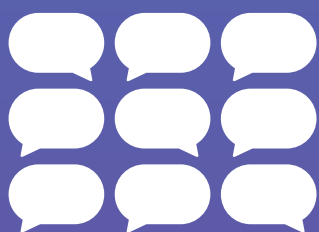


Diversity and Inclusion Guidelines



european
youth forum

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- Youth of European Nationalities (YEN)
- Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU)

Forward

by the Expert Group on Membership Diversity and Inclusion

Young people today are more diverse than ever. This changing reality creates more educational opportunities than ever before and makes it easier to experience mobility and other experiences abroad. On the other hand, young people continue to face many challenges in various life realities, for example: young people are those with long-term learning, sensory, hidden or physical disabilities, they are young parents, young carers, they are also homeless, refugees, asylum seekers, young migrants, gypsy or roma traveller, they are young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), and they are those with long-term mental health conditions, with learning disabilities or physical health needs.

As youth organisations we want to reflect on this diversity of needs, interests and challenges young people find themselves in. In our structures and actions, we see the responsibility to stand for the diverse circumstances of young people and their uniqueness. We advocate for ending discrimination against young people based on different premises and are fighting for more inclusion and diversity. We also need to embrace diversity in our practise and develop ourselves towards being more inclusive, in order to see change in others we must start with ourselves. We hope and wish for our generation to become the generation of inclusion, respecting each other in diversity and enjoying full access to rights.

"Inclusive youth organisations eventually lead to an inclusive society"

We believe we have an obligation to ensure that our actions and organisations are representative of the diversity of young people, regardless or because of their reality. This must include the voices and interests of young people from underrepresented groups, we believe this can only contribute to better decision-making and benefit society. As youth organisations are self-organised and self-determined spaces, this representation cannot take place without the participation of those same underrepresented young people. We also see the mission as ensuring a full representation of the diversity of young people and the strengthening of their voices in the European Youth Forum itself. In order to fulfil that task, both youth organisations and the European Youth Forum need to become more inclusive and take time to reflect on their structures, processes and cultures. Inclusive youth organisations eventually lead to an inclusive society and full access to participation and rights for diverse and minority groups. This is the vision we the European Youth Forum stand for.

With this vision as the foundation, the Expert Group on Membership, Diversity and Inclusion has developed these guidelines. This publication is our knowledge and expertise on the subject, with it we want to begin a discourse on inclusion and diversity in youth organisations. We want that this document serves as an inspiration, provides concrete ideas, and supports further work towards inclusion. This publication is by no mean a finished and completed work, we intend for it to be continuously updated, improved and developed over the coming months and years.

Background and rationale

“The vision of the European Youth Forum is to be the voice of young people in Europe, where young people are equal citizens and are encouraged and supported to achieve their fullest potential as global citizens.”¹

As part of our work we strive for inclusive, non-discriminatory and gender-equal practices within all youth organisations. Furthermore, the Work Plan 2017-2019² puts a strong emphasis on inclusive membership and the access to rights of young people. As part of its implementation we have developed the Membership Strategy 2018-2021.

The importance of diversity and inclusion is not new to the environment of youth organisations. They are pivotal to the delivery of the visions and missions of many youth organisations across Europe as well as the European Youth Forum. In the changing global context where new generations are more diverse than ever, youth organisations and especially the European Youth Forum, have a responsibility to ensure all young people find themselves welcomed, included and represented.

The European Youth Forum and our members are committed to taking on this responsibility and there have been ongoing conversations with our members on how to do so. Jointly, we want to deepen our understanding of how youth organisations can appropriately respond to the increasingly diverse social context of young people. We also want to assess how we as youth organisations can adapt our organisational culture and approaches to becoming more accessible to all young people.

We want to support youth organisations in providing young people from different cultural and social backgrounds with opportunities and experiences, that will help them to develop positive attitudes towards differences. We also want to see them build positive relationships based on the values and principles of human rights and respect.

One of the key goals of our Membership Strategy is to become a more diverse and inclusive platform, aiming to ensure that the Youth Forum is a welcoming, inclusive and safe space for all groups of participating young people. As part of this strategy, the Expert Group on Membership, Diversity and Inclusion has developed these Diversity and Inclusion Guidelines in order to foster diversity and inclusion in the platform as a whole.

The ultimate aim of these Guidelines is to increase the capacity of the European Youth Forum, and our Member Organisations, to foster diversity and inclusion. Another aim of these Guidelines is to raise awareness of inclusive practices among the representatives of the Youth Forum and our Member Organisations by providing practical advice as well as examples and tools that support youth organisations in becoming more inclusive.

Who are these guidelines for?

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Understanding Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion have always been an integral part of the work of the Youth Forum. The Work Plan notes that:

“young people are not a homogeneous group and youth from disempowered backgrounds and vulnerable groups face additional barriers to social and economic inclusion.”³

Furthermore, the Work Plan also emphasises that:

“social inclusion is a process that ensures that all young people gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a decent standard of living and well-being.”⁴

There are a few policy papers that elaborate on these topics with an accent on political recommendations for developing structural support for the inclusion of young people, especially those with fewer opportunities. For example:

- [Policy Paper on Social Inclusion through Youth Participation](#)⁵
- [Policy Paper on Equality and Non-Discrimination](#)⁶
- [Policy Paper on Equality and Diversity](#)⁷
- [Policy Paper on young people and poverty](#)⁸

Diversity and inclusion are both terms with no generally agreed definition and can be used to express a variety of ideas. The next two sub chapters outline the definitions of both inclusion and diversity that these Guidelines are based on. They are extracted from various youth work manuals, the above mentioned policy papers, and general practices of the Youth Forum.

Diversity

Diversity is a concept widely used in everyday conversations and policy discourses. In a nutshell, it's about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different. This can be in terms of age, gender, cultural background, language, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and education, etc.

The current perspective on diversity has shifted from celebrating, appreciating or managing diversity, to inclusion and development of an intercultural society.

When elaborating on the concept of diversity it is important to acknowledge its intersectionality and the interrelated nature of the different identity aspects. These include and are not limited to: gender, ethnic and cultural background, language, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, geographic location or visa status. These different aspects of a young person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation, and amplify barriers to inclusion.

The European Youth Forum believes that diversity should be valued in Europe and that to 'celebrate' it, respect for identities and a sense of belonging to a shared set of values should

be promoted. In our work, we embody that by fostering intercultural respect and by empowering young people from all walks of life to raise their voice.

Inclusion

Inclusion is a concept used widely in social and educational policy making to express the idea that all people living in a given society (should) have access and participation rights on equal terms. As a process, inclusion seeks to ensure that everyone, regardless of their circumstances and background, has the possibility and means to participate fully in society. When looking at young people and social inclusion, it is concerning that young people in general face many challenges in order to fully participate in society. Therefore, for youth work, inclusion is identifying, understanding and removing barriers that exist to ensure equal participation, representation and belonging.

Among youth organisations and the field of European youth work, inclusion is also about ensuring access and participation in activities, programmes and decision-making especially for young people with fewer opportunities.

Young People with Fewer Opportunities

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people who are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more situations and obstacles. These can include, social, economic, linguistic, geographic obstacles, dealing with educational difficulties, cultural differences, having health problems, having a disability, or having limited access to social rights.

In certain contexts, these situations or obstacles prevent young people from having effective access to formal and non-formal education, transnational mobility and participation, active citizenship, empowerment, and inclusion in society at large.

For more information and resources about the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, please consult the SALTO-Youth website.

As the European Youth Forum we strive for greater inclusion by expanding our membership to youth organisations that enable us to become more responsive to all young people of Europe. The Youth Forum also proactively reaches out to platforms outside of our membership to ensure as many voices are taken into account as possible.

In our decision-making structures, we either ensure intersectionality in the selection of participants or raise awareness among our members on the importance of diversity and inclusion within their delegations. We endeavour to ensure all voices are heard.

To achieve this the European Youth Forum utilises such processes as the EU Structured Dialogue with Young People. Through our members involvement in this process we are reaching out to and hearing the voices of millions of young people.

Notes

- 1 <https://www.youthforum.org/european-youth-forum-our-goals-vision>
- 2 <https://www.youthforum.org/work-plan-2017-2019>
- 3 Work Plan 2017-2019, European Youth Forum. P7
- 4 Ibid
- 5 Policy Paper on Social Inclusion through Youth Participation, European Youth Forum 2006
https://www.jugendpolitikineuropa.de/downloads/4-20-2280/EYF_socincl_youth_part.pdf
- 6 https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0099-16_Policy_Paper_Equality_Non-discrimination_FINAL2.pdf
- 7 <https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/mars/source/resources/references/04%20-%20CM%20Youth%20Forum%20Jeunesse%20Policy%20Paper%20on%20Equality%20and%20Diversity%202006.pdf>
- 8 <https://www.youthforum.org/policy-paper-young-people-and-poverty>

Organisational assessment

Diversity and inclusion is not a target you can check off just once in your organisation and be done with it. This would imply there are already organisations that ideally capture the diversity of the environment they exist in and have eliminated all barriers to participation. Becoming more diverse and inclusive is a continuous cycle of reflection and action. There are a wealth of opportunities to include underrepresented groups in your organisation so the important thing is to start somewhere and go from there.

And where do you even begin the journey?

As a starting point, we invite you to take the time for some organisational reflection and self-assessment. The questions below, can help you with this:

- What does being inclusive mean to you?
- Whom do you represent? This is particularly important if your organisation engages with external parties, e.g. doing advocacy: on whose behalf do you speak?
- Do all the key people in your organisation have the same understanding of inclusion?

Once you have reflected on this baseline, you can get down to the nitty-gritty. Here are some more questions for you to discover where in your organisation diversity and inclusion actions can have the biggest impact:

Organisational culture

Review your organisation's core documents (e.g. value statements, missions, vision, etc.). Are commitments toward diversity and inclusion explicitly ensured?

To what extent are the concepts of diversity and inclusion incorporated into your organisational mission, vision statements and your organisations values?

Decision-Making Structures

Compare your top decision-making structures (e.g. your board, steering committee, etc.) to the composition of your membership.

Do they represent the diversity of your membership?

Compare your other decision-making structures (e.g. your general assembly) to the composition of the society your organisation is based in.

Could your structures benefit from including more view points to stay in touch with the world around them?

Who is making decisions within the organisation and where does their mandate come from?

Who decides on who gets put forward for election?

Are there any restrictions and/or exceptions for participation? (e.g. for taking part or nominating for General Assembly / Board members)

Were those in the decision-making structures elected to take decisions to the extent that they do?

Can they consult with others when taking decisions?

Membership

How do you define your target group? Compare your membership composition with the society and environment they come from!

Do you find they represent all the key dimensions of the wider community?

*

We encourage you to consider the intersectionality of identities when reflecting on this question.

What are the reactions of your members when someone shares a differing view, a new perspective, or an alternative insight connected to their background? (e.g. someone shares an instance or experience of discrimination)

How do the other members react? With curiosity, support, dismissal, or disdain?

Many organisations base their work on a set of values. Does your organisation show a commitment to include diverse standpoints (e.g. a value statement)?

Do you actively work on this commitment with your members or are your values passive commodities?

Does your organisation have a membership criteria?

To what extent do those criteria create opportunities or limitations?

Events

Do the attendees of your past events reflect the composition of the society you are based in (e.g. ethnicity, religion, gender)?

(ref. check national statistical/demographics data)

When planning events, what attention is placed on making sure your location, venue, food, speakers and other logistics encourage a diverse and inclusive space?

Is the location/venue accessible and equipped sufficiently for young people with disabilities?

Is there a budget for things like sign language interpretation, speech-to-text, text to braille translators, or any other equipment or personnel required for the specific needs of any young people participating?

Reflecting on your past events and meetings, can you identify elements that have made it youth-friendly (e.g. the format of the session, time and location)?

What do these things mean for any future events?

Communication

How does your target group get to know about your activities?

Is the communication you use adaptable and are the communication tools you use adaptable, and or accessible for minority groups?

To what extent do you directly invite young people from minority or marginalised groups from your community to participate in your youth organisation and or events?

*** A note on intersectionality:**

Some organisations focus on a certain demographic subset, e.g. students. When you consider the intersectionality of identities (e.g. students with disabilities, students who are parents, students with migration backgrounds), then you can check whether most of your membership shares a particular background or whether you have a diversity of backgrounds.

'Diversity and Inclusion' is a broad and big topic. Despite this, you can still make a difference to underrepresented groups and to your organisation through both small and big actions. If you're struggling to find a way to start, consider the following two dimensions:

1. Where are the easy fixes in my organisation?

These can be small adjustments with the potential to have a big impact. For example: checking your meeting venues for disability accessibility or using pronouns instead of gender on your online registration form.

2. Which changes will have the biggest impact?

Which areas in your organisation will benefit the most from adding new perspectives to the conversation? Which actions will significantly reduce the barriers to participation for underrepresented groups?

Guidelines

This chapter will present to you some steps and a concrete starting point in order to increase your organisational capacity and to foster diversity and inclusion in your structures and activities.

The guidelines presented below are by no means a definitive list and should rather serve as a practical inspiration. Consider it as a list of suggestions, possible strategies and examples, on how to start with some specific issues, and what aspects to consider when working in and with a youth organisation.

Organisational culture

The foundation for strengthening diversity and inclusion is your organisational culture. The values of diversity and inclusion should underpin the values and the mission of your organisation. It should be this that in turn forms the basis of the commitment of your organisation's leadership taking this process forward.

◆ Values

Developing a culture of inclusiveness requires organisations to reflect upon their values, behaviours and actions. A tool that can support you in this is the assessment questionnaire we presented in the previous section.

We encourage you, together with your team, to do this step and consider your organisation's openness to difference, willingness to embrace diverse ways of knowing and being, and commitment to non-discrimination and equity in your work.

◆ Vision and Mission statements

It is important that the values of inclusion and diversity are incorporated in your organisational vision and mission statements. They should include aspects and approaches of engagement with young people from diverse backgrounds and other inclusive practices for your work. This may require reflection not only upon the actual vision and mission but also your organisations practice and principles.

Organisational Structures

One of the particular values of youth organisations is their youth-led aspect. This is exemplified mainly by young people making decisions about and for themselves and having a direct influence on the organisation. This process includes young people taking responsibility for their decisions.

An important principle of many youth organisations is the election of their representatives. A group of (young) people who speak and act on behalf of the paid staff, volunteers and the members/target group. The main role of this elected leadership (often referred to as board, presidium or committee) is to lead the organisation and make the strategic decisions. Therefore, it is essential that the leadership of the organisation, reflects the diversity of the membership and demonstrates the values of the organisation. In this way they can make the decisions based on the actual interests of all the members as well as the organisation as a whole. This group must be in touch with the needs and aspirations of the young people in order to be able to talk about, defend, or make decisions in the name of young people.

It is also important that there is consistency, encouragement, and an ongoing commitment to continued implementation and improvement for diversity and inclusion strategies and practices in the organisation. This can be achieved through raising awareness and promoting diversity and inclusion within the organisational culture and further through ensuring diversity in the decision-making bodies. There should also be a strategy for including those who usually do not have access to such positions.

In order to foster diversity and inclusion within the internal organisational structure and in particular the decision-making bodies, we invite you to consider some of the following strategies outlined below:

◆ **Support young people in overcoming personal obstacles**

Very often there are personal obstacles preventing young people from taking an active part in specific democratic and governing processes and structures in the organisation. They might lack self-esteem, have a fear of being discriminated against or feel a lack of encouragement. They might be shy and do not feel they have enough support.

For that to change, it is important to look around and actively talk to people, encourage them to run and show them your support. Very often in an organisation, there is an established culture of people in the leadership positions coming from the similar background, group, city, etc. To support people who may not be the obvious candidates, it is important to acknowledge they might need personal support, reassurance and encouragement.

◆ **Encourage diversity and inclusion within the elected and representative structures**

Very often only those with a clear plan for running for positions within youth organisations are well informed about the steps and the details of the election process as well as what the position entails.

To provide all members with the relevant information, it is important for the representatives and existing people in the decision-making bodies to make the process, the roles and the tasks, as transparent and easy to understand as possible. In order to encourage diversity and inclusion within the elected and representative structures in the your organisation we encourage you to:

- Actively promote an organisational culture that is inclusive and respectful of the diversity within the nomination and election process;
- Provide information about the importance of decision-making and the governance processes of the organisation. Many people are often uninformed about the substantial value of the democratic processes and how the organisation benefits from these;
- Disseminate the information on the positions and the election processes a long time in advance. Communicate through different channels and in different forms (see communication part);
- Develop an anti-discrimination and/or cultural inclusion policy. This should include election processes in order to ensure a culture of 'no tolerance' of any negative attitudes based on any form of a young person's identity;
- Organise info-sessions for everyone in order to provide detailed information on what certain positions and mandates entail;
- Make sure the presentations of the candidates do not set a clear preference for those with specific competencies (e.g. public speaking). Provide different ways for the candidates to present their candidatures;

- Contact people who belong to the groups usually not represented in the decision-making bodies and discuss with them the main reasons for their not taking part on previous occasions.

◆ **Diversity and inclusion in the secretariat and among the staff**

Very often youth-led structures are supported by youth workers who are employed in the secretariats and bureaus who run the daily business of the organisation. In a larger organisation it is good practice to have a particular position dealing with the subject of inclusion and diversity policies. In smaller ones, it is important that someone with the responsibility for the 'human resources' side of the organisation is familiar with inclusion and diversity approaches. In this way they can encourage the participation of young people with less opportunities and or those from less represented backgrounds.

In order to create a more inclusive working environment of the secretariat or bureau, the following can be considered:

- Distribute the inclusion and diversity portfolio among staff members and make sure that the person(s) responsible for human resources is familiar with the inclusion and diversity subject;
- Provide training courses on diversity and inclusion strategies to all staff members and volunteers. This helps individuals to reflect on their bias's and so enables them to work on them. Often negative behaviour comes from ignorance rather than malice. A willingness to be educated can go a long way;
- Include the subject of inclusion and diversity in everyday office life. Create a shared understanding of and vision for inclusion and diversity, especially if the office is composed of an international team;
- Analyse and review your employment policy with regards to inclusion and diversity. Make sure that your office is fully accessible, so that people with disabilities can move and communicate freely and without problem. Provide infrastructure and opportunities for people with various different needs. This can include things such as working from home, flexible working hours, breakout rooms and other spaces (e.g. changing room, reflection room, etc.).

An example of an accessible office in terms of communication:

When the secretariat has a deaf officer, the whole secretariat is encouraged to take sign language courses in order to be able to communicate with their deaf colleague fluently.

Membership, Participation and Outreach

Given the diversity of the membership of the European Youth Forum and its member organisations we will tackle this section both from the perspective of network organisations (made up of local and/or national organisations) as well as from the perspective of individual national and local organisations.

◆ **Promoting the values of diversity and inclusion among your membership**

Make sure that all of your members are aware that diversity and inclusion is part of your organisational culture and organisational priorities. The simplest way to do this is to engage in dialogue with your members about diversity and inclusion. Offer training or ask for their input on how you can make the organisation a more diversified and inclusive space. For example, include the topic of diversity and inclusion as a part of the meetings with your membership, such as monthly meetings, General Assemblies, or policy discussions. Ask your members to express their opinions and expertise on the topic or invite a partner organisation to share their views.

◆ **Define and get to know your target group(s)**

Before you diversify your outreach and work towards creating a more inclusive organisation, we invite you to reflect on what could be the possible obstacles for a targeted group of young people to be a part of your activities!

Before creating more opportunities for involvement with your target group, it is important to work towards understanding their needs and interests, their cultural backgrounds and motivations. You should also establish a process for regular and meaningful consultations so you have a systematic way of gathering feedback.

Actively talk to organisations or young people who are not represented in your organisation.

◆ **If you don't have the expertise, partner with an organisation that has it**

You can strengthen your organisational capacity by partnering or participating in networks that work in similar sectors or have the expertise in working with specific target groups. Ensure that the partnering is beneficial for both sides (i.e. that resources, knowledge and assistance are shared both ways).

◆ **Tackle all practical barriers (appropriate timing, reduce financial obstacles, accessibility of meeting place, etc.)**

Try to have in place or develop specific measures for inclusive membership. This can include things such as lowering membership fees or accepting exemptions for members struggling with particular criteria of the membership. It might be worth reflecting with your existing members if your membership criteria is an obstacle for some organisations or target groups you are reaching out to. Some of your practices may be a practical barrier to your existing members, not only to new groups you are reaching out to.

When preparing your budget (annual, event etc), try to include an amount that can be used for tackling inclusion and accessibility issues.

Ways to Support your members to be more inclusive

- Offer diversity and inclusion training courses as well as learning or mobility opportunities for tackling these topics;
- Develop an accessibility event toolkit to be disseminated to all participants in your activities and to your members.

Events and Activities

When organising events, there are multiple issues to reflect on which can contribute to a higher diversity of people joining in and better inclusion of people who are not always reached with such offers. Keep in mind the target group you are working with and their needs and realities. If you are not fully aware of their needs and realities, ensure that you get to know them. Also raise your awareness of their cultural backgrounds, their visions of the future and their home situations. You can easily gain much of this information through the use of application forms, questionnaires, a visit, or a discussion with the target group.

Organisationally you need to reflect on who you want to be inclusive of, what are your limits and where you want to start – you don't need to do everything at once. As a principal being inclusive shouldn't mean preferential treatment but should mean being adaptive.

The following checklist was developed from the meeting of the Expert Group on Membership, Diversity and Inclusion, as well as from other sources. This checklist is intended to support you in reviewing accessibility aspects when organising events.

◆ Accessible location and venue

- Many venues say they are accessible, this is not always true according to what you may believe accessibility means. Always ask specific questions which will help you to establish the actual accessibility of the venue. For example:
- Is the venue appealing enough and reachable for your target group? (for example would all participants feel safe to come to the venue);
- Contact organisations working with people with disabilities to help you find an accessible venue.
- Double-check the accessibility! Different people and countries have a different understanding of what an accessible room or venue means. Therefore, it is better to ask about specific features. For example:
 - can a person using a wheelchair access the building?
 - what is the maximum number of wheelchairs allowed above the ground floor?
 - are there doors which would be an obstacle to someone who's visually impaired?
 - does the lift have audio?
 - are there pillars in conference rooms that would cause issues for sign interpretation?
 - do only certain rooms have hearing loops? Etc.
- If your group includes persons with visual impairments or hard of hearing/deaf persons, check that you have the needed video and audio assistive technology. For example:
 - provide large print documents ensuring accessibility for persons with visual impairments;
 - provide sign language interpretation or palantypist for persons who are hard of hearing or deaf.

- Is the room setting adequate and appealing to your group's needs? For example: how accessible is the room when set with tables and chairs? What is the quality or type of lighting?
- Are there external noises that could cause problems with hearing for some people?
- Are there gender neutral toilets at the venue, or is there a possibility to establish such?
- Building orientation – offering a tour of the building to your group is useful for all and particularly for those with visual impairment;
- Providing a reflection room – this is helpful for all but particularly for those experiencing poor mental health and those on the autism spectrum, etc.

Extra advice:

- Engage with the young people with disability to understand what you need to do in order to make the event accessible for them. Ask before assuming is always a safe principle to follow!
- Select participants, and then book the venue. This approach will mean that you can book the venue that meets the selected participants accessibility needs.

◆ Accessible logistics

Inclusion is everyone's responsibility and doesn't solely lie with the organiser. Therefore, it can be helpful to include a statement on inclusion and diversity as part of your welcome pack, programme materials or venue signage. Other logistical elements to consider can include:

- What information do you need to provide to support the young people in reaching the venue? (e.g. maps, methods of transport, how much and how to pay, and how easily or not the venue is to reach by public transport, etc.);
- When providing information about transport to the venue, it is wise to include a contact person if the young people get stuck on the route or have an emergency;
- Consider providing information about any further assistance you can provide to participants and again indicate the contact person;
- Is there a possibility to offer adapted transportation for participants with such needs? (e.g. paying for taxis, use of adapted vehicles, etc.);
- For accessible accommodation, we advise you to double check the accessibility of the rooms. Contact local organisations working with people with disabilities to provide you with a list of accessible hotels and restaurants;
- Ask participants to indicate their dietary requirements, if they have any allergies or particular dietary needs, as part of the registration and or application process;
- If you are not able to meet their dietary requirements fully, it is always safer to inform them in advance and have a dialogue of possible alternatives (e.g. they provide you with recipes for the venues kitchen or they have to bring some of their own food, etc.).

◆ Accessible programme

- Emphasise the importance of breaks and practice it. A lot of events and gatherings tend to last too long and participants tend to sit most of the time. It is important to provide enough breaks (with access to drinking water), but also make sure, there are resting place(s) or a silent room for religious rituals and meditation, etc.;

- Promote that 'it is all of our responsibilities to enable accessibility';
- Live streams can also make the event more accessible;
- Consider a balanced list of speakers with regards to gender.

◆ **Accessible information and language**

If your activity includes young people with disabilities, ensure that you provide them the necessary information in advance, and that you have all their relevant information in order to support their participation at the event:

- Provide information to all participants on access. For example; the event will have captioning, interpretation, wheelchair access, a loop, etc.;
- Reading slides – read out slides and audio describe photos;
- Use simple words, short and simple sentences, and avoid technical terms, jargon and other difficult words. Use words or variations of words which you know are in common usage locally or among the target group. This will make your event more appealing and understandable for all the non-native speakers, as well as for young people with learning difficulties;
- When speaking, clearly emphasize the words which are the most important for conveying the meaning of the sentence;
- Make sure the content is well organised and accessible for young people with visual impairments. If needed provide handouts or other materials with large print;
- Provide the necessary assistive listening systems or sign interpretation when working with young people who are hard of hearing or deaf (bearing in mind it is always good to ask the participant in which way you can accommodate their participation at the event);
- Use visual signs as well as word based signs;
- Use different ways and different settings to make your activity adapted to the target group. Use appropriate directional signage to indicate the direction toward the relevant rooms (working rooms, breakout rooms, eating room, toilets, etc.).

◆ **Methods and facilitation**

The methodology of your activity should be adjusted to the needs and profile of your group. It is advisable to gain the information on the needs from the application and or registry forms. Use methodologies of non-formal learning to make the activities attractive to the group and their profile.

Even if you are organising a meeting, try to have interactive ways of presenting and moderating in order for the meeting to be appealing enough to your members and encourage them to engage.

When working with mixed ability groups we advise you to focus on abilities while keeping in mind the obstacles and limitations participants might face. Often, the participant(s) with disability can help you in determining access requirements and give you information about what they are comfortable with.

Extra advice:

In the resource section you will find suggestions for a few practical booklets specifically addressing work with mixability groups.

◆ **Promote common understanding of safe space**

During the event it is important to create safe spaces and friendly environments (e.g. sign language courses in breaks! This brings more understanding and breaks taboos):

Encourage minority and excluded groups representation;

Promote diversity, inclusiveness and safe spaces as part of the organisational culture as well as during events;

Promote diversity (and different profiles) in representation on events. Make sure there are new people and change is happening among the representation.

Inclusive Communication

People may use different ways to communicate and to express their ideas, needs, and feelings, especially if they are facing particular obstacles in communicating or have a disability. Therefore, in communicating with your members, participants and/or beneficiaries, it is essential to be aware of and value all the different ways people might use to communicate. Be well informed about the needs of the ones you are communicating with. We suggest nurturing an organisational approach that is creating a supportive communication environment, valuing the notion to understand and be understood, rather than simply to communicate.

Below are some basic tips to follow for more accessible and inclusive interaction and communication:

◆ **Ask rather than assume!**

Asking questions refers to asking young people directly, restrain from making assumptions about their condition, pronoun or if they need help.

◆ **Speak directly to people**

Even if a young person relies on assistance from someone else to communicate you should still address them directly instead of speaking to their assistant, interpreter and/or companion.

◆ **Use simple and plain language**

Use simple and plain language while explaining or in any documents you are providing.

◆ **Use gender-sensitive language and pronouns**

Avoid the use of combination forms he/she, as well as the use of the pronouns; he, him, his, she, her and hers. Instead, use plural nouns or pronouns; they, them, or their. Be sensitive to gender and pronouns. It is advisable to ask the young person how they prefer to be addressed and what pronoun they use.

◆ **Focus on the person**

Focus on the young person and put them first. Emphasise the young person and not the labels. Do not use a disease or disorder to refer to a young person. This puts the focus on the individual, not the particular functional limitation. Avoid using the word 'disabled', and instead, use 'person with disabilities'.

◆ **Young people with disability**

Young people with disabilities need to be included in the decision-making process for

issues that affect them, including issues related to their participation at your activities and event. Don't decide for them.

◆ **Use inclusive language**

Use inclusive language and adapt your communication to the audience in front of you. Remember that not everybody has the same language skills, be it English or sign language. Include visual forms of communication which support the spoken or signed language, e.g. by using universal design (design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability). For more information about media and communication with sign language, see 'Media Guidelines' by the European Union of Deaf Youth (available in the resource section).

◆ **Respect people's privacy and data security**

Before publishing information relating to individual young people ask them for their permission. The same applies to taking photographs or audio recordings and disseminating them in the media. Also make sure that the media coverage is only assisting the work and does not disturb people in fulfilling their tasks.

Resources and tools

Organisations can develop tools and exercises in order to ensure that inclusivity is at the heart of their organisation. Those documents can be used as a form of guideline, capacity building and/or content added value toolbox.

This section lists the resources and tools that the expert group consulted in the creation of these Guidelines. It also includes others which offer further information on promoting diversity, inclusion and accessibility. All the resources and tools shared here have been gathered from Member Organisations and others during the mapping performed in 2017. For each resource shared we provide you a short description and a link.

The context of the resources shared may vary in scope as some are there to make a statement, to be used as a toolkit, or even showcasing best practices. Therefore, there is no one size fits all approach when it comes to providing resources and tools on inclusion and diversity.

Despite the disparity of approach, all the resources and tools have many features in common. All the ones we list here, tend to recognise that social inclusion cannot be achieved with only one responsible sector involved, as a result, a cross-sectoral approach is essential if you want to be progressive. The resources are organised according to topic.

Our final note is that in order to have meaningful actions and impact in the wider community while working on social inclusion and diversity as a youth organisation, it is necessary to recognise how inclusive and diverse your own organisation is or is not! It is crucial to self-assess your own organisation first before working on others.

Happy exploring!

Accessibility

Media Guidelines

By the European Union of the Deaf Youth

An information and guiding framework for planning and implementing accessible communication and media processes, specifically related to working with deaf youth.

[Discover the resource.](#)

Survey Report about the Cooperation between National Youth Councils and EUDY's Member Organisations

By European Union of the Deaf Youth

Provides an overview of the awareness and capacity of youth organisations to involve and collaborate with deaf youth organisations

[Discover the resource.](#)

Disability Handbook

By Youth for Exchange and Understanding

A publication providing guidelines and advice about organising and facilitating activities involving young people with disabilities

[Discover the resource.](#)

Access requirements form

By European Network on Independent Living – Youth

A form that organisations can use to gather information about their participants' access needs prior to an event. This form means that organisations can plan to meet attendees access needs in advance, so that everyone can get the most out of the event from the very start, and do not have to feel like an afterthought.

[Discover the resource.](#)

No Barriers, No Borders

By SALTO-Youth Inclusion Resource Centre

A practical booklet for setting up international mixed-ability programmes

[Discover the resource.](#)

Disability Etiquette: Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities

By United Spinal:

A booklet with tips on interacting with people with disabilities covering a wide range of disabilities.

[Discover the resource.](#)

Diversity and Inclusion

'Merging of Knowledge and Practices when working with people living in situations of poverty'

By International Movement ATD Fourth World

A member organisation which works on eradicating poverty on a knowledge-merging basis. It is important to point out that the process of merging knowledge is not black or white, as it depends on the context of situations

[Discover the resource.](#)

Accessing policy

By Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations

A member organisation which uses workcamps to provide participants with fewer opportunities with skills and to facilitate their active involvement, as citizen, in community life

[Discover the resource.](#)

Guidelines on Scouting for children in especially difficult circumstances

By World Organisation of the Scout Movement – European Region

A member organisation which use scouting to create awareness and advocacy strategy, meaning making difference in the minds and attitudes of young people towards marginalised people.

[Discover the resource.](#)

White paper on Minority Rights

By Youth of European Nationalities

This paper gives a comprehensive image of minority groups in Europe and provides specific recommendation for advocacy on themes like Education, Social Inclusion, Volunteering and Roma Minorities, but also self-committing to take actions in developing its network

[Discover the resource.](#)

T-kit 8: Social Inclusion

By the European Union-Council of Europe Youth Partnership

This publication explores the changes and developments made in this field. The 'guideline' is designed to equip youth workers with a better understanding of real experiences of social exclusion and how the related challenges are taken up in youth policy

[Discover the resource.](#)

ID Booklet

By SALTO Youth, Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre

This booklet provides youth workers and other practitioners working directly with young people concrete tools for making their projects and youth work more inclusive while also reaching a diverse target audience

[Discover the resource.](#)

The Welcome Checklist

By European Youth Forum's Migration and Human Rights Network

Check if your organisation is inclusive and welcoming towards displaced youth and young migrants. A compact checklist that encourages and support youth organisations to be open, inclusive and welcoming towards displaced youth and young migrants.

[Discover the resource.](#)

Inclusion and Diversity from a Gender Perspective

Norm Criticism Toolkit

By International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Youth and Student Organisation

This is a toolkit to help a wide range of audiences to reshape oppressing norms and try out a norm critical mindset to analysing norms, power structures and discrimination

[Discover the resource.](#)

Europe Region Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Toolkit

By World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

This toolkit provides support to youth organisations for them to be more inclusive from a gender and diversity perspective

[Discover the resource.](#)

Variety is the spice of life - Gender issues through the stages of life

By Youth for Exchange and Understanding

A publication aiming to support youth workers, trainers and facilitators in promoting, dealing and mainstreaming gender matters in their work

[Discover the resource.](#)