

How inclusive is the (Erasmus+) Youth in Action programme?

And with a little bit of warmth, fun and love, our magical time in the captain's cabin was over. There was no better way to end the conversation among incredibly invested and passionate people, who got very cosy in their new setting, supported by warm and approving looks and nods from our Turkish-speaking captain.

Have we managed to answer the question of how inclusive the Youth in Action programme is? Probably not, since there are a lot of aspects to be considered in making the final verdict. But hopefully the dialogue captured on these pages can give you some additional insight from very different perspectives.

That said, we are also aware that our "triangle" was not perfect and that there are so many voices that deserve and, in fact, need to be heard on this question. Young people (beneficiaries of the programme) were highlighted by all of our participants in the conversation, but not only! So, if you have an opinion to whether, from your experience, the programme walks the talk, please do share it with us! We look forward to hearing from you!



Munchausen's approach to youth work by Marti Taru

There was a mythical figure, Munchausen, who pulled himself out of the bog by his hair. In statistics there is also a term: bootstrapping, which basically refers to the same thing. Pull yourself out from the mud, by your hair, for instance. The thing is, to do this, you use your resources only, you do not get anything from outside. And I was just thinking that youth work is very much in the same position. To get recognition, youth work has to pull itself out by its hair. So if you really believe that this is a thing that is worth doing, you just need to continue doing it. Because to provide some kind of scientific proof that it's really, really beneficial will be very, very hard. It takes a lot of time. And it might be that in real life it is much easier to pull yourself up by your own hair instead of waiting until the researchers come and prove that youth work is really worth doing.

Training plan for youth work – Inclu-fit & Mobi-Dance

By Triin Ilves and Marlies Pöschl

photos by Marlies Pöschl



It's January, Christmas is over, the cookies are gone, the plates are empty. Youth work looks at herself in the mirror, anxiously: "Have I got out of shape? Have I become rigid? Big? Exclusive?"



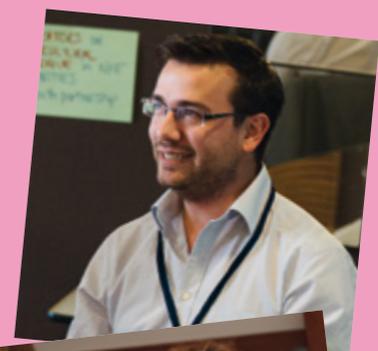
"I need to work on myself!" she thinks and jumps onto the treadmill of self-optimisation. "Luckily, last year in Istanbul, a few people worked out a training plan, specifically for me. My very own personal Inclu-Fit & Mobi-Dance – a training plan for inclusiveness and mobility in youth work. What a privilege! I'm curious to see if it works," thinks youth work.

By sharing a few tips on how to get youth work on the track to inclusiveness, participants of the EPLM Conference had the chance to become mentors for youth work's special Inclu-Fit & Mobi-Dance. Each of them suggested one simple exercise or thought experiment. Here we go!

Jump and watch out

JO DEMAN
EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM, BRUSSELS

We should all be jumping, so that we can see over walls; walls we usually don't even see anymore but that are keeping excluded people out. Jump, so you can see further and allow yourself to see the hurdles that young people have to overcome.



Give everyone a racket

ROMANA MYSULA
JECI-MIEC, UKRAINE

In table tennis, there are usually only two people playing, and the other people might get bored. But there is a version in which more people get rackets and all the players move around the table. They are always mobile and their roles are constantly changing so that everybody gets to play, and everybody becomes involved.



Training plan for youth work – Inlu-Fit & Mobi-Dance



SUSANNE HAUER
ALLIANZ KULTURSTIFTUNG,
GERMANY

Move forward step by step

I think inclusion is a process in which you can only be successful if you move step by step and that needs to be put into practice in sustainable ways.



Travel through the world with open eyes

SANDRA TÜRK
REISENETZ, GERMANY

On the one hand it's about inclusiveness and about the ability to travel through the world even if you are disadvantaged. On the other hand it's about travelling with open eyes – not closing your eyes to other cultures and people.

Don't forget: stretching works for some, but doesn't work for others

To reach some parts of the body, you need extra effort. Inclusion also needs extra effort to reach some young people, but it's worth it. We're healthier afterwards. If you don't stretch your muscles enough, they might block. So stretching is very important for the entire body. If you just build muscles and you don't stretch, your muscles might break, just as youth work risks failing if we don't make sure to stretch out to those that are excluded.

STEFAN MANEVSKI
CENTRE FOR INTERCULTURAL
DIALOGUE, "THE FORMER YUGOSLAV
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA"



JACQUES SPELEKENS
ENGIE, BRUSSELS

Increase flex-security

In order to make sure mobility is inclusive, we have to train young people's flex-security. It's like training someone to walk on a slackline, so he or she can do it while blindfolded. It will give him or her security to do the same thing in a different environment.



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Keep the balance between different language levels

SASHA MURR
UNITED KINGDOM

Your background language is very important in terms of inclusiveness. Your mother language as well as exposure to the English language could mean a lot to your language skills. Living and working in the European Union, people tend to use mostly English or French, not taking into account that the levels of either one of them are still quite different in different parts of Europe. So that even knowing a language doesn't necessary mean that you are included by default. Therefore we should acknowledge that there are different levels of language knowledge but also different language backgrounds that can make learning new languages easier or more difficult.

MARK E. TAYLOR
COYOTE TEAM,
STRASBOURG

Clean your ears

If you want to include something, you have to make space. For example: clean your ears.



CHRISTIANE DITTRICH
GERMANY

Do it regularly!

My training exercise is more of an after-workout one. You stretch your body and in order to do that, you need two people for the exercise. It's also an exchange and collaboration between them. This is also an exercise you do more and more – you practise and get better over time. When you do things more than once, you get more out of it.



"What a workout," thinks youth work. Stretching, jumping, flexing, stretching, bouncing against walls...

What is this chase all about?

There are times when we, youth workers could try and jump over the walls, but we should keep in mind that sometimes creating a sphere of inclusiveness would be easier if we erased certain boundaries rather than teaching everyone else to overcome them. Or what if we just changed the rules of the game? The one with the longest legs does not necessarily need to be the winner – as we learned in the fairy tale "The hedgehog and the hare". In a race with the light-footed rabbit, the hedgehog uses a ploy. He just asks his wife to hide near the goal, and, as the hare appears running, she jumps out of her hiding place and shouts: "I am here already!"

"Maybe I'm more of a team player anyway," youth work thinks as she takes off her shoes.