

# Guideline

on collaboration between people with and without  
disabilities regarding independent and  
self-determined living



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## A project by



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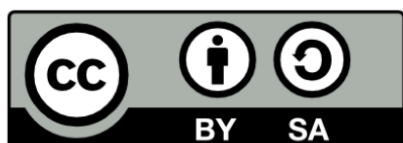


**VSBI** e.V.

## Authors

Veronika Pataki, Sonia Holubkova, Nadia Glaeserer, Lisa Risch

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## **1 Introduction**

As part of the international Erasmus+ project 'Indeed', the focus was on the exchange of knowledge and experience between four partner organisations from Hungary, Italy, Slovakia and Germany. All these organisations offer services for persons with disabilities and are committed to self-determined living. The project promotes the right of people with disabilities to self-determination and inclusion in the community by facilitating the transnational exchange of best practices and concepts in the areas of disability, inclusion, self-determination and independent living.

The participating partner organisations had the opportunity to explore new paths and review their own approaches.

A central concern of the project was the active participation of people with disabilities. Self-determination processes were facilitated through discussions about their own needs and experiences.

Throughout the duration of the project, joint workshops were organized on site between people with disabilities and employees of the respective partner organizations. The aim of these workshops was to involve staff in supporting people with disabilities to lead a self-determined life. The workshop participants exchange their experiences and perspectives on self-determined living and prepare the topics for the international project meetings. The results of the knowledge exchange were collected in a publicly accessible online learning course on the Moodle platform. This course contains information on identified approaches, materials and methods, as well as interviews with people with disabilities who tell their own stories.

The project partners have also created this guideline for discussions on the topic of disability and independent living between different stakeholders, which is currently in front of you. Here you will find a theoretical background on self-determined and independent living, accessibility and working with stakeholders, as well as practical tips for implementing your own inclusive workshop. At the end of the guideline, all project partners present the results of their workshops and evaluate the international project meetings.

## 2. The right to an independent and self-determined life

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force in May 2008. It concretises the general human rights to the situation of people with disabilities. This serves to protect people with disabilities from discrimination and marginalisation, which is still a problem. The UNCRPD has also established a human rights approach to disability. People with disabilities have all human rights. In turn, the state is obliged to respect, guarantee and protect these rights. Disabilities are seen as an enrichment of human diversity.

The UNCRPD contains various **principles** such as

- self-determination
- equal opportunities
- non-discrimination
- inclusion

As well as **obligations**

- Participation
- Awareness raising
- Accessibility

And **individual rights**

- Civil
- Political
- Economic
- Social
- Cultural Rights

The overarching goal of the UNCRPD is the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities<sup>1</sup>

The focus of the Indeed project is on independent living for people with disabilities. The legal basis for independent living is Art. 19 'Independent living and inclusion in the community' of the UNCRPD.

All people with disabilities - just like people without disabilities - have the right to live in and be part of the community. The signatory states to the UNCRPD (which also include Italy,

Slovakia, Hungary and Germany) are obliged to guarantee this right. There are various aspects to independent living and inclusion in the community. People with disabilities have the right to freely choose their own place of residence and to decide where and with whom they live. No one can be obliged to live in a special form of accommodation (Art. 19 para. A UN CRPD).

In addition, all people with disabilities must have access to community-based support services at home and in institutions. This also includes personal assistance. This is necessary to support life and inclusion in the community. Personal assistance also serves to prevent isolation and segregation from the community (Art. 19 para. B UN CRPD).

General services and facilities that are available to all people should also be accessible to people with disabilities on an equal basis with others (Art. 19 para. C UN CRPD).

### **3 Accessibility**

To ensure that people with disabilities can lead an independent life and participate in all areas of life, the states parties to the UNCRPD must take measures to identify and remove obstacles and barriers to access (Art. 9 No. 1 UNCRPD). This includes public buildings (such as schools, medical facilities and workplaces), roads, public transport and residential buildings (Art. 9 No. 1 Para. A UNCRPD). Access to all services, such as information and communication services, as well as emergency services must also be guaranteed (Art. 9 No. 1 Para. B UNCRPD).

#### **3.1 Universal Design**

In order to lead an independent life, products, services and a person's environment must be accessible and usable<sup>2</sup>

One way of creating accessibility and promoting a self-determined life is the use of universal design<sup>2</sup>.

In universal design, products and the environment are designed in such a way that they can be used by all people, so that adaptation or specialisation is not necessary. Universal design follows seven principles:

1. **Equitable use:** the product or environment can be used by all people - regardless of their abilities.

2. **Flexibility in use:** the product or environment can be used by many people with different preferences and abilities.
3. **Simple and intuitive use:** the use of the product or environment is easy to understand. Regardless of a person's experience, knowledge, language skills and ability to concentrate, the design should be usable by all people.
4. **Perceptible information:** The product or environment conveys all important information to people. The environmental conditions and sensory abilities are irrelevant.
5. **Tolerance for error:** The product or environment helps to prevent hazards and negative consequences caused by unintentional actions.
6. **Low physical effort:** the product or environment can be used efficiently without the need for special physical effort.
7. **Size and space for approach and use:** The product should be of an appropriate size. There must also be enough space to reach and use the object. This should be independent of the user's height, posture and mobility<sup>3</sup>.

### 3.3 Accessible Communication

Accessible communication is required to ensure that everyone can take part in a workshop. Accessible communication comprises various elements. These include clear and simple language (see chapter 3.4). The use of images, pictograms and infographics serves as visual support<sup>4</sup>. The Arasaac website provides free pictograms that can be helpful for the development of barrier-free workshops. With the help of the search function, a large number of relevant terms can be found as pictograms. The website is available in English, German, Italian, Slovakian and Hungarian. The website can be accessed via the following link: <https://arasaac.org/>. The provision of information in alternative formats such as Braille, sign language or audio output devices can also contribute to accessibility. A clear layout of texts with a clear structure and contrasts contributes to an accessible structure and layout (see also chapter 3.4).

To make information more accessible, it should always be communicated via at least two senses (two-senses principle). This means, for example, that acoustic information should also be presented visually. In addition to the spoken word, there are also written recordings that represent the content<sup>4</sup>.

### 3.4 Easy and simple language

To ensure that all participants in a workshop can understand its content, attention must be paid to the type of language used.

This is why there is easy language and simple language. But what exactly is easy language, and how does it differ from simple language?

Easy language is primarily used for people with learning difficulties or cognitive disabilities. Simple language, on the other hand, is intended for people with reading difficulties, reading and writing difficulties or non-native speakers<sup>5</sup>.

Simple Language is orientated towards language level B1, while easy language is more in the A1 to A2 range. Simple language is comparable to the language used in everyday life. The texts are generally more fluent and easier to read. In addition, they are more clearly structured, and clearer and generally used terms are used<sup>6</sup>. There are no fixed rules for simple language, but there are recommendations<sup>5</sup>.

Easy language, on the other hand, follows a fixed set of rules. It must also be checked by people with learning difficulties. Only when the reviewers find the texts comprehensible may the term 'easy language' be used<sup>7</sup>.

Even though easy language was developed specifically for people with learning difficulties, other groups of people can also benefit from it<sup>6</sup>. These include - just as with simple language - people with reading and writing difficulties or people whose native language is different from the national language<sup>8</sup>.

Although easy language may only be used after it has been checked by experts, the rules can still be helpful for the development of workshops. Here are some tips from the rules for easy language<sup>8</sup>.

Interestingly, easy language and simple language have not been implemented in all EU countries. This is not always due to a lack of resources, but to a lack of social awareness. The introduction of the concept is still in its beginnings for example in Romania and Bulgaria or in the Baltic States. Croatia and Slovenia have already moved in this direction, but the use of easy-to-understand communication is still limited.



## **Words**

- Use of simple and short words
- Avoiding technical and foreign words
- Avoid idioms and figurative language (as these can be taken literally by people)
- Long words can be separated with hyphens

## **Numbers and characters**

- No use of Roman numerals
- Avoid old years, high numbers or percentages; instead: a long time ago, many people, etc.
- Use the number and not the word (4 instead of four)
- Do not use special characters (such as % or &)

## **Sentences**

- Use of short sentences with a simple sentence structure
- Separation of long sentences into several short sentences

## **Texts**

- Address the reader directly
- Do not ask questions (this can be confusing)
- Avoid references to other texts

## **Design of the texts**

- Use simple fonts that are easy to read (e.g. Calibri, Verdana or Open Sans)
- Use a large font (14 or larger)
- Sufficient line spacing
- Use headings and paragraphs
- Important things should be emphasised (highlight in bold, underline)
- Use images (must match the text)

## **4 Cooperation between people with and without disabilities - organising a workshop**

In this chapter you will find practical tips for implementing an inclusive workshop which is an important objective of our Indeed project. We want to bring together all stakeholders involved in the development of independent living and generate conversations. We feel that this kind of joint discussion, problem solving and brainstorming is really missing in most countries.

**A short workshop (from 45 to 90 minutes)** is a single educational program.

It is prepared to introduce to participants practical skills, techniques, or ideas which they can then use in their daily lives. It could be a cycle of different workshops to master the picked topics.



## BASIC RULES TO ORGANIZE A WORKSHOP

1

### Create the group you want to work with

- **diversity is the best choice**

People with and without disability working together.



- **consider the workshop size**

Ask how many people will take part.

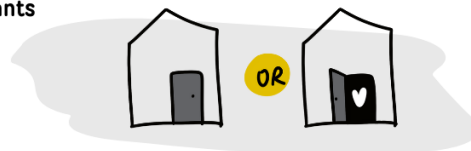
- **small group of 7-14 pax is optimal for discussion**

Allowing everyone some personal attention and the chance to be heard.



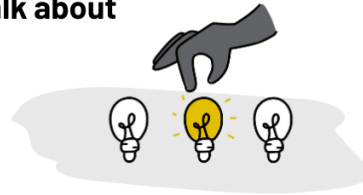
- **decide if the group will be closed or open for new participants**

A workshop can help to create a sense of community or common purpose among its participants.



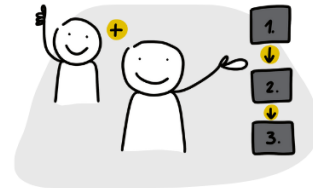
## 2 Ask people about the topics they want to talk about to make their lives better

- consider and pick your topics



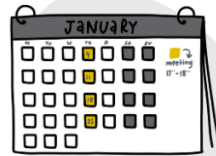
- find who will lead the workshops

The best are people who have real experiences in the topics discussed.  
Co-leaders or co-facilitators can greatly expand the possibilities.

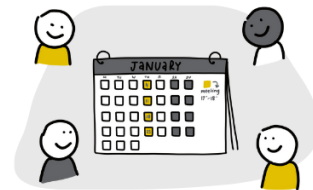


## 3 Plan of the meetings

- plan the number of sessions



- regular time is optimal



- consider and set times available for all

- plan the time to introduce and connect

The opportunity to get to know others and exchange ideas  
is one of the central values for many people plan the time to talk.



- plan breaks – allow plenty of breaks

Both because of the need to stretch and use the bathroom  
and because of attention span.



- plan, which supporting material will you need (paper, markers, etc.)



- **the optimal duration is between 45 – 60 minutes**
- **think about the possibility of refreshments**  
Often small variety of drink choices (water, coffee, tea)  
and some little snack helps to loosen the clime.



## 4 Use easy to understand language

- **make the workshop accessible to understand for all participants**  
Easy-to-read charts, pictures and graphs are helpful for a lot of people.
- **combination with pictures is the best for all**



Summary, bullet points, and the use of colour or pictures helps.

- **vary activities**  
For example: to present, to discuss, to paint, to play theatre etc.



- **people learn things in different ways**  
Make it accessible and participatory.  
Participants are active, they influence the direction of the workshop.  
They have a chance to practice the techniques and skills discussed.



- **make it informal**  
A part of discussion in addition to participation,  
rather than just a lector presenting material to be absorbed by students.



- **make it self-contained**

The workshop may end with a toolkit and suggestions for further reading or study or those who are interested.



- **make up an evaluation form**

People can fill it out quickly at the end of the workshop, but that covers the areas you really want to know about.



## 5

### Share the results and ideas to inspire others

- **make a short report about the results of each workshop**

Restate the significant points that the workshop covered and revisit the agenda to identify any areas you didn't get the chance to.



- **share it with other people**

Participants can present it to peers, friends, researchers, stakeholders, ...

- **use social media**

More people can be inspired.



- **use pictures**

That makes the messages and statements stronger.

- **use ideas**

Some people can see them or new ones and support you.



# 6

## Try to implement easier steps to the real life

- encourage participants to relate the workshop content to their reality
- small steps are the most important in the beginning
- the second step will come naturally



# 7

## What more can help and support the inclusive preparation of workshops

### ● accessibility

Ensure the workshop venue is wheelchair accessible and has facilities like ramps and elevators.

Provide materials in multiple formats (print, electronic, large print) to accommodate diverse needs.



### ● flexibility and adaptability

Be flexible with schedules and breaks to accommodate the diverse needs of participants.

Have alternative activities or materials ready in case someone needs an adjustment.



### ● **respect individual abilities**

Acknowledge and respect the different abilities and strengths of each participant.

Avoid making assumptions about what individuals can or cannot do based on their disabilities.



### ● **provide options**

Offer a variety of ways for participants to express themselves, whether it's through spoken words, writing, or other means.

Ensure that tools and equipment are adaptable to different needs.



### ● **sensory considerations**

Be mindful of sensory sensitivities and provide a quiet space or sensory-friendly tools if needed.

Avoid strong scents or loud noises that may be disruptive.



### ● **encourage peer support**

Foster a supportive environment where participants can assist each other.

Encourage open communication among participants to share experiences and insights.





### ● **accessible technology**

Ensure that any technology used is accessible,  
including screen readers  
or captioning for presentations.

Test technology in advance to address potential issues.



### ● **trained facilitators**

Equip facilitators with training on inclusivity  
and disability awareness.

Facilitators should be prepared to offer assistance  
when needed without being intrusive.



These guidelines aim to create an environment  
where all participants feel comfortable,  
valued,  
and able to fully engage in the workshop.



## 5 Collaboration with other stakeholders

In order to achieve a specific goal together, collaboration with stakeholders is essential. This is a process in which organisations or projects collaborate with individuals or groups who have an interest in them. A distinction is made between internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are individuals and groups within the organisation itself. External stakeholders are partners, clients and communities outside the organisation<sup>9</sup>.

*But why is collaboration with stakeholders relevant?*

Collaboration with stakeholders has many advantages. By involving stakeholders in the decision-making process, they are empowered at the same time. They can also help with decision-making and provide a form of support - this can create sustainable change. Beneficial relationships can be built and fostered for both sides - stakeholders and the organisation. Through collaboration, important issues that have previously received less attention can be uncovered. Above all, the involvement of stakeholder groups, which could tend to make work more difficult, as supporters increase an organisation's chances of success.

Stakeholders can also contribute to education and serve as a valuable source of information - and at the same time learn something from the organisation<sup>10</sup>.

*Successful collaboration*

To ensure successful collaboration with stakeholders, several aspects should be considered. It is important to ask for comments from the stakeholder group and include them in the decision-making process. From the outset, expectations should be communicated and agreements made about future work. As the project progresses, stakeholders should be kept informed and involved. To achieve the best possible result, feedback must be taken into account<sup>9</sup>.

*Strategic approach*

To find suitable stakeholders, the following questions should be asked first:

- What should be achieved through the collaboration with the stakeholders?
- Which stakeholders are suitable for achieving the goal?
- How can the stakeholder information be utilised?

- How can the stakeholders be reached in order to propose cooperation?

#### *Identify and analyse the stakeholders*

- What are the expectations, needs and roles of the stakeholders?  
 ➔ A thorough assessment of the interests, influence and impact of all possible stakeholders helps to decide whom to work with. It can be useful to create a list of all stakeholders, in which important information and contact details can be found.

#### *Identify opportunities to be involved*

Stakeholders should have the opportunity to be involved in the project, e.g. through:

- Joint workshops, interviews or focus groups
- Participation in meetings and events
- Registration on the project website
- Feedback through surveys, emails or phone calls

It should always be ensured that only those people who are relevant to the project are involved in individual areas and decisions<sup>10</sup>.

#### *Keep people up to date*

During a project, it is important to regularly provide stakeholders with new information and progress on the project. The regularity of the updates depends on the phase of the project and can be monthly, fortnightly or weekly (in particularly active project phases, updates can also be more frequent). Various information channels such as post, letters, text messages or social media can be used<sup>10</sup>

#### *Building trust*

For successful collaboration with stakeholders, a trusting relationship must be established with them. To achieve this, organisations should demonstrate integrity, honesty, commitment and consistency and communicate effectively with stakeholders<sup>10</sup>.

#### *Regular reports*

Regular project reports are a good opportunity to show stakeholders their participation in the project and its results. These reports are especially important for stakeholders who have a high level of influence on the project through close collaboration<sup>10</sup>.

## **6 Evaluation of the national Workshops**

In this chapter you can read about the national workshops that each partner did. But you can get some inspiration to create your own inclusive workshops.

### **6.1 Workshops by People First/Hungary**

One **workshop was held on 11.02.2025**, to which all parties interested in the development of independent living were invited. During the organisation, there was not much hope that staff/managers of institutions would accept our invitation. They did not respond; they did not react. So, on the day of the workshop, we were surprised to see that staff from several large institutions came and actively participated in the discussion. There were representatives/leaders from the University of Pécs, the Kerek Világ Foundation (they run a small institution), and a large institution with hundreds of people, run by Baptists.

The workshop was an unexpected success, not only in the number of participants but also in its intensity. It was a very active, lively and interactive discussion, which was very inspiring for the participants. Such a meeting of all sides involved in independent living (people with disabilities, family members/carers, innovative-thinking staff in institutions) had never been held in Pécs before.

During the meeting, after an introduction, we presented the Indeed project. Then, in an active discussion, we explored what self-determination means to each of us. We identified some topics for orientation and recorded ideas and opinions on a flipchart. We used the break to get to know each other and have small talk. Then we chose two topics from the flipchart board related to self-determination, which we analysed in more depth. The two chosen topics were the following:

- Separation from parents. How far should the helper's help extend?
- Independent housing.
- We have analysed these issues along the following dimensions:

- How can these issues/problems be solved?
- How can we actively participate in the solution?
- What is my approach?
- How can my attitude be improved?
- What can I not participate in, what can I participate in?
- How? What is my plan for the near future?
- Collecting good practices to help others.
- We also considered it important to evaluate who gets what from the workshop and what they take home?

The posters attached show the responses collected.

There was a clear need to continue the workshop, and the participants expressed their wish to have similar discussions in the same circle on a regular basis.

The **multiplier event was held on 18.03.2025**. The workshop participants were invited, and we extended the invitation to the press and local decision-makers. The press included online and paper newspapers and local TV. On the part of the local government, the civil councillor was present. Representatives of the press and local government actively participated in the discussion throughout.

The Indeed project was also presented at the multiplier event, as well as the main lessons learnt from the personal meetings of the participating countries.

Two topics were moved from the previous workshop. We discussed the surprising proposition raised there that segregated teaching/education still has legitimacy today. A very lively, useful and surprising debate ensued - in a moderated format. The result was that although segregated thinking has moved beyond the times, there is still a place for some form of segregation in today's inclusive society.

# What does self-determination mean for you?

*In everyday life?*

*Independence is the problem of society as a whole  
Parent awareness, peer groups*

*In housing?*

*Having an own, barrier-free home  
is the basis for independence*

*In self-advocacy?*

*I determine the assistance.  
IAwareness as an individual at institutional level  
Permissive helper (let stumble)*

*In the society?*

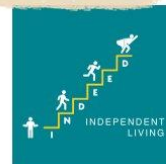
*Society's proactivity should not hinder autonomy  
Independence is already damaged as a child:  
compliance*

*In education,  
learning?*

*Detachment from parents  
How far should the assistance extend?*



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# Two selected topics

## ***Separation from parents How far should the helper's help extend?***

- *Let there be encounters!*
- *As a parent, self-awareness is the key.*
- *As a helper, mental help is missing*

### ***What will you do about it from now on?***

- ***I am organising a Facebook group for helpers. Request supervision.***
- ***In education: start a parent detachment support group.***
- ***Involve public institutions: they recommend groups, NGOs. Compulsory education is an excellent arena for this.***

## ***Independent housing***

- *Independent housing for limited period*
- *Equal work.*
- *Personal assistance*
- *University of Pécs: cheap independent housing for students. Starting a life. Limited period.*

### ***What will you do about it from now on?***

- ***Political presence, grassroots initiative.***
- ***Self-advocacy in support of housing at the Pécs City Hall.***
- ***Participation in forums, articulation of own opinion***



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# What will you take home from here?

*Have more such tripartite discussions*



*Let's talk about the place of segregation in today's society*



*Debate is good!*

*Thinking together, everyone's opinion was important*



*Confirmed as a parent, teaching independence is important*



*Do not have expectations, but act ourselves*

*As an institution, it was good to see that there are social initiatives*

*I will stand up for myself more*



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## 6.2 Workshops by VSBI/Germany

We organized three workshops as part of the project. These took place every two weeks and lasted three hours each. Both VSBI employees and people with disabilities took part as experts on their own behalf.

At our first workshop, we first collected the topics that we were interested in and that we would like to discuss at the upcoming workshops:

- Education
- Information about your own rights
- Self-representation/management
- Attitudes and attitudes of organizations, professional service providers, administrations and society
- universal design (design for all) in public spaces

We then discussed what self-determination means to us and what constitutes a self-determined life. We recorded our findings on a flip chart.

- Knowing what you want
- Knowing your own limits
- Being allowed to make mistakes in a self-determined way
- Being able to decide for yourself what you do, when, how, where and with whom
- Not being forced to live in a particular type of accommodation; free to decide where to live and with whom
- Self-determined social life and leisure time
- Not being told what to do
- Free choice of profession
- A self-determined lifestyle (religion, sexuality, diet, etc.)

The second workshop focused on education, information and clarification, as well as self-representation and self-administration.

How should education be organized? What should people learn in order to lead a self-determined life?

- Participatory education
- Accessibility and the right didactics for access to education
- Target group-orientated and needs-based education
- Sensitization
- Civic education for all
- Enabling points of contact
- More inclusive education programs (currently: lack of inclusive education on offer)
- Education for institutions and society regarding the self-determination of people with disabilities
- Trusting people to do things → Experts in their own lives

What do self-representation and self-administration mean?

- Filling out applications independently and self-determinedly
- Giving a voice to people who have no voice
- Mistakes are allowed and must be tolerated

What influences people's commitment to representing themselves or not representing themselves? What makes self-advocacy more difficult?

- People tilting at windmills
- Prevention of self-representation by other people
- People are not taken seriously
- No knowledge of what counts as self-representation
- Difficulties in cooperating with institutions, organizations, authorities, etc.
- Obstacles from legal carers, institutions, etc.
- Attitudes of the authorities (knowledge of one's own rights is exhausting for other people)

What could motivate more people to represent themselves and get involved?

- Real accessibility
- Volunteer assistance
- Public relations work
  - What can you do to represent yourself?

- How does self-advocacy work?
- What are your own rights?
- Your own attitude is the basis

The third workshop was dedicated to the topics of attitudes and behavior in society and universal design.

What kind of attitudes and behaviors do people with disabilities or people who work with people with disabilities encounter?

- 'I couldn't do that...'
- 'No fish, no fowl' → Not really disabled, but not really non-disabled either
- Discrimination based on a visible and/or invisible disability
- Regular 'outing': justifying what you can or cannot do

How can we change society's attitudes and behaviour?

- Strengthen and empower all children from an early age
- Create real, authentic encounters
- Prove the opposite → Show what you can do

Design for all/universal design

- Has received too little attention so far
- There are different levels: architectural, structural, content-related
- Think before you act/build
- Ask people what they need = end-user orientation
- Make contact persons visible = who can you turn to?
- Education and information = inclusive, usable and accessible (according to Burgstahler, 2021)

All in all the workshops were very interesting and we discussed a lot different but equally important topics. It got clear that there is a lot of things that need to be changed in Germany to ensure an independent and self-determined life for everyone.

### **6.3 Workshops by Fondazione Luigi Clerici/Italy**

Three local workshops were organized in Italy, involving not only the two participants of the transnational workshops but their entire class, which included students without disabilities, students with certified disabilities, and students with learning disabilities. The decision to work with the whole class was made due to significant bullying issues and due to the fact that the two participants who have also participated in the transnational workshop in Erfurt had claimed that such workshops would be very important for them since school does not adequately prepare them for real-life situations such as living independently, paying bills, and developing social skills.

Each workshop focused on a specific topic:

#### **1. First Workshop: Inequality**

- The students discussed how they experience inequality in their lives. They were asked to think about their strengths and weaknesses and to choose a strong and a weak person they know. They then used the DIXIT board game, selecting cards that represented strength and weakness and explaining their choices.

#### **2. Second Workshop: Global inequality**

- The students reflected on inequality around the world and discussed the inequalities they experience personally. They also studied and talked about Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### **3. Third Workshop: Anger and fear**

- This workshop focused on the emotions of anger and fear, emotions which had emerged from the previous workshops.
- The first part of the workshop focused on anger. Students created posters depicting things that provoked their anger. They explained that anger provokes almost all of them to have a physical reaction. Therefore, they were asked to express their initial physical reactions in ripping, stamping on, or scribbling on the posters. They then had to glue the pieces back together and find socially

acceptable ways to express their anger, writing these methods on the back of the posters.

- Regarding fear, students wrote their fears on a large poster and then used straws to blow paint over them. The message from the teachers was that everyone shares similar fears, and the best way to overcome them is to have support from others.

These workshops had a huge positive impact on the students: we all get angry, we have the same fears, we all live inequalities with all strengths and weaknesses.

#### **6.4 Workshops by Land of Harmony/Slovakia**

##### **Workshop 1 - How to be accepted and respected – discussion November 11, 2024**

- to be open to learn different languages
- to meet new people
- be active during free time
- to behave honestly
- to develop relationships with people
- to behave as equal citizens
- to be active in cultural and other social activities
- to train what I learned
- to move and to live healthy
- to gain working abilities and new experiences in life
- to develop own partnership relationships
- don't believe the stupidity and behave with dignity
- to live social in the community
- to be independent and autonomy
- to learn and educate yourselves
- to be open to tabu topics (sexuality, family, children)

##### **Workshop 2 - Wishes for future - discussion December 9, 2024**

- Work

- Living
- Friends
- Trips
- Family
- Sport
- Independence

**Workshop - keys to citizenship – discussion January 20, 2025**

- Purpose of my life
- Freedom
- Money
- Home
- Help
- Life
- Love

**Workshop 4 HOW I WANT TO LIVE - discussion February 10 2025**

- Happy
- Together with other people
- To behave equally and take me into community
- To be useful

## **7 Evaluation of the transnational project meetings**

In the following you can read about an evaluation that we did at our last transnational meeting in Milan. Each partner collected ideas and inspiration they got from the other meetings and partners. We also discussed which approaches and ideas we would like to implement in our own country as well.

### **7.1 Evaluation of the meeting in Erfurt/Germany**

In April 2024 we met for the first time in Erfurt, where we got to see each other in person for the first time as well.

During the meeting we talked about independent living and what it means for each of us. Our partners from Fondazione Luigi Clerici particularly liked this activity and replicated it with the whole class back in Italy. We were also introduced to the WIR project and had a Q and A with an employee of the project who uses a wheelchair and leads a self-determined life with the support of assistance. This approach was also very interesting for Fondazione Luigi Clerici.

We also heard a presentation by the LIGA Selbstvertretung, which is a political self-advocacy group of people with disabilities in the federal state of Thuringia. Due to this, Land of Harmony learned the importance of being active in socio-political life and supporting persons with disabilities in participating in the political sphere. It motivated them to assist in preparing a self-advocacy group to develop communication skills and provide advisory services based on personal experiences.

For People First Hungary, the biggest realisation at the meeting in Erfurt was how similar the Slovak and Hungarian systems and social attitudes are. It was very enlightening to learn from the Slovak grassroots approach, which showed them that it is worth starting this way in Hungary too, without waiting for government initiatives. The persistent, multi-stakeholder German work was also instructive (cooperation between various NGOs and public institutions).

### **7.2 Evaluation of the meeting in Žilina /Slovakia**

In June 2024 we met for a second time in Žilina.

Our partners from Fondazione Luigi Clerici were very impressed with the accessible train stations in Accessible train stations in Žilina. These could be replicated in smaller towns and villages, along with special architectural features in Italy as well. Some of the VET centers of

Fondazione Luigi Clerici could be more accessible. Our partners also discovered that there are similar problems with regard to supporting teachers: they are not prepared, they are asked to take students with disabilities out of the classroom, and educational staff are underpaid.

In Slovakia, we learnt a lot about the personal budget and assistance for people with disabilities. It was particularly interesting to learn that the legal basis for this is based on the work of Adolf Ratzka. Assistance in Slovakia is implemented exclusively by volunteers who work as assistants in addition to their regular jobs. We were very impressed by the way Land of Harmony networks and recruits volunteers. In particular, the 'Jolly Festival' - an inclusive arts festival - is used to recruit people for voluntary work. The German team was very impressed by that.

Another fact that VSBI was particularly interested in was how Land of Harmony has enabled many people with disabilities to find jobs in the primary labor market and lead independent lives, despite limited government support. This is a valuable example for Germany in promoting inclusion. The partnership between Land of Harmony and the Blue Butterflies, a self-help organization for personal assistance, was also noteworthy.

For People First it was inspiring to meet individuals with significant care needs who communicate without words. An important lesson was that in Slovakia all architects work according to the universal design; there is no need for a specific training of this sort. It was also important to hear that there has been a personal assistance law since 1998, as a grassroots initiative, driven by NGOs. This is a model for Hungary. The Jolly Festival showcased strong community-building power.

### **7.3 Evaluation of the meeting in Pécs/Hungary**

Our third meeting was held in October 2024 in Pécs.

In Pécs we heard about the Inclusion Festival that takes place every year. Fondazione Luigi Clerici really liked this idea and would like to replicate a festival like this in Italy as well.

VSBI was very impressed by the work of People First as a self-advocacy organization in Hungary. People First has managed to establish a self-advocacy organization for people with various disabilities, rather than focusing on one type of disability. In Germany, there is still a kind of segregation within self-advocacy organizations. A common organization for all people with



all types of disabilities would be a desirable goal for Germany. People First has an enormous impact on the local economy, civil society, and the entire city of Pécs. Above all, strengthening civil society is a worthwhile goal for VSBI's work. In Hungary, personal assistance is organized and implemented without any legal basis, made possible solely through the efforts of volunteers and family members. VSBI was very impressed by this. People First has also developed various business models, such as the Hidden City Tour through Pécs and a database listing accessible shops in Pécs. All the locations were tested by People First and given a sticker certifying their accessibility. VSBI would like to realize this interesting project in German cities as well.

From our partner in Hungary, Land of Harmony learned a lot about the participatory budget in Pécs and about cooperation in supporting students with disabilities at university. Land of Harmony appreciated the strong network of organizations in Pécs and aims to replicate this in Žilina. Land of Harmony considered accessibility rules and how universal design is the best choice for all citizens.

#### **7.4 Evaluation of the Meeting in Milan/Italy**

Our last meeting took place in Milan in March 2025, where we learned a lot about vocational educational training centres and the transition to the labour market.

The implementation of diversity in a company as part of McDonald's 'Tiki Taka' project was particularly interesting for VSBI. This involves companies, students with disabilities and their families gathering at a round table to discuss how they can implement more inclusion and diversity in the company. The VSBI would like to adapt a similar approach in Germany.

Another interesting topic was the work of the social cooperatives that exist in Italy. These reminded the German team a little bit of the parents' initiatives that later became large organisations for people with disabilities. For their own work, VSBI would like to establish social cooperatives of employees that offer more opportunities for self-management and self-determination.

From our partner in Italy, Land of Harmony learned more about the process of preparation and training for work in the open labour market and the various tools used to support the employment of people with disabilities. Land of Harmony admires the cooperation with different companies and visited some of them. They also appreciated the acceptance of people

with disabilities as part of the community. Land of Harmony will regularly develop more revisions of accessibility in their town and cooperate more intensively with companies to support the employment of people with disabilities in the open labour market. Land of Harmony will support the transition from school to work through cooperation with other partners in their town.

From the experiences Land of Harmony learnt during this project, it is clear that the lives of communities can provide the opportunities to be active, useful, and respected as a citizen for a person with a disability. That's why they will continue to provide support to persons with disabilities this way.

At the TPM in Milan, Italy, one focus was on an inclusive vocational educational training centre (VET-centre). People First liked the ideas of personalized learning plans, an internship system, and having all teachers serve as inclusive tutors instead of having separate supportive tutors.

### **7.5 Evaluation of all meetings in easy-to-understand language by Land of Harmony**

We were glad to meet all teams.

It was a fun the same time.

Every person should have the same rights.

All information is supposed to be easy to understand.

We learned how to involve all participants.

We learned to make own decisions.

We spoke about what we want in our life.

We have to learn how to do it.

We spoke about own responsibility.

We met new people.

We gained new experiences.

We found new ideas and solutions.

We listened to each other how we can have a better quality of life in the community.

Nobody wants to live in an. Institution.

## 8 Ressources

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