

EUROPEAN TOOLKIT

**How to create a
mixed group of youth
and youth with
intellectual disability
for the promotion of
active citizenship**



DISCLAIMER CLAUSE

“The “Imagine” project is co-financed by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union.

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This European Toolkit was created for use by educators and practitioners throughout the European Union.

This Toolkit can be used in schools and in non-formal educational settings, such as community centres.

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1) GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This toolkit was developed during the project *"Imagine! - Strengthening active citizenship and civic skills among youth and young people with disabilities"*, supported by the European program Erasmus+, Action KA2, Small Scale Partnership in Youth. The goal is to guide practitioners involved in the creation of mixed groups between normotypical youth and youth with intellectual disabilities.

The "Imagine!" project was created to provide on the one hand a pathway for mixed youth/youth with disabilities groups to be accompanied towards participation in group life by developing awareness and expression of interests, through non-formal and informal practices, and on the other hand for operators to create skills to build a suitable environment and the ability to accompany during this pathway.

The general objective of the Imagine! project is to develop inclusive and participatory practices and methods that are sensitive to diversity, promoting active citizenship and a sense of initiative among young people, through a Peer methodology among mixed groups of normotypical youth and youth with intellectual disabilities, boosting autonomy and self-determination on all participants, and the training of youth workers.

This general objective is then divided into several specific goals:

- To improve the quality of nonformal and informal education for youth with intellectual disabilities through the exchange of best practices between participating organizations and directly involved youth, to build relationships and structure a partnership to exchange methodologies in a continuous learning perspective;
- Providing appropriate training for the staff involved on the issues of disability, inclusion, youth and active citizenship,

so that they can address the needs of young people and can structure appropriate pathways, while being the bearer within the organization of reference, of elements of innovation and openness, which also pass through cooperation with foreign partners in the framework of the Erasmus+ Program;

- Capacitation of youth and socio-educational animators through the creation of mixed youth/young people with disabilities groups: contributing to the creation of inclusive environments that allow, on the one hand, young people with disabilities to acquire and develop skills to strengthen their civic engagement in the community of reference and in European democratic life, and on the other hand, normo-typical young people to become aware of diversity. Social-educational facilitators will be able to field test the practices learned.
- To give voice and space to young people with intellectual disabilities, on whom there is a lack of participation in the life of nonformal groups and active citizenship issues, mainly due to the difficulty of involvement by educators and the lack of specific strategies for the management of mixed groups;
- to create transnational coordination by entities in order to develop the capacity to work at the EU and cross-sector level and to define a strategic dialogue based on the exchange of expertise and the integration of socio-educational approaches and bottom-up co-design.

These specific objectives link to the European "Inclusion and Diversity" framework: peer-to-peer activity allows individual potential to be expressed in stimulating and safe environments through the facilitation of trained staff. It is interesting to experiment with it in a mixed mode to encourage social inclusion and the enhancement of diversity, such as disability among young people.

2) THE CONTEXT

2.1) European and other International strategies and agendas

2.1.1) Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030

The European Union is firmly committed to fundamental values such as equality, social equity, freedom, democracy and human rights. Both the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union provide the basis for combating all forms of discrimination, establishing equality as a cardinal principle of EU policies. President von der Leyen said that building a Union of equality, in all its aspects, is one of her Commission's priorities.

The adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 was a pivotal moment in establishing minimum standards for the rights of persons with disabilities. The EU and its member states are both signatories to the Convention and are working to implement it.

The European Pillar of Social Rights, proclaimed in 2017, provides a framework for EU employment and social policies. Principle 17 of the Pillar emphasizes the right of people with disabilities to financial support that ensures a life of dignity, to services that facilitate their participation in the labor market and society, and to a work environment appropriate to their needs.

The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 paved the way for a barrier-free Europe by promoting actions also funded by the EU to improve the lives of people with disabilities. However, despite progress, people with disabilities continue to face significant challenges in accessing health care, education, employment, and social participation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these inequalities, making action to address the situation even more urgent.

The EU responded promptly to the pandemic with emergency measures and economic recovery proposals. The EU's long-term budget, together with NextGenerationEU, represents unprecedented support to address the socioeconomic challenges arising from the pandemic. The European Parliament called for a new disability strategy, while the Council promised to continue working to implement the Convention. EU advisory bodies have stressed the importance of accessibility, independent living and governance in promoting the rights of people with disabilities.

This strategy aims to improve the lives of people with disabilities in the coming years, both within and outside the EU. It aims to address the specific challenges faced by people with disabilities by promoting accessibility, inclusion, and equality in all areas of life. The goal is to maximize independence, participation, and decent living conditions for people with disabilities by 2030.

Achieving these goals requires strong state commitment, policies, and targeted actions to create accessible environments, inclusive education systems, high-quality health services, and equitable employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Enabling people with disabilities to fully participate in the transition to an inclusive, green and digital economy and society will help strengthen EU values and promote the rights of people with disabilities globally.



2.1.2) Long life learning

The document shows the eight key competencies for lifelong learning according to the European Council Recommendation of May 22, 2018. These competencies are essential for personal and professional development, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and active citizenship.

1. **Functional Literacy Competence:** Ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, feelings and facts through various forms of communication, both oral and written. Includes the ability to communicate effectively, understand the emotions of others, and evaluate information critically.
2. **Multilingual Competence:** Ability to use several languages in various social and cultural contexts. Includes understanding, interpreting and producing messages both orally and in writing.



3. **Mathematics and Science, Technology and Engineering Competence:** ability to apply mathematical and scientific thinking to solve everyday problems and understand the world around them. Includes knowledge of fundamental mathematical concepts, ability to formulate and solve scientific problems, and interpretation of data.

4. **Digital Competence:** Ability to safely, critically and responsibly use digital technologies for learning, work and social participation. Includes skills such as navigating online, creating digital content and protecting online privacy.
5. **Personal, social, and learning-to-learn competency:** Skills in self-awareness, time and information management, and lifelong adaptation and continuous learning.
6. **Social and civic citizenship skills:** Ability to actively participate in civic and social life, understanding the concepts of citizenship, human rights and the interconnection between global and local issues.
7. **Entrepreneurial competence:** Ability to transform ideas into actions and values for others, using creativity, critical thinking and collaboration to manage projects with social, cultural or financial value.
8. **Competence in cultural awareness and expressions:** Ability to understand and respect cultural and creative expressions in different cultures through a variety of artistic forms. These skills are essential for meeting the challenges of the contemporary world and promoting individual and social development. Their integration into educational programs is crucial to preparing people to be active and competent citizens in today's society.

In the context of mixed groups of normotypical youth and youth with intellectual disabilities, this text can be used in several ways:

- **Creating an inclusive environment:** The text emphasizes the importance of social inclusion and effective communication. Using it as a foundation, facilitators can create an environment that encourages and enhances the participation of all, regardless of their abilities.
- **Development of social and civic skills:** The section on social and civic skills in citizenship emphasizes the importance of

acting as responsible citizens and actively participating in civic and social life. This can be used to promote collaboration and participation of youth with intellectual disabilities in community projects or volunteer activities.

- Fostering autonomy and the ability to learn: The section on personal, social and learning competence focuses on the ability to organize one's own learning and deal with obstacles effectively. This can be adapted to help young people with intellectual disabilities develop personalized and adaptive learning strategies.
- Promote interaction and communication: Digital competence can be used to promote interaction and communication among group participants, using accessible digital tools adapted to the needs of youth with intellectual disabilities.
- Encourage entrepreneurship and creativity: Entrepreneurial competence emphasizes the importance of creativity, critical thinking and problem solving. This can be used to encourage youth with intellectual disabilities to explore their passions and develop creative projects that provide value to the community.

2.1.3) Agenda 2030

A number of shortcomings make the achievement of inclusion goals in participatory settings complex, against the guidelines and policy principles found at the operational level (reflection and inclusion practices by social and educational organizations) and at the macro level with respect to the 2030 Disability Agenda; the latter summarizes the disability-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

- goal 1, zero poverty;
- goal 4, quality education;
- goal 8, decent work and economic growth;

- goal 10, reduction of inequality;
- goal 11, sustainable cities and communities;
- goal 16, peace, justice and strong institutions;
- goal 17, partnerships for the goals.

Integration of tools and practices between youth workers and youth leaders in the field of intellectual disability is still partial: they lack streamlined, practical and flexible tools for integrating non-formal education practices and youth activation in peer mode in mixed groups.



2.2) The target groups: disability and autism

People with intellectual disabilities play a strategic role in promoting a democratic society; inclusion is not only a basic human right, but also “central to the promise” of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Young people with intellectual disabilities must not only be recipients of services, but also be able to actively contribute to the common good by offering their thoughts and voices.

To give substance to these principles, it is necessary to field cross-sectoral projects capable of creating opportunities for contamination between different skills (nonformal education, recovery of intellectual disability) and implementation of an inclusion strategy through the implementation of actions in both educational aspects and aspects related to the process of participation of the young person with disabilities in the life of a peer group.

This process of activation and **empowerment** can be achieved through improving the quality of nonformal and informal education also through activities that involve them in peer exchange (young people without intellectual disabilities) and dialogue with the community of reference. Those working in the field of youth and disability services also want to make their work increasingly effective and efficient in order to best contribute to the realization of true inclusion, considering that working on the two dimensions (youth and disability) requires the integration of specific skills and methods.

2.3) Toolkit background: best practices exchange.

This document comprises the results from a series of trainings and online exchanges of best practices from two entities that work with youth at risk of exclusion for diverse reasons. Lunetica, working with youth to promote empowerment, citizenship, sense of belonging to their community, thus providing the non-formal learning process towards a engaged citizens in participatory projects, showed up the projects and methods used that brought the best results over the years, preventing young people from early school leave and social disconnection.

Amicos, working specifically with people with intellectual disabilities, presented the projects in which also empowering methods provide opportunities for inclusion and social activism, raising awareness on the community on the enriching asset that diversity brings to

any society, and any social challenge, in particular, regarding the environmental global challenges we are all facing.

As a result from the exchange, this toolkit provides the basic steps, founded on both methodologies that complement each other: peer education (the importance of learning from peers to feel more connected and less judged or rejected) and PCP (person-centered planning) that focuses on the power of self-determination, and the possibility of making own choices in social actions.

3) THE METHODOLOGIES

3.1) Peer education

Peer education is an educational methodology that is based on peer learning, where individuals with similar experiences or equal skills share knowledge, experiences and resources with each other. This approach is based on several theories, including social learning theory, which emphasizes the significant role of social interactions in individual learning and development and argues that people learn best when they see others similar to themselves facing and overcoming similar challenges.

Within peer groups, the methodology is usually implemented through structured sessions where group members share knowledge, discuss common problems and support each other in the learning process, creating an inclusive and collaborative environment where each individual has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the experience of other group members. These groups can be formed to address a wide range of topics, including health, education, personal and professional development.

This methodology focuses on activating prior knowledge, peer interaction as a means of fostering active learning, and building a sense of community and mutual support. Instructors or facilitators

in peer groups often assume a role of guidance rather than authority, encouraging active participation and the sharing of personal experiences as valuable educational resources. This approach not only promotes the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills, but also the development of social skills, individual empowerment and a sense of group belonging.

3.2) PCP: person-centered planning

Person-Centered Planning (PCP) is a methodology that was developed in the 1980s with the objective of promoting people with intellectual or developmental disabilities the opportunity to direct their own lives. Key Principles of PCP:

- **Self-determination:** PCP is based on the right to self-determination, allowing people with disabilities to establish their own plans and goals for the future.
- **Personalized Support:** During the PCP process, the person with disabilities has the support of a group of significant people that they choose, such as family, professionals and friends.
- **Individualization:** it is recognized that each person is unique with different interests, needs and dreams, which is why individualization is a central value of the services that provide support.

A full PCP Implementation requires specialized staff to provide all the steps and support during daily life routines and choices. That is, it requires a good understanding of the person with disabilities and their life situation is sought by all the people involved in the process; a balance of Aspirations and Supports: a balance must be established between what is important to the person, their aspirations, and the supports they may need to achieve them. And also the targeted person, with the support of his or her group, formulates his or her own future plans and goals, as well as the strategies, means and actions

to achieve progress and success. This methodology allows people with disabilities to take control of their lives and decisions, promotes inclusion and active participation in society, improves quality of life and personal satisfaction. In the framework of this toolkit practical applications proposal, the main aspects that will be considered when forming mixed groups of young participants in non-formal collaborative activities will be those regarding the **OPTIONS** (having the opportunity to choose which groups or activities to become part of, which own projects or proposals within the peer group to get involved), and **SUPPORT** (having a trained person supporting the person with disabilities, that could be a peer or not).



4) PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

As part of the project, the use of peer education is proposed as an effective methodology to stimulate active participation of youth within mixed groups: indeed, it has proven to be a tool for learning and growth, and when applied within mixed groups between normotypic youth and youth with intellectual disabilities, it offers numerous benefits for both normotypic and youth with disabilities participants.

First, by promoting social inclusion and integration among individuals with different abilities and backgrounds, this approach allows youth with intellectual disabilities to feel accepted and valued within the group, thereby reducing the risk of marginalization and social isolation.

At the same time, normotypical participants have the opportunity to develop empathy, understanding and respect toward people with disabilities, helping to create a culture of inclusion within the community.

In addition, peer education fosters the development of social and interpersonal skills for both groups: through interaction and collaboration with their peers, young people with intellectual disabilities have the opportunity to improve their communication, problem solving, and interpersonal relationship management skills; likewise, normotypic participants benefit from the experience of working with individuals with disabilities, learning to communicate clearly, adaptively, and inclusively.

In addition, the development of self-esteem and self-confidence is fostered for both groups: active involvement in teaching and learning processes enables young people with intellectual disabilities to experience personal successes and to feel valued for their abilities and contributions.

Similarly, normotypic participants gain confidence in their own

leadership and teaching skills, recognizing the value of their role in supporting others and creating an inclusive and supportive environment.

Finally, this methodology fosters creativity and innovation through the exchange of different ideas and perspectives; in fact, by working together to address common challenges and find innovative solutions, participants develop the ability to think critically, creatively, and collaboratively, preparing them to successfully address real-world challenges.

For peer education to be effective, certain precautions must be taken to foster an inclusive, collaborative and empowering environment for all participants. So anyone willing to start and promote an inclusive peer education activity, three main aspects shall be addressed: people, location, activities.

4.1) The people

When making a call for reaching young participants with the perspective of establishing social connection within the group and engagement for a long period (the idea is to engage and connect, meet, for several months with a certain frequency, and that youth feels motivated and enthusiast towards meeting each others), some considerations shall be made regarding the personalities, the specific needs, the abilities and skills that each participant brings to the group.

This is part of the process: knowing each others, but also being aware from the beginning of risks, limitations, and needs, to adequately address conflict.

First of all, it is essential to create an inclusive and welcoming environment in which all participants feel accepted and respected within the group. This can be achieved by fostering a culture of inclusion and diversity through activities and discussions that value individual differences. In addition, it is important to adopt

policies and practices that counteract bullying and discrimination, thus ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all.

The rules and limits for being part of any group should be clearly stated, and participants themselves can be the ones establishing those rules (activity for democratic life learning).

In promoting an inclusive and respectful environment within mixed groups between normotypical young people and young people with intellectual disabilities, it is essential to adopt a series of good practices that encourage the active participation of all participants.

In this guide, we will focus on two important aspects: providing specific guidelines to facilitate the participation of children with intellectual disabilities and promoting the correct behavior of normotypical children in order to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

The objective is therefore to create inclusive environments that allow, on the one hand, young people with disabilities to acquire and develop skills to strengthen their civic commitment in the community of reference and in European democratic life, and on the other to normal young people of raise awareness of diversity.

This type of activity fits into the broader framework of the first specific objective (improving the quality of non-formal and informal education for young people with intellectual disabilities through the exchange of good practices between participating organizations and young people directly involved and the training of youth workers in the bodies involved on the topic of disability, inclusion, young people, active citizenship in non-formal\informal education), referring to the policy framework defined by the Council of the European Union and its Recommendation on key competences for long life learning (2018) which identifies the essential key skills for citizens (personal fulfillment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, increased employability, active citizenship and social integration).

Key competences are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that should be developed from a young age throughout life through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Through this action we intend to achieve the objective of improving the active participation of young people, precisely through their interaction with young people with intellectual disabilities, who are in turn valued and empowered, with the ambition of contributing to the creation of true inclusion at two levels : making young people with intellectual disabilities more protagonists of their lives with the help of peers, who in turn increase their skills and attitudes of participation and active citizenship and inclusion of peers with difficulties.

In order for normotypical young people to contribute effectively to the inclusion and active involvement of their peers with intellectual disabilities, it is essential to raise their awareness and provide them with the necessary tools to act appropriately in interpersonal relationships.

First of all, it is important to promote greater awareness and understanding of issues related to disability and autism. Offering young people information and practical tools on how to interact with their peers with disabilities can help them develop an empathetic and inclusive attitude. For example, providing suggestions on how to handle specific situations, such as the constant repetition of a behavior by an autistic child, can be extremely useful.

Furthermore, it is essential that young people are available and welcoming towards their peers with intellectual disabilities. A willingness to understand individual needs and offer support and friendship can make a difference in the inclusion and well-being of all group participants.

Likewise, it would not be correct to overlook the importance of educating normal children on appropriate and respectful behavior towards their peers with intellectual disabilities.

Through the adoption of empathetic, inclusive and non-discriminatory behaviors, normal children can significantly contribute to creating an environment that values and respects individual differences. By combining these two perspectives, we can create an environment where all participants feel accepted, valued, and encouraged to contribute their unique abilities. Through the application of the good practices illustrated in this guide, we aspire to promote an enriching and inclusive educational experience for all young people involved.

4.2) The location

As part of good practices to encourage the active participation of children with intellectual disabilities, it is essential to adopt an approach that takes into account their specific needs and abilities. A series of targeted strategies can facilitate the inclusion of these young people within the educational and social context.

First of all, it is essential to carefully take care of the structuring of the context in which the activities take place. The meeting room should be designed to minimize distracting stimuli and encourage concentration on the proposed tasks. This neutral and well-organized environment can significantly contribute to creating optimal conditions for the active involvement of children with disabilities.

In addition, adequate preparation is crucial to anticipate and facilitate the participation of children with intellectual disabilities. Providing them with a social story that describes the meeting location, times, people involved and planned activities can help them feel more confident and prepared to deal with the situation.

The use of Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) tools, such as checklists and task analysis, represents further support for these children in completing the proposed activities.

These tools allow them to better understand instructions and organize their actions more effectively, thus facilitating their involvement and active participation.

Finally, identifying a young person as a point of reference for each participant with an intellectual disability can be extremely beneficial. This supportive companion can accompany the child throughout the journey, offering practical and emotional support and facilitating their interaction with other participants and the surrounding environment.

4.3) The activities

Another crucial aspect is to foster collaboration and active involvement of all participants through activities and projects that require everyone's cooperation and contribution. Encouraging teamwork and the sharing of ideas can stimulate each individual's interest and commitment, allowing them to feel involved and valued within the group.

It is also important to tailor activities to the needs and abilities of each participant, considering the different abilities and preferences of participants when designing educational activities. Using inclusive and differentiated approaches will ensure that everyone can actively participate and contribute in their own way, without feeling excluded or overwhelmed by the proposed activities.

Finally, it is crucial to promote empowerment and shared leadership among participants, enabling them to take active roles within the group and contribute to decision-making and planning of activities. Encouraging shared responsibility and shared leadership fosters a sense of belonging and active participation, enabling youth to develop their leadership skills and contribute meaningfully to the life of the group and the community as a whole.

As regards children with intellectual disabilities, it is essential to provide targeted support and resources to allow them to participate

actively and meaningfully in group activities. We will focus on practical strategies that allow them to express their opinions, collaborate with their peers and contribute to the success of the team.

Another aspect to consider is the simplicity in structuring the activities and materials proposed. Minimizing the complexity of activities and materials can facilitate the participation of children with disabilities, allowing them to concentrate on the main activities and make full use of their abilities.

Finally, to encourage better interaction and relationships between participants, it is useful to provide small group moments within the large group. These moments allow us to create more intimate and reassuring environments, where children with disabilities can feel more at ease in actively participating and relating to the external environment. How to “hook” young people?

To engage typical young people and young people with intellectual disabilities in mixed group activities, it is essential to adopt an approach that takes into account the needs, abilities and preferences of both groups.

Firstly, communication plays a crucial role: it is essential to clearly and directly communicate the intention to involve young people in these activities and illustrate the potential benefits of mutual interaction; using accessible language suited to the needs of participants with intellectual disabilities is essential to ensure adequate understanding and informed participation.

Involving caregivers and families from the beginning is equally important to create a climate of trust and collaboration, for example through information meetings or orientation sessions where the proposed activities are presented and where participants' questions and concerns are answered and of their families.

Furthermore, it is crucial to actively involve young people in the decision-making process regarding the activities to be carried

out: asking them what types of activities they prefer and taking into account their opinions and preferences fosters a sense of belonging and self-esteem.

Promoting an environment of acceptance and inclusion is another fundamental aspect, and this can happen through informal events or preliminary meetings where young people can socialize and get to know each other, create bonds and overcome any social barriers.

Offering incentives for active involvement can also be an additional effective strategy, rewarding participants for their effort and participation and encouraging deeper and more motivated involvement in activities.

Finally, it is essential to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for activities, ensuring that spaces are accessible to all, including the specific needs of participants with intellectual disabilities and ensuring the presence of qualified support staff.

4.4) Group creation

After starting the “engaging” activity and involving normal young people and those with intellectual disabilities, the creation of the group can be managed carefully to ensure an inclusive and stimulating environment.

You can start with guided group formation, organizing sessions in which participants are grouped based on common interests, personal goals or affinities. A facilitator can observe interactions and suggest appropriate group combinations, ensuring that each group is balanced and includes a diversity of participants.

To encourage integration and interaction between all participants, you can also consider the possibility of rotating members between different groups during the course of the activities: in this way, participants will have the opportunity to get to know and work with a variety of people, thus broadening their perspectives and promoting cohesion within the mixed group.

If necessary, volunteers can be assigned to provide individual support to participants with intellectual disabilities in integrating into the mixed group, facilitating the socialization process and ensuring that all participants feel included and supported.

Actively involving all participants in establishing group rules and norms is essential to creating a respectful, inclusive and collaborative environment. This process can be facilitated by brainstorming sessions in which participants share their ideas and suggestions to promote mutual respect and sharing of resources.

Another important step consists in organizing specific activities aimed at strengthening the sense of belonging and collaboration within the group. These activities can include trust games, problem solving activities or collaborative art projects, suited to the needs and abilities of all participants. Finally, constantly monitoring the climate and dynamics of the group and providing additional support if necessary is fundamental for managing conflicts, promoting open communication and strengthening interpersonal relationships. It will therefore be necessary to be available to answer participants' questions and concerns and to intervene promptly in case of problems. Involvement of normotypical young people and young people with intellectual disabilities. Once the group has been created, there are several practices that can be adopted to actively engage typical young people and those with intellectual disabilities.

To start, it is useful to organize collaborative activities that require the participation of all group members: art projects, group work or problem solving activities are excellent examples of this, as they promote interaction and the sharing of ideas. Another effective way to involve participants can be to assign roles and responsibilities within the group, designating group leaders, secretaries or activity managers and allowing them to actively contribute to the functioning of the group.

Mentoring activities give normal young people the opportunity to

offer support and guidance to their peers with intellectual disabilities: this not only promotes mutual learning, but also the development of meaningful relationships within the group; the organization of recreational activities such as excursions, trips or game evenings also offers participants the opportunity to socialize and have fun together, creating bonds and sharing pleasant moments. Volunteer projects or community service initiatives can engage the group in activities that promote a sense of social responsibility and solidarity, giving them the opportunity to work together for a common good.

Finally, organizing informal social gatherings, such as dinners or movie nights, offers an opportunity for participants to socialize and strengthen friendship bonds in a relaxed and informal setting.

The aim is to offer a variety of opportunities that take into account the interests, abilities and needs of participants, thus creating an inclusive and stimulating environment in which everyone can grow and develop fully.

In this context, how can democracy of decisions be ensured? When co-creating events, how can you be sure that the opinions of young people with disabilities are taken into consideration as much as those of normal people?

Ensuring democracy of decisions in an event co-creation context is crucial to ensuring fair and inclusive involvement of all participants, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Here are some strategies to promote participation and fairness in decision-making:

- Access to information: ensure that all relevant information is accessible to all participants, using formats and methods of communication that respect the individual needs of participants with intellectual disabilities; this could include the translation of documents into accessible formats, the use of clear and understandable language and the physical accessibility of spaces.

- Participation support: Provide the necessary support so that all participants can fully participate in discussions and co-creation of events, including through the use of technological aids, the presence of interpreters or mediators, or the assignment of mentors to offer support individually to participants with disabilities.
- Safe and inclusive spaces: Create an environment where all participants feel free to express their opinions and contribute to decisions without fear of judgment or discrimination. It will be necessary to ensure that all group members respect the opinions of others and promote a climate of openness and mutual respect.
- Diversified representation: the co-creation group must be diverse and representative of all perspectives and experiences present in the community; this can favor a balanced participation of normal and intellectually disabled young people, as well as people with different ethnic, socio-economic backgrounds and guidelines.
- Transparent decision-making procedures: Clearly define decision-making procedures that are transparent and accessible to all participants, adopting the majority principle or seeking to reach consensus among all members of the group.



5) CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the toolkit developed in the context of the project “Imagine! - Strengthening active and civic citizenship skills among young people and young people with disabilities” is the result of a commitment aimed at promoting the inclusion and active participation of young people with and without disabilities intellectual through the co-creation of events and activities. Through the promotion of inclusive and participatory practices and methods, the project aims to improve the quality of non-formal and informal education for young people with intellectual disabilities, encouraging the exchange of good practices and the training of youth workers. The adoption of the Peer Education methodology, together with the creation of mixed groups of normal young people and those with intellectual disabilities, aims to promote the self-esteem, social and communication skills of both groups.

However, ensuring the democracy of decisions in this context requires constant commitment and a series of targeted strategies. It is essential to ensure access to information, provide support for participation, create safe and inclusive spaces, ensure diverse representation, adopt transparent decision-making procedures and involve all participants in feedback and evaluation of the decision-making process.

Ultimately, the “Imagine!” project represents an important step forward towards promoting the inclusion and active participation of young people with intellectual disabilities, offering a replicable and adaptable model for the co-creation of events and activities that are inclusive and respectful of diversity. The toolkit created aims to be a complete and organized resource that provides educators and youth workers with practical tools, guidelines, activities and teaching materials to support their educational work, to help in educational challenges and in building mixed youth\youth groups disabled.

