

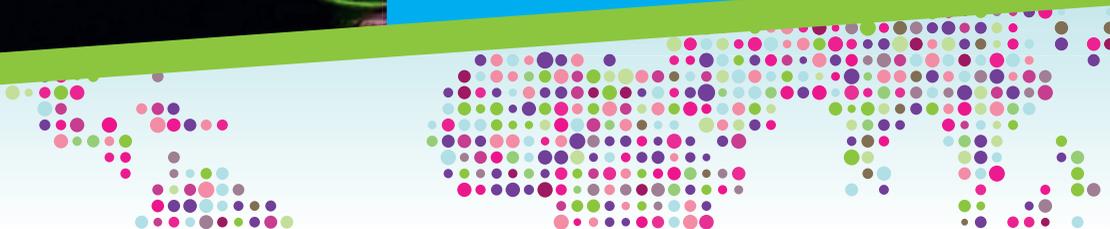


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VISION:INKLUSION

An inclusion strategy for
international youth work



• • • • •	Foreword Marie-Luise Dreber	4
• • • • •	Introduction Ulrike Werner and Christoph Bruners	7
• • • • •	Fundamentals of inclusive international youth work: Human rights, youth policy, concepts Elżbieta Kosek and Christian Papadopoulos	10
• • • • •	Developing a specific inclusion strategy: A model for the planning process VISION:INKLUSION expert group	26
• • • • •	Objectives, actions and reflection questions to support inclusive international youth work VISION:INKLUSION expert group	28
	Objective 1: Creating inclusive cultures in international youth work	29
	Objective 2: Producing inclusive policies	34
	Objective 3: Evolving inclusive practices	40

• • • • •	Successful implementation: Examples	48
	Listen to the silence! International youth exchanges for hearing and deaf young people Klaus Waiditschka, Jugendhilfe und Sozialarbeit e.V.	48
	Be there or be square – Inclusive holiday camps Herbert Swoboda, Wilde Rose e.V. – Interkulturelles Jugendnetzwerk im Bund Deutscher PfadfinderInnen (BDP).	52
	Go on, try it – get out of your comfort zone! Experiencing the world in workcamps Christoph Meder, IBG Workcamps – Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V.	55
	Go ahead, do it! – Inclusive volunteer programmes abroad Rebecca Daniel, Behinderung und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit e.V. (bezev)	61
	Discovering common ground and overcoming reservations – A youth retreat in partnership with disability organisations and youth work Frank Scheider, Lebenshilfe Bonn gGmbH	66
	The Kreisau Model expert programme Elżbieta Kosek, Kreisau-Initiative e.V.	70

• • • • •	Literature and websites	74
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• • • • •	Legal information	82
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Foreword

Marie-Luise Dreber, Director of IJAB –
International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany

Why do we need an inclusion strategy specifically for international youth work? A strategy that gives all young people – including those with a disability or impairment – access to international youth work activities?

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Germany ratified in 2009, takes a human rights perspective, stipulating that all persons are entitled to full and effective participation in society. For instance, Article 24 calls for an inclusive education system at all levels as well as for lifelong learning; Article 29 urges that persons with disabilities be enabled to participate in political and public life; and Article 32 demands that international cooperation, including international development, be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities. The Convention marks a paradigm shift in attitude towards persons with impairments, who are no longer seen as passive objects requiring social welfare, but as subjects with clearly defined rights who take decisions pertaining to their own lives as active members of society. Individual impairments are not decisive, since these only produce a disability once they collide with environmental and attitudinal barriers. All members of society are called upon to be mindful of this.

Over the last few years, inspired by the UN Convention several action plans have been drawn up at the national, state and local level as well as by various organisations. Version 2.0 of the German Federal Government's National Action Plan was published in 2016; however, it makes practically no mention of non-formal/informal education and youth work settings. That said, they are referenced in the mission statement of the Federal Government's Child and Youth Plan. Specifically, the Plan states that the subject of participation of young people with disabilities and impairments is mainstreamed across the entire field of child and youth services. When it comes to implementing the measures funded under the Plan, it must be ensured that a disability or impairment does not lead to exclusion and that access and participation remain unaffected.¹

The renewed framework for an improved cooperation between EU countries in the youth field for the period 2010-2018 mentions eight

specific fields, one of which is social inclusion. In late 2014, the European Commission adopted the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the field of Youth, which makes specific mention of young people with fewer opportunities to ensure the Erasmus+ programme sufficiently promotes diversity in the youth field. Meanwhile, the Federal Government's 15th Child and Youth Report is the first to mention the importance of international learning opportunities when it comes to participating in a globalised world; in fact, it considers this to be an important task for the future.

So while there is an extensive legal foundation and many texts have been written on the subject, there is little in terms of hands-on guidance for practitioners.

When Professor Thomas from the University of Regensburg in Germany published his study on the long-term effects of international exchanges in 2006, it was revealed that the majority of survey participants were female grammar-school pupils. In other words, we realised that a lot of work lay ahead of us before international youth work activities could be considered accessible for all. Meanwhile, we know – thanks to a wide range of initia-

tives and model projects – that these kinds of activities are particularly beneficial for disadvantaged target groups. International youth work takes a resource-oriented approach, meaning it is ideally suited for helping young people to broaden their horizons and to experience learning in a much wider sense. Young people who are part of inclusive groups don't just learn to manage diversity, they also have first-hand experience of active participation, which often inspires them to start giving back to their own communities. They develop a greater tolerance for people who are different while experiencing themselves what it means to be different. They learn that the realities of life are not the same for everyone. This helps them to leave behind the cultural and social norms that inhibit them in their development, and to lose their fear of the unfamiliar.

To help overcome these challenges IJAB, the International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany, collaborated with representatives of community organisations, disability organisations, researchers and government representatives to produce this inclusion strategy for the international youth work field. This involved extensive network-building and an exchange of experiences and expert knowledge to answer the

¹ Richtlinie über die Gewährung von Zuschüssen und Leistungen zur Förderung der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe durch den Kinder- und Jugendplan des Bundes (KJP) (2016), p. 811



following question: How can international youth work be shaped and adapted so as to allow all young people – whether with or without an impairment – to take part in its activities without difficulty? For this to happen, the cultures, policies and practices in our field of work have to become more inclusive. This can only be done through cooperation with all stakeholders.

To create the right environment, we need to be aware of the specific needs of the target group and for this reason, the strategy is

focused on young people with an impairment or disability. However, many of the aspects in the strategy are equally applicable to other target groups, where necessary with small adjustments. The lines are blurred. In fact, the target group “young people with an impairment” is not homogeneous either.

The inclusion strategy is designed to encourage all young people to enjoy an international learning opportunity and play an active role in our globalised world.

..... Introduction

Ulrike Werner and Christoph Bruners, VISION:INKLUSION project officers

International youth work is diverse. As an environment offering non-formal and informal education, it develops activities and concepts that are open to young people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Accordingly, international youth work can play an important role when it comes to creating inclusion: it already works with diversity-centred approaches that can be used to create inclusive activities and may hence be a blueprint for similar efforts in other areas of society.

Before VISION:INKLUSION even started, IJAB and other stakeholders had already begun to explore pathways to more inclusion in international youth work. Between 2015 and 2017, the project served as a framework for putting these efforts on a more systematic footing and extending them to include a variety of (international) inputs to form a strategy.

This explains why the strategy was not developed for, but with the international youth work community and with as large a number of stakeholders and “beneficiaries” as possible. This was done by a group of experts who met regularly, and by the participants at a series of three project conferences and a large number of events organised by our partners. Over time, a lively and professional network

evolved that will continue to bring the strategy to life and help implement it.

The expert group was a core element of the VISION:INKLUSION project. Its members were drawn from international youth work, research, (community) associations, government bodies and implementing organisations who provided expert input to the strategy as it evolved, helped to build networks, and identified synergies. At the same time, the group functioned as a liaison for various social bodies. Its members were:

- **Aktion Mensch e.V.:** Alexander Westheide
- **Federal Association of Catholic Youth Holidays:** Martina Drabner
- **bezev – Behinderung und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit e.V. (Disability and Development Cooperation):** Rebecca Daniel
- **German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth:** Andrea Balbach
- **Designbar Consulting (accessible design and communication):** Christian Papadopoulos
- **Deutsche Gehörlosen Jugend (German Deaf Youth Organisation):** Andreas Gaudzinski

- **IJAB - International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany:**
Ulrike Werner, Christoph Bruners
- **Kreisau-Initiative e.V.:** Elżbieta Kosek
- **National Agency JUGEND für Europa:**
Christof Kriege
- **Cologne University of Applied Sciences:**
Stefanie Vogt, Judith Dubiski

As the project continued, it became clear that there could be no such thing as “one” inclusion strategy for the entire international youth work field. The variety of realities, for-

mats and priorities faced by a highly diverse group of organisations is simply too broad. Hence, this publication has been designed as a framework within which the international youth work community as well as individual organisations can explore their own avenues towards inclusive international youth work activities.

Using a process model and a set of objectives and associated actions, users can develop their own inclusion strategy that responds to their specific organisational structures,

settings and contexts. Ideally, this is a process that constantly evolves – it cannot ever be truly completed. The objectives are aligned with the three dimensions of the Index for Inclusion,² which make it possible to structure the process and its various levels: Creating inclusive cultures in international youth work, producing inclusive policies, and evolving inclusive practices.

This central part of the publication is surrounded on either side by two core elements of any strategy development process: theory and practice. The first chapter focuses on the human-rights, youth-policy and conceptual fundamentals of inclusive international youth work, effectively outlining the framework within which this strategy was designed. The subsequent chapter describes how the strategy can be implemented in practical terms. Existing good practices stemming from various international youth work formats help to flesh out the objectives and actions and illustrate how they can be put into practice.

The inclusion strategy is primarily aimed at international youth work experts and organisations, the child and youth services community, organisations for and run by people with impairments, and disability assistance providers that are interested in inclusive international youth work. It also provides input for youth policy networks, policy-makers, administrations, ministries and funding organisations as it helps to develop an understanding of the realities and processes in this area.

We would like offer our thanks to all experts, cooperation partners and contributors for their valuable input and ideas that have been incorporated in the VISION:INKLUSION project and without which this strategy would never have been developed. The task ahead is to work on implementing the inclusion strategy. This will require giving a stronger international dimension to the strategy and providing adequate support and training to the organisations. Against this backdrop, the strategy is a major contribution to the evolving field of international youth work.



Participants of the international conference of the IJAB project VISION:INKLUSION in September 2016 in Mainz, Germany.

2 Booth, T./ Ainscow, M. (2000, 2011)

Fundamentals of inclusive international youth work: Human rights, youth policy, concepts

Elzbieta Kosek, inclusion and education desk officer at Kreisau-Initiative e.V. and **Christian Papadopoulos**, Designbar Consulting – Accessible design and communication

The objective of international youth work is to enable all young people to enjoy equal access to international youth work activities, no matter what their origin, ethnic and cultural background, gender, sexual orientation and impairment. In other words: international youth work is all about inclusive education. As such, international youth work is aligned with the Federal Republic of Germany's declared objective to be a democratic and social state that ensures equal opportunities and participation in all areas, including international exchanges and activities abroad.³

However, in practice this is not always successfully done. Many international youth work activities fail to take account of the specific needs of disadvantaged young people; also, in many cases the barriers to access are too high. This is particularly true for young people from low-income or less educated families, young members of the immigrant community and young persons with a disability. For them, equal access is all too often an illusion. The inclusion strategy seeks to bridge this gap between theoretical ambition and practical implementation. First, the key terms and concepts need to be defined.

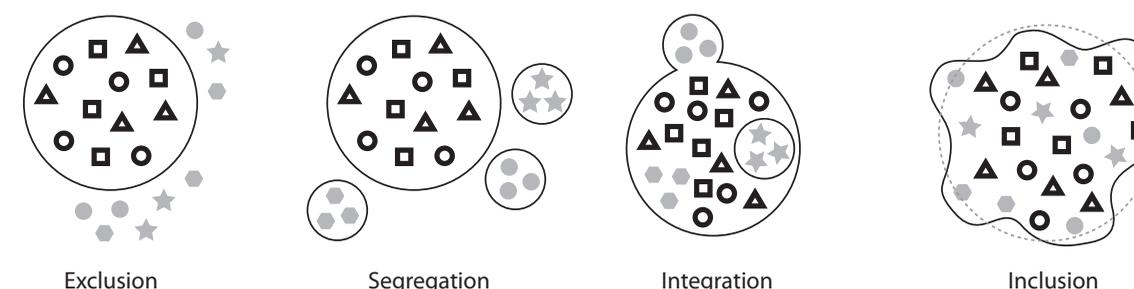
The concept of inclusion and how it relates to integration

The traditional concept of inclusion was established in the 1970s, when a group of U.S. citizens with disabilities began to call for full and equal participation in public life. It was not until the UNESCO Salamanca Statement was adopted in 1994 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force in 2008 that the European

debate on the implications of inclusion for education and social policy finally commenced. This debate centred in particular on Article 24 of the UN Convention, which calls for inclusion in education. "On the basis of equal opportunity," reads Article 24, "States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system on all levels and lifelong learning."

The German debate centres above all on formal (i.e., school) education. However, the international debate goes beyond the formal level, recognising that inclusion needs to be considered on a broader societal level, since inclusion is primarily a human right rather than an educational issue.

The following diagram provides a brief illustration of the social, educational and political backdrop to this issue and helps to give clearer definition to the terms "integration" and "inclusion" which, certainly in the German-speaking regions, are often still used synonymously.⁴



Until the mid 20th century, both society and education were heavily characterised by mechanisms of exclusion. Priority was given to those who were considered to represent the mainstream, while individuals who did not fit the norm were pushed to the margins. An international debate on inclusion commenced in the mid 20th century, which led to the introduction of segregation in education and beyond. For instance, young people with special needs were given access to education and their right to personal assistance was recognised. However, they received this special assistance in separate groups or schools, with "talented" children segregated from their "non-talented" peers. Preference was given

to teaching homogeneous rather than mixed groups.⁵ Unfortunately, today's schools and social systems still favour this segregation approach.

In the 1970s the integration debate began; in the 1990s, the Salamanca Statement triggered a similar debate on inclusion. In regard to education policy, the Salamanca Statement called for mainstream schools to be opened up to all those children who had hitherto been taught in special institutions. This is precisely where a major challenge for the integration model comes into play, highlighting the main dividing line between "integration" and "inclusion". While the integration model

calls for mainstream education systems to be opened up to previously marginalised groups of people, it essentially perpetuates the dominance of mainstream structures: the newcomers, who are already at a disadvantage for a variety of reasons, are required to adapt considerably so they can function in their new environment. By contrast, the inclusion model is based around a different education and social system that is not dominated by mainstream structures; rather, the circumstances are flexible enough to allow every individual to contribute and participate to the best of their personal ability without having to struggle to adapt.

In other words, inclusion calls for a paradigm shift towards a society in which diversity is the accepted norm. In this context,⁶ identifying and eliminating discriminatory structures are important tasks. The primary objective is to enable access to and participation in social life for all individuals.⁷

Due to its historical roots and the revival that the inclusion debate has undergone thanks to the UN Convention, the concept of inclusion is often discussed in the context of impairments and disabilities. Attempting to define the term is a challenge. Its interpretation



ranges from narrow definitions all the way to a broader understanding of the concept that is inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This broad interpretation extends far beyond persons with disabilities to include all human beings.⁸ It also refers to those forms of disadvantage and discrimination that, if one were to use disability as a dividing line, could easily be overlooked.⁹ An important term in this regard is intersectionality, defined as the interaction of and overlap between several dimensions of social inequality in regard to the same person, in particular social background, ethnic affiliation, skin colour and social gender,¹⁰ but also age, disability or sexual orientation.¹¹ This produces a very specific constellation of privileges and discrimination.¹² In the context of inclusive activities and programmes, considering this perspective is vital in order to recognise that each and every individual may be subject to a number of overlapping forms of discrimination, resulting in a variety of needs.

6 Boger (2017)
7 Trisch (2015)
8 UNESCO (2014)
9 Trisch (2015)

10 cf. Crenshaw (1991)
11 cf. Reindlmeier (2014)
12 cf. Walgenbach (2012)

It is important to repeatedly place **inclusion**, in the broader sense, in the context of various forms of disadvantage and discrimination to ensure that the concept itself is not hampered by a blinkered point of view. By the same token, sufficient consideration needs to be taken of disability as a dividing line, ensuring that the needs of these important target groups are always respected.

In light of the difficulties associated with the concept of inclusion and its implementation, profound social change is necessary that puts the theory into genuine practice and allows stakeholders to undergo a process of trial and error so that real progress can be made and perspectives changed. International youth work has the capacity to trigger such processes.

Disability – The social and the human-rights model

The social model of disability interprets it as the result of social marginalisation due to existing barriers and negative attitudes towards persons with impairments.¹³ In other words, the root cause of disability is understood not to be ill health, but the social environment. Persons with impairments are not disabled; rather, they are put in that position. While the social model does not deny that an impairment impacts on an individual's personal situation, it explicitly objects to any discrimination or marginalisation that results from that impairment.

This interpretation contrasts with an individualised approach to disability that considers it to be a regrettable affliction or in any case, a divergence from the socially constructed norm. It requires the individual to resign themselves to their fate and to

adapt as far as possible to society's expectations of what is "normal".¹⁴

The human rights model, too, focuses on the social barriers, prejudices and negative attitudes that prevail in society and prevent persons with an impairment from participating equitably and effectively. It considers the obstacles to participation as violations of human rights principles, specifically the principles of inherent dignity and individual autonomy, non-discrimination, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, equality of opportunity, accessibility, equality between men and women, and respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for their right to preserve their identities.¹⁵

13 cf. UPIAS (1976), Oliver (1990)
14 Waldschmidt (2005)
15 cf. Article 3 UN CRPD (2008)

What both models have in common is that they do not require the individual to adapt to society – instead, it is society that has to change by removing barriers, actively ad-

The participation aspect

The inclusion strategy has as its main focus the inclusion of young people with disabilities or health impairments. This may seem counter-intuitive, given the considerable barriers that exist when it comes to giving young people facing other disadvantages access to international exchanges and other activities. However, perspective is restored when considering the broad diversity of realities that people with disabilities face. They come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, have varying access to education, various social genders, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, and not least a variety of impairments that prevent them from participating in society on an equal basis with others.¹⁶ As a rule, the paradigm shift away from requiring individuals to adapt to mainstream society¹⁷ also benefits other disadvantaged groups.¹⁸ Today, it is society that carries responsibility for removing – indeed actively combating¹⁹ – the barriers,²⁰ clichés and negative attitudes that prevent individuals from enjoying full participation.

ressing clichés and negative attitudes, and providing technical and personal assistance (e.g., aids, support services).

The act of removing structural and technical obstacles to accessibility benefits everyone, because the environment is then adapted to the diversity of its human users. If the international youth work community creates greater accessibility for disabled people of limited financial means and varying educational backgrounds, it cannot refuse to do so for non-disabled persons. If activities are appropriate and responsive to the needs of both young men and women with disabilities, there are no grounds to argue against making this a general mark of quality in international youth work. If international youth work activities are open to disabled members of the immigrant community and refugees, they have to be open to all other young people from these target groups as well.

An **international youth work community** that is inclusive for people with disabilities is a space for everyone to meet, enjoy experiences together, and learn how to take living and learning together as a given.

That said, it makes sense to develop a strategy that takes particular account of the obstacles to participation faced specifically by young people with a disability. These personal impairments require the removal of barriers faced by people with health or mental impairments or learning difficulties, people who

are hard of hearing or deaf, who have visual impairments or are blind, who have impaired language or motor skills, and who have several impairments simultaneously. These specific constellations may require the provision of personalised forms of assistance and support.

The right to education

International youth work takes place in non-formal learning environments that promote an exchange between young people from different countries, encourage intercultural learning and facilitate hands-on human rights education. Accordingly, international youth work activities are educational in nature and should be seen in the context of the right to education.

The right to education can be regarded as the most instrumental cultural human right of all, given that access to education is a prerequisite for empowerment, solidarity, and participation in society.

The UNESCO Salamanca Statement of 1994 created a framework for education for individuals with specific needs. This international document stipulated the right to inclusive school education for all children and adolescents.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights²¹ recognises the right to education as a fundamental human right. Specifically, it stipulates that education

- shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity,
- strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,
- shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society,
- promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and
- further the maintenance of peace in the world.

16 cf. Article 1 sentence 2 UN CRPD (2008)
17 cf. Article 1 sentence 2 UN CRPD (2008), Degener (2015), p. 63
18 cf. Degener (2015), p. 59

19 cf. Article 8 (1) b UN CRPD (2008)
20 cf. Article 3 f, Article 4 f-g, Article 9 UN CRPD (2008)

21 cf. Article 13 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education (1999)



The General Comments lay out four fundamental principles that were drawn up by Katarina Tomaševski, the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education. Her 4-A scheme is designed to verify the state of

Fundamental principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The UN Convention calls for a paradigm shift in the way persons with disabilities are perceived: no longer as passive recipients of care, but rather as individuals who enjoy equal rights and are capable of taking their own decisions. The starting point of the Convention is the marginalisation and discrimination that persons with disabilities suffer. To address this, the Convention seeks to eliminate obstacles to participation so as to enable the inclusion of persons with disabilities. According to the UN Convention, persons with disabilities include “those who have long-term physical,

implementation of the right to education in line with the following four criteria: General education needs to be available (availability); it must be accessible without discrimination (accessibility); it must be recognised by all target groups (acceptability); and it must respond and adapt to the best interests of every child (adaptability).²²

Although the Covenant and the 4-A scheme were developed for use in a school context, their objectives, principles and methods are easily applicable to other educational settings such as international youth work. However, this perspective is only introduced into the human rights system via the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”²³ This implies that it is not individual persons who have to adapt and change, it is society as a whole. The UN Convention calls upon governments and societies to ensure the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities also in education.

Besides inclusion and participation, the Convention also lays down a number of other

principles. States parties’ policies and the resulting strategies, programmes and measures must respect the dignity of human beings. They must also respect their individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and follow the principle of non-discrimination. There must be respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity. Other principles refer to equality of opportunity, accessibility, and equality between men and women. Finally, the Convention calls for respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.²⁴

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities makes specific reference to human rights in the context of persons with disabilities. Among the sections that are directly applicable to international youth work are those dealing with the right to education (Article 24) and the right to participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (Article 30). Article 24 is based on the fundamental principles of the right to education as stipulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.²⁵ Taking into account the further evolution of the right to education, the ICESCR calls for an inclusion-based understanding of education and urges its implementation. An inclusive education system does not exclude persons

with disabilities from the mainstream system. It respects the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination for all persons with disabilities, regardless of their gender, age and impairment. It states that persons with disabilities may not be refused access to the education system owing to their disability and calls for compensatory action and support that enables individuals with a disability to succeed in getting an education. Staff are assisted in developing an awareness of disability and are trained to use accessible communication and teaching aids. This is applicable for all areas of education, including life-long and non-formal learning. Thanks to the principle of equal opportunity, these principles also benefit other disadvantaged groups and other activities.

International youth work activities are often cultural in nature or offered in a recreational or sports context, Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is another important point of reference. Article 30 recognises the right to participation in cultural life and access to cultural materials in accessible formats (e.g., remembrance activities), the creation of opportunities to develop and utilise their creative and artistic potential (e.g., music, dance and drama workshops) and the equitable participation in leisure, recreational and sports activities (e.g., educational trips, inclusive holidays, inclusive international sports festivals).

24 cf. Article 3 UN CRPD

25 cf. Article 13 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education (1999)

Germany, as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is committed to the **inclusion** and **participation** of young persons with disabilities in international youth work activities. In other words, state-funded programmes, projects and activities must enable the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in both design and practice.

The competent government bodies are called upon to create the necessary legal frameworks and to put in place the financial and structural preconditions to ensure that organisations offering international youth work activities can actively include participants with disabilities and allow them equal access.

Non-formal education activities follow certain principles that determine the structure of non-formal learning settings and which are relevant to the development and education processes that participants in such international activities undergo. For instance, participation in international youth and education activities must be **voluntary** in nature, since this naturally leads to stronger motivation and willingness to participate. **Participation** itself is yet another important methodological principle of non-formal education. The young participants are invited to help take decisions and play an active role, accept responsibility, enjoy transparent decision-making and learn about their own interests and needs; this enables them to directly influence and “own” the learning process. This opens up opportunities for **self-determined action** and personal decision-making, gives young people a **sense of impact**, and helps them develop problem-solving skills. **Subject orientation** is another important principle when it comes to inclusive international education activities. This refers to the continuous adaptation of educational approaches and methods to the needs and realities of participants in order to maximise the benefit to them. This closely ties in with **strength orientation**, which requires the activities to take account of available

resources. Carefully designed activities can allow participants to discover and maximise their personal skills and potential. **Process orientation** is another major principle of international education work. This means that it is not the outcome, but the learning process which participants undergo and through which they gather experiences that is the main concern. The final principle, yet one that is vital for inclusive education work, is **diversity orientation**. The spotlight is always on the individual and their traits, both immutable (gender, impairment etc.) and changeable (social status, language, education, etc.). In international youth work, the diversity of participants is a crucial resource and enriches the educational process. Diversity pedagogics is all about creating equal opportunities and levelling out the playing field while respecting participants’ personalities.²⁶

In summary, international youth work seeks to empower and encourage young people to actively engage with and critically examine their own lives, but also the social environment they live in. In doing so, they should develop the skills they need as they become active, aware and responsible members of society.

26 Yagci-Grobner & Prochazka (2009)

The international youth work community’s self-perception

International youth work involves enabling young people to spend time abroad to meet other young people, learn more about and from each other, and experience life in a different country. However, international youth work also seeks to assist young people in developing personal and social skills, amongst other things. Besides offering a space for interaction, international youth work aims to enable them to experience learning in a shared environment. By designing attractive activities that take up current societal issues and respond to the needs and interests of children and adolescents, the young participants can learn together and thereby acquire key life skills, become more confident, and recognise their own strengths and talents. Activities that centre around participatory decision-making can promote a sense of civic engagement and encourage young people to play an active role in their communities.

International youth work is part of the non-school educational field; its activities are guided by qualified trainers and educational experts. International youth work employs a broad range of creative non-formal education methods. At the centre of all shared learning and education processes are the individual participants, who bring their specific experiences and backgrounds to the table. Learning experiences are triggered by responding to the needs of individual participants, selecting the right methods and educational activities, encouraging participation, and offering process-oriented educational opportunities. The social interaction between participants of international exchanges, too, helps them to learn with and from each other and hence acquire important skills.

Inclusion in international youth work

Inclusive international youth work aims to open up mobility projects also to those target groups who were previously not, or only barely, in scope. Even recent statistics show that young people with a disability, educationally challenged adolescents and young people facing health, cultural, social, geographical or economic disadvantage are vastly underrepresented when it comes to these activities. This is the case although international youth work, of all things, offers great potential for inclusion. Similarly, inclusion is of major value to international youth work.

International youth work, non-formal education and inclusive education share the same goals and pursue the same principles. They are open to all persons and use participatory processes to create learning and development opportunities. These commonalities alone mean that short-term international youth exchanges are a prime platform for trying out inclusive approaches. Given that they take place in a non-formal education setting, they are the ideal space for shared learning and experiential processes in which par-

ticipants can break down barriers, develop an awareness of diversity, and understand diversity as an opportunity.

International programmes bring together young people from very different backgrounds and many different countries. In such an environment, diversity and multilingualism are the norm rather than the exception. Frequently, these encounters take place in an environment that is new to all participants, who bond over this shared experience. This reduces anxieties associated with personal interaction and encourages participants to rethink their attitudes towards themselves, their peers, and their environment. The dialogue with others and the experience of learning



together leads participants to open up to each other and develop tolerance, empathy and solidarity.

Successful inclusive international youth work activities require professional educational support. First, a safe space has to be created in which the participants can interact and learn from and with one another. This requires experts who are adequately trained in working with these target groups. Inclusive groups may consist of wheelchair users as well as individuals with motor impairments. Language, too, can be a barrier – not only do the participants speak different languages, their native and foreign language skills may differ widely, too. Some participants may not communicate at all using spoken language, but other forms of communication such as sign language. Religious beliefs, sexual orientation or cultural backgrounds may also influence participants' behaviour and scope for action and as such, can be instrumental in determining whether or not the learning experience and indeed the exchange as a whole can be deemed a success.

All these individual needs and interests must be taken into account while planning and implementing an inclusive international education programme. They require the experts

to demonstrate a broad range of methodological and technical skills. While non-formal education work is a broad field that offers many different options, the education experts on hand need to adapt the methods they choose to participants' learning processes, their personal needs, and the individual skills they already have so as to ensure genuine inclusion. This requires a willingness to reflect on these processes on an ongoing basis and address the needs of every individual in the group. A sufficient number of different methods and approaches must be considered; this is vital when it comes to ensuring that the project delivers benefits for all participants.

While inclusive education, a fairly new field, is a challenge for experts and also for participants, the time-limited, non-formal character of an international youth exchange makes it an ideal setting for trying out inclusive concepts and methods and assessing their appropriateness. The safe space in which these encounters take place also accommodates failures and mistakes. A participatory approach means all participants can share in a learning process that can be evolved and transferred to other social and educational settings.

Funding instruments and framework conditions for inclusive international youth work

The right to education at international, European and national level and its interpretation in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities means, in the context of the inclusion strategy, that the political framework, specifically funding instruments, must be consistently centred around enabling all disadvantaged and disabled young people to participate fully by removing all barriers to access. At the same time, the individual needs of participants, too, must be accommodated.

This requires rethinking existing concepts as well as reflecting on the funding instruments at the state, national and especially European level. The next section reflects on the Child and Youth Plan of the German Federal Government, the EU Youth Strategy, and the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.



The Child and Youth Plan of the Federal Government

The Child and Youth Plan (known as KJP) is based on the concept of the welfare state and the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as on the conviction that child and youth services is responsible for ensuring equal participation and equal opportunities for all young people.²⁷ The KJP is designed to assist youth work organisations in developing and providing professional

services that respond to the needs of all young people. Specifically, this means creating a level playing field for them, reducing disadvantages, and eliminating existing risks. This explicitly also includes support for young members of the immigrant community as well as young refugees, whether they have leave to remain or not. The KJP is focused on giving all young people an opportunity to participate.

The guiding principles of the KJP are: orientation towards personality development, teaching of democratic and rule-of-law values, equality of opportunity, participation, protection of children and adolescents, empowerment of young people to manage risks, strengthening of youth policy and regard for youth policy considerations, support for European and international exchanges and dialogue opportunities, quality development, and support for innovative concepts in child and youth services.

As a rule, all of these aspects also play a role when it comes to ensuring high-quality inclusive international youth work. That said, it makes sense to focus on those aspects that

explicitly seek to include previously out-of-scope target groups – in particular young people with a disability – in international youth work.

The overarching objective of the KJP is to enable all young people, regardless of their socioeconomic status, social gender, origin, family language, residential status, sexual orientation, disability or health, to enjoy the same kind of access to youth work activities. This implies that any barriers to access faced by out-of-scope disadvantaged groups must be actively eliminated. Another objective is to enable young people to have a say in youth policy development and youth work activities.

Inclusion in the youth field in Europe

At the European level, the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights offers some guidance for Germany's national inclusion strategy. Article 21, para. 1 focuses on non-discrimination. It reads: "Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or

any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited." On the basis of this principle of non-discrimination, the Charter provides for the right of persons with disabilities to live an independent life, enjoy social welfare, pursue a profession and participate in the life of the community.²⁸

Erasmus+ Youth in Action and the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy

All of the European Union's education policy strategies and funding programmes have been brought together under the umbrella of Erasmus+. The Youth in Action programme, which is part of Erasmus+, provides a framework for developing and promoting international youth work in the shape of informal and non-formal education activities for young people. In other words, there is a tangible connection here to the EU Youth Strategy.

Youth in Action, too, is focused on creating an active European civil society that is based on tolerance and solidarity and that enables young people to help shape the future of the EU. It respects the Charter of Fundamental Rights' principle of non-discrimination, stipulating that all young people should be given this opportunity, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background.

The Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy goes somewhat deeper and defines *disability*, *health problems* and *educational difficulties* as factors that promote inequality. Other factors are *cultural differences*, *economic obstacles*, *social obstacles* and *geographical obstacles*. The Strategy creates a framework for inclusive European education in the non-formal youth area. Its vision is that diversity should be embraced and celebrated, and that differences should become a positive source of learning rather than a cause for negative competition and prejudice. Young people and full-time as well as volunteer youth workers should be equipped with the necessary competences to manage and work with diversity. This will, states the Strategy, encourage positive interactions between people of all walks of life and ultimately improve the situation of young people with fewer opportunities.



Group work during the international conference of the IJAB project VISION:INKLUSION in September 2016 in Mainz, Germany.

Developing a specific inclusion strategy: A model for the planning process

VISION:INKLUSION expert group²⁹

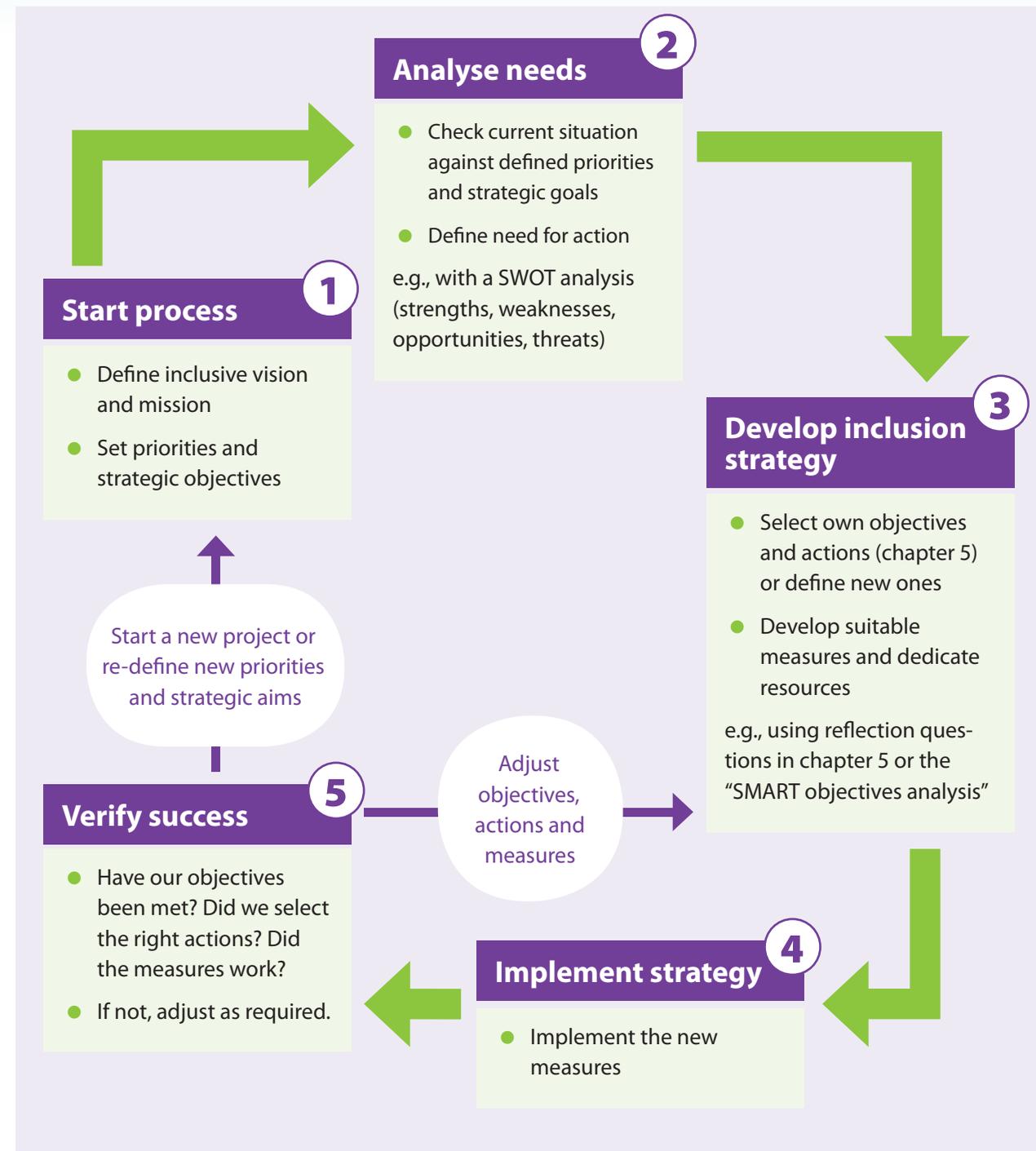
Total inclusion in international youth work will probably always remain a vision. Yet this vision is important all the same, because it points towards the direction in which international youth work as a whole, as well as each individual organisation, can travel and thus functions as a source of motivation. The journey towards inclusive international youth work is an ongoing one that will never be quite complete. However, this also means that not everything can be done straight away and not everything has to be perfect. The idea is

to move ahead one step at a time, to set priorities and to direct the spotlight at the capacities and interests of the young participants, whether they have a disability or not.

The model described here serves to help organisations develop an inclusion strategy of their own that responds precisely to their specific structure, situation and context. The objectives and actions presented in the next chapter are a source of guidance. Reflection questions have been drawn up for each action that will help organisations to come up with measures they can implement as they build their own strategy.



²⁹ The members of the expert group are listed in the introduction on p. 7–8



Objectives, actions and reflection questions to support inclusive international youth work

VISION:INKLUSiON expert group

As described in the previous section, this strategy aims to help individual organisations and international youth work as a whole become more inclusive. It is important to choose an approach that best reflects the specific organisational structures, settings and contexts in each case. Below is a collection of objectives and actions that can be selected according to individual requirements. Rather than serving as checklists to be ticked off one by one, they aim to offer suggestions and guidance to organisations seeking to improve inclusion.

Each action includes several reflection questions to help with the creation of specific measures relevant to setting and context. Applicable questions can be selected from those provided or used as inspiration for entirely new ones. Questions and actions should always be seen in the context of the objective.

Christian Papadopoulos,
member of the
VISION:INKLUSION expert
group, in an interview.



Objective 1: Creating inclusive cultures in international youth work

Strengthen an understanding of inclusive international youth work amongst the organisations involved and foster an inclusive approach.

A fundamental principle of international youth work is that it should be accessible to young people and give all target groups the opportunity to use and benefit from the services available. But in reality this isn't always the case. To further bridge the gap between theoretical ambition and reality, a shift towards an inclusive culture and approach in international youth work is urgently necessary. Part of this effort is to see the person as a whole and embrace diversity, rather than pigeonholing people into "us" and "them". It should be obvious that it is not acceptable for individuals to be consigned to the fringes or excluded altogether, and that discrimination

must be pinpointed and actively eradicated. Another key aim is to ensure that all individuals treat each other with fairness, tolerance and respect.

The success of this hinges on the actions of everyone who is involved in international youth work – youth policy stakeholders, organisations, funding agencies and research institutes. Every single individual at these organisations, from management to those out in the field, across all departments and areas, must take responsibility for their part in the process.

Objective 1

Involvement of all stakeholders and levels

Actions

All stakeholders (international youth work organisations, funding agencies, researchers, self-help organisations, disability organisations, managers and team members, participants with and without impairments, parents) and levels (local, regional, national and international structures) are involved in creating an inclusive culture. They provide mutual, complementary support.

? Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Which stakeholders are or should be involved?
- Who is interested in a partnership?
- Which stakeholders are missing?
- What interests and interfaces do stakeholders have in common?
- Where do interests collide or are irreconcilable?
- How can different interests be reconciled?
- ...

Understanding of inclusion and associated terms

Actions

There is an ongoing discussion of the term "inclusion" and associated terms and concepts (impairment/disability, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, participation, empowerment, target groups etc.) among the individual organisations and in the international youth work community in general. Human rights are always put at the forefront.

? Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- How do we talk about inclusion? What terms and concepts are used?
- Has a shared working environment been created from an understanding of inclusion that has been developed together?
- Does an established setting exist that enables reflection on whether the various activities are accessible to all young people and whether the young people genuinely have the freedom to decide for or against participation?
- Is there an awareness of the participants' individual needs and interests?
- Has sufficient consideration been given to overcoming existing obstacles in terms of accommodation, communication and planned activities?
- ...

Actions

Overlapping forms of disadvantage and discrimination affecting individuals (known as intersectionality) are recognised (such as socio-economic background, ethnicity/skin colour, social gender, age, disability or sexual orientation). The resulting differing needs are taken into consideration.

? Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Which dimensions of inequality are identified and addressed?
- How do the different dimensions of inequality in the individual relate to each other?
- Are some dimensions given more importance than others?
- Have the dimensions of inequality been examined with respect to the associated social power structures?
- ...

Objective 1



Actions

Partnerships between international youth work, disability organisations and community organisations – or with international partners – take account of the fact that attitudes and self-perception may diverge. A basis for successful cooperation is established.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- What is understood by and associated with the terms inclusion, education, youth work, etc.? What is the underlying institutional self-perception?
- What common ground and what differences are there?
- What steps are taken to enable mutual communication and understanding?
- How are young people involved in this process?
- ...

Awareness raising



Actions

Anxieties, inhibitions and reservations on all sides are taken seriously, addressed and eliminated. Raising awareness amongst planners, employees and team members of special or individual needs is a continual process.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Is an open, inquisitive and solution-oriented approach fostered, along with an appreciation of diversity?
- Are spaces for experiences and exchanges created at all levels?
- Are low-threshold, short-term and closely guided inclusive formats also offered as a form of introduction?
- Can managers, planners and decision-makers take part in job shadowing, expert dialogues or inclusive expert events that would give them new insights without the need to take on responsibility straight away?

- Are mixed management teams in place comprising disabled and non-disabled individuals? If not, how can this be put into practice?
- Is attention paid to learning about (the need for) appropriate ways of communicating when working with people with an impairment (disability etiquette)?
- ...



Actions

Stakeholders and international youth work regularly reflect on implicit standards and assumed need for adaptation and make changes where necessary to ensure no further modifications are needed.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Do any implicit standards dominate?
- What is expected of young people who want to participate? How do young people or team members with an impairment have to adapt in order to be able to participate?
- Are individual needs taken into account whilst keeping an eye on the overall process/other participants?
- Do the language and the PR used reflect an organisational culture that makes everyone welcome (e.g., by using suitable images, choosing project partners from disability organisations or community organisations, writing by-laws in plain language, using certain key words, enquiring about support needs)?
- Is communication accessible? For whom is communication possible and for whom is it not?
- How can the need for adaptation be minimised?
- ...

Objective 2: Producing inclusive policies

Create frameworks and set up partnerships and support structures that enable inclusive international youth work.

Producing inclusive policies means integrating inclusion consistently across all levels. This includes putting the necessary organisational, financial and legal frameworks in place to allow inclusion to be incorporated into international youth work activities. It also means giving everyone the opportunity to contribute to committee work or as team members. Cooperation between international youth

work organisations and international partner organisations, community organisations and disability organisations is also key. Further partnerships should be established in addition to act as support structures for inclusive international youth work. Last but not least, access to the various international youth work activities must be provided and existing or potential barriers removed at all levels.

Organisational and legal framework

Actions

Legal and funding frameworks are created that make inclusive international youth work possible.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Where do young people feel that structural obstacles exist (e.g., economic barriers, duration, age, legislation, programme/funding rules)?
- How can these obstacles be removed?
- What form would inclusive funding rules take?
- How can the various stakeholders get involved in structuring or designing inclusive funding structures?
- How can sufficient consideration be given to the conceptual planning, preparation and coordination phase with partners that is so important for inclusive measures?

- How can inclusion incentives be created?
- What steps can be taken to ensure sufficient staffing resources?
- ...

Actions

Organisations systematically review and update their inclusive practices.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Are the measures analysed and evaluated on a regular basis?
- Who is involved in the process?
- What steps are taken to ensure the process is evolved continually?
- ...

Actions

Models are established to ensure long-term financing for inclusive measures.

Cooperation with international partner organisations, community organisations and disability organisations

Actions

Cross-sectoral cooperation is used across professions, youth work, community organisations and disability organisations..

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Do experts from diverse professional backgrounds – such as curative educators and youth workers – contribute to the projects?
- ...

Objective 2



Actions

Structures are in place that ensure that international partners are involved every step of the way.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Is there a trust-based relationship with the partner organisation?
- Are conversations held with international partners on the following aspects during preparation for and implementation of the measures: understanding of inclusion, local attitudes towards disability and dealing with people with disabilities, accessibility standards?
- Are face-to-face meetings held in advance with sufficient opportunity for a dialogue on aspects that go beyond the organisational details?
- Is the partner organisation a central pillar of the support system in the foreign country during extended stays; for example, could they establish contact with local community organisations or peers?
- ...



Actions

Young people are included in every stage and get actively involved throughout the measure, from project design to de-briefing.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Do young people actively play a role in shaping each phase of the international project?
- Are *all* young people (including those with impairments of any kind and from diverse backgrounds) given the opportunity to get involved?
- Does the potential to get involved also extend to the development of work in general, for example by participating in strategy groups or general meetings?

- Are target group-specific resources and methods provided for this purpose?
- What specific steps are taken to inspire young people to work inclusively and get involved?
- ...



Actions

Systematic and critical work with parents.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Are efforts to work with parents successful at removing constraints to the empowerment of young people and strengthening young people as far as possible?
- Is strong consideration given to young people's independence?
- Are parents' concerns dealt with appropriately?
- ...

Existence of support systems



Action

Access to support is created and communicated actively:

- During the preparatory phase
- Abroad and/or during the programme
- Upon return
- In volunteer work and recreational activities

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- What support is already available in the different areas?
- How and where is this communicated?
- Where is additional support needed? What form does this take?
- ...

Actions

Experts, team members, supervisors and inclusive teams receive targeted training.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- How are training needs identified?
- Are training opportunities and incentives in place?
- What training is available?
- Is a training concept in place?
- Are partnerships or networks used for this?
- ...

Enabling access

Actions

Steps to reach out to the relevant target groups are taken after careful and consistent planning.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- How do I reach out to young target groups with low participation levels?
- ...

Actions

Activities are available to all young people interested in taking part. Activities are oriented to demand.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- How is demand identified?
- How are potential obstacles identified?
- How are these needs and obstacles considered when planning projects?
- ...

Actions

Various barriers are broken down systematically:

- Barriers to information (type and placement of information, advertising, information material...)
- Barriers to communication (establishing contact, opportunities to ask questions...)
- Physical barriers (ramps, signage, multi-sensory design...)
- Social barriers (cost, programme content...)

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- What obstacles are there? How are these obstacles removed?
- ...

Objective 3: Evolving inclusive practices

Research and create the success factors, tips and methods needed for successful inclusive international youth work and apply them in practice.

The evolution of inclusive practices represents the practical educational side of the inclusion strategy. Input and information is provided that should be taken into consideration when planning, implementing and evolving inclusive international youth work. It builds on existing inclusive cultures and established structures and fosters an inclusive attitude amongst all individuals.

It is vital to ensure that inclusive practical international activities are designed and adapted to meet the needs of specific target groups. The diverse needs and interests of all individuals must be taken into account and self-directed, active learning processes

encouraged across the board. Respect and integrity in dealing with one another is essential if diversity is to be used as a learning opportunity. This is expressed in part by using sensitive, non-discriminatory language and communication devices.

Inclusive international youth work is still uncharted educational territory. This is another reason why it is so important to provide training to inclusive international youth work stakeholders, why existing material, human and methodological resources should be used, and why partnerships should be used to build support systems that can help to implement successful inclusive practices.

Educational principles and implementation

Actions

Both the entire programme and individual activities and methods take place at a slower pace. Quiet zones and the flexibility to engage in interest-led activities are incorporated.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Is the programme sufficiently flexible and does it incorporate enough breaks?
- Are safe and quiet spaces available to participants (places, times, support)?
- Can activities be interrupted? Will returning participants be welcomed back to the activities?
- What pace is expected or required? Who sets the pace?
- ...



Actions

The core principles of international youth work are actively applied to ensure an inclusive workplace: e.g., participation, empowerment, self-determination, strength orientation, process orientation, diversity orientation, subject orientation, voluntary character of activities.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Do the same rights and obligations apply to all participants? How are these negotiated?
- How are diverging interests dealt with?
- Which participation model can be selected, given the nature of participants? Does the activity include opportunities for joint decision-making?
- Does the activity provide opportunities for participants to determine their own actions so feel they can influence proceedings and learn skills?
- Is the activity aligned with the available resources? Does it help participants to explore personal abilities, talents and potential?
- Does the educational activity focus on the process – i.e., on experiencing, seeking and finding?

Objective 3

- How is social diversity reflected in the activity? Does it require and encourage participants to deal with one another respectfully? Does the activity promote a positive understanding of diversity? Is diversity used as an opportunity for shared learning?
- Does the activity take the daily life and "lifeworlds" of the participants into consideration? Is it flexible enough to allow implementation to be aligned with the personal needs and interests of participants?
- Who decides to participate? The participants themselves or someone else? How can individuals be given more scope to make their own decisions?
- ...



Actions

Risk-taking – and thus the potential to fail – is allowed and encouraged. An error-friendly environment is maintained throughout.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Is failure seen as a learning process?
- Are errors dealt with positively?
- Is this supported by the organisations and associations (as well as funding agencies and administrative bodies)?
- ...

Language and communication³⁰



Actions

Language is used sensitively and in a non-discriminatory manner.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Is external communication inviting and appealing to everyone?
- Are discriminatory terms and turns of phrase used? Has critical consideration been given to this?
- What obstacles arise at the international level? How do we deal with language barriers? How is language use between different languages reflected upon and examined for discrimination?
- ...



Actions

Communication between participants of an international programme is supported actively.



Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Are language animation tools used and adapted to the target group?
- Is enough staff available to help as language mediators?
- Are other resources available, such as picture dictionaries or apps?
- Are international projects organised also with other German-speaking countries to remove the additional challenge of the language barrier?
- ...

Support



Actions

Adequate human and financial resources are provided to enable top-quality implementation.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Is top-quality implementation ensured?
- What potential improvements are necessary?
- How can the necessary human and financial resources be obtained?
- ...

Actions

Implementation is interdisciplinary, assisted by suitable partnerships and the involvement of young people and experts with and without impairments and from diverse backgrounds.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Are any partnerships between youth work and disability organisations in place?
- Can international youth work experts or experts in disability organisations contribute their skills (e.g. intercultural learning, educational group exercises, curative educational knowledge etc.)?
- Are the teams inclusive?
- ...

Actions

Qualified contact persons are available when needed, e.g., in the event of problems, to identify measures or place participants, to consolidate resources, or for advice and ideas.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Where do stakeholders obtain information and advice?
- Who are the contact persons?

- How is this information communicated?
- Is any information available on the targeted application of various international youth work formats?
- ...

Actions

National and international good-practice examples, along with an "inclusive map" of Europe, are available and updated continually.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Where can good-practice examples be viewed? How can these be used beneficially?
- What can be done to help expand the knowledge pool?
- ...

Actions

Manuals and practical aids are available and updated continually.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Are suitable manuals available with information on the methods and educational approach used in inclusive international youth work?
- Do they address a range of target groups, such as team members, planners, administration staff, parents, young people etc.?
- ...

Actions

Training opportunities are provided with suitable content and in appropriate formats.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- Is there an option to use low-threshold awareness-raising formats in the form of suitable exchanges and experiences?
- Do experts need coaching and, if so, is this available before, during and after the measure?
- In which areas is training required for planners and team members?
- Is training available for experts on working with parents?
- Are opportunities to undergo empowerment training available to young people?
- ...

Actions

Steps are taken to ensure that decision makers and experts have access to key information about participants.

Reflection questions to help develop corresponding measures

- What information about participants is necessary to ensure the measure can be optimally prepared and implemented?
- What should be known prior to a measure (for application and planning) but is irrelevant to actual implementation (risk of reproducing divisions and assumptions)?
- What information may be an obstacle to impartiality?
- Are suitable tools in place for collecting information?
- Who receives the information and who doesn't (leaders, other supervisors or carers, participants, parents etc.)?
- What about data protection?
- ...

Successful implementation: Examples

..... Listen to the silence!

International youth exchanges for hearing and deaf young people

Klaus Waiditschka, head of department for non-formal education and international cooperation at Jugendhilfe und Sozialarbeit e.V., Fürstenwalde/Spree (www.jusev.de)



Quiet. Not really the adjective that comes to mind when you picture a lively, colourful and dynamic youth exchange. However, quiet is the right word for this particular exchange because when you meet up with deaf people, sounds are irrelevant. If you want to make yourself “heard”, you need to put out a signal, such as switching the lights on and off to get everyone’s attention. “Listen to the silence” was an experiment we staged in 2016. It was a double exchange, if you will – between young people from three countries (Germany, the

Czech Republic and Malta) and between deaf and hearing youngsters. In fact, we performed the experiment three times: in March 2016 at our youth education centre in Hirschluch near Berlin, in June on Gozo (Malta) and in September on the Vltava river in the Czech Republic. Another anomaly: we did these three exchanges with (almost) the same people within the same year. And then we repeated the exercise a fourth time in September 2017, in Malta, with a larger group.

..... New horizons

“When did you last do something for the first time?” was the question with which we invited hearing youngsters to join the experiment. The response was overwhelming; we had more applicants than spaces. Experiencing for the first time that you can communicate without speech – how do you do that? By

asking deaf young people to help. Being deaf doesn’t mean you’re different; it means you communicate by other means. When it comes to wordless communication, deaf people are the experts; us hearing people can learn from them. Why do schools teach foreign languages, but not sign language? Besides making

some progress with sign language, we also experimented with all kinds of non-verbal communication – writing, gestures, images (photography), theatre (pantomime) – learned a lot about the participating countries, took trips to the surrounding region, talked about successful famous people who are deaf (who most hearing people have never heard of), and discussed why deaf people are often discriminated against and considered stupid.

Despite our efforts to teach some simple sign language, a lot of what happened during these exchanges was only made possible by the presence of sign language interpreters. As people who don’t live in a silent world, we might think that sign language makes it so much easier to transcend national, cultural and (spoken) language borders. That’s true, but it’s also not true. Deaf people are used to using their entire body to communicate, so it’s easier for them to reach out to people

Youth exchange in the
Czech Republic
JuSeV e.V.



on the other side of a national or language border. But: every country has its own sign language! So what happened was that the hearing participants communicated in English, but whenever they spoke English, they had three or four interpreters next to them who simultaneously translated their words into various sign languages. This could only be done simultaneously because the interpretation made no sound; interpreting into several spoken languages could only have been done consecutively, which would have taken ages.

The project and its impact

The project started in 2015 with an inquiry and a search for partners in the Czech Republic. International youth exchanges for deaf youngsters have existed for some years, many of them organised by the European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY). However, an exchange involving hearing and deaf young people was certainly something new – exciting and challenging at the same time. Our association was asked to help because we have been organising international exchanges for persons with specific needs for many years. That said, our regular clients tend to be young people with learning difficulties and minor intellectual impairments. At this point we had never dealt with hard-of-hearing or deaf young people before and in fact, this turned out to be the biggest challenge initially. How could we reach out to deaf communities without anyone on the team with a knowledge of sign language? Finally, we managed to get there in the end, thanks to support from the Czech Republic and a lot of knocking on doors. The next challenge was to find two sign language interpreters. We had to place around 80 inquiries until we found what we wanted: not all SL interpreters work with English and

Signs for “blue” in German, Czech and Maltese Sign Language
JuSeV e.V.



what’s more, their normal work settings are doctors’ surgeries and public authorities, companies and training sessions where they work by the hour. Certainly not groups of young people who meet for an entire week and need constant support.

We learned, crucially, that exchanges with hearing and deaf young people are not really that different from “regular” youth exchanges when it comes to concept design and group dynamics. The participants, no matter their language, are first and foremost young people with normal human needs such as a safe space and guidance at the beginning of the exchange. They are curious about getting to know other young people from other cultures, they share a common goal – to work towards a shared goal in a mixed team – and they are all delighted when they can present the fruits of their work. Of course the methods have to be adapted. For instance, activities that use sounds can be adapted to use sign

language instead. A drama project will be more of a pantomime than a spoken theatre piece. However, the biggest challenge – and the greatest asset – is the additional language involved. Using Language Animation methods, the hearing participants become curious about learning a new language, which can become a major skill for them to take away.

New partners

Over the course of the project, most partners from the early days departed while others joined. A youth council from Malta felt unable to deal with the work involved, so we are now working with the Deaf People Association. This, I feel, has been a big step forward in terms of project quality because the DFA, a disability community organisation, is now part of the group and has delegated deaf representatives to the preparation and organisation team. It took quite some persuasion and a willingness on the part of Germany’s national agency JUGEND für Europa to learn that the deaf youngsters would not be “piggybacked” by the youth organisations, but that they have their own representatives and would of course also need sign language interpretation during the planning sessions. The fourth country to be invited to the project was Slovakia, initially via an informal group of young people. Meanwhile, in the next project phase the Slovak Association of the Deaf became our official partner.



Poster: “We are all the same – deaf people can do anything...”
JuSeV e.V.

While our target group is currently limited to young adults, the next step – provided we get the go-ahead – will be to organise similar activities for a younger group (aged 15-19). We are fortunate in that two of our hearing participants are currently studying to become professional sign language interpreters and will be available to participate in an exchange. In September 2017 one of our former deaf participants was appointed the director of German Deaf Youth, so now there is close cooperation on the German side with deaf community organisations, too. In summary, having overcome its initial challenges the project is now well positioned to continue its work in the coming years.

Be there or be square – Inclusive holiday camps

Herbert Swoboda, chairman of Wilde Rose e.V. – Interkulturelles Jugendnetzwerk im Bund Deutscher PfadfinderInnen (BDP), fg.wilderose@bdp.org



Our inclusion journey began when the mother of a boy with physical disabilities asked why he couldn't take part in the holiday camps that his able-bodied brothers were attending. The answer was in fact a second question: Indeed, why not?

That, in a nutshell, was the starting point of our efforts to extend our programme of activities to inclusive camps. Our journey turned out to be a series of learning processes, since we were not professionally trained camp counsellors.

Where there's a will...

In line with our motto "Where there's a will, there's a way... we just need to find someone to help put the idea into practice", we started to include young wheelchair users in our preparations. Assistance came from the new funding programme "Kultur macht stark" of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. From a concept point of view, we were quite clear about wanting to work inclusively rather than offering holiday camps specifically for youngsters with disabilities.

Because we already knew our potential clients, we knew what kind of support they would need. To begin with, we worked with four young men with varying levels of impairment but who were all wheelchair users and each needed a personal assistant. It was not easy to find volunteer assistants who would be willing to provide this high level of care.



Holiday camp in Corfu
Wilde Rose e.V.

Holiday camp in Corfu
Wilde Rose e.V.



Creating ideas together – living together

We were lucky in that we had good contacts to a nursing college so that the volunteer nurses were in fact only slightly older than the participants in their care. Since they shared the same interests, a disco evening, for instance, was fun for the assistants, too, rather than an annoyance. Evening singalongs around a camp fire, too, were enjoyable for all participants, some of whom stayed up far past their bedtime.

The daily programme, decided by the whole group, is communicated via large, clearly written posters but also read out during the morning session. The day's activities are quite different from what they would be on a normal school day – especially at the camps we organise in Greece. The high daytime temperatures mean most activities take part in the evening and after dark, so participants normally sleep in late, enjoy a late breakfast and take a nap after lunch. The disabled participants had no problem adjusting to the unfamiliar schedule.

Our camps are designed such that they respond to the needs of the participants, with the young people largely taking their own decisions on what they want to do in the group, weather and other circumstances permitting.

Independence for all

Young people with disabilities are at risk of being treated as children rather than as equals. Provided they are old enough, of course they are able to enjoy a beer as much as their able-bodied peers. To a bystander, that can take some getting used to, as can

the fact that sometimes they sit in their wheelchairs while observing what's going on around them, rather than getting attention all the time. Why shouldn't they have the right to spend some time alone without being fussed over constantly? Any other

able-bodied participant might come up to them and ask, are you ok? Or would you like to sit at our table and watch us play cards? Meanwhile, the able-bodied youngsters help during mealtimes and feed their friends who can't eat on their own. This has become completely normal, although initially some were apprehensive about having to wipe away the occasional dribble.

It turned out to be a good idea to integrate our small group of ten participants into groups of 30 to 50 participants of varying age. Not only has this widened our scope for inclusive action; it also enables participants aged over 18, so beyond the age limit for "Kultur macht stark", to continue going to camp.

What has everyone learned from this?

1. We can achieve so much more in mixed groups than we think.
2. Spending time in close quarters with disabled peers triggers something in above-bodied participants (see the poem by Imad Karim).
3. Youngsters with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else. They can go to bed and have breakfast whenever they want. They can participate in all activities, enjoy the occasional beer, or simply spend time by themselves.
4. We need to remember what the alternatives are for them if they can't attend camp with everyone else: a daily routine, evenings spent watching TV, and an early bedtime. After all, their professional carers have the right to a break, too.

For Felix

*I take your hand in mine
Not because you are disabled
We are both disabled
In our own ways*

*You are just like me
A brother on this life's journey
Even if my suffering is invisible
While yours is apparent*

*Your smile is a balm on my wounds
Your laugh is a wellspring
When the wheels of your chair turn
My spirit comes alive.*

Poem by Imad Karim,
Corfu, April 2014

Go on, try it – get out of your comfort zone! Experiencing the world in workcamps

Christoph Meder, managing director of IBG Workcamps -
Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V.



Can young people with disabilities simply get out and experience the world? Of course they can! International workcamps are a great way for almost everyone to enjoy an intercultural exchange, give back to the community and face new challenges. The young adults can move out of their comfort zones while enjoying a safe space. But how?

Sabrina (not her real name) travelled by herself to attend an international workcamp, an open-air museum where she helped rebuild traditional mud houses. She is 21, from an immigrant family, suffers from epilepsy, used to attend a special needs school, has learning difficulties and is classed as severely disabled. She is training to be an office clerk on a special scheme.

International workcamps

International workcamps are a classic international youth work format. Young people from all over the world spend two or three weeks working together on a non-profit project, manage their daily schedules together, and familiarise themselves with the local surroundings and population. Workcamps are ideal for young adults aged 18 and above, although some also accept young people aged 15 or over. They sign up individually and also travel alone to the project venue, where they meet the rest of the group. The educational approach of a workcamp is based on the assumption that everyone shares a similar cultural and social background. For almost

two decades now, IBG has been working towards inclusion and accessibility – which in concrete terms means removing the barriers to access and enabling all young people to attend a workcamp, regardless of their personal, cultural and social backgrounds. Besides young people with disabilities, IBG also seeks to include young people affected by other form of exclusion, such as young immigrants and school drop-outs.

Over the last few years, young people with a wide range of physical or intellectual impairments have travelled to workcamps in Germany or abroad or have travelled from

abroad to complete a placement in Germany. Many of them have learning difficulties; some have mental illnesses or a physical disability. Some are wheelchair users, some are blind, some have artificial limbs and

• • • • • Daring to take the first step – How can young people with disabilities access a workcamp?

How did Sabrina do it? The organisation running her training scheme had invited IBG to hold a presentation on its international workcamps. An instructor was on hand to encourage people to register an interest, so he removed the first obstacle. Around fifteen young people of varying backgrounds showed an interest in hearing more about the workcamps. In the end, three of them, including Sabrina, decided to actually sign up for an international workcamp. Since Sabrina lives near Stuttgart, she started by attending an interview at IBG's Stuttgart office, which was the second obstacle for her. The other interested parties, who lived further away, were offered other forms of advice and support.

These interviews are the starting point of a process involving personal preparation and support. They can also require the social workers who work with the potential participants to get involved. Identifying the barriers and personal obstacles to access requires all involved parties to trust each other, which is

some have Down's Syndrome. IBG offers personalised support so potential participants can overcome the objective and subjective barriers to access.

difficult to accomplish in a short space of time. This personal support is offered in order to make it easier for participants to overcome the obstacles without, however, robbing the workcamp of its challenging character. Her advisor sat down with Sabrina and helped her choose from more than 1,200 different workcamps worldwide to find a project that suited her needs in terms of dates, accessibility, language skills, type of project, infrastructure and above all her interests. The large number of available options is one of the strengths of international workcamps as a format, since there is always one that suits even the most specific of interests and needs. Sabrina opted for a workcamp at an open-air museum in Catalonia. She likes watching telenovelas, so she had an interest in Spain; the workcamp was relatively easy to reach from Stuttgart by air; and another two German-speaking participants would also be at the camp. The last point addressed her concerns that she wouldn't be able to communicate well with her basic English.

• • • • • On the way to Spain – Help or challenge?

In the run-up to the project Sabrina met up two more times with an IBG representative. She helped her plan her travel to Spain and home again, discussed her expectations, told her more about Spain and Catalonia, discussed daily life at the workcamp and helped her understand the infosheet, a ten-page English language document containing detailed information about the workcamp (meeting point, things to pack, emergency phone numbers etc.). Finally, they talked about what to do in an emergency so as to remove Sabrina's last anxieties. Sabrina felt more confident because her IBG advisor got in touch regularly to inquire about her preparations, although she did want the project to retain its challenging character. When it comes to international workcamps, the main barriers to access are travel and language. The international nature of the project means that participants travel to the workcamp from all over the world, so the volunteers meet for the first time at the venue (or at the nearest train station). That is why the preparations tend to be dominated by the necessary travel arrangements. Participants and advisors plan the trip together; if necessary, the train operator, airline or a partner organisation can be requested to help the volunteer find the right train or plane. In some cases, the advisors "train" the participants to find their way around a railway station or airport.



Workcamp in Spain
IBG Workcamps

Sabrina decided to do without assistance when she arrived at Barcelona airport and managed to find her own way to the train station and board the right train. Once she had arrived, her experience was much the same as that of the other 15 international volunteers from twelve different countries: somewhat disoriented, she tried to find her bed in the school that served as accommodation. At first she was rather slow to reach out to the two group leaders and the other volunteers. However, since everyone else seemed to feel the same way and some of the volunteers had to supplement their basic English with gestures and grimaces, Sabrina quickly became bold enough to speak out and was soon a regular part of the international group.

For the next two weeks, the group would normally have breakfast at 7 am, then work at the museum between 8 and 12 before meet-



ing up for lunch. After lunch, some enjoyed a siesta, others played games or headed to the pool before returning to the museum for some more work between 4 and 6. Dinner was usually served around 10 pm. The group cooked together in groups of three, with Sabrina and her two co-workers preparing a traditional German dish of cheese “Spaetzle” for everyone. Everyday chores were also done together, with a changing rota for cleaning and cooking. The group leaders usually went grocery shopping.

What impact does an inclusive workcamp have?

Sabrina returned home happy and quite changed. The experience of being part of an international group, living with others, having worked with her own hands and so giving back to the community was invaluable. However, for Sabrina the most valuable experience was having dared to embark on this adven-

The work in the museum was supervised by professionals; the volunteers produced mud bricks and paved paths. This was a new experience for all of them, and everyone contributed as best they could. If someone needed a break from the exhausting physical work, often in high temperatures, they took one. The shared goals the groups worked towards brought everyone closer together; the pride they took in their work was common to all of them. The fact that Sabrina had learning difficulties became wholly irrelevant; either the others didn’t notice, or they didn’t consider it to be important. At the weekend, the group took trips to the surrounding area, once to the Pyrenees mountains and once to Barcelona. At regular intervals the group met to assess their progress. The group leaders were aware of Sabrina’s anxieties about fitting in, but she needn’t have worried at all. She had the contact details of her IBG advisor to use in case of an emergency.

ture by herself, travelling to Spain alone and facing an unknown situation. She returned with a sense of independence, greater confidence, better language skills and not least, with new friends. Her supervisor on her training course later said Sabrina appeared more confident professionally and personally.

During the preparations and also at the debriefing sessions, Sabrina met other German volunteers who had been at a workcamp and who did not have a disability. This interaction, which happened on an entirely level

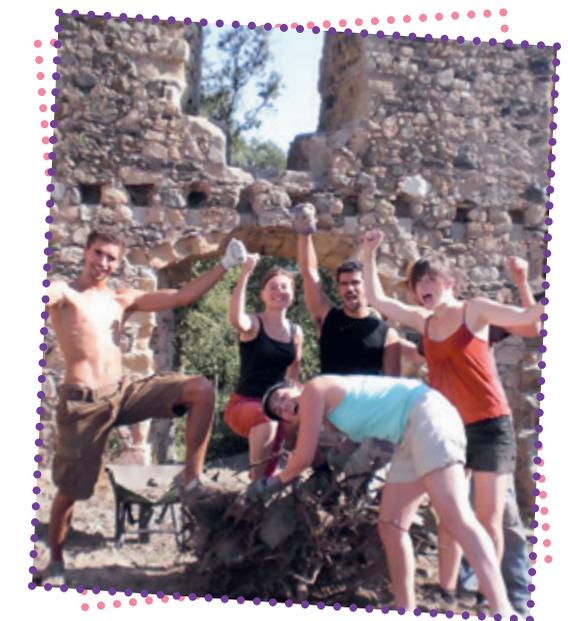
Limitations, alternatives, benefits

International workcamps have the greatest impact if volunteers travel alone. This is why most young people with a disability attended their workcamps without a carer and also travelled there by themselves. This of course requires them to be reasonably independent. For instance, they have to be able to take any necessary medication without assistance. The projects are for the most part voluntary in character; it is rare to find educators or other professional supervisors on site.

Should an international workcamp turn out to be too much of a challenge for young people with a disability, there are some low-threshold alternatives:

playing field, was another valuable part of her workcamp experience. Sabrina has since attended another workcamp in Estonia. This impact is one that we see in many returnees.

- They can participate together with a friend or carer.
- Another low-threshold option is for a youth organisation or disability community organisation to host an international workcamp themselves, offering the young people in their care a chance to join the international group if they can and want to.



Workcamp in Spain
IBG Workcamps

Inclusion and integration can be implemented in a workcamp in various ways. And still, each case is different. Finding responses to the specific needs of a young person with a disability means they can be made part of the group. This requires close coordination within the international network of workcamp organisations. For IBG and many other international partner organisations, experiences such as Sabrina's are a welcome reminder that their approach works. Sabrina herself was a valua-

ble addition to the international group. This is why staff are willing to invest additional effort in this target group. Because resources are limited, however, the number of young people who can (only) take part in such an international workcamp thanks to specific support will remain small. But – it's worth it! For the young people themselves, the other volunteers in the workcamp, and for us full-time and volunteer staff inside the workcamp organisations.

Go ahead, do it! – Inclusive volunteer programmes abroad

Rebecca Daniel, coordinator of the competence centre for inclusive international exchanges at bezev e.V.



Model projects at bezev to promote inclusive international exchanges

"Go ahead, do it!" is the slogan for the initiatives run by Behinderung und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit e.V. (bezev) to promote the inclusion of volunteers with an impairment or disability in international volunteer programmes. In 2012, bezev launched a pilot project called "worldwards for everyone!" to include twelve volunteers with an impairment or disability in the weltwärts volunteer development programme together with numerous other participants. The number of people with an impairment or disability taking part in weltwärts (funded by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) has been growing steadily ever since, with almost 70 volunteers going abroad since the pilot was launched. After the pilot ended in 2015, bezev received funding from the weltwärts programme when it was

established as a centre of excellence for inclusion of volunteers with an impairment or disability. In April 2017, bezev implemented a new model project to promote the inclusion of people with a disability or impairment in international exchange programmes. The aim is to apply the experiences gained in inclusive work carried out under weltwärts to other initiatives. Individuals who want to volunteer for a few weeks, months or even a whole year can complete a placement abroad. They travel to countries in the Global South or Global North to help out at various charitable partner organisations on the ground. They generally travel alone or occasionally in pairs with other volunteers to work in orphanages, schools, hospitals, environmental organisations or other non-governmental organisations.

Removing barriers to international exchange, piece by piece

Volunteers begin preparing for their exchanges around nine months in advance. Flights and accommodation must be arranged, visas applied for and vaccinations organised. Around this time, volunteers get a first taste of the project in their destination country so they can learn about what will be expected of them and what they can expect when they get there – such as how accessible the conditions are on site. The sending organisation also provides support. bezev helps volunteers with any questions on organising and financing their additional needs. This includes

agreeing special insurance rates, stockpiling and ensuring the refrigeration of medicines, arranging accessible accommodation wherever possible, ensuring suitable precautions are taken at the future place of work, finding mobility assistants for travel and work, and much more. It may sound like a lot of work, but it needn't be. Many volunteers with an impairment or disability only have minimal additional needs, not all of which are complicated. The important thing is to communicate regularly and speak openly about needs and obstacles, even if this can feel unfamiliar and a little intrusive. Photos, videos and Skype calls with foreign partner organisations can be of great help here, as can talking to former volunteers from the same project. It is helpful to have a good network of contacts who know about accessibility and what kind of precautions should be put in place. Contact with experts in the foreign country and, depending on the volunteers' needs, additional resources are also very valuable. What everyone can learn from this is that individuals with an impairment or disability in Germany and abroad know their needs and the situation on site best of all. It follows, then, that when organising volunteer placements abroad the guiding principle should always be "Don't talk about us without us!"



Inna on her volunteer programme
bezev e.V.

Swapping perspectives in inclusive seminars

Volunteers are also required to attend preparatory, interim and follow-up seminars. A wide range of methods and tools are used for inclusive groups, such as sign language interpreters, modified presentations and accessible rooms. Some seminars are held in plain or simplified language to make sure that volunteers with learning impairments or whose first language is not German can understand everything. This is also beneficial for hearing-impaired volunteers. Depending on the needs of participants, the lighting and noise in rooms is tested beforehand. Activities and games designed to break the ice at the seminar are checked and if necessary adapted to

allow everyone to take part. The seminars also cover the topic of inclusion itself and dealing with impairment or disability in Germany and abroad. Some volunteers give presentations on their own impairment or needs; former and returning volunteers report on their experiences of how impairment or disability is dealt with in the destination country. The basic premise of the seminars is that "it's normal to be different". And, in case of doubt, that things are also different in the foreign country – so the seminar is a great opportunity to practice speaking a different language (such as sign language) or seeing the world through different eyes.

"Just do it. You know you can!"

Deaf volunteer Inna Shparber went to Buea in Cameroon in 2015 to work at a school for deaf children. When she applied, Inna originally wanted to go to India or South America. Her scepticism about Africa stemmed mainly from the way it is portrayed in the media. She also wanted to work on a project involving other deaf people. bezev had the perfect placement to match Inna's experience and her preferred field of work, but it was in Cameroon. Inna wasn't sure at first whether to accept the offer or not, but then she decided to go for it: "It seemed like I was destined to go to Africa. And it's true, it was absolutely perfect for me," said

Inna, happily recounting her experiences in an interview after returning from her volunteer placement abroad. The courage to try new things and explore new horizons is part and parcel of spending a year abroad. Not everyone finds this step easy to take, and not because of any disability or impairment. Inna is a great example; her experience shows it really is possible. Although she had to learn the local sign language to be able to communicate with the children and teachers on the project, it was still easier for her than for many hearing volunteers who had had no contact with sign language before the programme. "Just try it.

"You can do it!" says hearing-impaired volunteer Til, who completed his placement at the same school for the deaf a year before Inna, in a campaign video by bezev encouraging other volunteers with an impairment or disability

to take part. He adds: "You yourselves know your impairments and concerns the best of all. You know what help you need. 'worldwards for everyone!' means everyone can take part, including you."

Remove barriers – Enable engagement

Challenges and conflicts are a part of every volunteer programme and the possible solutions are as diverse as the individual needs of the volunteers and their environments. In bezev's experience, many volunteers with a disability or impairment are used to dealing with obstacles and frustration, including in life in Germany. This can even give them an advantage over other volunteers during the preparatory phase.

The funding rules were updated to include a section on additional financial support for inclusive programmes to cover the cost of typical additional requirements such as sign-language interpreters or assistants. Extra hours of work for support staff are now also accounted for, e.g., to provide more intensive organisational and educational guidance, adapt specific methods to make them suitable for inclusive seminars, or take suitable precautions.

It helps that some programmes have already worked hard to remove structural barriers. On the weltwärts programme, this is thanks in part to the ongoing work of bezev – for example, the age limit has been raised and made more flexible, now giving people with an impairment or disability aged up to 35 or over an opportunity to take part. The conditions for access were re-phrased; now the minimum requirements (personal suitability or a school-leaving certificate from a school for children with learning difficulties) are listed first.



Inclusive group at a bezev preparatory seminar
bezev e.V.

Another issue that is crucial to overcoming obstacles is open communication about needs and barriers, respect for one's peers and, most of all, enjoying finding creative solutions to challenges. More often than not, the positive experience of engaging in inclusive work is enjoyable enough in itself – thanks, for example, to positive feedback received from partners in the destination countries who actively seek out volunteers with an impairment or disability because they are role

models for other people with an impairment or disability in the country in question. This is one of the most valuable experiences to be gained from inclusive work in the field of international exchange. People with an impairment or disability are no longer perceived as dependent recipients of care, but as active members of the community who join their peers in donating their time to non-profit projects around the world.

For more information, go to:

www.bezev.de

www.jetzt-einfach-machen.de

www.inklusivefreiwilligendienste.de



Publications:

"Just do it now!": Manual for inclusive volunteer programmes

"Go ahead, play!": Manual with activities and games for inclusive seminars

Discovering common ground and overcoming reservations

A youth retreat in partnership with disability organisations and youth work

Frank Scheider, head of tourism at Lebenshilfe Bonn gGmbH



This example tells the story of a 14-day inclusive youth retreat held near Husum in northern Germany in August 2017. Young people and young adults aged between 11 and 22 took part. The congregation of a Protestant church in Bonn and the organisation Lebenshilfe Bonn joined forces as project partners. 14 of the 34 participants were individuals with intellectual and (in some cases severe) physical impairments. The group was looked after by a team of eleven team leaders who represented the two project partners.

The goal of the project was to use a holiday setting to create an environment in which all participants could interact with one another respectfully and on an equal footing – with the aim of strengthening tolerance, empathy and mutual respect among them. Both project partners saw the trip as a non-formal education setting that would invite, yet not oblige, participants to become involved. This shared vision would help all participants to improve their sense of agency.

The concept and itinerary were drawn up and developed in three preparatory sessions and several “creative days” over a period of six months. All eleven team members were involved in the process from the very start. The result was a varied daily schedule designed to encourage commitment on the one hand and provide plenty of room for individuality and creativeness on the other.

Each day began with a theme tune that was repeated often throughout the entire retreat. For many disabled young people, this was an important point of orientation and a helpful way to keep track of time. For others, the tune conveyed a sense of togetherness and marked the start of a new programme element. This meant that the ability to tell the time was no longer important. Breakfast, like all the other meals, was eaten together, with random seating arrangements. After breakfast, the group started the day with a 20-minute or so wake-up session. These were planned and implemented by small groups of three to four team members. The session

Lebenshilfe
Bonn gGmbH



was followed by the first workshop of the day, with crafts, exercise and creative activities to choose from guided by one or two team members. Lunch was followed by either a second workshop or an excursion. Each week, participants went on one full-day excursion – once to the island of Föhr and once to the city of Flensburg. After dinner came a compulsory programme of activities that included team games, karaoke or team quizzes. At 10.15 pm, the day was brought to an end with a relaxation session. Once participants had been assisted with their night-time routines, the team met again to analyse the day, give feedback and plan subsequent activities. The team leader for the next day was assigned, important messages for the activities discussed and educational approaches agreed on. These meetings were led by a different team member each day.

During the long and intensive preparatory phase, the team members were able to develop a sense of unity. They found it was

no longer important who came from which project partner or what their previous experience of retreats was. The daily structure developed by all of the team members was a valuable bonding experience; nobody felt anxious about the daily schedules. The workshops provided enough flexibility for team members to contribute their personal preferences, strengths and qualities and gave participants an opportunity for one-on-one interaction with the other team members. The activities were all well designed and the necessary materials purchased in advance. As a result, everyone could respond to situations, demand or weather as required and adapt the programme to participants’ individual needs.

There were plenty of challenges to overcome or deal with ahead of the trip in order to avoid conflict and allow each partner to position itself clearly within the project. The funda-

mentals were agreed by both project partners at management level prior to commencing the work sessions and creative days. Issues to be resolved included:

- paid team members and volunteers working side by side in line with the respective project partner's customary practices,
- the incompatibility of funding initiatives by disability organisations with those by child and youth services,
- the question of which project partner would bear liability for the trip, who would be responsible for if the travel company were to become insolvent, and who would appoint team leaders,
- use of any surplus funds or dealing with financial shortages,
- crisis management and the PR work of the project partners,
- the booking process and how the places would be split between the project partners,
- setting of prices for participants.

Despite careful planning, the inclusive nature of the project bore some conflict potential. One such example was a disagreement with the cleaning staff in the accommodation. As a facility run by a disability organisation, the staff were used to group supervisors or team members tidying up the disabled youngsters' rooms, suitcases and wardrobes. However, this was the first time in decades that they had to deal with a mixed group of young people with and without impairments and the staff were unused to the chaos in the bedrooms. It was expected that the team leaders would tidy up or that the young people would be disciplined. In youth work, the standard view is that young people's rooms and bags are off limits for team members so they would develop a sense of responsibility – but this was unacceptable to the cleaners. The situation

escalated as photos were exchanged via the cleaners' WhatsApp group showing mountains of laundry and untidy rooms. They were not open to discussing the matter or to requests to clean only the halls and sanitary facilities. In the end, the only solution was to put pressure on the facility director to get the cleaning staff to comply with his instructions, delete the photos and arrange new cleaning schedules. The staff were so used to team leaders acting on behalf of disabled people that they expected them to do the same for young people without an impairment. Inclusion generally poses a challenge for accommodation, but this example shows that such problems are not always due to logistics.

What made this inclusive trip so valuable for everyone involved? First and foremost, it was the effective team work by a large number of carers. It is thanks to them that such a wide range of activities could be offered. The young people without impairment also benefited from the excellent ratio of team members to participants.

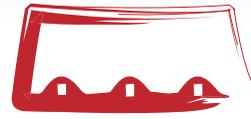
The way in which the young people and young adults saw the team members as role models was also pivotal. Since a large portion of the team members already had experience of dealing with disabled people, this gave both the other members and the participants themselves a sense of normalcy in daily life and allowed them to handle unusual situations as if they were normal. The entire group developed a particularly strong bond. In this inclusive setting, common ground was discovered, reservations were overcome and barriers broken down. Another success of the inclusive approach was that it allowed many participants to re-evaluate how they came across to others, which is always central to youth work. For example, seeing disabled people singing their hearts out, visibly having fun even though they may be totally out of tune, can make it much easier for people who always worry about how they appear to others to relax and build some self-esteem. For me, watching the participants bonding and gaining more respect and consideration for others is the biggest advantage of an inclusive approach.



Lebenshilfe
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..... The Kreisau Model expert programme

Elzbieta Kosek, inclusive education expert at Kreisau-Initiative e.V.



Kreisau-Initiative

The Kreisau Model project took place for the first time in 2006/2007. It aims to connect inclusive international youth exchange programmes with international expert schemes. The activities offered by the partners have a beneficial influence on each other and help to produce fresh input. The curricula of the expert programmes are based on experience gained during youth exchanges. Participants reflect on their experience with each other, whilst new insights and skills developed in these training programmes are fed back into the design and planning of future youth exchanges.

Our inclusive international educational activities are designed for young people aged 14 to 30 from three, four or sometimes more European countries. We take a broad inclusive approach in our work, resulting in projects that are open to anyone interested in taking part, irrespective of their social background, educational experiences, language skills, physical impairments or learning difficulties.³¹ The more diverse the groups, the more intense the experience for all involved. Working with mixed groups forces us to adopt new, rethink existing and modify familiar, tried-and-tested methodological and educa-

tional approaches. This is a key objective of the Kreisau Model expert programme.

The Kreisau Model offers both basic training and advanced training modules. Both are aimed at European experts working in national and international, formal and non-formal education who want to make their activities more inclusive and/or wish to broaden their expertise in this field. When choosing our partners and advertising for participants, we aim to reach out to people from diverse youth work fields (international youth work, disability organisations, community organisations, child and youth services, etc.) so the perspectives of a wide range of target groups can be incorporated into the curricula.

The goal shared by all training modules provided under the Kreisau Model is to teach methodologies for inclusive non-formal education work, initiate shared learning processes and bring together European youth work stakeholders. Most importantly, though, the main aim is to strengthen and expand inclusive education in Europe in order to bring educational activities to young target groups who have previously been less involved in youth work or not at all.

The basic module teaches the fundamentals. It starts by establishing a shared understanding of inclusion. This is particularly important, as debate surrounding the topic of inclusion is handled differently in the European partner countries. Using this approach establishes a common basis for discussions and learning processes. During the rest of the five-day basic training, experts learn about methods that play an important role during the various stages of group dynamics in international exchanges. In order to become active in inclusive international youth work and education themselves and work with heavily mixed groups, the experts must possess methodological and educational skills along with the necessary qualifications. The basic module raises awareness of how a trusting, safe and accessible environment and the use of adapted integration methods can positively influence and foster respect amongst one another and promote the success of inclusive international youth exchanges.

The five-day advanced module expands on the basic training. It also starts by establishing a shared understanding of inclusion and how it is relevant to learning processes. This module teaches methodological approaches

to and key elements of inclusive education. The substance of the module can vary but is always oriented to the needs of the young target groups and the knowledge needs of the experts, whilst incorporating approaches we have found to be reliably successful as well as aspects relevant to implementing the programme. Over the last few years advanced training modules have been offered on language and communication or visualisation, and educational approaches using drama, art, circus, sports and physical activity have been presented and taught.

Our educational work is process- and experience-oriented. The curriculum is aligned with the same dynamic processes found in international youth exchanges. To safeguard the success of the training course, many aspects that are also important when planning and implementing exchange programmes for young people must be considered. This is an important fact and one that is used for the learning processes during the course. Education takes place on two levels across both modules: Experts get a sense of the dynamics and processes involved in international exchanges by taking part in the course, learning the methods and attending practical work-

³¹ "Wir wollen nicht "geistig behindert" genannt werden. Wir sind Menschen mit Lern-Schwierigkeiten!" <http://www.menschzuerst.de/> (accessed 12 Oct 2017).

shops from the participants' perspective, and reflect on these together on a higher level. An important part of the Kreisau Model expert programme is putting new theoretical knowledge into daily practice, which builds greater capacities among the experts.

Not only do experts participate in the training, but as specialists in their respective fields they are valuable sources of input for the learning process and the expert discourse. During reflection sessions on the methods, they share perspectives and experiences from their own countries and areas of work, which produces broad discussions, perspectives, findings and not least successful learning. To tap into this potential, the expert programme is flexible enough to incorporate space for exchanges, debate and reflection.

Work in heterogeneous groups, both in youth and adult education, can also be wrought with challenges. Whilst the variety of international viewpoints contributed by participating experts is beneficial to the process, depending on in which country the international programme is being held this variety can result in conflicting understandings of inclusion, education systems and other aspects which have to be reconciled. This process calls for close supervision and,

most importantly, communication amongst everyone involved as well as a willingness to see things from another perspective. Module supervisors must use appropriate methods and provide assistance to ensure the process is a success. After all, it is this diversity of perspectives that makes the expert programme so invaluable.

As mentioned at the start of this article, our inclusive international youth exchanges and the expert training modules are closely inter-linked, each safeguarding the quality of the respective other project. Experts who have taken part in the Kreisau Model and who return to take part in the inclusive exchange programmes with youth groups help to improve quality on a continual basis. Not only are they better able to prepare the young

participants and offer support during the learning and experience phases – thanks to their training, they also make a sustainable contribution to the impact of the measures by remaining in touch with the young people as supporters after the exchange ends.

In addition to contributing added value to international youth work, expert training schemes of this nature are important for network building among partners in Europe. These European expert networks are needed to be able to offer high-quality inclusive international education and exchange programmes and spread awareness of inclusion throughout education and society. The partners have shared goals and act as multipliers who share successful inclusive programmes, methods and educational approaches. Thanks

to the Kreisau Model, over the past few years we have established a network of European partners in the field of inclusion. Each new training scheme and each new youth exchange brings new partners on board. There is still a lot of work to do to fully integrate inclusive thinking in society, and plenty of room for improvement when it comes to expanding international networks and lobbying.

Most of all, we should not be afraid to make mistakes or to tackle challenges and obstacles head-on. Inclusive international education is still a new area for us all. It is only by continuing to work towards this goal that we will successfully spread and establish inclusive ways of thinking. Our Kreisau Model training makes a small contribution in this respect.



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Links

Eurodesk for everyone: www.rausvonzuhause.de/fueralle (in German) is Eurodesk's website with information on programmes, organisations and points of contact for young people who want to spend a period abroad. The site also offers reports from previous participants and an accessible eurodesk.tv video on an inclusive multinational exchange in Poland. www.rausvonzuhause.de/fueralle

"INKLUMAT" by the district youth councils of Rems-Murr and Esslingen, Germany. This is a tool for child and youth services workers who want to know about inclusion for persons with disabilities and impairments. The Inklumat tool consists of four elements: A self-test, a manual for implementing inclusion in youth work, a set of methods, and a glossary. www.inklumat.de

Inclusion map: A map of Germany showing successful inclusion projects. www.inklusionslandkarte.de

Online manual "Inklusion als Menschenrecht" (Inclusion, a human right) by the German Institute for Human Rights. The manual is designed for those interested in inclusion, disability and human rights. A search function helps to filter for materials according to group size, learning settings and learners' needs. The manual also contains texts, role play scripts, simulation games and other formats for use in group settings. Finally, it includes background texts and a timeline plus biographies and references to legislation.

www.inklusion-als-menschenrecht.de

SALTO's Inclusion for ALL youth work booklets: Various practical manuals for use in (international) inclusion projects, all based on the SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion training seminars which provide universal access to methods and materials.

www.salto-youth.net

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**VISION:
INKLUSION**

The project **VISION:INKLUSION** aimed to develop an inclusion strategy for international youth work. The outcome, which is published in this brochure, goes beyond that in two ways:

- The strategy was not developed *for*, but *with* the international youth work community as well as for a wide variety of experts and target groups.
- During the project, it became clear that there is no such thing as “one” inclusion strategy for the entire international youth work field. The variety of realities, formats and priorities is simply too broad. For this reason, this publication has been designed as a framework within which the international youth work community as well as individual organisations can explore their own avenues towards inclusive international youth work activities.

Using a process model and a set of objectives and associated actions, users can develop their own inclusion strategy that responds to their specific organisational structures, settings and contexts. The central section of the brochure is complemented on the one hand by an overview of the human-rights, youth-policy and conceptual fundamentals of inclusive international youth work, on the other by a series of good practices that illustrate how the strategy can be put into practice.

This publication is primarily aimed at international youth work experts and organisations, the child and youth services community, organisations for and run by people with impairments, and disability assistance providers that are interested in inclusive international youth work. It also provides input for youth policy networks, policy-makers, administrations, ministries and funding organisations.

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