HOW TO...

MAKE MY WORKCAMP INCLUSIVE

Hello, we are participants of the Erasmus+ training course "How to make my Workcamp inclusive" which took place in Ehningen, Germany, from 24th to 28th August 2023. Here, we wrote a few tips and tricks for you that we learned regarding inclusion in Workcamps.

In this booklet...

The **definition of inclusion** that we have agreed between the participants of this training course is the following: **Inclusion is the creation of optimal conditions so that everyone can participate in equal terms regardless of their physical or mental abilities, sexual orientation or cultural identity.**

Why inclusion matters

Inclusion in an international Workcamp is crucial because it **fosters diversity, creativity, and collaboration**. When individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, identities and perspectives come together, it leads to a broader range of ideas and innovative solutions.

An inclusive environment **promotes a sense of belonging, boosts volunteers' morale**, and **enhances overall activities.** By embracing diversity, leaders and organisations can tap into the full potential of their volunteers and create a fairer camp, in addition to **promoting a social transformation towards an equal society**.

Mental health & (physical) disabilities

In our lives, we all go through difficult and uncomfortable situations. **We are all different. And you can never know all the things that someone is going through.** A lot of time, we do not like to talk about our issues. It can be **very hard to share these things with others**, especially if in the past we already have an experience with someone having a negative reaction to us revealing the issue.

In Workcamps, it is very much the same - maybe you will know ahead of time that one of your participants has certain physical or mental issues and/or limitations, but ultimately, many times it can take you by surprise.

We can divide disabilities into two categories - **visible** and **invisible**. Invisible disabilities are disabilities of which we cannot see the extent of from the outside. An example could be partial blindness, being hard of hearing and similar. We as humans tend to make assumptions, but it is very important to keep an open mind and be flexible in your views.

With **mental health issues**, it is important to keep in mind that they are invisible and that **mental health is not just an absence of mental illness/disorder/disability**. So even if someone does not have a diagnosis (or you don't know about it) they may need certain extra support. Which of course goes also for physical disabilities.

Overall, it is important to **keep an open mind, free of assumptions**. For example if you are talking and you see someone doodling, or playing with something, it is easy to feel like they not listening to you - however for many people, this can help them to focus.

Ultimately - something that you will probably read a lot in this short booklet - **having a honest and open talk with the person is usually the best way**. Ask them what they want, what they need, how can you support them. If you are unsure how to talk about the issue, or you do not have much information about it, say so, ask them for more information/tell them that you want them to tell you if something you say is wrong or offensive.

Last thing is that you **do not make assumptions**, and do not be attached to an image of how the person should behave based on symptoms you know or find online. **Symptoms and needs differ incredibly between people.** Two people with the same diagnosis may have completely opposite needs. Especially in mental health, where the criteria for diagnosis are often broad and can be interpreted differently.

To sum it up, **people will never tell you all the things they are struggling with**. Some things, you will never find out - but some may come up, or you will know about them from the start. There is no recipe to follow, but honest conversation, an open mind and willingness to help can go a long way. You can find some tips and tricks for it below.
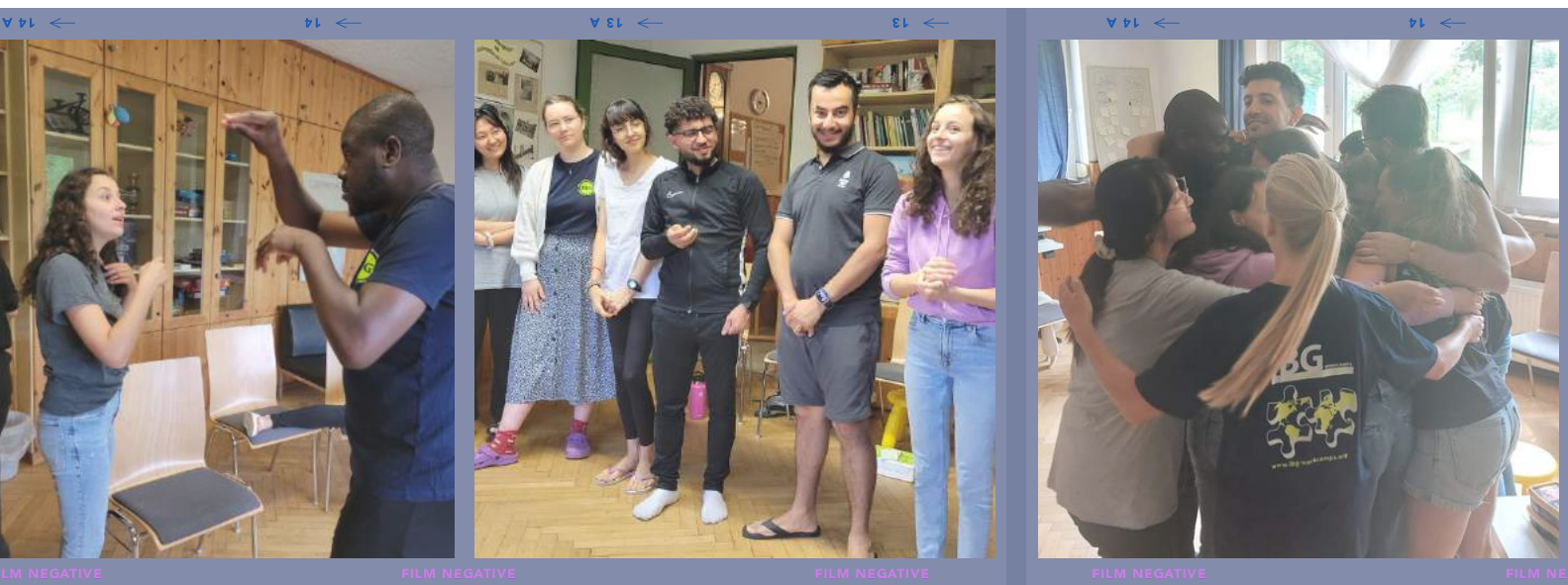
Communication tipps & tricks

Open vs closed questions

- **Closed questions are yes/no questions** (e.g. "Do you like apples?" "Are you having a good day?"). Closed questions often contain assumptions and are not very inviting but helpful if you want to clarify/ask if you heard right. Using too many closed questions can feel like an interrogation. On the other hand, closed questions make it easier to answer for people who are very shy or have only very basic command of a language.

- **Open questions are questions that give the person more space to direct and elaborate their answer** (e.g. "What fruit do you like?" "How is your day?"). Open questions invite people to talk more, do not shut down the conversation, and they often lead to more information.

Effective use of body language

According to some studies, **more than 50% of the meaning of a message is communicated through our body language**! Use open and welcoming gestures, turn towards the person you speak to, show that you are paying attention.

Person-centered conversations

There are few tricks based on **Carl Rogers' method of person-centered psychotherapy** that you can use for better conversations:

- Use **open** (vs closed) **questions** and linear questions.
- Use **encouraging words and phrases** during your conversation.
- **Give time** to receive the answer and time to think about it.
- **Keep eye contact** and use an **open body language**.
- **Repeat what the other person said** to clarify or get more information (e.g. "I really don't like this situation." - "This situation?" This prompts the other person to naturally elaborate what exactly they mean by "this situation".) This is good especially for avoiding misunderstanding which rise from assumptions.

Keep in mind that a person-centered conversation is *not* **supposed to be about the problem, more about the person's resources for finding solutions**. Try to be **transparent**, **acceptive** and **empathetic** in every conversation.

"I"-statements & non-violent communication

"I"-statements are a way of speaking that can help **reduce feelings of blame**. An "I"-statement takes responsibility for one's own feelings, while describing a problem, e.g. "I feel worried when you disappear without letting me know." Communicate non-violently using the following steps:

1. Describe the **situations/ facts**.
2. Describe your **feelings**.
3. Describe your **needs for improvement**.
4. Articulate your **wish(es)**.

Active Listening Techniques

- **Encouraging**: Say "hmm" or "uh-huh", give the other person time to think, repeat the last word of conversation.

- **Clarifying**: Make sure you understand the situation correctly, e.g. "When did this happen?" …

- **Restating:** Check if you understood correctly or not, e.g. "So you would like for your parents to trust you more. Is that right?" ...

- **Reflecting**: Help the person evaluate his/her own feelings after hearing them expressed by someone else, e.g. "You seem very upset."...

- **Summarizing**: Pull important ideas, facts and feelings together, e.g. "These seem to be the key ideas you have expressed...."...

- **Validating**: Acknowledge the worthiness of the other person, e.g. "I appreciate your willingness to resolve this matter."

Breaking the barriers

- Play **ice breaking games** (ninja, dancing chairs, secret dancer, one of the language animation games below - there are also a lot of resources on the internet)

- **Speed dating** :) Pair people up, then after a few minutes they switch and talk with someone new - you can also give talking prompts.

- **Creating 'buddy' couples**. Their task is to take care of each other, check on the other etc.

- **Compliment** each other.

- If your group is not very cohesive, **look for group building games and activities**.

Language animation

There are also certain **games that can help with cohesion within the group despite a language barrier** - these are called **language animation**. They can be useful if someone does not speak English very well, or to get people interested in other languages. It is good practice to give the group small daily learning tasks and make it fun to learn - for example, one day they learn how to say what their name is in a certain language, or they learn how to say a compliment etc.

1. **Fruit salad** (about 20 minutes)

This activity is designed to learn some basic words in the languages of the group. The group sits in a circle. The relevant terms on a poster are read out by native speakers and then repeated by everyone else. Each person gets assigned a word. One person doesn't have a chair, stands in the middle of the circle and wants to sit down. To get a seat, they say a word (although not in their mother tongue), after which those participants who have been assigned the word have to change places. The person in the middle is trying to get a free seat. Again, one person is left without a chair, who again says a word and other participants have to switch places... With the word "fruit salad" everyone has to switch places.

2. **Dance of colours** (approx. 15 minutes)

This activity is designed to learn the colours in the languages of the group. On a previously created poster, the names of different colours are put in the existing languages. They are read out loud by native speakers and then repeated by all others. When the music starts playing, all participants move freely in the room, possibly even dancing. When the music stops, one colour will be said aloud by the game leader in one of the languages and each person must now find an object of that colour as quickly as possible and touch it. Then the music continues to play, the participants continue to dance/move until the music is stopped again. Whoever touchs an object last gets to say the next colour, and so on.

3. **Molecules** (about 15 minutes)

This activity is designed to use movement to learn the numbers in the existing languages and make it possible to expand listening comprehension in a simple way. The team prepares a poster with the numbers from 1 to 10 or up to the number of participants in 3 languages (German, French and Ukrainian for example). The group first practices pronunciation. Then music will be played, the participants walk around the room and someone from the team calls out a number. The participants have to form small groups now according to the number mentioned. The person left remains, it is now your turn to call out a number.

4. Song puzzle (about 30 minutes)

The game leader chooses in advance different songs, in every language that is represented in the camp. He prepares the lyrics printed enlarged. The lyrics of the song are cut up into individual words, these are mixed up and laid out on a large table in the middle of the room (written side up). The participants stand around the table, hands on it Back. Now the song is played once and everyone listens first just once. Then the song played again and the participants should reach now as fast as possible for all words who recognize them. When the song ends or when all snippets of words from the table disappear, the game comes to the end. Now everyone gets the printed lyrics and reads along, while the song again is played.

Note: Depending on the language level, it can be that only single words, sentences or sections of text are recognized. The songs can also be put together by binational tandems. Then can translate the song together and in the cultural context explain.

5. The scene (about 30 minutes)

A mono-national small group of 2 to 4 people prepares one short, simple scene in their first language (e.g. German) and act it out her to the rest of the group. Directly afterwards, that the scene played again, but this time one person from the other group (e.g. French) stands behind each of the actors. The members of the French group now try the German-speaking text. They learn by following the scene several times with the first language speakers and repeat: Repeating the first time they just watch and imitate the gestures, repeating the second time, they try to also speak the German text etc. After three to four repetitions the German-peaking actors leave and the French-speaking participants take their role and play the scene by themselves in German. In a second phase, the roles are swapped: Now the French group prepares and acts out a scene in French and the German-speaking participants gradually learn the French text until they are able to play it unaided.

Note: The dialogues and the length of the Scenes must match the language level to be adjusted. For absolute beginners in a language: No more than two sets of each four words maximum.

Dear camp leader,

we understand that you might be feeling nervous, anxious, or excited after reading everything in this booklet. We know that leading a camp can be challenging by itself, and we hope that all the tips and tricks we learned will be helpful for you. We want to express our appreciation for your presence and let you know that we believe in you!

You are not alone. You have the support of all previous campleaders and the IBG team. Please continue doing your great work, and don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it. Also, remember that it's okay to take breaks during work. Please take care of yourself and ask yourself questions like "What brings me happiness?" or "After what do I feel relieved, relaxed, and good in general?"

We are looking forward to seeing what you accomplish in the future! 🤍

With love,
Ayş, Burcu, Kačka & Kat
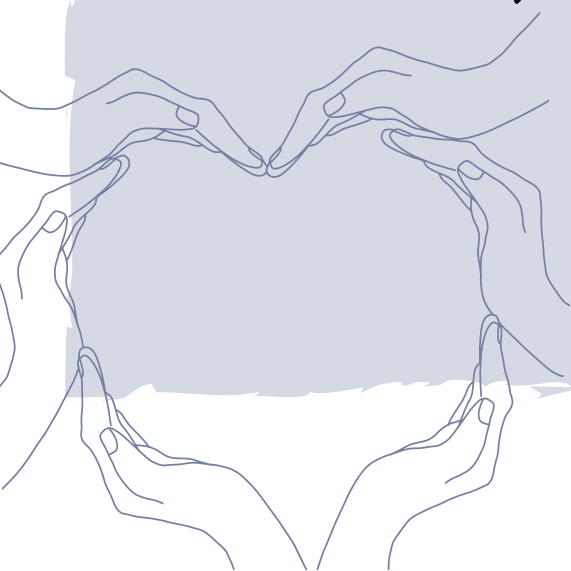
"Workcamp Charta"

We propose all Workcamp participants to accept the following declaration with the objective of building a (more) inclusive Workcamp.

Declaration of volunteers for a (more) inclusive Workcamp:

- I will take care of myself and others.

- I will avoid judgements.

- I will appreciate the differences.

- I will recognize that even if there is a disagreement, each participant is entitled to their perspective.

- I will respect all identities.

- I will use language that is understood by everyone.

This booklet was created during the Erasmus+ project *'How to make my Workcamp inclusive - Diversity and personal support of volunteers in Workcamps'*. In this training course, 15 camp leaders, volunteers and trainers from international voluntary service organisations in Belgium, Catalonia, Czech Republic and Germany worked together to develop concepts and practical tips concerning inclusion in Workcamps and other IVS projects. The project was coordinated and organized by IBG e.V. in Ehningen, Germany in August 2023.

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