



# Challenges & Recommendations Guide

Inclusive and Accessible  
Communication  
in the Youth Sector

That's  
**clear!**



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## CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS GUIDE

Inclusive and accessible communication  
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# General Project Information

## 1. Overview of the project and its objectives

**That's Clear!** is a transnational project under the Erasmus+ Programme that addresses the pressing need for inclusive communication within youth services across Europe. At its core, the project promotes plain language as a powerful tool to make information more accessible for marginalised young people, including migrants, early school leavers and those with cognitive disabilities.

The project aligns with three key Erasmus+ priorities:

1. **Inclusion and Diversity in Youth Work** – tackling communication barriers that prevent vulnerable youth from accessing services.
2. **Improving the Quality and Recognition of Youth Work** – equipping youth workers with new communication tools to better support their target groups.
3. **Digital Transformation** – integrating interactive, digital resources to professionalise and modernise youth work.

Across Europe, youth organisations face common challenges: limited communication training, underutilised inclusive practices, and inadequate tools to reach disadvantaged youth. With nearly half of European adults lacking adequate literacy skills (OECD), this communication gap has become a major obstacle to inclusion.

‘That’s Clear!’ responds to this need by introducing plain language, already an established standard in legal and administrative fields, into the youth sector. Plain language follows international guidelines (ISO 24495-1:2023), offering a broader and adaptable framework for inclusive communication. It simplifies content using clear vocabulary, logical structure, and visual support, making information understandable without diluting content.

The project sets out to:

- **Break down communication barriers** by developing accessible brochures, infographics, and evaluation tools through youth-centred co-diagnostic workshops.

- **Train youth workers** with a five-module course (in-person and digital) on plain language, complemented by an interactive digital toolkit and Youthpass certification.
- **Leverage digital tools** for flexibility and broader impact, using clarity-assessment software, visual content tools, and an open-access platform to host resources.

What makes ‘That’s Clear!’ stand out is its innovative and participatory approach. Youth with lower literacy skills are directly involved in identifying problems and shaping solutions, ensuring that tools are practical and relevant. Furthermore, the project draws on the diverse expertise of its partners, from inclusive publishing and literacy to social theatre and youth leadership, bringing together best practices across sectors and countries.

By fostering cross-sectoral synergies between youth work, education and training, the project amplifies its reach and sustainability. It also holds potential for impact in other areas such as sports, where inclusive communication can enhance participation among marginalised youth.

Ultimately, ‘That’s Clear!’ envisions a youth sector where everyone, regardless of literacy level, ability, or background, has equal access to information and opportunities to engage, learn and lead.

## 2. Purpose of this publication

This guide on clear and inclusive communication in the youth sector is a key output of the ‘That’s Clear!’ project, developed under Work Package 2: ‘Diagnosis of needs and inclusive practices for young people’. Its purpose is to identify the communication challenges faced by marginalised youth, such as those with cognitive disabilities, limited literacy, or linguistic barriers, when accessing youth services.

**The guide was developed through a participatory and research-based process. It brings together findings from:**

- **A mapping of communication practices** currently used in youth services across partner countries,

- **A series of co-diagnostic workshops** involving youth workers and marginalised young people, aimed at identifying obstacles and co-creating inclusive communication strategies.

**By combining this evidence and direct feedback from young people and professionals, the guide offers:**

- A clear overview of communication barriers affecting marginalised youth
- A synthesis of inclusive strategies and tools currently in use or needed
- A set of practical, actionable recommendations for improving communication accessibility in youth services.

This publication is intended for youth workers, educators, youth organisations and public institutions seeking to make their services more inclusive. It supports the broader goals of the ‘That’s Clear!’ project: to foster social inclusion, empower young people in decision-making and equip youth professionals with tools for more effective and equitable communication.

Through its recommendations, it aims to foster long-term change in how youth services communicate, with clarity, accessibility and inclusion at their core.

# Overview of Youth Organisations in Europe

## 1. What is a youth organisation?

Youth organisations are formal or informal groups that provide educational, cultural, social, or civic opportunities for people typically aged 13–30. Their mission is to support youngsters for civic and democratic participation, personal development, and social inclusion. They may take the form of NGOs, associations, cooperatives, student groups, cultural clubs, or communities initiatives.

### 1.1. Definition of “youth” and profiles of those who access these services

- **European perspective:**

The EU Youth Strategy defines “youth” as people aged 13–30.

- **Profiles of participants:**

- Any youngster in transition into adulthood, often include those facing challenges
- ‘Young migrants’ navigating new social and linguistic contexts.
- ‘Early school leavers’ seeking alternative education or employment pathways.
- ‘Youth with cognitive or learning disabilities’ requiring adapted communication.
- ‘NEETs’ (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) at risk of social exclusion.
- ‘Civic-minded youth’ engaged in volunteering, activism, or cultural projects.

## 1.2. Current landscape, statistics, and key contacts by partner country



### **A. Youth Sector Context in Italy**

#### **Structural & Policy Landscape:**

Italy's youth policy is based on a multilevel governance framework. At the national level, the Department for Youth Policies and Universal Civic Service, under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, is responsible for strategy and support mechanisms. Additionally, the Italian National Agency AIG-Agenzia Italiana per la Gioventà, oversees Erasmus+ implementation, acting as a crucial link between EU priorities and national-level execution. Meanwhile, regions, autonomous provinces, local authorities and civil society organisations (including NGOs and youth associations) play vital roles in programme delivery and engagement.

#### **Defining “Youth” & Demographic Context:**

Italy does not legally fix an age range for ‘youth’: this varies across initiatives.

However, the lower boundary is commonly set at 14 years, while upper limits can differ based on the policy focus or target (mainly 28, 30, or 35).

Demographically, Italy is characterised by a rapidly aging population and a shrinking youth cohort. In 2024, the proportion of individuals aged 0–14 years stood at approximately 12.9%, while the 15–24 age group accounted for around 9.6% of



the population. The number of young adults aged 18–34 declined from 13.39 million in 2002 to 10.33 million in 2023, a 22.9% drop, highlighting a significant demographic shift. Projections from ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) indicate that the working-age population (15–64 years) will shrink by over 20% by 2050, from the current 63.5% to just 54.3%.

### **Challenges:**

- **Youth Unemployment**

Young people in Italy struggle to enter the labour market, with the youth (ages 15–24) unemployment rate hovering around 20.1% as of June 2025 and reflecting persistent regional disparities.

- **NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training)**

Italy's NEET rate is significantly high, the rate stood at 16.1% in 2023, remaining well above the EU average of around 11.2% and especially high in southern regions like Sicily and Campania, where rates exceed 27%.

- **Risk of Poverty & Social Exclusion**

The ISTAT report "Poverty in Italy" estimates in 2022, just over 2.18 million families were in conditions of absolute poverty.

The incidence of families in absolute poverty is confirmed to be higher in the South (10.7%), while it drops significantly in the North, especially in the North-West (7.2%), and is lowest in the Centre (6.4%).

With reference to age groups, the incidence of absolute poverty stands at 13.4% among minors; at 12% among young people aged 18–34 (rising from 2021), and remains at a high 9.4% also in the 35–64 age group, while it remains below the national average for the people over 65 (6.3%).

### **Key contacts / actors**

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### **Resources:**

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## **B. Youth Sector Context in Austria**

### **Structural & Policy Landscape:**

Austria has a dense and diverse network of youth organisations covering a wide range of interests – from culture, education and the environment to religion, leisure and sport. The Federal Youth Council (BJV) plays a central leadership and coordination role and ensures that young people are politically, culturally and socially visible. Large youth organisations each reach more than 50,000 young people and thus make an important contribution to promoting youth participation and engagement.

The financing of youth organisations is complex. Funding comes from the federal government, the federal states and municipalities, supplemented by EU funding programmes and their own resources. The European level in particular opens up additional opportunities – for example, by promoting international youth mobility and transnational projects.

An important instrument for supporting disadvantaged young people is the ‘Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz’ (Vocational Assistance Network), which is funded by the Social Ministry Service (SMS). It is aimed primarily at young people at risk of exclusion and people with disabilities. NEBA offers six core services free of charge throughout Austria: youth coaching, training fit, vocational support (BAS), job coaching, work

support and business services. The target group is young people in the 9th grade up to around 24 years of age, people with learning difficulties or disabilities, and socially disadvantaged people. Students in 9th grade are between 14 and 15 years old. The aim is to provide these young people with the best possible support in their transition from school to training or work. More than 200 regional organisations throughout Austria are working to implement this programme. To this end, detailed data is collected in each federal state.

In addition, numerous subsidised associations and federations, such as the Alpine Association and the Austrian Youth Red Cross (ÖJRK), make an important contribution to reaching and supporting young people with low-threshold services. These organisations are often supported in their work by project funding.

### **Challenges:**

- **Youth Unemployment**

In Austria, the youth unemployment rate stood at 10.4 % in 2024.

- **NEET**

NEET rate shows the proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 who are not in school, not in work and not in formal training, as a percentage of the resident population, with a rate of 8.7% (women: 8.8 % and men: 8.6%), Austria ranks in the middle of the pack (+0.6 percentage points more than in 2022).

### **Key contacts / actors**

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## C. Youth sector context in Spain

In Spain, youth is officially defined as people aged 14–30 (according to the Spanish Youth Institute – INJUVE). Youth policies and funding are largely coordinated by INJUVE at the national level, but implementation is strongly decentralised, with Autonomous Communities and municipalities playing a key role.

Fuengirola and the wider Andalusia region reflect Spain’s broader youth landscape: a mix of municipal youth centres, local associations, NGOs, and grassroots initiatives that work on education, social participation, intercultural exchange, employment, and cultural activities.

### Statistics and challenges:

- **Population**

Approximately 6.6 million young people in Spain (aged 15–29), representing about 14% of the total population (Eurostat 2023).

- **NEETs**

Around 12.7% of Spanish youth are NEETs (Not in Employment, Education, or Training), higher than the EU average. Andalusia consistently shows one of the highest regional NEET rates.

- **Unemployment**

Youth unemployment in Spain remains among the highest in Europe, around 27% in 2023 (Eurostat).

- **Inclusion**

Migrant youth, early school leavers, and those with limited literacy face significant barriers to accessing opportunities. Communication practices in services are often overly bureaucratic, creating additional exclusion.

### **Types of youth organisations in Spain**

1. Public youth services: Municipal youth departments (concejalías de juventud) run information offices, cultural spaces, and training programmes.
2. Youth associations and NGOs: Covering areas such as volunteering, intercultural learning, disability inclusion, arts, sports, and environmental projects.
3. Student and community organisations: Operating at schools, universities, and in neighbourhoods, often informal but essential for civic engagement.
4. Regional networks: In Andalusia, the Instituto Andaluz de la Juventud (IAJ) coordinates youth policy and funding.

### **Key contacts / actors**

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## **D. Youth sector in Belgium**

In terms of general public administration, Belgium is a very complex organism. The country is divided into two main provinces. The southern one is called Wallonia. The one in the north is Flanders. There is also a German-speaking minority. Each of these communities has its own local parliament. Within the structures of each regional parliament, one finds agencies responsible for the youth sector. In the following paragraphs, the focus is on presenting the youth sector landscape in Wallonia – the French-speaking community. The main actors in terms of youth advocacy, operating at different levels and in different fields, will be presented. Special attention will be paid to youth councils and youth centres, as they create a well-developed network in Belgium.

In Belgium, one will find youth councils active at all levels: local, provincial and state. They serve as youth spokesmen and representatives to relevant authorities. But they also play another very important role: they teach young people how to be an active citizen, who is not afraid of the authorities or is against them. Belgian youth councils learn how to create a dialogue with policymakers.

- State level: Le forum des jeunes [The Youth Forum]  
It is an official spokesperson and advisory body to the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles [Wallonia-Brussels Federation] of youth (aged 16-30). They create an important and meaningful link between the youth and policymakers. The Youth Forum makes young people the actors of the society of the future, defends youth ideas and turns their projects into reality, as well as promotes the vision of Belgian youth in the country and abroad. The Youth Forum runs its own projects to support young people, promote critical thinking, diversity, democracy and harmony. Thanks to that, they are still very close to youth and are aware of the challenges they face in the modern world.
- Provincial level: Conseil provincial des Jeunes (CPJ) [Provincial Youth Councils]  
Some of the Wallonia provinces have their youth councils. Their members are usually youth aged 14–26. They are elected or selected usually for a two-year term. Their role is to represent their peers at the provincial level. The CPJ members advise provincial authorities on youth policy and other youth-related matters. CPJ runs its own projects and organises events, like debates, awareness campaigns, or cultural activities. Provincial Youth Councils exist in several Belgian provinces, like Hainaut or Luxembourg. Unfortunately, most of them don't have dedicated websites or social media profiles.
- Local Level: Conseil communal des jeunes (CCJ) [Community Youth Council]  
Many local Belgian authorities have decided to establish their youth councils. Their members are usually people aged 12–18. For them, it is the first contact with local administration and policymakers. They act not only as an advisory body. They are active in the fields of sport, culture, well-being and similar. They organise their own projects and educational initiatives.

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## E. Youth sector in France

Young people aged 15–29 represent 16.4% of the French population ( $\approx$  10.9 million). However, integration into education and employment remains uneven. Around 11% of French youth are NEETs, this number being close to the EU average. The youth unemployment rate (15–24) reached 18.7% in late 2024, nearly double the overall unemployment rate.

Marginalised groups are particularly at risk. Early school leaving affected 7.5% of 18–24 year-olds in 2022, often leading to unstable jobs or long-term exclusion. Rates are much higher among foreign-born youth, who leave school without qualifications at more than twice the rate of their native-born peers. Young people with disabilities also face structural barriers in accessing both education and the labour market.

Communication is a key factor in these inequalities. Research by the National Institute for Youth and Popular Education (INJEP – Institut national de la jeunesse et de l'éducation populaire) shows that administrative language is often too complex, creating obstacles for young people with low literacy, migrant backgrounds, or cognitive difficulties. Youth organisations therefore play an essential role in translating policies and services into formats that are understandable and usable.

Several major actors structure the French youth sector:

- INJEP, The National Observatory for Youth, produces research and statistics.

- CIDJ (Centre d'Information et de Documentation Jeunesse) coordinates a network of regional (CRIJ – Centres régionaux d'information jeunesse) and local youth information offices (BIJ – Bureaux information jeunesse) providing free advice nationwide.
- FAGE (Fédération des Associations Générales Étudiantes) represents student associations and campaigns for equal opportunities.
- MJC (Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture) offer local cultural and educational activities.
- The COJ (Conseil d'Orientation des Politiques de Jeunesse) connects youth organisations and policymakers.

Together, these organisations illustrate the diversity of the French youth ecosystem. Yet persistent challenges — school dropouts, migrant youth exclusion, and inaccessible communication — underline the importance of taking action.



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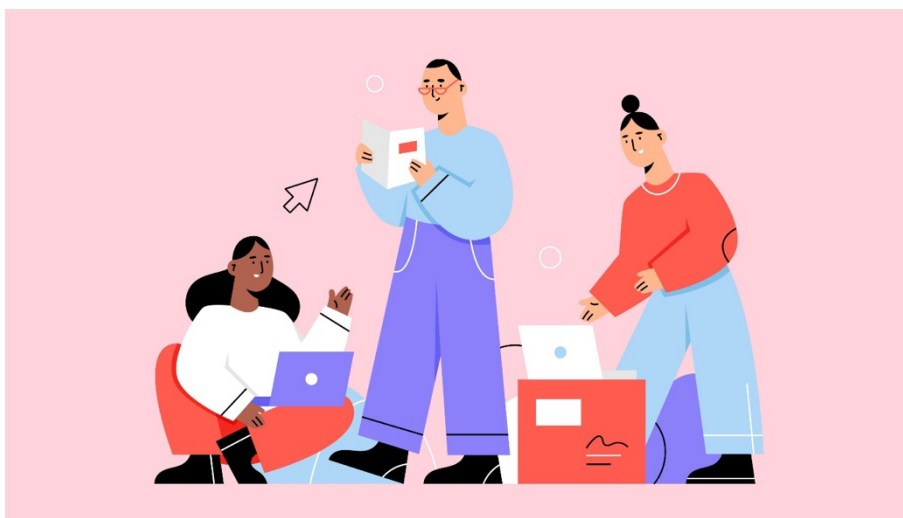
# Communication Barriers

## 1. The role of communication in social inclusion

In the context of youth work, communication is central to fostering social inclusion. For marginalised youth, such as migrants, early school leavers, or young people with disabilities, accessing services and information often depends on how clearly and inclusively these are communicated. When language is overly technical, formats are inaccessible, or messages are culturally detached, young people are excluded not only from information but from opportunities to participate in society.

Inclusive communication, grounded in plain language, universal design and participatory methods, contributes directly to removing these barriers. It allows services to become more transparent, approachable and effective. Beyond clarity, inclusive communication recognizes the diversity of needs, languages and learning styles, using multiple formats (text, visuals, audio, digital tools) to reach wider audiences.

By using accessible language, structured layouts, and alternative formats (such as easy-to-read or audio versions), organisations can ensure young people understand their rights, navigate services and engage with confidence. Communication also becomes a space for participation when youth are involved in co-creating the tools and messages that address them. In this way, communication moves from being a technical skill to a social practice that enables inclusion, equity and empowerment.



## 2. Barriers – introduction

To identify the communication barriers faced by young people and youth workers, we led a series of co-diagnostic workshops. They took place in each country of the partnership (France, Belgium, Austria, Italy and Spain). Over 75 participants shared with us their experiences and reflections on communication challenges they face in mutual contact. These were people aged 15+. They were: students, marginalised youth, youth educators, youth coaches, teachers, psychologists, social workers, and youth professionals. We'd like to thank them for their active participation, openness and sincerity. Their input into this project is priceless.

### 2.1. Barriers faced by young people

Young, marginalised individuals face numerous communication challenges. They are directly related to the needs we identified during the workshops.

#### **Challenges:**

- **New language:** For some of the marginalised youth, the language of the country they live in currently is not their native language. Learning grammar, using it, learning new words, studying, and writing in that language are big barriers.
- **Talking to native speakers:** We've observed that talking to native speakers of a language is more challenging for young people than speaking the language itself (for example, during language classes or with other non-native speakers).
- **Character traits (pointed out by one of the educators):** Shyness, introversion, and a feeling of being lost often prevent young people from active participation in discussion and activities.

#### **Needs:**

- **Adapted way of talking:** talking slowly (or not so fast, as some wrote), repeating words when needed, speaking louder, and using simple words, paying attention to the fact that they simply don't understand what someone is saying and that it would be very useful if they rephrased the sentence, and being patient. One person wrote that a French native speaker, if they don't understand, can always ask to repeat, instead of trying to 'correctly interpret'

what the other person just said. Such understatements lead to miscommunication.

## 2.2. Barriers faced by youth workers

Youth workers are strongly motivated to communicate efficiently with young, marginalised people. Years of practice and observations help them to develop their strategies to break down as many barriers as possible. However, they still face many challenges and struggle to find ways to overcome them. During the co-diagnostic workshop, they pointed out several areas of improvement. It is a very good sign. Youth educators are people who are open to learn new things in order to fulfil their mission. Below, we present the main challenges, strategies, and areas for improvement that came out as a result of our co-diagnostic workshops.

### **Challenges:**

- **Diversity of the target group:** people at different educational levels, of different origins, social and cultural backgrounds, sometimes with disabilities.
- **No common language:** it happens that there is no one language that everybody speaks within the same group.
- **Passive listening:** the lack of engagement in the conversation and group activities.
- **Spatial conditions:** young people are more open, receptive and relaxed when the activity (workshop) takes place in an open space or outside. The seminar or group rooms bring the opposite result.

### **Strategies:**

- **Body language:** using gestures to support understanding (e.g. showing on your fingers a number you speak aloud), smiling, standing face-to-face, observing the person's facial expression to make sure if (and to what degree) they understood.
- **Emotions:** Being patient when somebody doesn't understand, not showing one's annoyance, being polite, empathic and being aware of the person's level of stress and emotions, taking somebody's needs seriously.

- **Vocabulary:** applying plain language, good articulation, talking slowly, using infinitives.
- **Supports:** drawing, asking an interpreter or NGO for help, using technology for translating, using visual aids, and short written instructions.
- **Engaging activity formats:** (moderated) discussions, creative tasks (e.g., drawing), role-playing, storytelling, and culture-sharing activities, active listening.

#### **Areas of improvement:**

- **Strengthening the empathy:** raising the awareness of youth workers of the influence of marginalisation and low literacy on one's emotions and self-confidence.
- **Simplifying the communication:** Youth educators pointed out the lack of simplified language in materials and information. As one of them said [original spelling]: We need to stop using flyers that feel like mini-legal document. They'd also like to use visualised content more often and develop digital communication skills.
- **Applying plain language:** The ability to (re)write texts in plain language and apply plain language rules in daily life (spoken language) are skills youth workers would like to improve.

### **2.3. Main communication formats**

During Activity A1, the consortium conducted a structured assessment of 32 mediation tools used by youth-oriented organisations in partner countries. The analysis identified five main communication formats and highlighted key thematic focuses relevant to the youth sector.

#### **Communication Formats Identified**

##### **1. Websites (10 entries)**

The most commonly used format, typically by institutional bodies or large organisations. Websites often serve as information hubs, but vary in clarity and accessibility. While most used structured layouts, few included alternative formats such as audio or easy-to-read versions.

2. **Brochures (8 entries)**

Frequently used for program-specific communication, brochures provided concise information but sometimes included dense text or lacked visual support. They were often physical formats, but also shared digitally.

3. **Social Media Profiles (5 entries)**

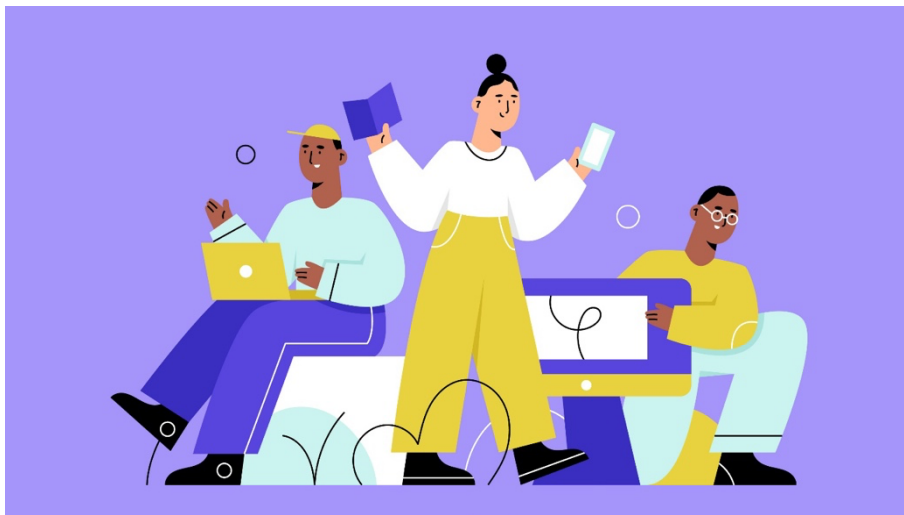
Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn pages are used for real-time updates and engaging with followers. They are effective for outreach but inconsistent in message clarity and accessibility, particularly for audiences with cognitive or sensory challenges.

4. **Newsletters (5 entries)**

While generally clear in structure, they were rarely translated or adapted into more accessible formats. Visual hierarchy and message clarity varied between tools.

5. **Posters (4 entries)**

Used for the promotion of specific events or services. Posters were typically visually engaging but scored lower on content clarity and rarely included multilingual or inclusive design features.



**Key Themes Identified**

- **Employment and career guidance:** Several tools focused on vocational support, job readiness, or training pathways.
- **Cultural participation and civic engagement:** Found in tools from cultural centers and public institutions promoting youth activities, workshops, and participation.

- **Mental health and wellbeing:** While not the central focus of any single tool, some resources indirectly addressed inclusion, emotional support, or confidence-building.
- **Accessibility and inclusion:** Only a few tools scored highly in terms of offering alternative formats (braille, audio, easy-to-read), indicating a significant area for improvement.

### Overall Observations from the Assessment

- Most tools used simple vocabulary (average rating: 3–4 out of 5) but often lacked translations, audio support, or interactive elements.
- Structured text and clear layout were generally well applied, but only a minority used pictograms, step-by-step visuals, or sensory-friendly designs.
- There is a notable gap in the use of inclusive formats, particularly for users with disabilities or low literacy.

These findings underline the importance of improving both content clarity and format diversity in youth communication. While websites dominate, integrating more accessible, multilingual, and interactive elements across all formats is essential for promoting inclusion.

## Best Practices

### 1 Italy

Type of communication tool	Multilingual publication in standard, easy-to-read, and braille formats
Who? (name of the organisation)	Sciara Progetti A.P.S. - E.T.S. in cooperation with the partners of the 'DIS-Abilities' project (financed under Erasmus+ KA220)
Where? (country, city)	Italy, France, Spain, Greece
Target group (to whom they address their communicates, services and/or events)	Youth workers, educators and individuals with cognitive or visual disabilities
When was the communication tool implemented? How long it's been working?	Developed and published in 2024 under the Erasmus+ project 'DIS-Abilities' <a href="https://disabilitiesproject.eu/">https://disabilitiesproject.eu/</a>
Why is it successful?	This publication stands out for its extended inclusiveness. It was produced in five languages (English, French, Spanish, Italian and Greek) and adapted into both easy-to-read and braille formats in each language. This multi-format approach ensures accessibility across linguistic, cognitive and sensory barriers, allowing a wide range of users to benefit from the content. By integrating universal design principles and investing in accessible publishing, the tool demonstrates how communication can be both inclusive and scalable.



## 2 Spain

Type of communication tool	WhatsApp group and channel
Who? (name of the organisation)	PLIS
Where? (country, city)	Fuengirola, Spain
Target group (to whom they address their communicates, services and/or events)	Followers in the channel and community – all the groups related to PLIS
When was the communication tool implemented? How long it's been working?	One year ago
Why is it successful?	We manage two types of communication: one through our channel, where 350 people follow us but may or may not join activities, and another through our WhatsApp community, where around 300 members participate more actively. To keep both groups engaged, we share two versions of the same updates, tailored to each audience. This approach has proven more effective, ensuring everyone receives information in the way that best suits their level of involvement.

### 3. Austria

Type of communication tool	<p>Reflection and action tool: Four plus one.</p> <p>This tool is a method from person-centered work.</p> <p>It helps everyone learn from previous activities and efforts.</p> <p>These learning experiences can give rise to a new perspective on situations and help to break new ground and plan ahead.</p>
Who? (name of the organisation)	<p>LebensGroß regards the person-centered approach of its services as the basis for individualized and tailored support. The focus is on strengths and abilities, personal will, and the resources available in the environment (support networks). The aim is to improve quality of life and participation in society.</p>
Where? (country, city)	Graz, Austria
Target group (to whom they address their communicates, services and/or events)	<p>Employees, educators, and people with disabilities, learning difficulties, and those affected by disadvantage.</p>
<p>When was the communication tool implemented?</p> <p>How long it's been working?</p>	<p>Person-centered working has been applied and further developed within the organisation since around 2014.</p>

<p>Why is it successful?</p>	<p>This method is successful because regular discussion of what we have tried, what we have learned, what we are happy with and what concerns us, as well as the next steps, is important. It is a simple method for jointly evaluating a situation. All participants answer four questions together, after which they use the fifth question to plan the next steps.</p> <p>The five questions are:</p> <p>What did we try?</p> <p>What did we learn?</p> <p>What were we happy about?</p> <p>What were we concerned about?</p> <p>Based on what we know: What is the next step?</p> <p>The results are recorded on a poster or worksheet. The method provides structure and helps to facilitate discussion. It can be used for family work, individual work and team meetings.</p>
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### 3. Belgium

Type of communication tool	<p><u>‘Écrire pour être lu’</u> [‘Written to be read’]</p> <p>and</p> <p><u>Amesure</u></p>
Who? (name of the organisation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministère de la Communauté française de Belgique, Service de la langue française [Ministry of the French Community of Belgium, French Language Service].</li> <li>Ministère fédéral de la Fonction publique. Service d’information [Federal Ministry of the Public Service. Information Service].</li> <li>Centre de traitement automatique du langage (CENTAL) [Centre for Automatic Language Processing] of the Université catholique de Louvain [Catholic University in Louvan].</li> </ul>
Where? (country, city)	Wallonia Province, Belgium
Target group (to whom they address their communicates, services and/or events)	The communication tools we present in this case study were created for administrative employees preparing the administrative texts for inhabitants of the Wallonia region.
<p>When was the communication tool implemented?</p> <p>How long it’s been working?</p>	<p>The first version of the manual <u>‘Écrire pour être lu’</u> was published in 1998. Unfortunately, we didn’t manage to find the date of its reedition, which we provide a link to in this case study.</p> <p>The <u>Amesure</u> tool was developed between 2012 and 2017.</p>

<p>Why is it successful?</p>	<p>We know that these are not classical ‘communication tools’, like a social media profile or a website.</p> <p>This tool combines theory and practice in daily life. Authorities prepared a publication with guidelines for administrative employees, presenting the theory of creating an administrative text in plain language.</p> <p>Maybe there were some trainings as well. We don’t know that.</p> <p>What is brilliant here is preparing an automatic verification tool. Every person can check if, and to what degree, their administrative text is understandable for readers.</p> <p>This is a unique combination providing a theoretical basis and a practical verification tool.</p>
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## 4. France

Type of communication tool	Digital platform + service information portal: 'Youth Compass' ('Boussole des Jeunes')
Who? (name of the organisation)	The French Ministry of National Education and Youth / Information Jeunesse network.
Where? (country, city)	France (national, with local/regional branches)
Target group (to whom they address their communicates, services and/or events)	Young people aged 16–30, especially those unfamiliar with their rights, marginalised youth, youth who might not easily access formal information channels, as well as adult professionals working with this youth.
When was the communication tool implemented? How long it's been working?	This service exists and has been continuously improved since 2017. Currently operational in around 63 départements (counties) and covering eight areas (employment, training, housing, health and international mobility, sports/leisure/culture, social engagement/activism and everyday life), the Compass aims to expand into new geographical areas and new areas of focus each year.
Why is it successful?	Boussole des Jeunes serves as a service mapping and guidance platform: it connects young people with services they need, explains rights and procedures in clearer terms, and helps them find local professionals.  It reduces the gap caused by complex or hard-to-find information. Because it is digital, free, uses understandable language (easy to understand language and use of the direct 'tu' in French,

	<p>instead of a more formal 'vous'), and ties local/regional structures, it reaches youth who might be excluded otherwise.</p> <p>It's successful because it combines clarity, visibility and practical help in one place.</p>
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# Introduction to Tools and Approaches

## 1. Accessibility vs Inclusion

In the European youth sector, **accessibility and inclusion are closely related but distinct concepts.**

**Accessibility** refers to the removal of barriers – physical, digital, or informational – so that young people with disabilities or other limitations can access spaces, services, and resources on an equal basis.

**Inclusion**, however, goes further: it is about actively creating environments where all young people, regardless of their abilities, background, or status, can participate, feel valued, and influence decisions.

European frameworks reflect this distinction. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), ratified by the EU and its Member States, established accessibility as a legal obligation. This principle was reinforced by the European Accessibility Act (2019), which requires Member States to harmonise accessibility standards for products and services, including information and communication technologies. These measures **have improved access to education, culture, and digital tools** across Europe. Yet, as many youth organisations observe, accessibility alone does not guarantee meaningful participation.

**Inclusion is a broader, more proactive concept.** The EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 identifies inclusion and diversity as key priorities, emphasising the need to empower marginalised groups such as school dropouts, migrant youth, young people with disabilities, and those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. For example, a youth centre may meet accessibility standards by offering a ramp or accessible website, but inclusion requires adapting programmes, language, and communication so that these young people are not only present but also engaged and represented.

In practice, **accessibility is often the starting point**, while **inclusion represents the goal**. This is especially relevant in communication: making a website technically compliant with accessibility guidelines ensures access, but using plain language ensures comprehension. Similarly, offering information in multiple languages, co-



designing activities with young people, or integrating digital tools that adapt to different literacy levels are inclusive practices that go beyond compliance.

In summary, **accessibility opens the door; inclusion ensures that young people feel welcome**, recognised, and able to contribute. European youth organisations must therefore integrate both principles if they are to build equitable, sustainable, and participatory services for future generations.

#### Resources

- United Nations (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- European Union (2019). European Accessibility Act.
- European Commission (2018). EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027.
- Council of Europe (2022). Youth Sector Strategy 2030: Inclusion and Diversity.

## 2. Inclusive design

### • How did it start?

Let's go back to the second half of the twentieth century. People with disabilities start fighting for their rights. Very slowly, step by step, the 'able-bodied' society recognised 'disabled' ones as full members of the society. On that basis, the idea of universal design was born. This term primarily refers to architecture and products. The universal design approach tries to find a golden mean – a solution that will be best adapted for everybody, 'abled-bodied' and 'disabled'. The digital revolution and its wide range of adaptive possibilities have given rise to a concept of inclusive design.

### • What is inclusive design?

It is all about knowing your target group, its needs and... diversity. This approach gives us all a new, fresh approach. Its three main messages are:

- We have to end up with the polarised division into 'disabled' and 'abled-bodied'.
- It is necessary to see the diverse needs of one group.
- We have to adapt the product or service to those needs.

This case study will help clarify the matter. Let's take a closer look at the recently introduced collection of adaptive clothing by one of the world's well-known clothing

companies. Blouses, t-shirts, pants, and underwear have, for example, magnetic zippers and snap fastenings, opening for tube, stoma, or catheter access.

- **Why is it important?**

Inclusive design enables the recognition of the diverse needs of a certain group. One may be experienced in a certain field, but there are always things to learn. Or let's imagine that suddenly you discover that a new group of people could start using a certain product or service. To reach more clients or beneficiaries, only some adaptations will be needed.

- **Why is inclusive design important in communication with marginalised youth?**

Inclusive design in communication means creating content that is easy to understand and navigate by the widest possible group of people, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background, as well as age, gender, and abilities.

Think for a moment. What are the reasons for youth exclusion? These might be, for example, low literacy, social, cultural, or migrant background, learning disorders, handicap, and many others. By adapting to their needs, you make your voice heard among them. For them, it is a sign that they are not invisible. They're seen and welcome to use your product or profit from the services you provide. If they're welcome, they participate. And if they participate, we are on the right track to equality.



- **Diverse target group, diverse team**

Knowing the target group and its diversity is the first step. Being aware of their needs, strengths, and limitations is the first step in working on adapting services or products to meet their expectations. But will you work on it alone? Probably not. Reflect for a moment on who you'll invite to your team. The representatives of the target group should participate as experts. They will contribute to the design/creative process in a way you would never imagine. They'll pay attention to the matters and issues nobody would ever think of. They'll show the complexity and diversity of their own group. A very simple, classic example: does being a visually impaired person mean seeing only darkness? Numerous videos prove that it is not true.

#### Resources

- Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution telling the story of that movement in the USA.
- Corporate Primark website, <https://corporate.primark.com/en-gb/a/news/corporate-news/adaptive-fashion-hits-the-high-street-as-primark-launches-first-men-and-womens-range-with-victoria-jenkins>, accessed on 9 September 2025.
- A video in English showing various kinds of visual impairment, <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/plsLO6D3r1g>, accessed on 10 September 2025.

### 3. Sustainable and eco-friendly communication

The term 'sustainable and eco-friendly communication' describes communication practices that are ecologically responsible and socially sustainable in the long term. This involves more than just the type of communication: the focus is also on the content, the attitude behind it, and the impact on society and the environment.

- **Sustainable communication**

This refers to a form of exchange that is effective in the long term, ethically acceptable, and socially responsible. It aims to build trust, conduct dialogues on an equal basis, and create transparency. People are actively involved in processes, enabling and encouraging participation. Key topics of sustainable communication are social justice, education, diversity, inclusion, and environmental and climate protection. This form of communication is value-based: it reflects not only what is said, but also how and why.

- **Eco-friendly communication**

Eco-friendly communication focuses on the ecological footprint. Strategies are applied that aim to conserve natural resources and reduce environmental impact. Examples include consciously avoiding printed materials in favour of digital media, paperless working methods, the use of sustainable advertising materials, avoiding disposable flyers, and the use of energy-efficient technologies. Reducing business travel through virtual meetings also falls under eco-friendly communication practices.

- **The connection: communicating in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.**

Combining both approaches results in a complete communication strategy that is consciously designed in terms of both content and form. Sustainable and environmentally friendly communication takes into account not only what is communicated, but also how, by what means, and with what consequences. It is about understanding communication as a tool for social change – responsible, reflective, and resource-efficient. Companies, organizations, and individuals can thus make an active contribution to environmental and climate protection, assume social responsibility, and gain the trust of their target group through authentic and transparent communication.

The digital age offers many opportunities to implement these principles. However, it also requires a rethink and a critical examination of existing communication structures. Sustainable and environmentally friendly communication is not a short-term trend, but a forward-looking approach that is becoming increasingly important.

## 4. Plain language

Plain language is not only a writing style or a way to communicate, but also **a matter of fairness**. When young people can easily understand the information they receive, they can make choices, take part in activities, feel they belong and make an impact in their communities. For those who face barriers such as limited literacy, migration, or learning difficulties, clear communication is often the first step toward inclusion. But **it also benefits everyone**: even highly educated readers prefer messages that are quick to grasp and easy to act on.

The principle of plain language is now internationally recognized.

The ISO 24495-1:2023 Plain Language Standard defines four key outcomes:

1. The audience can find what they need.
2. They can understand it.
3. They can use it.
4. They can achieve their goals.



These outcomes are achieved by working **on three levels**:

- **Structure:** Organise content logically, with the most important information first ('front-loading'). Use headings, lists, and short sections to guide the reader.
- **Language:** Choose common words, active voice, and short sentences. Avoid jargon, double negatives, or abstract phrasing.
- **Design:** Support text with readable fonts, clear contrast, and visuals such as icons or infographics. On digital platforms, make sure content is scannable and mobile-friendly.

**The benefits go beyond accessibility.** In public services, texts written in plain language reduce mistakes and speed up processes. In healthcare, patients who receive instructions in plain language are less likely to make errors with medication. In education, students engage more deeply when learning materials are clear. The

same applies to youth work: when invitations, forms, or programme descriptions are clear, more young people participate and fewer drop out.

Imagine a young migrant who receives an announcement about a youth programme. If the message is written in bureaucratic language, they may give up before even asking a question. If the same message uses plain language, it means it has with a direct title, a simple explanation of what, when, and how, and a visual cue, that young person knows immediately that the opportunity is for them. **Clarity turns a potential barrier into an invitation.**

Plain language is different from 'easy-to-read'. Easy-to-read formats follow strict rules to support people with cognitive disabilities. **Plain language, instead, creates a wider framework that keeps complex ideas intact but makes them understandable for the general audience.** This flexibility makes it especially powerful in diverse and multilingual contexts.

Plain language can also be measured. Readability tools such as Flesch Reading Ease or LIX can give an initial score of text difficulty, while user testing with real participants provides direct feedback on whether messages work. These methods allow organisations to move from intention to evidence, ensuring communication is not only well-meaning but effective.

In short, **plain language is not about simplifying ideas, it is about respecting the right to understand.** By combining structure, accessible wording, and thoughtful design, youth workers and organisations create fairer conditions for participation. Clarity is not just a style; it is a pathway to equity, trust, and inclusion.

## Ten Recommendations

### 1. Begin with a communication review

Assess your websites, flyers, and social media posts. Ask: Who is excluded by the way we currently communicate? Involve young people in this process to capture diverse perspectives.

### 2. Prioritise plain language

Use short sentences, familiar vocabulary, and clear structure. Avoid jargon or explain it when necessary. Plain language ensures that all young people can understand and act on the information.

### 3. Reach young people where they are

Adapt communication channels to your audiences. While websites remain useful, young people tend to use social media or messaging apps. Ensure consistency across platforms.

### 4. Combine text and visuals

Support written information with images, icons, or infographics. Use inclusive visuals that reflect diversity and provide alternative text for accessibility.

### 5. Test with users

Before launching, share materials with small groups of young people. Their feedback on clarity and relevance will help refine your approach.

### 6. Support multilingual audiences

In multilingual contexts, provide key information in the languages spoken by your community. For migrant, refugee youth, as well as for the youth who do not speak the country's language for whatever reason, adapt resources to varying literacy levels.

### 7. Integrate accessibility from the start

Apply digital accessibility standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG): ensure high contrast, scalable text, captions, and simple navigation.

## 8. Build staff capacity

Offer regular training for staff and volunteers on clear writing, intercultural communication, and digital accessibility. Skills should be refreshed and shared internally.

## 9. Strengthen partnerships

Work with schools, libraries, cultural centres, and local authorities to broaden reach. Partner with specialists in literacy or disability for expert support.

## 10. Monitor and improve

Use analytics, surveys, or attendance data to track how young people engage with your communication. Adjust strategies regularly to respond to their evolving needs.



## Conclusion and References

‘That’s Clear’ demonstrates that **inclusion begins with our language**. The message is consistent across all partner countries: communication determines whether young people can find, understand, and use offers and services to achieve their goals. The project therefore aims to close this gap by systematically integrating plain language and inclusive design into everyday youth work practices.

The project thus addresses one of the main causes of exclusion – inaccessible communication. Experience from all partner countries confirms that **youth workers need concrete tools, practical training, and time** to adapt their work.

That’s Clear! follows a clearly structured approach:

1. Youth-centered co-diagnosis – Obstacles and needs are identified, created, and described together with young people.
2. Analysis of materials: Brochures, infographics, assessment tools, and a tool provide verifiable results and are analysed.
3. Development of training measures – modular training/workshops/webinars are combined with face-to-face and online learning, recognised by Youthpass.

This approach strengthens the practice of youth organisations, reduces dropouts, and increases participation. This particularly benefits migrants, school dropouts, and young people with cognitive impairments - but ultimately all people who prefer clear, understandable information.

That’s Clear! combines insights from inclusive publishing, literacy, social theatre, culture, and youth leadership. At the same time, it opens up avenues to education, training, and sports. Sustainable communication decisions - such as reducing printed materials, reusability, and prioritizing accessibility - also contribute to long-term social added value: fewer misunderstandings, greater capacity to act, and fairer access to services.

Country-specific perspectives

- Austria: Programs such as NEBA (Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz, or Professional Assistance Network) offer low-threshold support for the transition from school to work. Plain language can strengthen counselling, form, and coaching

materials in this area. Other youth organizations also form a dense, diverse network covering culture, education, the environment, sports, leisure, and even religion.

- Italy & Spain: Youth Wiki shows political frameworks and national youth institutes that illustrate where clear communication can be embedded in local services, mobility programs, and youth centres.
- Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels Federation): Belgium has a complex administrative structure (communities/regions with their own parliaments and responsibilities for youth issues). The network of youth participation is particularly influential: youth councils at the national, provincial, and municipal levels act as a voice and learning space for democratic participation. Example: The Forum des Jeunes is the official representative of 16- to 30-year-olds in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation; it connects young people and decision-makers, drafts statements, and supports participation processes. Such bodies are ideal for introducing plain language standards in public communication -supported by practical guidelines and automated comprehensibility checks.
- France: Young people aged 15 to 29 make up a significant proportion of the population, yet transitions in education and careers, including youth unemployment and school dropouts, remain a challenge. In order to break down communication barriers, INJEP (data and analysis), CIDJ/CRIJ/BIJ (low-threshold youth information) and MJC (local cultural and educational work) have established themselves as key organisations that can translate complex administrative language into formats that are both understandable and usable.

**Clear and inclusive language and communication are fair and effective.** When people find what they need, understand it, and can use it to achieve their goals, they automatically become involved.

By combining standards with co-design and the recognition of youth organisations, **clarity becomes a daily practice.** This leads to good or better results for young people. **It opens doors for communication and makes participation possible.**

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