abilities and gender identities in images and illustrations to foster a sense of inclusion, also for your internal communication. Remember that some diverse characteristics of youth workers may be invisible or not known to you, it doesn't mean they shouldn't be represented.

#### **At the external level:**

1. **Ensure your external communication is diverse and accessible.** Represent a range of identities, cultures and perspectives in your promotional materials, social media content and other public-facing communication.
2. **Evaluate your post descriptions about the activities** you run to ensure that they are free from gender and other bias and are inclusive of diverse identities. Check for terms that could come across as addressed only to well-educated, abled and high-income participants.
3. **Create an accessible web page that adheres to web accessibility guidelines.** This ensures individuals with disabilities can access and navigate your content effectively, promoting inclusivity and equal access to information.

By implementing these actions at different levels, organisations can foster inclusivity, respect and understanding for all individuals. It's important to regularly evaluate and update language practices to reflect evolving social norms and to create an environment where everyone feels valued and included.

## **Tools:**

### **1. Check for coded language**

Gender Decoder can be used in the youth work context for preparing announcements about volunteer positions or advertising youth activities. It highlights potential gender-coded language that may discourage individuals of a specific gender from applying.

The Gender Gap Grader: This tool allows you to enter text and assesses its gender balance, providing insights into potential gender biases. It identifies gender-coded language and provides suggestions for more inclusive alternatives.

Textio: Textio is an AI-powered writing tool that provides real-time feedback on language inclusivity, bias and effectiveness. While it offers a paid version, it also provides limited access to its platform for free.

### **2. Flip It To Test It method**

This is a simple yet brilliant and very effective method to check on our bias and inclusivity.

#### **How does it work?**

Take a phrase or expression you want to use, and flip the narrative around.

If it feels somehow wrong when flipped around, it indicates it might have been biased in the first place and you should not use it.

Examples: "You are so bossy" told to a girl versus a boy.

Saying "...and that will have consequences for mankind" versus saying "...and that will have consequences for woman"

"You being open about your relationship is so inspiring" being told to a gay couple versus a straight couple.

### **1. Intent -> Impact -> Improvement**

To check how what you're communicating could be perceived, try to separate your intent from the impact and think of how you can improve it.

Example: Asking "Where do you come from?" Comic that shows a conversation where person A says "where do you come from? No, originally?" Second slide person A is shown to just be curious and wanting to learn. Third slide shows person B thinking

“Here we go again. Will I ever be considered like I’m from here? He already put me in a box. Would he have asked if I was white?”

You can do it in 3 steps:

1. Consider why you want to say or do something and what message you intend to convey.
2. Once you've examined your intentions, shift your focus to the impact your words or actions might have on the recipient. Put yourself in their shoes and consider how they might interpret or feel about what you're going to say.
3. If you're unsure about the potential impact of your words or actions, think of how you can improve the statement to be more inclusive.

## **Case Study: INPRO - Embracing Inclusive Language for a Diverse Audience**

### **Principle**

Be inclusive with your language

### **Background**

Eurodesk multiplier International Projects' Association “INPRO” is a Polish organisation that understands the importance of effective communication in fostering inclusivity and reaching diverse audiences. They adapt their communication strategies to ensure their content is accessible, easy to read and proactively inclusive.

### **Challenge**

To engage people from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, INPRO needed to create accessible content that was easy to understand and visually appealing.

### **Solution**

INPRO implemented the following strategies to make their communication more inclusive:

1. Shared information in multiple languages (English, Polish and Ukrainian) on social media platforms to cater to diverse linguistic backgrounds.
2. Used plain language during activities, ensuring that participants from different nationalities could easily understand the content.
3. Focused on visually appealing and easily shareable content, such as storytelling and short videos, to engage with their audience effectively.
4. Used gender-neutral language and inclusive symbols, such as the Ukrainian flag, to promote a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

### **Results**

By adopting inclusive language practices, INPRO achieved the following:

1. Expanded its reach to a diverse audience, including Ukrainian refugees.
2. Created a welcoming and inclusive environment for participants from different nationalities during projects and events.
3. Improved the effectiveness of their communication by using visually appealing and easily shareable content formats.
4. Fostered a sense of belonging among their audience through the use of gender-neutral language and inclusive symbols.

**Key Takeaways**

- Use clear and simple language to ensure your content is accessible to a diverse audience.
- Share information in multiple languages to cater to people from different linguistic backgrounds.
- Create visually appealing and easily shareable content to engage your audience effectively.
- Incorporate gender-neutral language and inclusive symbols to promote a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

## Principle 5 - Make your content more accessible

### Time for reflection

As an introduction to the principle, we invite you to reflect on and evaluate the following statement:

My organisation is committed to prioritising digital accessibility and has successfully implemented practices to ensure inclusive access for all individuals.

Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### Supporting questions

*You don't have to answer them all in writing, but use them to reflect on and evaluate the main question:*

- How do you ensure that your content is structured and displayed in an inclusive way? Are headings, subheadings, and bullet points used to break up large blocks of text and make it easier to read and navigate?
- Do you use alternative text (alt text) for images and graphics to make them accessible to people with visual impairments?
- How do you ensure that your colours and fonts have high contrast and are easy to read?
- Do you provide transcripts or captions for videos to make them accessible to people with hearing impairments?
- Do you offer content in multiple formats (e.g. audio, video, text) to accommodate different learning styles and preferences?
- How do you test your content to ensure that it is accessible and user-friendly?
- Do you use language that is appropriate for the reading level of your audience?

List one thing that you would like to improve (if needed):

## Building awareness / context

In today's digital age, it is essential to ensure that online youth information content is accessible to all, regardless of their abilities or circumstances. Young people may face a variety of challenges when accessing online content, which can limit their opportunities for learning, personal development and social engagement. By making your content more accessible, you can help overcome these barriers and create a more inclusive digital environment for everyone.

There are several barriers young people may encounter when accessing online content, including **visual impairments, hearing impairments, motor impairments, cognitive impairments, speech impairments and sensory sensitivities**. Additionally, some young people may have **limited digital literacy, limited access to technology, or limited internet access**, further hindering their ability to engage with online resources.

To address these challenges, it is crucial to adopt a user-friendly approach when creating and sharing online content. By considering the diverse needs of your audience and implementing inclusive design principles, you can help ensure that all young people have equal opportunities to benefit from your online youth information content. Hence, below we wish to share with you various aspects that need to be considered and strategies to guarantee that your content is accessible.

### Step 1: Use easy to read and plain language

*"Any fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius - and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction. (...) My aim is to make things as simple as possible, but not simpler than that."*

Albert Einstein

Plain language<sup>1</sup> plays a vital role in effective communication, enabling you to convey essential information to your audience as clearly and efficiently as possible. The use of plain language has become the standard across various industries when communicating with a general audience. Your readers should be able to understand the information the first time they encounter it, without confusion. If they struggle to grasp the content from the beginning, they may be more likely to disengage and not return to your information again.

Here are some tips to help you write in plain language:

- **Write for your reader, not for yourself:** Focus on the needs and expectations of your audience rather than your own preferences.
- **Personalise your message:** Address your audience directly, using "you" and "your" to create a more engaging and relatable tone.
- **Use an active voice:** Write in an active voice, which typically makes sentences easier to understand. Active voice emphasises the subject performing the action, rather than the object receiving the action (e.g. "The dog chased the cat," instead of "The cat was chased by the dog").
- **State your main message first:** Begin your content with the most important information before delving into details.

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<sup>1</sup>Your guide to communicating clearly and effectively with plain language, [Writer](#)  
Easy Read UK, Heritage healthcare

- **Keep sentences short and focused:** Each sentence should convey one message, making it easier for readers to understand and digest the information.
- **Keep the text as short as possible:** Aim for brevity and conciseness, which can improve readability and comprehension.
- **Simplify language:** Avoid jargon, abbreviations, and complicated language. Explain necessary complex terms to ensure clarity.
- **Prioritise your message in design:** Avoid purely decorative elements and choose visuals that support or illustrate your message. Use headings, lists, and tables to make reading easier and establish a hierarchy in your visuals.

Adopting plain language when creating content for your digital communication makes it clear, concise and easy to understand. This approach makes your content accessible to a wider range of users, including those with cognitive impairments, limited language proficiency, or non-native speakers.

By following the five principles of plain language – considering your reader, knowing your message, writing effectively, organising your information, and presenting it well – you can create content that is visually appealing, engaging, and accessible to all readers.<sup>2</sup>

There are other ways of making written information accessible when working with young people - find out what works best for them by asking them.



Learn more:

- A guide to producing written information in easy read, North Yorkshire County Council Health and Adult Services.
- Plain Language Europe, a European network offering various tools and eLearning solutions on plain language.

## Step 2: Focus on layout and formatting

The layout and formatting of your content are crucial for ensuring its accessibility. By presenting information clearly and simply, you can help your audience better comprehend your message. Here are some important factors to consider when designing the layout and formatting of your content:

### Formatting:

1. **Unjustified text:** As a general rule, unjustified text is easier to read, so use it where possible.
2. **Emphasis:** Avoid using italics or capital letters for emphasising long titles. Instead, opt for bold text or a larger or different font style.
3. **Font choice:** Sans Serif fonts like Arial or Calibri are usually more readable and accessible than Serif fonts like Times New Roman. Choose fonts that are easy to read for your target audience. In the case of Eurodesk, Oswald and Roboto are used for internal plain communication, and Anybody and Recursive for external communication.

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<sup>2</sup> Five Principles of Plain Language - [Plain Language Australia](#)



*Image that shows the difference between Serif and Sans Serif font.*

4. **Font size:** For printed material, font size 12 is considered the minimum size for comfortable reading, while size 14 is recommended for easy-read format. For digital material, adjust font according to screen size and the specific needs of your audience.

## Layout

1. **Consistent layout:** Use a clear and consistent layout across your website or document, making it easier for users to navigate and understand your content.
2. **Headings and subheadings styles:** Organise your content using distinctive styles for headings and subheadings to visually break up large sections of text and improve readability. Ensure that headings are clearly marked to assist users who might be reading your content using screen readers or text-to-speech software.
3. **Lists:** Use bulleted or numbered lists to break up large blocks of text and make your content easier to follow.
4. **Visual order:** If your text is laid out in multiple columns, make sure the underlying structure of the document corresponds to the visual order of the information. This helps maintain clarity and accessibility.
5. **Images:** Position images clearly and distinctly from any text, shading, or overlays. If images are important for your communication, ensure they are easily discernible.
6. **White space:** Ensure sufficient white space to avoid clutter and improve readability.
7. **Responsive design:** Use a responsive design that adapts to different screen sizes and devices, ensuring that your content remains accessible and functional on various platforms.

## Step 3: Make your design accessible

When designing printed documents and online content, it is essential to consider accessibility and the needs of diverse audiences. Here are some key aspects to bear in mind:

### Use of colour and colour contrast

**Colour consistency:** Avoid using too many colours as they can disorient readers and make your message harder to understand, especially for people with learning disabilities. Maintain consistency with your organisation's usual colour combinations.

In the case of Eurodesk, our visual identity offers a range of blue and yellow shades to allow a variety of combinations while ensuring enough contrast between text and background.

**Colour contrast:** Choose high-contrast colour combinations for text and background to improve readability. Use free tools like WebAIM or Colour Contrast Checker to ensure appropriate contrast levels.

## Design principles

**Interactive elements:** Ensure all interactive elements are keyboard accessible and have visible focus indicators. Visible focus indicators are visual cues that help users identify which interactive element, such as a link, button, or form control, currently has keyboard focus on a webpage. These indicators are essential for users who rely on keyboard-only navigation, including those with motor impairments, as well as for users of screen readers who may also use the keyboard for navigation. WAVE Accessibility Tool has a specific feature to check for keyboard accessibility.

**Animations and media:** Avoid auto-playing media and minimise the use of animations or flashing content that may be distracting or cause discomfort.

**Accessible forms:** Design accessible forms with clear instructions, proper labelling and error handling.

*Image that shows the correct way to label interactive elements for screen readers.*

## File size and optimisation

**Media optimisation:** Optimise images, videos, and other media files to reduce their file size without compromising quality as many young people use their mobile phone to access information and could have limited data. Use appropriate file formats for different types of content (e.g. JPG for images, MP4 for videos).

**Code compression:** Compress and minify CSS, JavaScript and other code files to improve page load times.

**Lazy loading:** Implement lazy loading for images and other media elements to reduce initial loading times. Lazy loading is a method used on websites where certain content, like images or videos, only load when they're about to be seen by the user. This makes the website faster to load initially because it's not trying to load everything all at once.

**Content Delivery Network (CDN):** Use a CDN to deliver content faster to users in different locations. CDN is a network of servers that efficiently delivers web content, such as images, videos and other resources, to users based on their geographic locations, thereby improving website performance and user experience.

## Progressive enhancement and graceful degradation

**Progressive enhancement:** Design your website with a progressive enhancement approach, starting with a basic, functional version and then adding advanced features and enhancements for capable devices and browsers.

**Graceful degradation:** Ensure that your website degrades gracefully, so that users with older browsers or devices can still access the essential content and functionality.

## Multimedia

**Multimedia accessibility:** Offer transcripts for audio content, captions and audio descriptions for video content, and ensure that embedded media players have accessible controls.

**Alternative formats:** Offer alternative formats for multimedia content, such as audio descriptions for videos or text-to-speech versions of articles/contents.

**Accessible media players:** Ensure that embedded multimedia players have accessible controls and support keyboard navigation.

## User preferences and customisation

**Display settings:** Allow users to adjust font size, colour contrast, and other display settings to accommodate their individual needs and preferences.

**Control of dynamic content:** Provide options to pause, stop, or hide auto-updating or moving content, such as sliders or animations.

## Step 4: Have a mindful use of visuals

### Alternative text

Provide meaningful and descriptive alternative text (alt text) for all images, charts, graphs and other visual elements on your website/social media. The alt text should convey the essential information or purpose of the visual for users who cannot see it, such as those using screen readers or with visual impairments. Ensure that the alt text is concise, yet adequately describes the content or function of the visual.

1. **Be descriptive:** Provide a concise and informative description of the image, focusing on its content, context and purpose.
2. **Avoid redundancy:** Don't repeat information that is already present in the surrounding text. The alt text should complement the content, not duplicate it.
3. **Keep it brief:** Aim for an alt text length of around 125 characters or fewer. This ensures that screen reader users can easily understand the description without becoming overwhelmed.
4. **Include relevant details:** Mention important elements, such as text within the image, people, objects, or actions that are relevant to the content.
5. **Avoid phrases like "image of" or "picture of":** Screen readers typically announce the presence of an image, so there's no need to include these phrases in the alt text.
6. **Be mindful of charts and graphs:** For complex images like charts and graphs, consider providing a short alt text summary and a more detailed description in the surrounding text or as a separate accessible document.
7. **Decorative images:** If an image is purely decorative and provides no additional information, use an empty alt attribute (e.g. alt=""). This informs screen readers to skip the image as it's not relevant to the content.
8. **Functional images:** For images that serve as buttons or links, ensure the alt text describes the action or destination, rather than just describing the image itself.

## Selection of images and illustrations

The choice of images and illustrations is powerful in conveying your message and storytelling. It is essential to incorporate authentic and multifaceted depictions of people in your information and communication products and tools. It can be about different body shapes, skin colours, genders, etc.

1. **Ensure that the visuals reflect a diverse range of races, ethnicities, genders, abilities and backgrounds** to show that everyone is valued and included.
2. **Be careful not to reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes:** for example, are you depicting a young woman doing a volunteering project with young kids and a young man doing an internship in the World Bank? It's also about breaking traditional stereotypes, such as a fat person not being included in the typical photos of young people jumping or doing physical work, because of assumptions about their physical health.
3. **Use inclusive language** in captions, descriptions and accompanying text to make everyone feel welcome.
4. **Use real-life photos and diverse images** of people engaging in everyday activities to show genuine representation.
5. **Highlight collaborative and inclusive activities** to demonstrate a culture of belonging.
6. **Illustrate inclusivity** by portraying interactions that accommodate different needs.

*Links to resources for diverse representation in visuals.*

## Step 5: Be mindful about hashtags and emojis

### Accessible hashtags

Hashtags are widely used on social media platforms to categorise content, making it easier for users to discover and engage with relevant posts. To ensure that your hashtags are accessible to all users, including those with visual impairments or using screen readers, consider the following best practices:

- **Use camel case:** Write your hashtags in camel case, capitalising the first letter of each word within the tag (e.g. #AccessibleHashtags). This makes it easier for screen readers to recognise and pronounce each word separately, improving readability and comprehension.
- **Keep it short and simple:** Use concise and easily understandable hashtags, avoiding overly long or complex phrases that may be difficult for users with cognitive disabilities or those who are not native speakers of the language to understand.
- **Separate hashtags from the main content:** Placing hashtags at the end of your post or in a separate comment can make your content easier to read and understand, as it prevents the hashtags from interrupting the flow of your message.
- **Avoid hashtagging every word:** Hashtagging individual words within your sentences can make your content difficult to read and comprehend, especially for users relying on assistive technology. Use hashtags sparingly and meaningfully to categorise your content.

### Accessible emojis

Emojis are a popular way to convey emotions and meaning in digital communication. However, to ensure that your use of emojis is accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities or using assistive technologies like screen readers, follow these guidelines:

- **Use emojis in moderation:** Overusing emojis can make your content difficult to understand, especially for users with cognitive impairments or those using screen readers. Use emojis sparingly and meaningfully, focusing on enhancing your message rather than overwhelming it.
- **Screen reader compatibility:** Be aware that screen readers will read out the description of each emoji. For example :D (😊) will be read aloud as "smiling face with open mouth and smiling eyes" by a screen reader. Ensure that your emojis' descriptions make sense in the context of your message and do not confuse or distract your users. Avoid using emojis in the middle of words, and leave space between a word and emoji.
- **Provide context:** Do not use emojis to replace words. When using emojis, ensure that they are accompanied by text that provides context and meaning, so that users who cannot see or understand the emojis can still comprehend the message.
- **Avoid emojis in crucial information:** Do not use emojis in place of important information or within critical parts of your content, like navigation elements,

headings, or links. This can confuse users and hinder the accessibility and usability of your content.

- **Be mindful of cultural differences:** Emojis can have different meanings and interpretations across different cultures and languages. Be mindful of your audience and choose emojis that are universally understood and appropriate for your content.
- **Use emojis that work well on both light and dark backgrounds** in line with the rule of contrast of accessibility. Using the yellow emojis is the best option for contrasts.

💡 The Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes allow applicants to apply for inclusion support to help prepare accessible activities which target hard-to-reach participants.

The way to use inclusion support depends on the specific group you want to engage with. Its application is limited only by the need to demonstrate that the efforts and resources invested have genuinely contributed to fostering inclusion and connecting with young people. It means for example to rent a car for a group of young people with disabilities during their mobility experience, to rent special equipment, etc. All these costs can be covered by the grant.

You can also use Erasmus+ Key Action 1 to participate in a job shadowing or training course abroad to learn about inclusive communication, or Key Action 2 to develop cooperation projects with other partners (e.g. to develop inclusive communication tools for youth audiences).

When it comes to inclusive communication, here are some actions you can consider to include in your projects related to youth outreach:

- **Professional video production:** Invest in professional video production to showcase real-life stories of young individuals participating in European projects despite facing obstacles.
- **Digital communication specialist:** Employ a digital communication specialist with expertise in inclusivity. This role could involve dedicating more hours to providing digital consultations and promptly responding to queries from young people.
- **Collaboration with influencers:** Collaborate with influential figures in the digital space. Their reach and impact could enhance engagement with young people.
- **Social media advertising:** Utilise social media platforms to run targeted advertising campaigns. This can help in reaching a wider audience and generating interest among young people.
- **Collaboration with institutions:** Establish collaborations with different institutions that work with young people facing challenges. Co-organising events or projects can create a network of support and expand your reach.

Tailor the use of inclusion support to the specific needs and preferences of the target audience. Ensure a transparent and measurable impact on inclusion efforts and that engagement with young people remains a priority.

## **Case Study: Making Content Accessible at Eurodesk Germany**

### **Principle**

Make your content more accessible

### **Background**

Eurodesk Germany, a national information centre, is committed to making their content more accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. To achieve this, they established a landing page dedicated to providing inclusive information and resources.

### **Challenge**

Eurodesk Germany faced a significant challenge in their pursuit of inclusivity: ensuring full accessibility of their website to users with varied abilities. The goal was not only to provide information, but also to create a web environment where everyone, regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities, could easily navigate and consume the content.

### **Solution**

To tackle this issue, Eurodesk Germany collaborated with bezev (Behinderung und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit e.V.), an organisation that advocates for the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. Together, they produced sign language videos using a tooltip-avatar to translate the content found on the landing page mentioned above. To improve the accessibility of their website, they did the following: technically and editorially optimised and revised content, replaced decorative font for headings with a more readable font, adapted the texts to "easy read", optimised a jump marks menu and inserted further jump marks on the landing page.

### **Results**

Eurodesk Germany, through their concerted efforts and collaboration with bezev, was able to make their website more inclusive. The introduction of sign language videos with tooltips and web revisions significantly improved the website's accessibility, providing a more friendly and inclusive user experience. More users have the opportunity to fully engage with the website's content, promoting an environment of inclusivity and equal access to information.

**Key Takeaways**

- Making your content more accessible is crucial in fostering an inclusive digital environment.
- Collaborating with experts in the field, such as bezev, can provide valuable insights and resources to achieve this goal.
- Implementing features like sign language videos can significantly improve a website's accessibility.

**Credit:** Eurodesk Germany / IJAB - Fachstelle für Internationale Jugendarbeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e.V. and Behinderung und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit e.V. (bezev), Essen, Germany



## Principle 6 - Use different channels to reach broadly

### Time for reflection

As an introduction to the principle, we invite you to reflect on and evaluate the following statement:

My institution and I use different channels to make my content more accessible to various segments of my audience.

Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### Supporting questions

*You don't have to answer them all in writing, but use them to reflect on and evaluate the main question:*

- What outreach methods have been successful and what methods have not worked?
- What can you do to improve outreach to specific groups and ensure that they are aware of your services and resources?
- Do I adjust the content or presentation style based on the channel and the specific audience segment I am targeting?
- How do you ensure that your content is engaging for young people?
- Does your website follow Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)?
- Have you ever checked your website's accessibility using online tools?

List one thing that you would like to improve (if needed):

## Building awareness / context

There are many different ways we can communicate, each with its own uses, users and barriers to access. As usual, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. When deciding how we want to communicate and which channel to use, we need to consider:

- Who we're talking to,
- What we want to achieve,
- How much information we need to share,
- How public our message needs to be,
- How formal our message is,
- Any limitations with the method of communication,
- How urgent our message is, and
- Whether we need to write it down for records or for transparency.

We've already talked a bit about accessibility in principle 4, where we discussed things like using clear language, visuals, proper formatting, good design and so on. These tips apply no matter which communication channel we use. Now, we want to look in more detail at the different ways we can communicate.

It's worth saying at the outset that even though this guidebook mainly talks about digital information and communication, we also want to acknowledge **the role of more traditional, face-to-face activities**. Nowadays, these can often be moved online. While this guidebook doesn't go into detail about these face-to-face methods, it's important to recognise their value. These could be activities such as meeting your audience directly in real life, for example at a youth information office, or outreach work done by youth information workers, like being present at fairs, events, schools and so on, or any educational or leisure activities where a youth information worker is present and where opportunities for young people are discussed. Some activities that traditionally happen face-to-face, like providing youth information at dedicated points, can happen online too. During the pandemic, for example, some people used Discord servers for youth information. This created open channels where anyone could join in and chat in real time with a youth worker. Likewise, seminars and information meetings can be held online and recorded for anyone who can't attend.

Communication channels can serve a range of functions, depending on the nature of the communication and the intended audience. Here's how you can categorise them by their primary function:

### 1. Informative/Educational:

- **Website:** Core details about the NGO's work and mission.
- **Blogs:** Sharing updates, stories and knowledge about the field.
- **Emails:** Newsletters and updates to subscribers.
- **Webinars & online courses:** Providing deeper knowledge and skills.
- **Infographics:** Simplified visual representation of complex data or processes.
- **Podcasts:** Discussions and interviews on related topics.
- **FAQs on websites:** Answers to common questions about the organisation/programmes/initiatives.
- **Press releases:** Sharing important news with media outlets.

## 2. Community engagement:

- **Social media platforms:** Interacting with followers, sharing updates, and running campaigns.
- **Community outreach programmes:** Directly engaging with the community.
- **Workshops:** Facilitating learning and engagement through hands-on experiences.
- **Public speaking & conferences:** Sharing the mission, projects and updates at larger events.
- **Video testimonials:** Sharing stories of real people impacted by our services/the programmes we promote (e.g. past beneficiaries of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes).

## 3. Direct communication/support:

- **Email support:** Responding to inquiries, providing personalised support.
- **SMS and mobile messaging apps:** Quick, direct communication with individuals (can be asynchronous as long as you inform young people when to expect an answer).
- **One-on-one counselling or consulting sessions:** Offering individualised advice or support.
- **Live chats:** Real-time, personal communication with website visitors.

## 4. Promotional/Marketing:

- **Social media campaigns:** Promoting specific causes, events, or fundraising campaigns.
- **Targeted social media ads:** Reaching a specific demographic to promote the organisation's work.
- **Newsletters:** Regular updates and promotional content for subscribers.
- **Direct mail:** Physical mailers promoting events, fundraising campaigns, or providing updates.
- **Partnerships with other organisations:** Joint promotions or events for wider reach.

Remember, these channels can often serve multiple functions and their use can be adapted depending on the specific needs and strategies of the institution.

In today's communication-centric world, it's crucial for organisations to make sure their messaging is clear, consistent, and accessible. Here are some key recommendations for organisations to follow on their various communication channels:

## Step 1: Make your content accessible

**Know the laws:** Familiarise yourself with the EU Web Accessibility Directives (2016) and the European Accessibility Act (EAA).

**Follow WCAG 2.0 Guidelines:** The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has provided the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) to help ensure accessibility.

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 present four main guidelines, each containing specific success criteria for making web content more accessible to people with disabilities. The four main guidelines are:

1. **Perceivable:** Information and user interface components must be presented in such a way that users can perceive them through different senses. This includes providing text alternatives for non-text content, captions and other alternatives for multimedia, and ensuring content is adaptable for various display and input methods.
2. **Operable:** User interface components and navigation must be operable and usable by all users. This guideline emphasises keyboard accessibility, providing enough time for users to read and interact with content, and avoiding content that could potentially cause seizures or physical discomfort.
3. **Understandable:** The information and operation of the user interface must be clear and easy to understand. This guideline focuses on using consistent navigation and providing clear instructions and error messages to help users comprehend and use the content effectively.
4. **Robust:** Content must be robust and compatible with a wide range of user agents, including assistive technologies. This guideline emphasises the use of valid and standard coding practices to ensure that content can be reliably interpreted by different browsers and accessibility tools.

**Inclusivity practices:** Implement the inclusivity recommendations from principle 4. This could involve simplifying language, using clear visuals and considering diverse user experiences.

**Use testing tools:** Regularly check your website's accessibility with tools like the WebAIM WAVE tool

**Keep learning:** Stay updated on accessibility and inclusivity best practices.

Accessibility and inclusivity are key to reaching the widest possible audience and promoting equal opportunities for all users.

## Step 2: Prioritise quality

**Review and refine:** Don't rush to publish information. Take time to review your content for accuracy, clarity and value. Get a second pair of eyes if possible; a fresh perspective can catch things you might have missed.

**Simplicity is key:** Make your content easy to understand and find. Use clear headings, bullet points, short sentences and plain language. Avoid jargon or complicated terminology.

**Quality over quantity:** Instead of posting frequently with less valuable content, focus on creating high-quality content that provides value to your audience. Quality content tends to get more engagement.

**Visually appealing:** Invest in creating attractive visuals and maintain a consistent layout. This can attract more people to your social media pages and keep your current audience engaged.

**Check engagement:** Regularly review how your content performs. See which posts get more engagement and try to understand why. Use these insights to improve your future content.

Remember, quality content is more likely to be shared, extending your reach and influence.

## Step 3: Emphasise consistency and relationship building

Here's how you can be consistent and build meaningful relationships with your audience:

**Stay consistent:** Stick to your chosen communication channels and maintain a regular posting schedule. Your audience will become accustomed to your updates, and consistency will help to grow your follower base. If you need to take a break, like closing for the summer, inform your audience ahead of time.

**Develop a strategy:** Have a clear plan for what, when and where you'll post. This strategy will guide your content creation and help ensure you're regularly providing value to your followers.

**Engage with your audience:** Respond to comments, messages and enquiries in a timely manner and fully. Address people directly and make them feel heard. This encourages more interaction and helps to build a sense of community.

**Foster relationships:** Make your followers feel important and valued. Engaging with them on a personal level not only makes them feel safe but also increases the likelihood that they'll engage with your opportunities. Remember, your communication

channels aren't just for sharing information, they're also for building relationships and trust.

In the end, consistency and relationship-building can lead to greater follower engagement and higher utilisation of the opportunities you provide.

#### **Step 4: Adapt for different communication channels**

Remember, a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't cut it. Different communication channels require distinct styles of content. Sending a 50MB video via WhatsApp or using the same image dimensions across various social media platforms won't work. Here's how you can tweak your content to suit different channels:

**Understand the platform:** Each communication channel has unique characteristics. Instagram favours high-quality visuals, while TikTok thrives on short-form video content. Understand what works on each platform and adjust your content accordingly.

You can learn more from the Eurodesk Social Media Guidebook:

**Optimise media files:** Adapt the size of your pictures, videos and documents to suit the platform. Different channels have different specifications for file sizes and formats. Always compress large files before sending them via platforms like WhatsApp.

**Modify your message:** Tailor your text to match the audience's preferences on each channel. What's well-received on one platform may not resonate on another.

Adapting your text, pictures and documents for different communication channels requires a keen understanding of the unique characteristics and audience preferences of each platform. Here are some strategies for doing so:

##### **Text:**

- **Social media:** Short, engaging and compelling text works best.
- **Email:** Be concise, and use clear and direct language. Your subject line should be catchy and informative to increase open rates.
- **Blog posts:** You have more room to explore a topic in-depth. Use headings for structure, include visuals, and add links to relevant resources.
- **Website:** Make sure text is broken up into easily digestible sections with clear headings.

## Pictures:

- **Social media:** Use high-quality, captivating images that can tell a story even without text. Infographics work well on platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn. Always include alternative text for accessibility. Remember to adapt the dimension of your visuals to the requirements of different platforms. You can use free tools such as Canva.com for this (and they have the option for the free PRO version for non-profit organisations).
- **Email:** Use visuals sparingly to avoid overwhelming the recipient or triggering spam filters. Ensure they enhance, not distract, from your message. Again, include alternative text.
- **Blog posts and website:** Use relevant, high-quality images that support your text. Infographics, charts and graphs can help explain complex ideas. Always include alternative text for accessibility.
- **Credits:** Remember to use visuals from legal sources and provide proper credit to the author of the photo or illustration. When using visuals from photo banks, always double-check the copyright.

## Documents:

- **Social media:** You typically can't share documents directly on most social media platforms, but you can share links to them. Create engaging posts to pique interest and drive clicks to the document.
- **Email:** Attach documents sparingly and only when necessary, as they can often end up going through spam filters. Instead, consider linking to the document hosted elsewhere. Ensure the document is accessible and mobile-friendly, as many users check email on their phones.
- **Blog posts and website:** Here you can provide downloadable resources. Ensure they're in a universally accessible format, such as PDF, and that they're properly formatted for accessibility.
- **Compress** large documents. Many young people have limited internet GB and storage, and sending large files for example via Whatsapp or email might make them unsubscribe from your channel. You can use the free online tool ILovePDF.com to compress your documents.

## Using AI

Right now life is even easier than before, since you can use **artificial intelligence (AI)** to help you adapt your texts. You can use AI to help you summarise the content of your document, create catchy titles, adapt the text to the requirements of different social media platforms or create more personalised responses to people who contact you. Here are some tips to consider:

- **Specify the social media platform/type of content:** Before you begin, clearly mention the platform for which you want to create content. This helps the model to understand the context and constraints.  
For example, you might ask, "You are a social media expert. Draft an Instagram post to promote a new blog post about mobility experiences?"
- **Provide necessary information:** Make sure to provide AI with all the relevant information. This might include the main message, the target audience, any important details, and the tone of voice you want to use.  
For example, you could say, "Write a post to announce our organisation's new

project start? The tone should be professional yet enthusiastic. Use plain language and a maximum of 200 words."

- **Ask for multiple versions:** Don't hesitate to ask for different versions of the same content. This can give you a range of options to choose from, or inspire you to create your own variation.  
You might ask, "Give me three different versions of an Instagram caption for this photo of our team celebrating our latest project completion"
- **Request edits:** If the generated content doesn't meet your needs or expectations, ask AI to edit it. Be specific about what you want to change. For instance, you could say, "I like the message, but can you make it sound more casual and upbeat?"
- **Avoid over-reliance on AI:** While AI can be a helpful tool for generating content and ideas, it's important not to rely on it excessively. AI models are trained on vast amounts of data and can provide diverse outputs, but they lack human creativity, intuition and context-awareness. Be aware that AI can express implicit bias. Bias in AI can manifest itself in various ways, including but not limited to gender bias, racial bias, or cultural bias. For instance, an AI model might associate certain roles or activities with a specific gender or might not handle different dialects or non-standard language forms effectively.

Here are a few examples of questions or instructions you could ask ChatGPT:

- "Create a series of 5 engaging and informative posts to advertise a blog post about the launch of the new EURODESK inclusion guidebook."
- "Create a catchy Facebook status to promote our upcoming webinar on youth information trends."
- "Rewrite the following post in a more concise way and with an excited tone."
- "Write an Instagram caption for this photo of our new mobility opportunity for young people."

Remember, the key is to be as specific as possible about what you want. The more information and context you provide, the better ChatGPT can assist you.

## Step 5: Mix your formats

When it comes to delivering content, variety is the spice of life. Repurposing content across different formats can broaden your reach and cater to varied audience preferences. Here are some steps to successfully mix your formats:

**Repurpose content:** If you've written an article on your website, consider turning the key points into a video, podcast, or infographic. This helps reach different audiences who prefer different mediums.

**Cross-promotion:** Projects like 'Be Europe'<sup>3</sup> offer good examples of cross-promotion. The same message is disseminated across different formats, increasing the chances of reaching a wider audience.

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<sup>3</sup> *Be Europe is Eurodesk's podcast focused on what it means to be young in Europe today. The podcast is showcased on various platforms (Twitch, Youtube, Spotify) and promoted on various channels through various formats.*



**Promote format availability:** Always inform your audience about the formats your information is available in. For instance, if your leaflet is accessible in Word format and as an audio file, make sure to advertise this. You never know who might need or prefer a specific format, and making this known could encourage more people to engage with your content.

Remember, by mixing formats, you create opportunities for more people to engage with your content in ways that suit their preferences and accessibility needs. Variety not only adds spice to your content, it also expands its reach!

## Step 6: Embrace networking

The importance of personal connections and networking cannot be overstated when trying to reach diverse audiences, particularly marginalised groups. The case of Eurodesk Iceland provides an excellent example of this approach.

*“Personal outreach by staff (Eurodesk and Icelandic NA for E+) to organisations working with youth who need inclusion support, actively bringing them into the programme. Offering them one-on-one meetings with coffee and discussions, Q&A of all their questions and showing them that the programme is for them and their target group. We found that frequently spreading the information through regular methods doesn't reach these groups properly, as they do not believe these opportunities are for them.”*

Here's a practical guide to networking:

**Personal outreach:** Actively reach out to organisations that work with marginalised youth groups. Offering one-to-one meetings over a cup of coffee, answering queries, and discussing the programme can encourage them to participate.

**Engage community leaders:** Often, youngsters may feel that certain opportunities aren't meant for them. By working with leaders from their communities who can talk about these opportunities, you're likely to change this perception and encourage wider participation.

**Collaborate:** Partnering with different organisations can help you understand the barriers and specific needs of disadvantaged young people more effectively. This collaboration can lead to solutions tailored to these needs.

**Take information to young people:** Instead of waiting for the young people to come to you, take the information to where they are. This could be in schools, skateparks, community centres, or online platforms where they spend their time.

**Establish and maintain networks:** Build relationships with those who have a significant influence on young people's lives, like teachers or community leaders. Keep these connections active and consistent.

Remember, personal relationships have immense power. Leveraging this power through effective networking can lead to a significant increase in the inclusion of typically excluded groups in European mobility.

## Step 7: Be clear about your communication channels

Clear communication about your preferred contact methods can make all the difference when engaging with young audiences. It allows them to connect with you efficiently and without any unnecessary confusion. Here are a few practical steps to follow:

**State your primary channels:** Let your users know which communication channels you use most frequently. For instance, if you have a newsletter, inform users how often it is distributed. If you primarily use email, let them know how long it might take for you to respond.

**Close unused channels:** If you have channels that are no longer in use or aren't checked regularly, consider closing them to avoid any miscommunication.

**Provide clear contact instructions:** Highlight the best ways for users to get in touch with you if they have any questions. For example, "If you have any questions, you can contact us via direct message (DM) or call or visit us at our office."

**Be transparent about decision processes:** If you're running an open call for a youth opportunity, let applicants know how and when decisions will be communicated. Mentioning the primary method of contact (e.g. email, SMS) and providing a timeline for communication can be helpful.

**Respect office hours:** If you're communicating via direct channels like DMs or WhatsApp, let people know your office/working hours. If you're not available immediately, set up a bot to acknowledge the received message and provide an expected response time.

**Avoid outdated contact methods:** Avoid displaying contact numbers for offices that are not in use, especially if your team works remotely. Also, if you're running a participant selection process, ensure applicants are clear on how they will receive responses and how long it will take.

In an age where some people are moving away from traditional email, being clear about your communication channels is vital for efficient interaction with your audience.

## Step 8: Offer both online and offline communication options

Diversifying your communication channels to include both online and offline options can help accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of your target audience. Here are a few tips to accomplish this:

**Cover different formats:** Remember, everyone communicates differently. Some people may prefer to reach out through online platforms, while others prefer traditional means. Catering to these preferences can help you connect with a wider audience.

**Be accessible:** Whether it's a physical meeting, a phone call, or a direct message on social media, strive to be accessible across various platforms. Some individuals

might feel more comfortable and reassured when they can speak with a representative directly or meet in person.

**Communicate clearly:** Be clear about the best ways for your audience to reach you. Whether it's through your website, social media handles, a phone number, or an office address, make sure this information is readily available and easy to find.

Offering a blend of communication methods ensures you cater to everyone's needs, thereby building a stronger, more inclusive relationship with your audience.

## Step 9: Provide clear data collection and GDPR information in an inclusive manner

Making your data collection practises transparent and compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is key to building trust with your users. Here's how you can do this in an inclusive manner:

1. **Easy-to-understand language:** Use clear, simple language when explaining what data you collect, why you collect it and how you use it. Avoid complex legal jargon which could confuse users, especially those with learning difficulties or non-native English speakers.
2. **Accessible formats:** Offer this information in a variety of formats. Consider creating infographics, explainer videos, or audio descriptions to make it more accessible.
3. **Explicit consent:** Be clear about consent. Allow users to easily opt-in or opt-out of data collection practices. A well-designed, easy-to-use consent form can ensure that users feel in control of their data.
4. **Contact point:** Have a designated contact point for data privacy questions. If users have concerns about their data, they should know who to contact and feel confident that their questions will be addressed promptly.
5. **Regular updates:** Keep your data policies up-to-date and inform users about any changes. Regularly review and adjust your data practices in response to changes in law or user needs.

By making your data practises clear, inclusive, and user-friendly, you demonstrate respect for your users' privacy and ensure compliance with GDPR.

## Step 10: Promote inclusive measures without stigmatising

When we work towards making opportunities more accessible for all, it's crucial to ensure we don't inadvertently stigmatise certain groups. The latest iterations of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps have emphasised social inclusion, offering targeted support for disadvantaged communities. However, promoting these measures needs careful thought. An example of this delicate balance can be seen in the DiscoverEU inclusion Action, which supports disadvantaged young people without emphasising their disadvantages.

Here's how you can avoid stigmatisation:

1. **Focus on support mechanisms:** Emphasise the support and benefits the programme offers without labelling it as an initiative for disadvantaged youths. Frame the opportunity as something that enhances inclusivity, rather than focusing on disparities.
2. **Use positive language:** Language plays a key role in how we perceive things. Ensure the language used in your promotional materials is positive, empowering and inclusive.
3. **Showcase diversity:** Feature diverse stories and experiences. This helps normalise diversity and reduce stereotypes.
4. **Consider your visuals:** Images should be chosen with care to reflect the diverse audience you are targeting. Ensure that visuals are inclusive and representative of the audience without focusing on their disadvantages.
5. **Accessibility and aesthetics:** Design and style needn't be compromised for inclusivity. Maintain aesthetic appeal while ensuring that your content is accessible. Choose readable fonts, high-contrast colour schemes, and use images that complement the message without distracting from it.

By using a tactful approach, you can successfully promote inclusive measures and make opportunities accessible without resorting to stigmatising labels. This respects the dignity of all young people while enhancing participation.

## Case Study: Asociación Cultural Ingalia - SOMOS MOITOS TOUR

### Principle

Use different channels to reach broadly

### Background

The economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic significantly affected young people, resulting in a high youth unemployment rate of 38% and a sharp rise in the number of NEETs (not in education, employment or training) to over 17%. Eurodesk Multiplier Asociación Cultural Ingalia, an organisation promoting cultural integration among young people, sought to address this issue through their project, SOMOS MOITOS TOUR.

### Challenge

The main challenge was to reach out to young people, particularly disadvantaged NEETs from rural areas of Galicia, Spain, who had limited access to information about national and European opportunities in training, employment, volunteering and education.

### Solution

To overcome this challenge, Ingalia Association decided to organise an informative, itinerant and participative project that aimed to:

- Promote an inclusive communication campaign targeting youth, especially disadvantaged NEETs from rural areas.

- Create spaces and moments of inclusion and youth participation in areas with more social inequality, a higher number of NEETs and a high percentage of youth unemployment.

By bringing the information **directly to young people in rural areas**, Ing Galicia Association was able to reach out to those who were previously unaware of the organisation and its activities.

## Results

The SOMOS MOITOS TOUR project achieved the following outcomes:

- Facilitated access to crucial information for young people, such as opportunities to discover and learn about Europe through EU-funded projects.
- Promoted inclusion and accessibility for young people in disadvantaged situations, particularly those living in rural areas.
- Increased engagement with the organisation's digitally communicated content and opportunities, thanks to initial face-to-face encounters.
- Visualised and gave a voice to the real needs of young people, especially NEETs by offering them contact with representatives of local, national and European institutions.

## Key Takeaways

- Using different channels to communicate your content is essential for reaching out to a wider audience and promoting inclusion.
- Bringing information directly to young people in rural areas can help bridge the gap in access to opportunities.
- Face-to-face encounters can play a crucial role in building trust and engagement with digitally communicated content and offerings.

**Credit:** Asociación Cultural Ing Galicia, Coruña, Spain

## Principle 7 - Keep monitoring and adjusting to your audiences!

### Time for reflection

As an introduction to the principle, we invite you to reflect on and evaluate the following statement:

My institution and I continually monitor our communications to meet my audience's needs and ensure that everyone can access my services and resources.

Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### Supporting questions

*You don't have to answer them all in writing, but use them to reflect on and evaluate the main question:*

- Do you regularly monitor the responses and engagement of your audiences across your various communication channels?
- Do you have a system in place to receive feedback from your users?
- How are you using feedback from your audience to guide adjustments in your communication approach?
- What learning mechanisms do you have in place to ensure you understand and can respond to the changing needs and preferences of your audience?
- How often do you assess the accessibility and inclusivity of your communications and services to ensure they cater to a diverse audience?

List one thing that you would like to improve (if needed):

## Building awareness / context

“Accountability is precisely where most diversity-, equity-, and inclusion-related initiatives fail” Tiffany Jana, DM, Michael Baran (Subtle Acts of Exclusion)

Inclusive digital communication is an ongoing process that requires constant monitoring and adjustment to effectively reach and engage diverse audiences. Many times in this guidebook, it's been mentioned that providing straightforward answers in the field of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) can be challenging. Implicit behaviours, which are often the focus of DEI discussions, can be difficult to recognise and address. Furthermore, the theory and understanding of DEI continue to evolve on a daily basis. This chapter acknowledges these complexities and emphasises the importance of actively learning, monitoring and adjusting communication strategies to ensure inclusivity.

### Step 1: Keep learning

Continual learning is vital for staying informed and connected to the evolving needs and preferences of your audience. There are various ways to stay updated with the latest approaches in the field and better understand and adopt inclusive behaviours. In the field of youth work, where inclusion is a key priority, there are many opportunities for residential learning that you can take part in. For those who are unable to travel, there are plenty of local or online learning options available.

Training possibilities in Europe offer a myriad of opportunities for personal and professional development. SALTO-YOUTH provides non-formal learning resources for youth workers and youth leaders and organises training and contact-making activities. You can consult the European Training Calendar and sign up for email notifications. For those interested in job shadowing and study visits, the Erasmus+ programme offers financial support, making it easier for participants to gain valuable experience and insights from experts in their field.

We would particularly like to suggest the concept of **microlearning**. Microtraining provides short bursts of content for learners to study at their convenience. Many practitioners and activists in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) create visually engaging content to bring you the latest conversations, developments and reflections from the field. We highly recommend following activists who specialise in specific topics of interest and practitioners who offer microlearning opportunities. By screening your social media feeds, you can easily access content that can help you develop your understanding and skills. It is advisable to find individuals to follow from your own country or cultural circle. This way, the language and content can be adapted to your context, and you can discover the unique aspects of your language and access context-specific information.

By actively engaging with different learning opportunities, you can continue to enhance your knowledge of inclusive practices in youth work. Embrace residential learning programmes, leverage online resources and explore microlearning content. Remember, learning is a lifelong journey, and by staying informed and connected, you can contribute to fostering inclusive digital communication practices in youth work.

**TO DO:** Go to the social media account you feel most comfortable using to search for and follow activists and practitioners of DEI, as well as activists specialising in the field you are interested in and/or least familiar with.

## **Step 2: Explicitly ask for feedback**

To foster a culture of inclusivity, it is crucial to have a concrete mechanism for receiving feedback from your audience, especially young people. By creating dedicated channels and platforms, such as online surveys, suggestion boxes, feedback forms or a simple email address, you provide accessible avenues for individuals to share their thoughts, ideas and suggestions. Actively inviting feedback and emphasising its value helps to establish trust and encourages participation from diverse voices.

Once you've received the feedback, it is essential to have a structured process for analysing and implementing it effectively. This involves carefully reviewing the feedback, categorising it based on themes or topics, and identifying actionable insights. By considering the feedback in your decision-making process, you demonstrate a commitment to inclusive communication that is responsive to the needs and preferences of your audience.

Implementing meaningful change based on feedback is key to driving continuous improvement. This may involve revising communication strategies, updating content, or adapting engagement approaches. It is important to track and document the changes made in response to feedback, as this not only demonstrates transparency but also shows that the input received has had a tangible impact.

By fostering a feedback-oriented culture and establishing a structured feedback process, you create an environment where diverse perspectives are valued, and inclusivity is prioritised. Through active engagement with feedback, you can ensure that your communication efforts are continually evolving and meeting the needs of your audience.

### **TO DO:**

- Create dedicated channels and platforms for receiving feedback from your audience, particularly young people.
- Clearly communicate the importance of their thoughts, ideas and suggestions in shaping your communication efforts.



- Actively invite feedback and make it known that their input is highly valued.
- Establish a structured process for analysing and implementing the feedback received.
- Ensure that feedback is thoroughly reviewed and considered in your decision-making.

### **Step 3: Revise content to avoid implicit bias**

To ensure your communication materials are inclusive and free from implicit bias, it is crucial to establish a content revision process. Consider assigning a dedicated person or group responsible for regularly reviewing and approving content prior to publishing. By involving an external reviewer, you introduce an additional perspective that can contribute to making the content more inclusive.

To tackle implicit bias effectively, provide training to your team on recognising and addressing language, imagery, or messaging that might unintentionally marginalise certain groups. This training raises awareness of potential biases in communication materials. Encourage critical analysis of content for implicit bias and make necessary adjustments for inclusivity. Additionally, consider accessibility and representation issues, ensuring materials are accessible to all abilities and represent diverse perspectives. Use inclusive language, diverse imagery, and avoid stereotypes. By addressing these aspects proactively, you can create welcoming and diverse communication materials.

#### **TO DO:**

- Establish a content revision process with a dedicated person or group responsible for reviewing and approving communication materials.
- Regularly evaluate and update the content revision process and training to align with best practices and inclusivity standards.

### **Step 4: Keep monitoring and adjusting your inclusive communication strategy**

To ensure **effective monitoring and evaluation** of your inclusive communication strategy, it is important to establish a systematic approach. This involves defining roles and responsibilities for collecting feedback, conducting evaluations and analysing data. Regular evaluation meetings should be scheduled to assess the effectiveness of your current strategies, identify areas for improvement, celebrate successes and set actionable goals for the next period. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity to align efforts, share insights and collectively drive your commitment to inclusive communication.

**Success indicators** should be identified to measure the success of your inclusive communication efforts. These indicators may include audience engagement, reach, conversion rates, feedback received, or changes in attitudes and behaviours. By

monitoring and tracking progress against these indicators, you can assess the effectiveness of your strategies and make informed decisions.

Incorporating **service design principles** into your evaluation process is essential. This can be achieved by actively involving your target audience through focus groups, surveys, or user testing. By gathering direct feedback on the accessibility, relevance and effectiveness of your communication materials or initiatives, you gain valuable insights and identify opportunities for improvement.

It is important to **celebrate successes** and share learnings from your inclusive communication efforts. Recognise positive outcomes, lessons learned and best practices identified during the evaluation process. Openly discussing challenges and areas for improvement fosters a culture of learning and collective problem-solving.

Setting **actionable objectives** based on insights gained from evaluation meetings and feedback allows you to continuously improve your inclusive communication strategy. These objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). Breaking them down into smaller tasks ensures effective tracking and progress towards your desired outcomes.

#### TO DO:

- Schedule regular evaluation meetings.
- Define key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Collect feedback from the target audience.
- Analyse data and insights.
- Set actionable goals.
- Monitor progress and make adjustments.

Inclusive communication is an ongoing journey that requires continuous monitoring, evaluation and adjustment. By actively reviewing and refining our strategies, incorporating feedback and setting actionable goals, we can foster a culture of inclusivity and ensure that our communication efforts resonate with our diverse audience. Together, let's commit to promoting inclusivity and making a positive impact through our communication practices.

## Case Study: Associazione InformaGiovani - Fostering Inclusion for Young People in the Criminal Justice System

### Principle

Keep monitoring and adjusting to your audiences

### Background

Since 2001, Associazione InformaGiovani has been engaged in information initiatives aimed at young people who have gone through the criminal justice system, collaborating with the territorial offices of Juvenile Justice. Their mission is to provide quality information as a tool for intervention and social change, focusing on territories and contexts where difficulty in accessing information translates to limited opportunities for individual and collective growth.

### Challenge

The main challenge was to adapt information activities to foster the direct involvement of young people in conflict with the law in international learning mobility activities, taking into account the unique context and cultural backgrounds of the individuals involved.

### Solution

To address this challenge, Associazione InformaGiovani implemented the following strategies:

- Preparing and collaborating with juvenile justice operators to build information activities tailored to each individual.
- Using easy-to-understand language, adapting to the often low levels of schooling among the target audience.
- Maintaining respect for rules and role distinctions within the judicial context, while employing a non-formal and non-institutional approach.
- Establishing trust with the young people by understanding their individual stories and characteristics, ensuring that information activities were an integral part of their broader social inclusion and path to rehabilitation.

### Results

By monitoring and adjusting their approach to the audience, Associazione InformaGiovani achieved the following:

- Developed inclusive and respectful activities by working closely with juvenile justice workers.
- Ensured that information activities were tailored to the unique needs and backgrounds of each individual, fostering trust and promoting social inclusion.
- Adapted activities to avoid potential triggers for young people with histories of abuse, ensuring a safe and supportive environment.

- Involved families, where appropriate, to overcome cultural barriers and to enhance the emotional and psychological support for young people participating in the programme.

### **Key Takeaways**

- If possible, find out about the history and socio-cultural background of the young people involved in advance.
- Continuously monitor and adjust your approach to suit the specific needs and backgrounds of your audience.
- Build strong collaborations with relevant stakeholders, such as juvenile justice operators, to develop tailored, inclusive activities.
- Use easy-to-understand language and maintain a balance between non-formal approaches and the respect for rules and roles within a judicial context.
- Establish trust with the target audience by understanding their individual stories and incorporating information activities into their broader social inclusion and paths to rehabilitation.

**Credit:** Associazione InformaGiovani, Palermo, Italy

## Conclusion

We hope you enjoyed reading this guide. We wish that it convinced you, if necessary, of the importance of the topic of inclusion in communication, just like in everything else we do.

It is easy to overlook the impact of an email, a social media post or a flyer; just like it is easy to overlook the invisible minorities in our society. However, communication is not only fundamental to our work as a vector of information. Caring about communication is important because it is made of words, concepts and symbols which structure the way we perceive society, interact with each other, and consequently, it structures the very condition of our lives.

This is why Eurodesk is proud to deliver this guide on inclusive digital communication. Preparing it was a fascinating journey that led us to grow stronger in our convictions. More importantly, it taught us that some of the content of this guide might very well become obsolete in the coming years and that it is something to look forward to!

This is indeed, because the conversation around inclusion is a vibrant one, and because communication, words and symbols are one of many scenes of the cultural revolution for an inclusive society. This revolution is a beautiful one, as it brings life, justice, and peace at the centre of the conversation. Every new person raising their voice for their rights brings on a new dimension to consider, making our world a little bit bigger. This revolution, threatened on many levels by fear of change, will require from all of us to be humble, to question our perceptions and to remember that we are all lifelong learners.

At Eurodesk we believe that youth (information) workers, as key actors of the social fabric, are playing an important role in breaking with the norms of exclusion, in communicating to youth their generous way of looking at others, and by doing so in preventing social gaps from widening. This is why we dedicate this guide to you, and as we have started implementing the advice we share here, we can not wait to see what you will make of it.

The transformation of our society towards inclusiveness will be a challenging journey. We should not forget why we have decided to embark on it. We did because there is no life that isn't connected to others; no justice if it isn't for all and only illusional peace behind the walls of exclusiveness. We did it because we care about youth rights and want a Europe based on a culture of belonging.

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