



Tools4Inclusion

Handbook

A guide to inclusive informal
educational activities

Tools4Inclusion

Partnership

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Tools4Inclusion Initiative

1. Tools4Inclusion Initiative

Tools4Inclusion (T4I) aims to **empower youth (ages 15–25)** from majority and minority backgrounds to become responsible citizens actively engaged in reducing social inequalities. Central to this initiative is the principle of **inclusivity**, achieved through collaboration between minority and majority youth who undergo comprehensive training and organize inclusive **educational sessions for children (ages 13–15)** from diverse backgrounds.

The project employs a **complex approach** to promoting youth civic engagement, requiring cooperation among multiple stakeholders, including children, youth facilitators, parents, teachers, and NGO professionals. This strategy offers dual benefits, enriching the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of both youth and children:

- ♦ **Youth facilitators** gain the ability to deliver activities tailored to children from diverse backgrounds by completing expert-developed training and facilitating inclusive sessions in a socio-culturally complex environment.
- ♦ **Children** benefit not only from educational activities, such as enhancing communication and problem-solving skills, but also from the attitude-shaping effects of positive intergroup contact.

The T4I initiative involves collaboration across three countries and four organizations: **Bagázs Közhasznú Egyesület (Hungary)**, **Aproximar-Cooperativa de Solidariedade Social (Portugal)**, **Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary)**, and **The Foundation for Global Human Dignity (Malta) [later: Human Dignity in Action (Belgium)]**.

The project's goal is to develop and implement inclusive educational programs in these countries, targeting youth and children from diverse backgrounds. Looking

ahead, T4I aims to expand its reach, including more countries to broaden its impact across Europe.



The Handbook

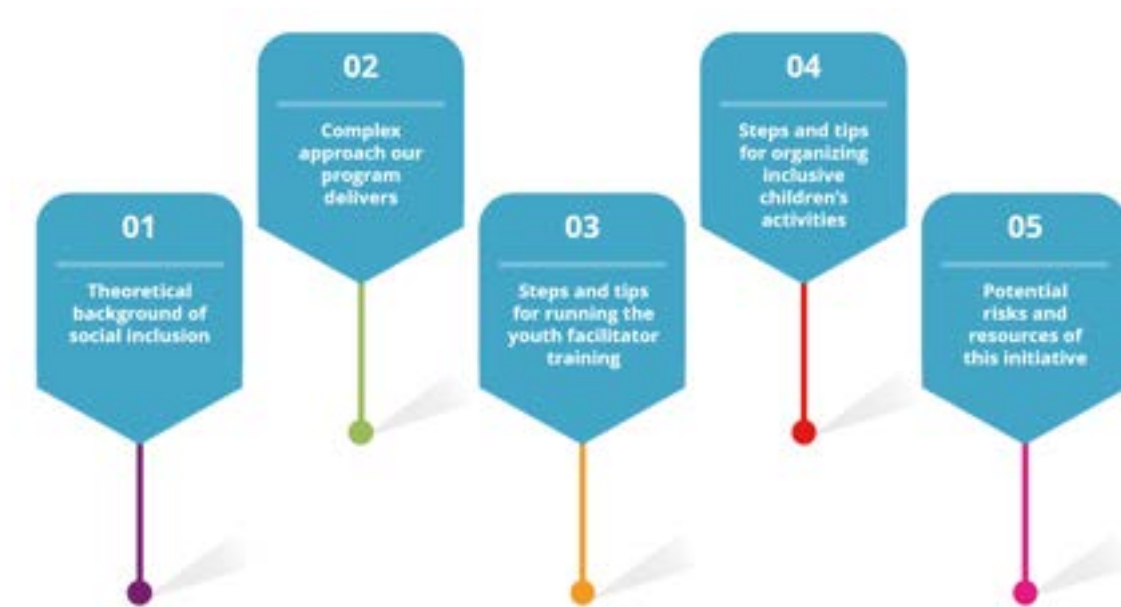
2. The Handbook

2.1. Aims and Goals of the Handbook

This *handbook* serves as a guide for implementing the Tools4Inclusion (T4I) initiative across Europe. Our objective is to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation in the field, thus offering an overview of both the theoretical background and the practical implementation of the initiative.

Given the dual focus of this project (youth facilitators and children), the *handbook* provides guidelines on training ethnically, culturally and socioeconomically diverse teams of youth facilitators, and subsequently implementing inclusive children's sessions with their assistance.

By reading this *handbook*, readers can gain knowledge about the:



2.2. Who is this Handbook for?

This *handbook* is designed for professionals in education—such as teachers, social pedagogists, social workers, and trainers—who wish to expand their knowledge on empowering and actively engaging diverse groups of youth or implement a T4I program in their school or community.

2.3. How to use this Handbook?

We encourage professionals to view this *handbook* as a tool that links theory with practice and to immerse themselves in the knowledge collected here, whether for better understanding the concept of inclusion or fully implementing an inclusive program in their community. To get a **general overview** of the practical implementation of the comprehensive T4I program, please see the *Gantt chart* on [page 20](#).

Chapter 3 introduces the **theoretical background**, offering a concise yet informative overview of social inclusion and inclusive education. It also provides an introduction to the comprehensive approach required to support the inclusion of ethnically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse youth and children.

Chapter 4 focuses on the **methodological aspects** of implementing the T4I program. Readers will gain a detailed understanding of the program's framework and the roles and responsibilities of its various stakeholders.

Chapter 5 guides readers through the **youth facilitator training**, offering insights into the training materials. Key topics include the profile of youth facilitators and strategies for addressing their diverse backgrounds.

Chapter 6 explores the implementation of **inclusive children's sessions**. It covers recruiting children, structuring a semester and individual sessions, and managing risks throughout the initiative.

2.4. Keywords

Social Inclusion; Diversity, Youth; Empowerment; Youth Training; Intervention with children.

Inclusion

3. Inclusion

Understanding the theoretical background is crucial for the success of the T4I initiative. This evidence-guided intervention combines theoretical knowledge with practical tools, ensuring that our efforts are grounded in evidence-based practices. By integrating these elements, T4I creates a comprehensive program that equips participants with the necessary skills and insights to address complex social issues effectively.

Chapter 3:

- ◆ Sheds light on the importance of social inclusion of children (3.1. *The Importance of Social Inclusion*).
- ◆ Explains this program's complex approach to inclusion (Chapter 3.2. *Complex Approach to Promoting Social Inclusion in Education*).

3.1. The Importance of Social Inclusion

From a youth perspective, **social inclusion** is the process by which individuals realize their potential within society, gain acknowledgment and acceptance from social institutions, and integrate into the network of social relationships within a community. This can occur through education, work, volunteering, or other forms of active participation. Social inclusion empowers individuals to engage actively in social life (Council of Europe & European Commission, n.d.).

In contrast, **social exclusion** is characterized by isolation and a breakdown of social connections between individuals and society (Council of Europe & European Commission, n.d.). It marginalizes specific groups by restricting their access to societal benefits and services available to majority populations (Galabuzi, 2004). Children from ethnic, cultural, and religious minority backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion. In environments where social inclusion is not prioritized, peer victimization, rejection, and friendlessness are more common (Juvonen et al., 2019). Furthermore, social exclusion and perceived prejudice negatively affect psychological well-being and hinder academic progress (Hood et al., 2016).

Educational settings play a pivotal role in shaping children's intergroup attitudes (Cooper & Slavin, 2001) and fostering prosocial behavior (Alan, 2021), encouraging inclusivity and bridging socio-cultural differences. Inclusivity in education can take many forms, addressing the needs of children with disabilities (Amado et al., 2013),

refugees and immigrants (Aarsaether, 2021), those with different first languages (Juvonen et al., 2019), or children facing social disadvantages (Veland, 2009). However, social inclusion extends beyond physical integration. A socially inclusive educational environment ensures equal access to social goods, such as learning opportunities (Lister, 1998), and facilitates harmonious relationships, including between students of diverse ethnic backgrounds (Juvonen et al., 2019).

Promoting inclusivity in education requires targeted solutions that address the needs of marginalized groups. **Inclusive educational interventions** are globally recognized practices designed to provide equal opportunities for all children (Tristiani, 2019). These interventions often include strategies like establishing common classroom goals and adopting inclusive teaching methods (Juvonen et al., 2019). **Social skills training** is especially effective for children at risk of exclusion, as it enhances positive social interactions (Denham et al., 2009).

Another impactful strategy is promoting **positive intergroup contact**, which reduces prejudice and improves intergroup relations when certain conditions are met: equal status between groups, shared goals, cooperation, and authoritative support (Allport, 1954). Intergroup contact interventions that meet these conditions foster understanding and empathy among diverse groups, reducing social tensions and promoting inclusivity (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

The T4I project integrates these practices through youth facilitator training and inclusive children's sessions. By leveraging positive intergroup contact and social skills training, T4I addresses the complexity of social systems influencing children and youth, including their school and home environments.

3.2. Complex Approach to Promoting Social Inclusion in Education

The T4I project adopts a **complex approach to promoting social inclusion**, grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which highlights the interplay between a child's primary and secondary social environments. The primary environment includes family and close community, while the secondary encompasses the school setting. Effective inclusive interventions, as emphasized by Radó (2017), require addressing both systems. This involves differentiated practices, institutionalized procedures, sustained inclusion capacity, and active parental involvement. Recognizing these interconnections, the T4I initiative engages stakeholders from each layer of children's social environments, including youth

facilitators, NGO professionals, teachers, and parents, to collaboratively support social inclusion.

Below we provide a general overview of the benefits of adopting a complex approach, with detailed descriptions of each stakeholder's role provided in Chapter 4.2: Stakeholders.



From the perspective of **participating children, youth facilitators** play a unique role as "near-peers" (Solomon, 2024) who act as relatable role models. Their presence fosters trust and inspiration among children while providing significant developmental opportunities for the facilitators themselves. Research shows that engaging in similar initiatives equips youth with skills to navigate diverse backgrounds, resolve conflicts, engage in compromise, and demonstrate empathy (Krauss & Suandi, 2008). Thus, the involvement of youth facilitators creates a reciprocal dynamic where both facilitators and children benefit.



Teachers are equally critical in fostering children's social inclusion. When educators are adequately prepared to manage ethnically diverse classrooms and equipped with inclusive guidance and resources, they can empower students and promote meaningful intergroup interactions (Keles, 2021). Conversely, inadequate teacher training or racially biased pedagogical practices can perpetuate marginalization. For example, Roma students are often subject to lowered expectations due to racialized perceptions of their abilities (Messing, 2017). The T4I initiative addresses this by equipping teachers with inclusive strategies and methodologies, enabling them to support positive intergroup contact as authoritative figures, a key condition for successful interaction (Allport, 1954; *see Chapter 3.1: The Importance of Social Inclusion*).



Parents also play a central role in their children's academic success and social adjustment (Bempechat, 1992). Their involvement is crucial for fostering social inclusion within the educational context (Gonzalez-Falcón et al., 2022). Field interventions have demonstrated the value of parental engagement in promoting inclusion, whether through skill-building activities, enhanced teacher-parent communication, or platforms that allow parents and children to voice their needs (Keles, 2021). Within the T4I framework, parents are encouraged to support and motivate their children's participation while also building stronger connections with teachers to reinforce inclusion efforts.

Tools4Inclusion Methodology

4. Tools4Inclusion Methodology

The T4I methodology consists of two interconnected phases: *training* and *intervention*. It engages multiple stakeholders, including *NGO professionals, teachers, parents, youth facilitators, and children*, whose involvement is crucial to the program's success. By addressing the complex ecosystems in which children live and interact, the program extends the benefits of inclusion beyond the participants to their schools, families, and broader communities.

Chapter 4:

- ◆ Introduces the two phases of the T4I program (*Chapter 4.1. Structure of the Program*).
- ◆ Details the background, roles, and responsibilities of all stakeholders (*Chapter 4.2. Stakeholders*).

4.1. Structure of the Program

Training: Educating and Empowering Youth Facilitators

The first phase of the T4I initiative focuses on equipping youth facilitators (aged 15–25) with the skills to lead inclusive sessions for children (*see Chapter 5: Youth Facilitator Training*). This phase combines online and offline training to introduce the T4I methodology and essential facilitation techniques.

The two primary objectives are:

- **To create an inclusive environment** for youth facilitators from both majority and minority backgrounds, fostering effective collaboration.
- **To prepare** youth facilitators to actively lead inclusive children's sessions.

Working in an inclusive setting with equal status benefits all youth facilitators (*see Chapter 3.1: The Importance of Social Inclusion*). Majority group youth gain a deeper understanding of and connection with minority communities, broadening their perspectives and fostering inclusivity. Minority group youth benefit by taking on leadership roles, acquiring valuable skills, and building supportive networks. This context empowers them to become agents of change in their communities, strengthening collective capacity to address future challenges and opportunities.

Intervention: Organizing Inclusive Programs for Children

The second phase emphasizes the practical application of youth facilitators' skills through inclusive sessions for children aged 13-15 from diverse backgrounds (see *Chapter 6: Inclusive Children's Sessions*).

The goals of this phase are:

- **To provide** youth facilitators with hands-on experience organizing inclusive sessions under the guidance of NGO professionals and teachers.
- **To foster an environment** where children can build positive peer relationships across social divides, enhancing their social skills and promoting inclusivity.

For children from majority backgrounds, the sessions offer exposure to diverse environments and interactions beyond their typical social circles, helping reduce biases during a formative stage of development. For children from minority groups, the sessions provide an inclusive setting to practice social adaptation and mobility skills, preparing them for unfamiliar contexts. Parent involvement is crucial to the success of this phase.

4.2. Stakeholders

As detailed in *Chapter 3.2: Complex Approach to Promoting Social Inclusion in Education*, the T4I initiative employs a complex approach that requires the active participation of various stakeholders to successfully implement the second program phase: intervention (see *Chapter 4.1: Structure of the Program*). The core agents of the T4I initiative are youth facilitators, who form the heart of the program through their central roles in both the training and intervention phases. Parents, teachers, and NGO professionals provide essential support in planning, facilitating, and promoting program activities.

While the involvement of multiple stakeholders is vital to the program's success, it can also lead to challenges, particularly around clarifying roles and responsibilities. To address this, we provide a detailed description of each stakeholder's contributions, enabling schools or organizations to implement the T4I program effectively within their contexts. To minimize confusion or diffusion of responsibilities, we recommend defining all stakeholder roles clearly during the initial project planning stage (see *Gantt chart on page 20*).

Children



Children participate in the **intervention phase** of the T4I program and are typically **between 13 and 15 years** old, representing both majority and minority communities. While it is suggested that at least one-third of the group include children from marginalized communities, schools and organizations should adapt this to their specific contexts. Children attend educational sessions and engage in activities aimed at fostering personal development, knowledge sharing, acceptance, and inclusion. Children from minority backgrounds might need additional support due to disadvantaged socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds. This support should be provided by NGO professionals (*see below: NGO Professionals*) or by teachers (*see below: Teachers*)

Youth facilitators



Youth facilitators, **aged 15–25**, are central to the T4I program, participating in both **training and intervention phases**. It is suggested that at least one-third of the facilitators come from disadvantaged backgrounds, though this can be adjusted based on the local context. These volunteers undergo **comprehensive training** (both online and offline) to acquire the skills necessary to plan and facilitate inclusive sessions for children. During the intervention phase, youth facilitators **prepare and lead** these **sessions** with professional guidance from teachers and NGO professionals, applying the knowledge gained during training.

Parents



Parental involvement is vital for the success of the children's activities in the intervention phase of the T4I program (*see Chapter 3.2. Complex Approach to Promoting Social Inclusion in Education*). Parents from both minority and majority backgrounds **support their children's participation** by providing consent, motivation, and managing their behavior. They **participate in parent-teacher conferences and children's sessions** as needed, depending on their availability and mobility. Especially for parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds, additional support (e.g. arranging transportation) might be necessary, which should be provided by NGO professionals or coordinated with the responsible teachers. Teachers maintain regular contact with parents to keep them informed and engaged, ensuring continuous feedback and active participation.

NGO Professionals



NGO professionals bring expertise in diversity, inclusion, and non-formal education, contributing significantly to the T4I program. Their suggested roles include **introducing the project to stakeholders, assisting with youth facilitator recruitment, delivering training, and supporting the intervention phase**. They may also provide tools and resources, oversee children's sessions, and maintain communication with schools and parents. If sessions are held in a formal educational setting, teachers can take on some of these responsibilities. In the case of the T4I pilot, professionals from the four partner organizations (Bagázs, Aproximar, GHD, ELTE) fulfilled this role. Group leaders from NGOs may also guide the program's implementation (*see below: Group Leaders*).

Teachers



Teachers from any subject area can participate in the T4I program if they are motivated to promote diversity and inclusion. Their role is vital for legitimizing the initiative by providing institutionalized support, a key factor for successful intergroup contact (*see 3.1: The Importance of Social Inclusion*). Teachers also contribute by sharing insights into the skills and needs of participating children, helping to tailor sessions for inclusivity.

Teachers can engage with the program in two primary ways:

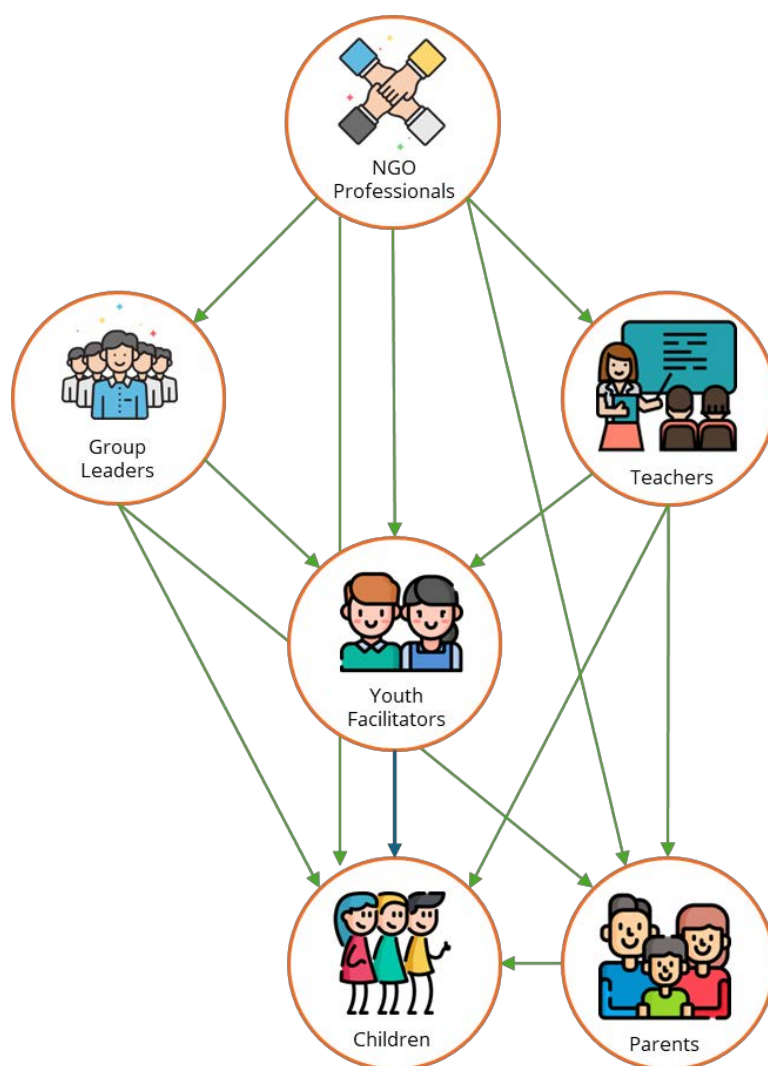
- **As Primary Contacts Between Parents and NGO Professionals:** In a non-formal educational context, teachers typically take on a more passive role. They are not required to attend youth facilitator training and can choose whether to join the children's sessions. However, they coordinate the attendance of children (and sometimes youth facilitators), act as the primary contact for parents, and organize parent-teacher conferences during the intervention phase.
- **As Group Leaders:** In a formal educational setting, teachers can take on an active role, similar to NGO professionals (see above: NGO Professionals). This includes organizing and attending youth facilitator training, overseeing and supporting youth facilitators during children's sessions, organizing parent-teacher conferences, and serving as the main contact for parents. To fulfill this role, teachers need skills in group management, an understanding of inter- and intra-group dynamics, and knowledge of the needs and skills of children and youth facilitators.

Group Leaders



The group leaders **oversee the implementation of the T4I project**. If the children's sessions are organized in an informal educational context (e.g., at a local community center or the site of an NGO), **NGO professionals** should assume this role. If the sessions are organized in a formal educational context (e.g., in a school), **teachers** can also take on the role of group leaders. To avoid the diffusion of responsibilities and facilitate the smooth progression of the project, it is recommended to decide who should be group leaders during the initial preparation of the project (see *Gantt chart on page 18*).

Whether NGO professionals or teachers take on this role, group leaders' main tasks include overseeing the recruitment and training of youth facilitators, guiding and assisting youth facilitators during the intervention phase, and ensuring the smooth implementation of the program. Group leaders should attend youth training, preparation sessions for the children's sessions, the children's sessions, and the parent-teacher conferences.





Stakeholders	Tasks	Initial preparation	Stage 1: Youth Facilitator Training			Stage 2: Inclusive Children's Sessions		
			Before Training	During Training	After Training	Before Sessions	During Sessions	After Sessions
NGO Professionals	Getting familiar with the T4i program; reading the Handbook, Training materials	Getting familiar						
	Defining roles and assigning group leaders*	Group leaders**						
	Preparing youth facilitator training materials		Training materials					
	Recruiting youth facilitators		Youth recruitment					
	Organizing and teaching youth facilitator trainings			Organizing and teaching training				
	Evaluating the youth training with the facilitators				Evaluation			
	Reaching out: Contacting schools and teachers					Reaching out		
	Providing necessary resources to all stakeholders						Providing resources	
	Supervising youth facilitators during children's sessions						Supporting youth facilitators	
	Evaluating the children's sessions							Evaluation
Teachers	Attending youth facilitator training (optional)**			Attending training**				
	Attending inclusive children's sessions (optional)**						Attending the sessions**	
	Being in contact with parents						Being in contact with parents	
	Attending parent-teacher conferences							P.T. conference
Youth Facilitators	Completing the T4i training			Completing training				
	Attending meetings to prepare the inclusive children's sessions					Preparation		
	Facilitating children's sessions						Facilitating the sessions	
Parents	Consenting to youth facilitator participation (18+)		Parental consent					
	Consenting to children's participation					Parental consent		
	Supporting children's participation						Supporting children's participation	
	Participating in parent-teacher conferences							P.T. conference
Children	Attending inclusive sessions						Attending the sessions	

* In a T4i project, the role of group leaders are usually fulfilled by NGO professionals. However, if the children's sessions take place in a formal educational context, teachers can also assume this role (see page X: Group leaders).

**The requirement for teacher involvement depends on whether the teacher plays a more active or passive role in the project. Their level of activity depends on whether the children's sessions take place in a formal or informal educational setting (see page X: Teachers).

Youth Facilitator Training

5. Training Youth Facilitators

This chapter focuses on youth facilitators, who serve as the cornerstone of the T4I program. These facilitators are volunteers who generously contribute their time to the initiative without any expectation of monetary compensation. Their role is essential to ensuring the program's success and impact (see *Chapter 3.2. Complex Approach to Promoting Social Inclusion in Education*). Consequently, T4I group leaders must acknowledge the vital contributions of youth facilitators and adopt a strategic approach to their management. By understanding their needs, group leaders and trainers can develop customized strategies for recruitment, engagement, and retention. Lastly, providing a comprehensive training program is crucial to equipping youth facilitators with the skills necessary to effectively lead inclusive programs for children.

Chapter 5:

- ◆ Provides guiding points for recruiting and selecting youth facilitators (5.1. *Recruitment and Selection*).
- ◆ Introduces effective methods for engaging and working with youth (5.2. *Working with Youth Facilitators*).
- ◆ Provides an insight into the state of the art youth facilitator training (5.3. *Training Course Curricula*).

5.1. Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment

Recruiting youth facilitators is a critical step in ensuring the success of the T4I program. To effectively recruit dedicated youth volunteers, start by **identifying your target group**: consider the relevant minority-majority backgrounds in your community and the appropriate age range for youth facilitators (it is advisable to have facilitators close in age to each other). To attract potential youth facilitators, **highlight the benefits of volunteering**, such as personal and professional growth opportunities, leadership development, community service experience, and skill-building. **Hosting information sessions** or webinars can provide details about the program, its goals, and the roles and responsibilities of youth facilitators, as well as answer questions and engage with interested candidates. To reach a broader

audience, **partner with schools, universities, youth organizations**, and **utilize various channels** such as social media, school bulletin boards, community centers, and local NGOs. Consider tapping into your **existing volunteer pool**. There might be people who already possess crucial skills for the T4I program, and it can also foster their sense of ownership and involvement.

Selection

For the selection process, we advise you to start with a clear and concise **application form** to obtain essential information about the candidates, such as their background, motivation, and relevant experience (there are many free, online, user-friendly websites, such as Google Forms and Survey Monkey that can be used for this purpose). We also recommend **conducting interviews** to assess applicants' enthusiasm, communication skills, willingness to learn, ability to work collaboratively, and alignment with the program's values and goals. Pay special attention to ensuring the recommended proportion (one-third) of minority youth facilitators in the group to achieve inclusion. **Notify selected candidates** and provide them with detailed information about the training schedule and expectations. An **onboarding session** can help welcome them to the program and give an overview of their roles and responsibilities.

If you intend to implement the T4I program in a school environment, both procedures are easier to achieve. However, for successful recruitment and selection in a school setting, we recommend using all available school communication channels to promote the program and engage students in participation. Providing information and clarification sessions is also important, ensuring that students do not feel lost or confused about the program's objectives or their role in it. If deemed relevant, the T4I program can be seamlessly integrated with supplementary curricular units or complement the non-formal educational offerings that the school provides.

5.2. Working with Youth Facilitators

Once the program has a diverse group of youth facilitators, it is important to keep them motivated to learn and engage, ensuring their continued participation. The goal is to retain youth facilitators for multiple semesters. Crafting a **successful volunteer management strategy** is crucial, as the success of the T4I initiative can be largely influenced by it, either propelling or hindering it. Here are some guidelines on how to manage youth facilitators to ensure a successful program.

Involve Youth Facilitators with Minority Backgrounds

To create an inclusive learning environment, the T4I program suggests that **at least one-third of youth facilitators come from minority communities**, corresponding to the children's backgrounds in the *intervention* phase (see *Chapter 4.2. Stakeholders*). Youth facilitators bring **firsthand knowledge** of their own needs, challenges, and resources, informing the design and execution of culturally sensitive children's sessions, and ensuring that the voices of disadvantaged communities are heard and respected. Therefore, we advise group leaders to see minority youth as a **resource** and make sure to involve them in the planning and execution of children's activities.

Emphasize Contribution to the Program's Purpose

Reinforcing the significance of youth facilitators' contributions is essential. Emphasizing the **broader impact of their commitment** on social systems and issues helps them understand how their efforts in the T4I programs address larger social challenges. Recognizing and communicating the purpose behind their work fosters a deeper connection to the T4I initiative, enhancing engagement and dedication. This approach helps youth see the broader impact of their roles, motivating them to contribute consistently and devotedly.

Establish Clear Program Goals

Establishing clear goals provides direction and purpose for youth facilitators. Helping them understand the objectives they are working towards increases their **motivation and engagement**. Clear goals enhance **accountability and transparency**, as youth facilitators know what is expected of them and how their contributions support the T4I program's success. This fosters a sense of **responsibility and ownership**, leading to greater **commitment and dedication**. Setting goals with youth facilitators can be a useful tool at the end of the training, before the children's activities start.

Implement Comprehensive Training

Investing in a comprehensive training program is vital for equipping youth facilitators with the necessary skills to succeed. By ensuring they receive thorough training, the T4I program empowers youth facilitators and ensures high standards for inclusive children's programs. The next section will delve into the specifics of the youth facilitators training program, outlining the methods and content that will prepare youth volunteers for their critical roles in the T4I initiative.

5.3. Training Course Curricula

Training Objectives

The T4I Youth Facilitator Training Program is designed to provide youth facilitators with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively and safely plan and deliver inclusive sessions for children. Moreover, the program seeks to enhance their awareness of key aspects of inclusion, promoting the development of more tolerant and cohesive communities.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes are twofold:

- ☐ To **acquire theoretical knowledge** of inclusion, multiculturalism, and assertive communication.
- ☐ To **develop practical skills** for moderating and managing a group of children effectively.

Format and Learning Methods

The T4I Youth Facilitator Training is designed with a combination of **distance learning (asynchronous)** content and **in-person sessions (synchronous)**. The aim is to foster the knowledge and autonomy of young facilitators to lead activities with children that promote inclusion and respect for diversity.

Asynchronous Sessions (Distance Learning)	Synchronous Sessions (In-Person)
The learning platform utilized by the youth facilitators is provided by Bagázs and is accessible at https://download.neting.hu/review/neting/bagazs/t4i/#/dashboard . Youth facilitators are expected to review the online content prior to attending the in-person sessions.	The in-person sessions emphasize discussing key concepts and debates while encouraging participants to share their experiences. These sessions incorporate exercises, group dynamics, role-playing, and other interactive activities to reinforce the knowledge gained.

Overview of Training Modules

The T4I Youth Facilitator Training is structured into six modules. Below are the main learning outcomes for each module:

Module 1 Introduction	Module 2 Understanding Children
◆ Learn about the T4I initiative and its objectives. ◆ Understand the importance of discussing inclusion and diversity.	◆ Learn about children's development and needs. ◆ Learn how to manage children's groups. ◆ Develop techniques to engage children effectively. ◆ Create a safe and supportive environment for sharing.
Module 3 Group Management	Module 4 Multiculturalism
◆ Learn strategies for conflict management in the context of the intervention. ◆ Manage different behaviors and emotions within a group. ◆ Foster team spirit and collaboration. ◆ Acquire tools to handle diverse groups effectively. ◆ Evaluate the process and outcomes of the intervention.	◆ Understand the concept of multiculturalism. ◆ Learn strategies for promoting respect and acceptance towards different cultures. ◆ Learn how to manage diversity and promote empathy. ◆ Reflect on inclusion and the importance of an inclusive approach in the school context.
Module 5 Self-Concept and Self-Esteem	Module 6 Communication
◆ Develop self-awareness and understand your own strengths and areas for growth. ◆ Explore the concept of emotional intelligence and strategies to enhance it. ◆ Learn to establish personal boundaries and limits while respecting others.	◆ Learn about different types and styles of communication. ◆ Recognize and practice assertive communication and active listening. ◆ Acquire strategies for empathetic and assertive communication. ◆ Identify and address common barriers to effective communication.

Workload

The **T4I Youth Facilitator Training** has a total duration of **16.5 hours**, distributed as follows:

- ☐ **12 hours of synchronous**, in-person sessions.
- ☐ **4.5 hours of asynchronous** online content.

	Face-to-Face (Hours)	Online (Minutes)
M1 Introduction	1	45
M2 Understanding Children	2	45
M3 Group management	3	45
M4 Multiculturalism	2	45
M5 Self-concept and self-esteem	2	45
M6 Communication	2	45
Total	12	4.5 hours

The **schedule** to accommodate these 16.5 hours of training **should be defined by each school or organization**. It can be delivered in a compact format over two or three full days, or spread out over one to two months with weekly sessions.

Monitoring and Evaluation Methodology

T4I evaluates both the young participants and the trainers who conducted the training sessions to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of the training course curricula.

With the young participants:

- ☐ Evaluating the effect of the Curricula on participating youth facilitators by asking them to fill out a questionnaire pre- and post-training measuring their attitudes towards diversity, ethnic minorities and social-dominance orientation as well as their critical thinking.
- ☐ Evaluating the experience of youth facilitators about the Curricula using qualitative methods by asking them to participate in a group interview upon the last session of the training.

With the trainers:

- Evaluating the feasibility of synchronous sessions by asking trainers about recruitment, number of youth who applied and completed the training, interactions between participants, and activity level of each participating youth facilitator.

5.4. Training Structure

As previously described, the T4I training program consists of an asynchronous online component and a synchronous in-person component. Next, we will take a closer look at each of them.

Asynchronous Part (E-learning)

The Tools4Inclusion (T4I) program's e-learning platform is accessible at:

<https://download.neting.hu/review/neting/bagazs/t4i/#/dashboard>

where participants can deepen their understanding of the Tools4Inclusion method through interactive modules covering facilitator training, inclusive community building, and child program design.

Platform Features

This neting.hu-based platform offers a modern, user-friendly dashboard (/dashboard) with intuitive navigation (layout, buttons/icons), modular content (chapters, units, tasks, interactive resources), and blended learning support (online theory + practical supplements).

Access: Full features available after registration/login on the moodle platform or can be used as an open link for everybody (e-learning materials, reflective tasks).

Functions: Dashboard overview, modules, blended structure, mobile-friendly.

Content: Interactively enriched e-learning focused on inclusion of vulnerable youth (Roma, migrants, refugees), community responsibility; directly linked to the in person training.

Key Task Types

These assignments blend theory with practical application to prepare youth facilitators for Tools4Inclusion intervention sessions:

- **Reflective quizzes and self-assessments:** Short multiple-choice or open-ended questions testing module concepts, such as identifying group development stages or self-esteem barriers in diverse youth (e.g., Roma, migrants).
- **Scenario-based exercises:** Analyze real-world cases, like adapting activities for multicultural child groups or resolving conflicts in inclusive settings.
- **Planning templates:** Design sample sessions, including mind-maps for interventions and toolkits for social-emotional skill-building.
- **Discussion prompts:** Journal entries or peer-forum posts on personal growth, diversity awareness, and inclusive facilitation strategies.
- **Multimedia interactions:** Videos, interactive diagrams, and drag-and-drop activities linking to the T4I Handbook and Toolkit for hands-on prep.

Tasks emphasize transferable skills, with progress tracking on the dashboard.

Synchronous Part (Session Plan)

Day 0: Preparation and Rapport Building

Activity Type	Function
Welcome & introduction of the purpose	Set expectations & experiential learning overview (play → experience → reflect → analyze → apply)
Name-sharing and icebreaker activities	Build initial rapport & memorability
Paired rapid connection rotations	Foster quick personal connections
Share their motivation	Align group goals with Tools4Inclusion project
Project overview & commitment clarification	Ensure understanding of logistics
Q&A	Address concerns
Break	Recreation
Comfort zone visualization exercise	Introduce risks/learning framework

Small-group expectation/fear sharing	Build psychological safety
Group norm-setting activity	Establish shared rules
Closing check-in circle	Get feedback
Logistics briefing	Practical preparation

Day 1: Trust Building and Group Formation

Activity Type	Function
Paired trust-navigation challenge during hike	Develop reliance & support skills
Mixed-group creative expression on Tools4Inclusion values	Encourage inclusion & spontaneity
Collaborative mind-mapping of intervention sessions	Clarify the details of the intervention sessions
Norm review + large-group cooperation task; feedback practice	Reinforce cohesion & leadership rotation

Day 2: Deepening Communication and Processing

Activity Type	Function
Situational role-play & multi-round peer feedback	Develop communicational skills & constructive feedback
Paired/small-group reflection	Analyze group dynamics
Physical warm-up + shared practical task	Build informal bonds

Gratitude-sharing circle	Create positive connections
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Day 3: Synthesis and Practical Application

Activity Type	Function
Advanced scenario simulations and leading activities	Master trainer techniques
Comprehensive reflection	Synthesize growth
Commitment & Practical information of next steps of the project	Create long term commitment

Facilitator Adaptation Guide

Activity Type	Function	Goal
Time Management	60-90 min blocks; allocate 20% for reflection	Support cooperation
Group Scaling	Pairs → Small groups → full group	Reflects on real moderating
Tool Preparation	Core items (post-its, markers, ropes/objects); always have backups	Allow the trainers to be able to change the tasks rapidly
Monitoring/Adaptation	Real-time checks (energy scales, circles); Plan B	Develops flexibility and metacognition.

5.5. Training Materials

Here, we provide an overview of the T4I Youth Facilitator Training materials, organized into six modules. Each module highlights the central concepts and main content covered in its respective topic.

Module 1 | Introduction

☐ Introducing the T4I Initiative

The **Tools4Inclusion (T4I)** initiative empowers young people aged 15–25 from diverse backgrounds to reduce social inequalities by organizing and leading educational sessions for children aged 6–14. Through T4I, youth are trained to lead activities that foster understanding and friendship among children from various ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups. Beyond supporting children, the initiative shapes facilitators into future leaders and contributes to building a more inclusive society. This is a cross-country project, involving Hungary, Portugal, and Malta, and aims to expand its reach across Europe.

☐ Why Inclusivity Matters

Inclusivity ensures that everyone, regardless of their background, has access to the same opportunities and feels welcome. Social exclusion can lead to issues such as bullying, loneliness, and poor academic performance. Promoting inclusivity—especially in educational settings—helps prevent these challenges and fosters a supportive environment where everyone can succeed.

☐ How Does the T4I Initiative Work?

T4I relies on collaboration among facilitators, children, parents, teachers, and NGOs. Facilitators receive expert-led training in assertive communication, problem-solving, and leadership to deliver engaging, meaningful activities and handle diverse situations effectively.

☐ What's in it for a Youth Facilitator?

Youth facilitators gain valuable experiences, including teamwork, activity management, and real-world problem-solving. These skills are beneficial for any career and make a lasting difference in the lives of children with limited opportunities.

☐ The Basic Rules of the T4I Youth Facilitator Training

To create a respectful, inclusive, and effective learning environment, the following **10+1 rules** guide the T4I Youth Facilitator Training:

1. Respect Everyone	◆ Treat others with kindness and consideration. ◆ Respect different opinions, backgrounds, and experiences. ◆ Support participants with special needs.
2. Confidentiality	◆ What's said in the room stays in the room. ◆ You may use shared information but must not disclose the identities of participants. ◆ Personal stories or sensitive information should not be shared outside the group without explicit permission.
3. Active Listening	◆ Pay full attention to speakers. ◆ Avoid interrupting and strive to understand others' perspectives.
4. One Voice at a Time	◆ Allow one person to speak at a time, ensuring everyone's voice is heard.
5. Be Open-Minded	◆ Approach the training with a willingness to learn from others' experiences. ◆ Discuss ideas constructively without personal criticism. ◆ Remember, there are no "stupid ideas" or "bad thoughts."
6. Active Engagement	◆ Contribute actively; your input is valuable to the group. ◆ Participation is encouraged but not forced.
7. Time Management	◆ Be punctual for in-person sessions. ◆ Respect others' time by staying focused and engaged throughout the training.
8. Constructive Feedback	◆ Provide feedback that is respectful and focused on improvement. ◆ Accept feedback with the same positive spirit.
9. Zero Tolerance for Disruptive Behavior	◆ Bullying, harassment, or consistent interruptions will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the session.
10. Safe Space	◆ Trainers will ensure a safe environment for participants to express themselves without fear of judgment or retaliation. ◆ Let trainers know if you feel unsafe at any point.
11. Be an Integral Person (The +1 Rule)	◆ Lead by example, as actions speak louder than words. ◆ Align your actions with your words, demonstrating integrity. ◆ Remember, these principles extend beyond the training and apply in everyday situations as a (future) leader.

Module 2 | Understanding Children

☐ Understanding Stress: Eustress, Distress, and Chronic Stress

Stress is a common part of daily life. Positive stress, or *eustress* (Selye, 1975), motivates us to face challenges, try new things, and avoid danger. However, when

stress becomes overwhelming, it turns into *distress* (Selye, 1975), which decreases motivation and performance. *Chronic stress*, when distress is constant, adversely affects mental and physical health (Thoresen & Eagleston, 1983). For those working with children, recognizing signs of distress is essential for responding to their needs effectively.

□ The Window of Tolerance

Each individual has a unique *window of tolerance* for stress, which affects how their body and brain respond (Siegel, 1999). Within this window, people can learn, connect, and process information.

- ◆ **Hyperarousal occurs** when someone is overstimulated, triggering a fight-or-flight response. Symptoms include irritability, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating. Children in hyperarousal may exhibit behaviors such as crying, pushing others, or withdrawing, even when no actual danger is present.
- ◆ **Hypoarousal happens** with prolonged stress, leading to a freeze response. In this state, children may appear disengaged, unresponsive, or distant, though they still experience stress internally.

□ Creating Safe Spaces

As facilitators, our priority is to ensure children feel safe. Recognizing their states of arousal and maintaining a calm, respectful demeanor can reduce stress, helping children develop emotional regulation and impulse control. By modeling safety and stability, we create an environment where children feel secure and supported.

□ From Self-Regulation to Understanding

Learning about stress and the window of tolerance is crucial for understanding both children and ourselves. As facilitators working with children, it is essential to ensure that one child's stress or trauma does not trigger heightened stress levels in the group. In situations where a child is in distress, the following steps can help maintain a safe environment:

- ◆ **Assess Your Own Stress Level:** Reflect on your current state of stress and your window of tolerance. Calming yourself first helps reduce the overall stress of the situation and allows for thoughtful responses.
- ◆ **Provide a Calm Presence:** Help others (children or parents) de-escalate by maintaining a balanced and relaxed demeanor. Offer a calmer environment where they can regain control of their emotions.

- ◆ **Reconnect:** Once the situation is calmer, connect with the child or parent appropriately. For children, this might involve playing together; for adults, it could mean engaging in conversation.
- ◆ **Facilitate Reflection:** When the child or parent is within their window of tolerance, reflect on the situation together. This process fosters awareness of actions and emotional responses.

Throughout this process, it is critical to avoid causing shame or guilt. The goal is to help participants recognize their window of tolerance, understand their emotions, and develop emotional awareness.

□ How to Help Children Function Well During a Session

Acknowledge Emotions	Respond appropriately when a child is in distress, avoiding overreaction or underreaction. A calm presence can help them de-escalate.
Establish Predictable Boundaries	Create a structured environment with clear routines in time and space.
Set Adapted Boundaries	Ensure rules and expectations are age-appropriate—challenging but not overwhelming.
Control Stimulation	Manage the intensity of activities to prevent overstimulation and acting out.
Encourage Openness	Talk about emotions and invite children to share their feelings.
Reflect Together	Help children understand and manage their emotions by reflecting on their state of mind.
Show Respect	Validate children’s emotions and experiences as they perceive them.
Provide Space	Allow children to self-regulate, stepping in only when necessary, while remaining available for support.
Offer Positive Feedback and Alternatives	Focus on rewarding actions rather than individuals, avoid overuse of negatives like “don’t,” and provide alternatives for appropriate behavior.

Module 3 | Group Management

□ Children's Groups

Working with children in group settings is a common practice in both formal and informal education. Group activities improve children's *social skills* by providing opportunities to practice them in real-time (Cooper & McEvoy, 1996). They also enhance *mentalization skills*, as children receive immediate feedback from peers and group leaders (Malberg et al., 2012). Being part of a group fosters a sense of belonging, boosting self-confidence and self-worth.

□ The Role of Group Facilitators

Facilitators play a crucial role in creating a safe and supportive space for children. They need skills to engage children and guide them into becoming active group members. Youth facilitators should be familiar with group dynamics and use appropriate tools to build a cohesive group where children feel safe sharing their ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

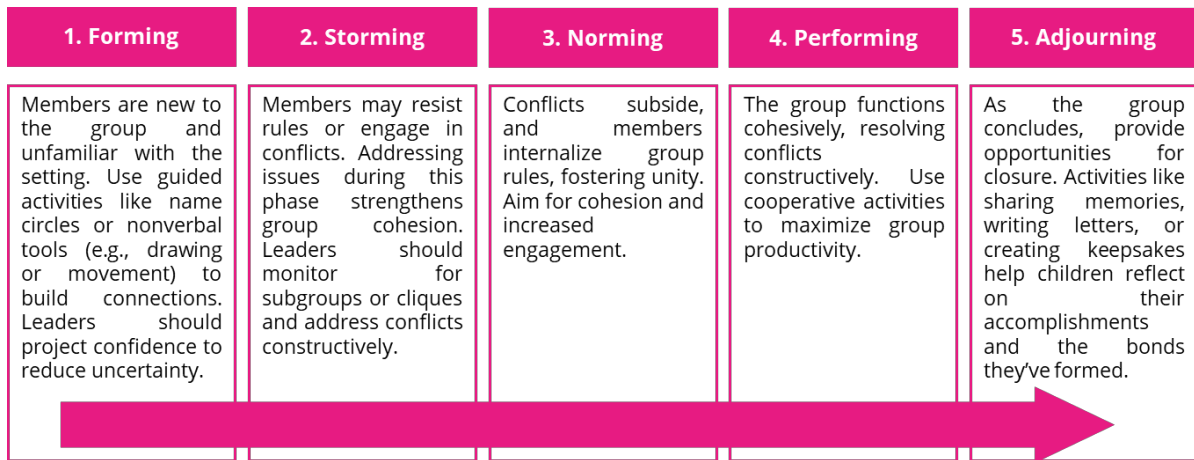
□ Structure of Group Sessions

Group sessions should be tailored to children's developmental needs and typically follow three stages:

Opening Activity	Main Activity	Closing Activity
Focus on "cooling down" rather than "warming up" to help children settle and focus. Activities like sharing snacks, using small instruments, or drawing together can help create a calm environment. For new groups, establish rules collaboratively during the first session.	Conduct activities that provide meaningful shared experiences, encourage learning about each other, and reflect on the session's topic. Examples include group games, arts and crafts, or collective learning tasks.	Reflect on the session's experiences and lessons. Use tools like mood thermometers, guided questions, or creative expressions such as drawing or movement to help children process and share their thoughts.

□ Group Development

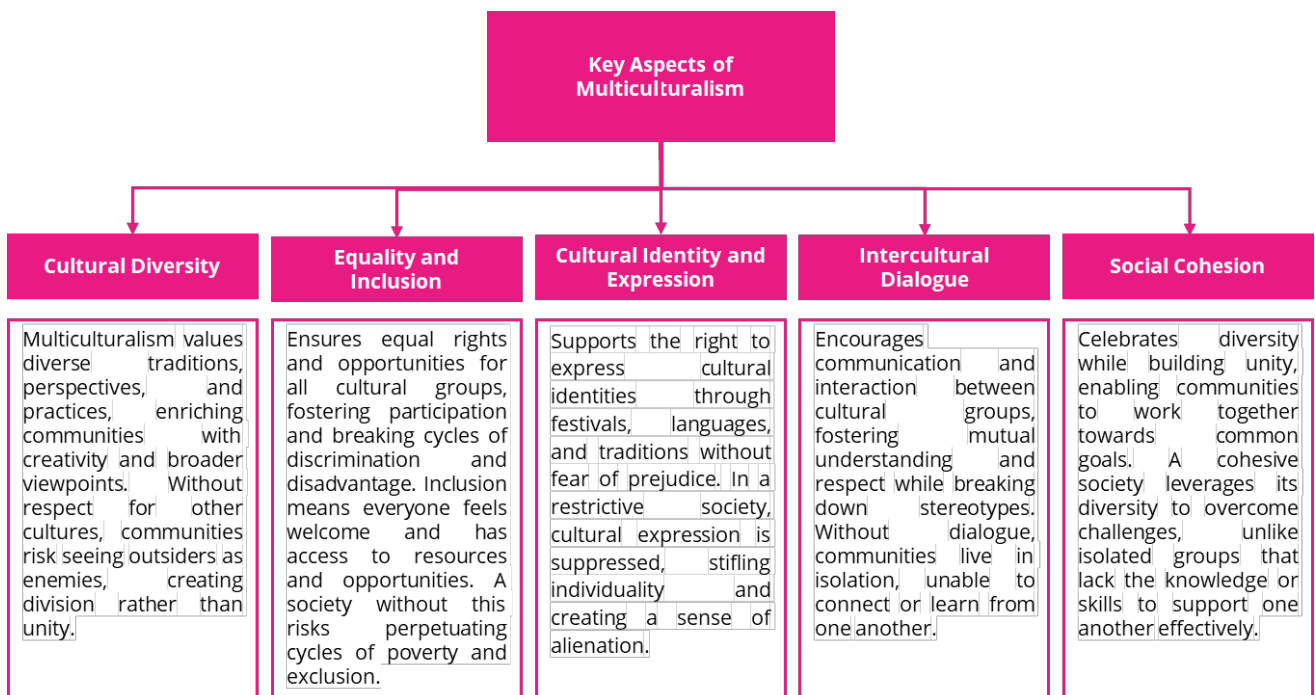
Groups evolve through five stages as identified by Tuckman (1965):



Module 4 | Multiculturalism

□ What is Multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism refers to the coexistence and recognition of diverse cultures within a community, where people from different cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds live together harmoniously while maintaining their unique identities. Its goal is to promote understanding, respect, and peaceful coexistence, addressing historical conflicts rooted in "otherness."



□ Importance of Multiculturalism

- ◆ **Promotes Tolerance and Respect:** Multiculturalism fosters inclusivity by challenging stereotypes and breaking down barriers, creating an environment where differences are celebrated rather than feared.
- ◆ **Enriches Society:** Cultural diversity brings new ideas, foods, music, and perspectives, sparking creativity and innovation, and making communities vibrant and dynamic.
- ◆ **Encourages Global Awareness:** In an interconnected world, understanding and respecting different cultures is essential for collaboration, communication, and thriving in diverse environments.
- ◆ **Fosters Personal Growth:** Interacting with other cultures promotes open-mindedness, empathy, and self-reflection, helping individuals grow and better understand themselves.
- ◆ **Builds Resilient Communities:** Valuing diversity strengthens bonds within communities, encouraging mutual support and teamwork to solve shared challenges.
- ◆ **Prepares for the Future:** Multiculturalism develops adaptability, teamwork, and cross-cultural understanding—essential skills for succeeding in today's global society.
- ◆ **Empowers Social Change:** By promoting equality and justice, multiculturalism challenges oppression and discrimination, paving the way for a more fair and inclusive world.

□ Multiculturalism in Education

In education, schools play a vital role in teaching about different cultures and histories, fostering respect and appreciation for diversity among students. Teaching goes beyond lectures or presentations; it involves actively engaging with different cultures. This can include organizing multicultural food events, dance and music performances, or celebrating each other's cultural and religious traditions.

Module 5 | Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

□ Understanding the Concepts

- ◆ **Self-concept** refers to how individuals perceive their abilities and competence in various domains, such as academics, social skills, and physical appearance (Harter, 1988). It reflects self-assessments and personal descriptions, like "I'm Armenian" or "I like helping others" (Vaz Serra, 1988). Self-concept evolves over time, becoming more accurate as young people integrate feedback and differentiate effort from competence (Harter, 1999).
- ◆ **Self-esteem** reflects one's overall judgment of their worth and is influenced by self-concept and how much value is placed on specific domains (Harter, 1999). Physical appearance often strongly impacts self-esteem. Encouraging acceptance of unchangeable traits (e.g., race or age) and effort toward changeable characteristics (e.g., skills or learning) helps foster positive self-esteem (Edukino, 2023).

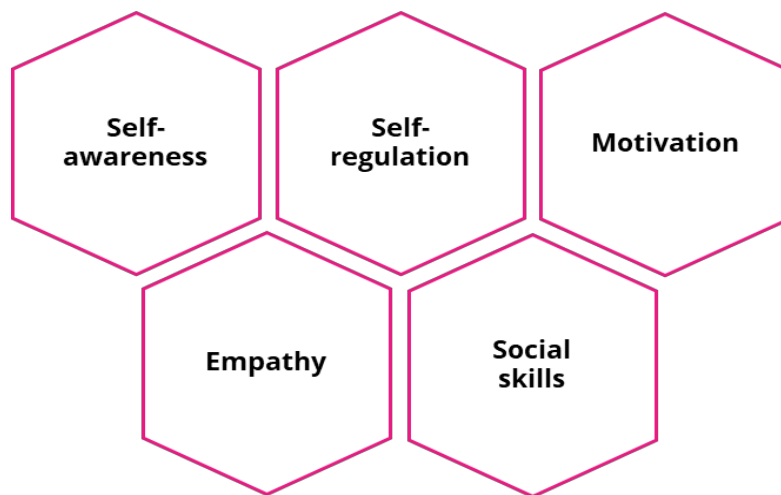
Promoting healthy self-concept and self-esteem is vital for children's well-being. Support and approval from parents, teachers, and peers significantly impact self-esteem, often more than tangible help (Harter, 1999). Positive feedback strengthens self-esteem, while criticism or poor performance comparisons can lower it (Lachowicz-Tabaczek & Śniecińska, 2011).

□ Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence, as defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), encompasses three key components: **attention to feelings**, **clarity of emotions**, and **mood repair**. Attention to feelings refers to the degree to which individuals notice and consider their emotions. Clarity of emotions relates to understanding and distinguishing different emotions, while mood repair represents the ability to shift out of negative emotional states. These abilities are vital for effectively managing emotions and navigating relationships.

Research demonstrates that emotional intelligence has a significant impact on self-concept and self-esteem, helping individuals develop cognitive, physical, and social skills (Cabello González et al., 2006; Matalinares Calvet et al., 2005; Salovey et al., 2002). It also enables individuals to recognize and accept their unique traits and differences, fostering greater acceptance and respect for others' diversity (ShareN(e)et, 2023).

Goleman (2011) identifies **five domains of emotional intelligence**:



- ◆ **Self-awareness:** The ability to recognize one's own emotions, understand their causes, and assess their impact on oneself and others. Self-awareness also involves knowing personal strengths and weaknesses, aiding in realistic self-assessment and decision-making.
- ◆ **Self-regulation:** The capacity to manage emotions constructively, maintaining focus and balance even in challenging situations. This ability helps individuals remain resilient and overcome setbacks effectively.
- ◆ **Motivation:** A drive to improve and succeed, characterized by setting high personal standards and consistently working toward goals.
- ◆ **Empathy:** The skill of understanding and considering others' emotions and viewpoints by seeing situations from their perspectives. Empathy is essential for fostering inclusion and mutual respect.
- ◆ **Social skills:** Encompassing conflict management, leadership, communication, and teamwork, social skills enable individuals to build strong relationships and navigate social interactions successfully.

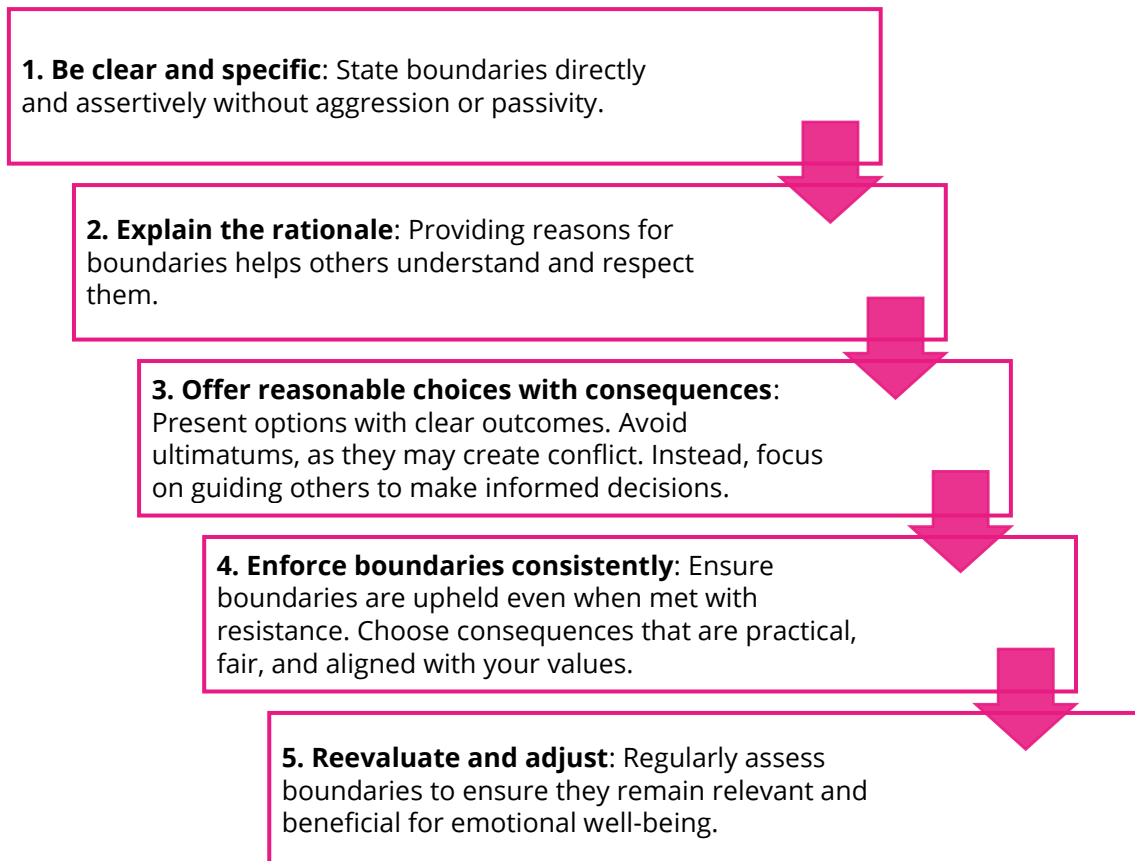
Developing these skills supports decision-making, and creates more tolerant, inclusive environments where everyone can thrive (Mayer et al., 2001; ShareN(e)et, 2023).

□ **Setting Limits**

Establishing clear, reasonable, and assertive boundaries is essential for preserving self-concept and fostering self-esteem. Boundaries are not about issuing ultimatums or punishing others but involve honest, assertive communication rooted in mutual respect.

Inclusivity requires respect and compromise, enabling people from diverse backgrounds to coexist peacefully. Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in managing emotions with maturity and confidence, especially during conflict or anxiety. A key component of this maturity is understanding one's own boundaries and establishing a safe personal space that respects others.

Five Steps for Establishing Boundaries (Crisis Prevention Institute, 2016):

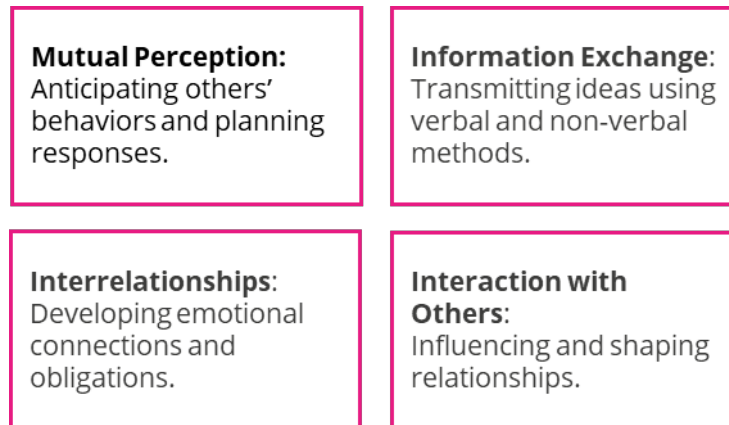


By setting boundaries thoughtfully, you can cultivate self-confidence and healthier relationships. These practices create inclusive, respectful environments where differences are celebrated, and individuals feel supported.

Module 6 | Communication

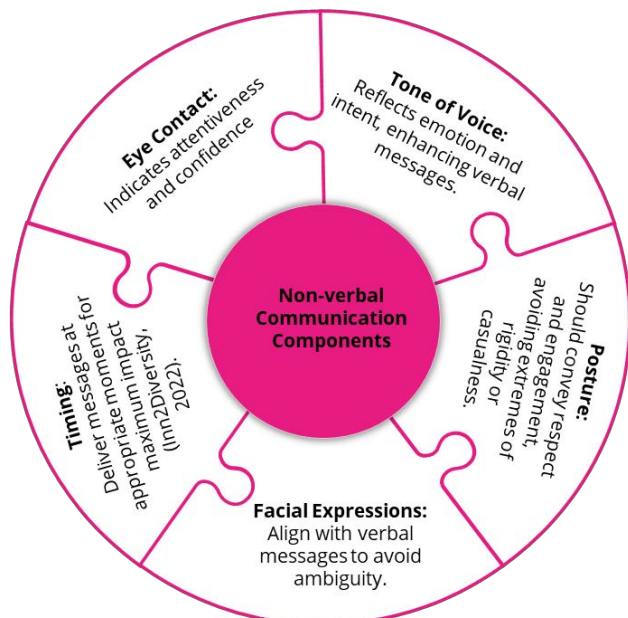
□ Definition of communication

Communication is a social and cognitive process involving the exchange of information, feelings, and thoughts, forming the foundation of human interaction (Bunglowala & Bunglowala, 2015). To ensure successful communication, four important aspects need to be considered (Extra C, 2024):



□ Types of Communication

- ◆ **Verbal:** Relies on grammar and words to share ideas, involving talking, listening, and feedback. It is intentional, adapting to context and aiming for clarity and persuasion
- ◆ **Non-verbal:** Uses body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone, and spatial positioning to convey meaning. It complements verbal communication and often expresses emotions and intentions (ShareN(e)et, 2023).



□ Styles of Communication

Aggressive	Passive	Assertive
Expresses opinions inappropriately, often provoking conflict and defensiveness. While direct, it can lack respect for others' viewpoints	Avoids conflict by suppressing feelings, often leading to frustration and disengagement. Useful temporarily to avoid disputes (Extra C, 2024).	Balances clarity and respect, allowing individuals to express ideas honestly while considering others' needs (Yuliani et al., 2020). It promotes effective problem-solving and mutual understanding (Inn2Diversity, 2022).

□ Communication Barriers

Barriers hinder effective communication and include according to Joshi, n.d.:

- ◆ **Physical:** Noise, interruptions, or inadequate technology.
- ◆ **Physiological:** Stress, emotional states, or mental distractions.
- ◆ **Semantic:** Misunderstandings due to jargon or ambiguous language.
- ◆ **Cultural:** Differing norms and interpretations.
- ◆ **Organizational:** Structural obstacles, like poor channels or hierarchies.

□ Improving Communication

- ◆ **Active Listening:** Engage with speakers by providing feedback, paraphrasing, and avoiding distractions. Show attentiveness through open body language and verbal affirmations.
- ◆ **Recognizing Non-verbal Cues:** Observe body language, facial expressions, and gestures to understand emotions and intentions.
- ◆ **Providing Constructive Feedback:** Offer guidance to improve communication skills without criticism or punishment.
- ◆ **Context Awareness:** Tailor communication to the audience and situation to prevent misunderstandings (Inn2Diversity, 2022).

Effective communication involves mastering verbal and non-verbal skills, fostering mutual respect, and creating an inclusive environment. Developing these skills equips individuals to navigate relationships confidently and address challenges constructively.

Inclusive Children's Sessions

6. Inclusive sessions for children

This chapter focuses on inclusive children's sessions, which is the main element of the intervention phase of the T4I initiative (see *4.1. Structure of the Program*). The goal of these sessions is to create an **inclusive environment** where children have the opportunity to **build positive peer relationships**, regardless of their ethnic, religious, or economic status. Participation in the sessions will enable children from both majority and minority groups to develop their social skills and interact with peers from different backgrounds.

Chapter 6:

- ◆ Provides guiding points for recruiting and selecting children for the inclusive sessions (*6.1. Recruitment and Selection*).
- ◆ Shows an example of how to structure a semester (*6.2. Structure of the Semester*).
- ◆ Outlines a sample children's session's framework and activities (*6.3. Structure and Content of the Program*).
- ◆ Shares good practices to manage risks throughout the initiative (*6.4. Risk Management*).

More detailed information on the content of activities for children and a collection of activities can be found in the [T4I Toolkit](#).

6.1. Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment

To recruit children for the T4I inclusive children's programs, it is essential to engage both children and their parents in understanding the program's purpose and benefits. Holding information sessions in schools and nurseries can help clarify doubts, outline the program's objectives, and explain the participants' roles. During these sessions, assessing children's needs and interests ensures the program aligns with their expectations and goals. Motivating participation involves emphasizing the advantages of joining, such as fostering inclusivity, building friendships, and gaining valuable skills. Encouraging parents to support and volunteer in the program reinforces its impact and builds trust, creating a collaborative environment for all involved.

Selection

The ideal proportion of children to achieve inclusion is two-thirds from the majority group and one-third from the minority group. Selecting participants for the T4I program should prioritize their willingness to engage. It is recommended that the same children, from both majority and minority groups, participate consistently in all sessions of the inclusive education program. This requires the youth facilitators to maintain their motivation throughout the process. Some children may face behavioral or self-regulation challenges, necessitating additional support from a peer. This peer could be an adult youth facilitator, a teacher, or an NGO professional who can address their specific needs. Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds might encounter greater difficulties in adapting to the group and may require extra assistance to ensure their full participation.

6.2. Structure of the Semester

Each T4I initiative is unique and, thus, should be tailored to the specific cultural context, organizations, and groups involved, considering the circumstances and needs of all stakeholders. To illustrate what a T4I intervention semester looks like, we provide an example from our T4I pilot program.

Getting Acquainted with the Children

Many young people today are constantly exposed to constant stimulation through screens, social media, and ongoing peer interaction, which can make it harder for them to slow down, tolerate uncertainty, and engage fully in face-to-face group processes. At the same time, despite being highly connected online, they may have limited confidence in building real-life relationships with unfamiliar or less familiar peers, and may be more affected by social anxiety, fear of exclusion, or the pressure to fit in quickly. Therefore engaging children and youth facilitators from lower opportunity groups requires intentional trust-building from the very beginning of the semester. Initial contact should therefore not focus only on information-sharing, but also on reducing anxiety, making participation feel predictable, and creating an early sense of belonging. Short, playful, low-threshold activities are especially important at this stage, as they allow children to participate without fear of failure and help youth facilitators build authentic connections with them.

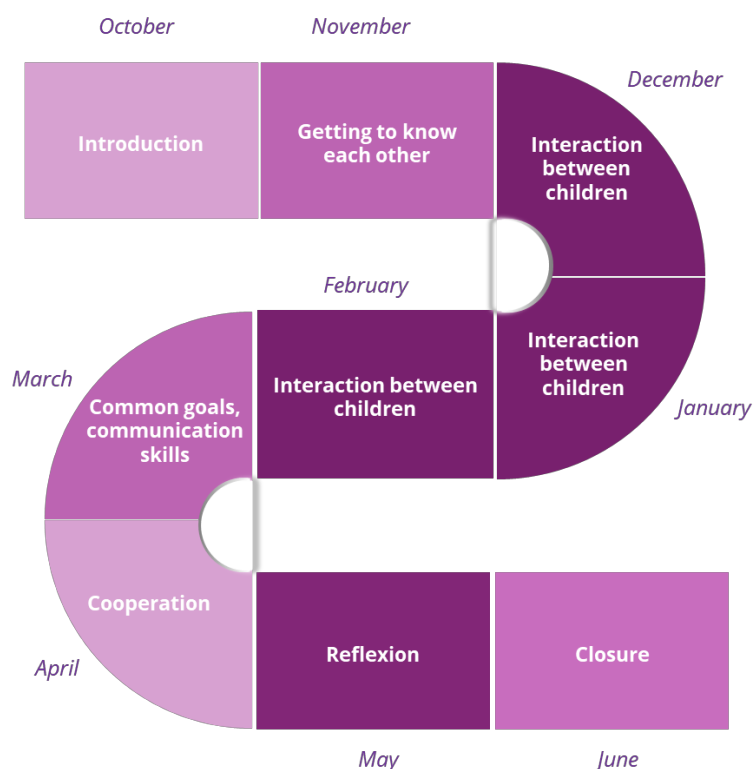
To sustain motivation across the semester, group leaders and youth facilitators should make the purpose of the programme visible and concrete. Children are more

likely to remain engaged when they understand what the sessions are about, what they can expect next, and when they experience small but regular successes. Likewise, youth facilitators from lower opportunity groups should be treated not only as participants, but also as valuable contributors whose experiences and perspectives strengthen the quality and inclusiveness of the programme. Giving them clear roles, responsibility, and regular positive feedback helps reinforce ownership and commitment.

Special attention should also be paid to practical and emotional barriers to participation. For some children and youth facilitators, irregular attendance is not a sign of disinterest, but the result of transportation difficulties, family responsibilities, insecurity in unfamiliar settings, or fear of not performing well. For this reason, motivation should be supported through flexible follow-up, individual encouragement, clear routines, and activities that are adapted to participants' interests, confidence levels, and lived realities. Youth facilitators and group leaders should meet with the participating children from both the majority and minority groups at least once before the start of the inclusive children's sessions. This meeting can be held at the school or the location of the future sessions. During the meeting, youth facilitators can play games, learn songs, or do arts and crafts with the children in order to reduce anxiety and build trust.

Preparing with the Group Leaders

Quarterly planning meetings (twice per semester) are essential for effective preparation for group leaders. In the first meeting of each semester, group leaders should establish the goals for each session. These objectives are reviewed and adjusted during subsequent meetings based on progress and feedback. Group leaders are responsible for planning large-group activities, which can be modified as needed. Below is an example of the overarching goals for children's sessions across two semesters:



The suggested monthly topics are merely recommendations. Group leaders have the flexibility to choose different themes that may align with seasonal celebrations, cultural events, or the ongoing work being carried out in the school throughout the year. This allows the intervention to serve as a complementary resource, adapting to the specific needs and context of the students at any given time.

Preparing with the Youth Facilitators

Youth facilitators from lower opportunity backgrounds may need additional support in order to participate confidently and consistently in this process. They should therefore be involved through clear and manageable responsibilities, regular encouragement, and a meeting structure that is predictable and supportive rather than overly formal or demanding. It is also important to recognise that irregular participation may sometimes be linked not to a lack of motivation, but to practical barriers, insecurity, or previous experiences of exclusion. For this reason, group leaders should create space for individual follow-up, positive feedback, and gradual confidence-building, so that youth facilitators can grow into their role at their own pace while still feeling valued and needed within the team.

Youth facilitators should hold meetings **every two weeks**. The aim of these meetings is to summarize and share their experiences from previous sessions,

discuss improvements, and prepare small group activities for the children that align with the overall aims and large-group activities planned by the group leaders. Meetings should last 60-90 minutes, and one group leader should always be present.

Preparing with the Parents

When engaging parents from lower opportunity backgrounds, communication should be especially clear, practical, and easy to follow. Whenever possible, it is useful to establish simple and accessible communication channels, such as an email list, a WhatsApp group, or other familiar forms of regular contact, so that parents receive timely updates and reminders. At the same time, official communication is also important and should preferably be provided in written form, including printed letters where needed. This is particularly relevant because, when minors are involved, organisers have a responsibility to obtain proper consent for the lawful use of photographs, videos, stories, and other personal materials connected to the programme.

It is also essential that parents clearly understand how the programme can benefit their child. These benefits should be explained in realistic and understandable terms, including improvements in confidence, social skills, participation, learning motivation, and access to new experiences. Even where some opportunities - such as participation in an international study visit - do not apply automatically or equally to every child, parents should still be given a transparent picture of the programme's overall value and of the different ways in which their child may benefit from taking part.

Before the sessions begin, it is essential that the parents of the children participating in the program get to know each other and have all their questions clarified. Therefore, it is highly recommended to hold a **preliminary meeting with all parents** to explain the objectives and structure of the sessions, address any concerns they might have, and encourage them to participate and get involved as much as possible. Parental involvement is crucial to the program's success.

To foster greater engagement, we also suggest inviting interested parents to take part in specific activities within the program or even assigning them concrete tasks, such as preparing shared snacks or arranging transportation. Additionally, whenever necessary or if facilitators and teachers deem it appropriate, individual meetings should be scheduled with parents of specific children to address any conflicts or to enhance the child's participation in activities.

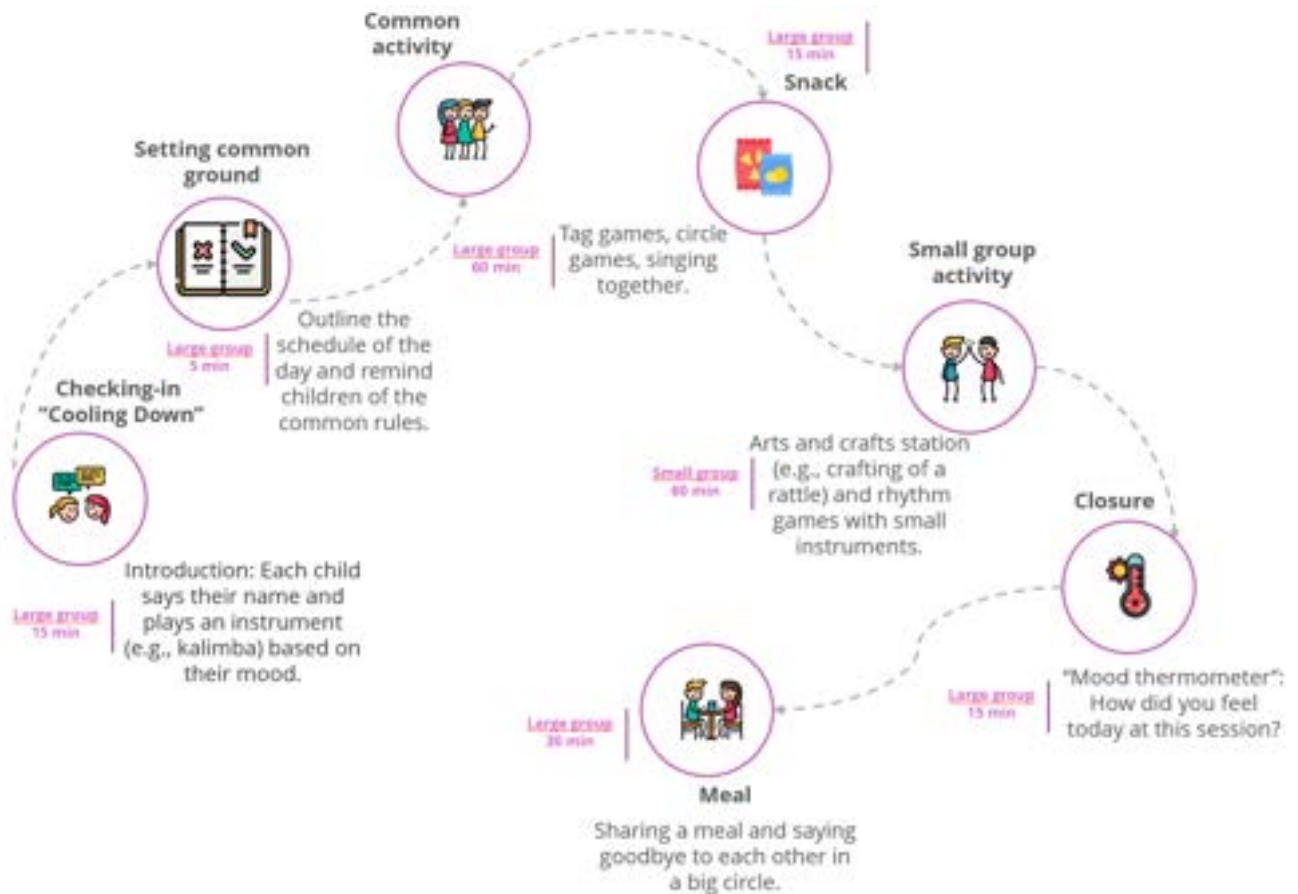
At the end of the intervention, after all sessions have been completed, it is advisable to organize a follow-up meeting with parents to provide a debriefing, discuss what worked well, and identify areas for improvement.

6.3. Structure and Content of the Sessions

Structure of Children's Sessions

The T4I inclusive children's sessions are a non-formal programme with interactive and reflective activities - this may also be called 'intervention programme'. The implementation phase, as presented above, can take one full academic year, while the specific part of **the inclusive children's sessions has a duration of around three months**. This duration is flexible and modifiable according to the specificities of the school or organization. There is no minimum duration defined.

Every intervention session takes place every two weeks and has a duration of 2 hours and 30 minutes, including a break. This timeframe helps participants to break the ice and delve into the topic of the session, while providing much opportunity to interact and engage in group activities. Each session consists of two main parts: a **large-group activity** and a variety of **small-group activities** (such as games, arts and crafts, music activities). As explained above (*see 6.2. Structure of the Semester*), the large-group activity is prepared in advance during the quarterly planning meetings by the group leaders and may involve the participation of children's parents to share knowledge or other professionals, such as child yoga instructors, dog therapists, or music therapists. The subsequent small-group activities build on the large-group activity and are prepared by the youth facilitators with the support of the group leaders. Between the large-group and small-group activities, participating children take a break to have a snack, and at the end of the small-group activities, they share a meal (optional). The session begins with a check-in circle and ends with a closing circle, allowing children to express their feelings about the activities at the beginning and the end. Below is an example of the structure and activities in an inclusive children's session, with an estimated duration of 3 hours that can be adjusted:



Content of Children's Sessions

The goals and content of the sessions must align with the individual needs and skills of the participating children to be inclusive (see 4.2. *Stakeholders*). Activities should be novel but not overly challenging, striking a balance to be engaging yet comfortable for both majority and minority children.

- **Introductory Exercises:** The first sessions should encourage children to introduce themselves and become familiar with the situation and their peers. Clear rules and boundaries should be established in the first session and consistently maintained. Once group boundaries are formed, group leaders and youth facilitators can introduce activities that promote interaction among the children.
- **Social Skills Development Activities:** As children become more familiar with each other, group leaders and youth facilitators can introduce activities that strengthen communication and social skills (e.g., assertiveness, non-aggressive communication, expressing needs). It is crucial to provide children with tools to resolve differences and verbalize their needs. Group leaders and

youth facilitators play an essential role in supporting children in resolving conflicts.

- **Cooperative Play:** Cooperative games help build connections between participating children, fostering a sense of unity. Achieving something together and reaching a common goal can strengthen trust and belonging. It is crucial that cooperative tasks are not too difficult for either the majority or minority groups.
- **Movement Games/Physical Activities:** Games that involve movement and physical activity are ideal for the early parts of the sessions (*see: Checking-in “Cooling Down”*), helping to reduce stress and focus attention on each other. These games are easy to engage in and can bring the group together in a fun way.

Within each of these activities, and according to the theme chosen by the group leaders for each session, the youth facilitators should engage children in the topics outlined in *Chapter 5.5 Training Material*. To achieve this, they should utilize the suggested activities provided in *Chapter 5 Activities for Children* of the Toolkit. This approach ensures that the selected themes are effectively addressed through structured and meaningful exercises that align with the objectives of the program.

6.4. Risk Management

Risk management is the process of identifying, assessing, and prioritizing potential risks that could impact a project's success. In the context of the T4I initiative, risk management is particularly important due to the involvement of **diverse stakeholders** (children, youth facilitators, parents, teachers, and NGO professionals). Potential risks could range from **logistical issues**, such as scheduling conflicts and resource availability, to more **complex challenges**, such as cultural misunderstandings or resistance to inclusive practices. By identifying these risks early and developing comprehensive strategies to address them, the T4I project can ensure that both the *training* and *intervention* phases are effectively implemented and that all participants are supported throughout the process. This approach helps to **create a stable and supportive environment** for both the youth facilitators and the children, ultimately contributing to the project's success.

In this section, we will provide specific risks and potential solutions based on the T4I pilot project's experiences tailored to help navigate these challenges effectively.

Additionally, risks can be specific to the context of each T4I project. Therefore, we advise you to convene with your team at the outset to identify potential issues that might arise in your particular situation.

Risk Description	Proposed Risk-Mitigation Measures
Youth Facilitators and Children drop out	If children and youth facilitators start skipping planned activities or show a lack of motivation, it is important to talk to each of them individually to understand why. Tailoring activities to their interests and needs may increase their motivation to participate. Additionally, there may be technical issues, such as transportation difficulties, that we can address.
Lack of involvement from Teachers, Parents or Youth Facilitators	Calling an initial meeting to explain the purpose and execution of the activities to all stakeholders (except children) is crucial for demonstrating the fundamental role they play in the project's success. Involving parents, teachers, and youth facilitators in the planning and execution of activities will give them a sense of ownership and motivation to participate.
Difficulty in scheduling activities	At the initial meeting, the availability of all those involved should be discussed, and the full schedule of activities should be defined. In this way, you can adapt and alternate the participation of parents, teachers and youth facilitators according to their availability, ensuring that someone is always there throughout the program, but not everyone at all times. If the T4I programme is implemented in the school, one suggestion is to make it part of a complementary curricular unit.
Conflict in involving Youth Facilitators from different backgrounds	If there is a conflict during the Youth Facilitator training or the children's activities, NGO professionals or teachers should speak to those involved privately to understand the cause. Ensuring open and assertive communication is crucial for resolving conflicts. Additionally, assertive communication for conflict management is a specific theme to be addressed throughout the intervention, so this will be an opportunity to support young people in putting what they have learnt into practice.
Children are passive and do not want to engage in the activities	Fear of the unknown can be a limiting factor and prevent children from actively participating. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds often show a lack of courage to participate in activities. If an activity is out of the comfort zone of the children involved, they should not be pushed but rather asked to remain in an observational position to familiarize themselves with the activity/situation.



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7. References

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