

**That's clear!**

# Diagnosing communication barriers in youth facilities



Module 2

# Goals of this module

- To identify the barriers to inclusion.
- To understand the current state of communication in youth facilities.



# Table of contents

2h 00min 🕒

- What makes learning difficult?
- What language barriers do young people face?
- Break
- The workshop



# What makes learning difficult?



# Sea of learning barriers

10 min 🕒



1. You receive a few waves in two colours.
2. Write one thing on each, making learning difficult.
3. On blue ones, write 'internal' factors (feature).
4. On green ones, write 'external' factors.

Example:

Internal factor - getting tired quickly

External factor - loud environment

Detailed activity description: see the Activity sheet.



# What language barriers do young people face?

Reading and writing learning starts with a huge dose of enthusiasm.

During their school years, some children will have to put in much more effort to gain those skills.

Nevertheless, these two basic competencies will always remain challenging for them.



# Learning difficulties

- Sensory impairment (weaknesses in vision or hearing)
- Severe behavioral, psychological or emotional issues
- The language of the country they're living in is not their native one
- High absenteeism
- Ineffective instruction, or inadequate curricula.



# Learning difficulties

Children have the potential to achieve at age-appropriate levels once provided with programs that incorporate appropriate support and evidence-based instruction.



# Learning disabilities

- Ongoing difficulties in some areas of learning
- Caused by a neurodevelopmental disorder (blend of the genetic, cognitive and environmental factors).
- It continues to exist, despite intervention or training.



# Who may face communication barriers?



Plain language benefits many different profiles, not only people with learning disabilities. Among them are people experiencing the following barriers:

- Motor
- Sensory
- Cognitive/neurodevelopmental
- Psychological
- Situational/invisible obstacles

# Cognitive and neurodevelopmental barriers



Some young people may experience difficulties processing written or spoken information due to neurodevelopmental conditions.

Examples:

- Dyslexia
- Dysgraphia
- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Language processing difficulties

# Cognitive and neurodevelopmental barriers

Possible communication impacts:

- Difficulty understanding complex text
- Slower reading processing
- Problems identifying key information
- Cognitive overload
- Fatigue when reading long texts



# Sensory barriers

## Sensory barriers:

- Hearing impairments
- Visual impairments
- Auditory processing difficulties

## Did you know that:

- 11% of Europe's population has a disabling hearing loss
- 9% of Europe's population has a visual impairment



**TIP: Check the statistics for your country.  
You might be surprised!**

# Sensory barriers

Possible communication impacts:

- Difficulty accessing written or audio information
- Missing important details in conversations or instructions
- Increased fatigue when concentrating on communication
- Difficulties navigating websites, forms, or multimedia content
- Feeling excluded from activities, discussions, or services due to inaccessible communication formats



# Psychological barriers

Some psychological conditions can affect how people understand, process or engage with information.

Examples:

- Anxiety disorders
- Depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Trauma-related disorders
- Social anxiety



# Psychological barriers

Possible communication impacts:

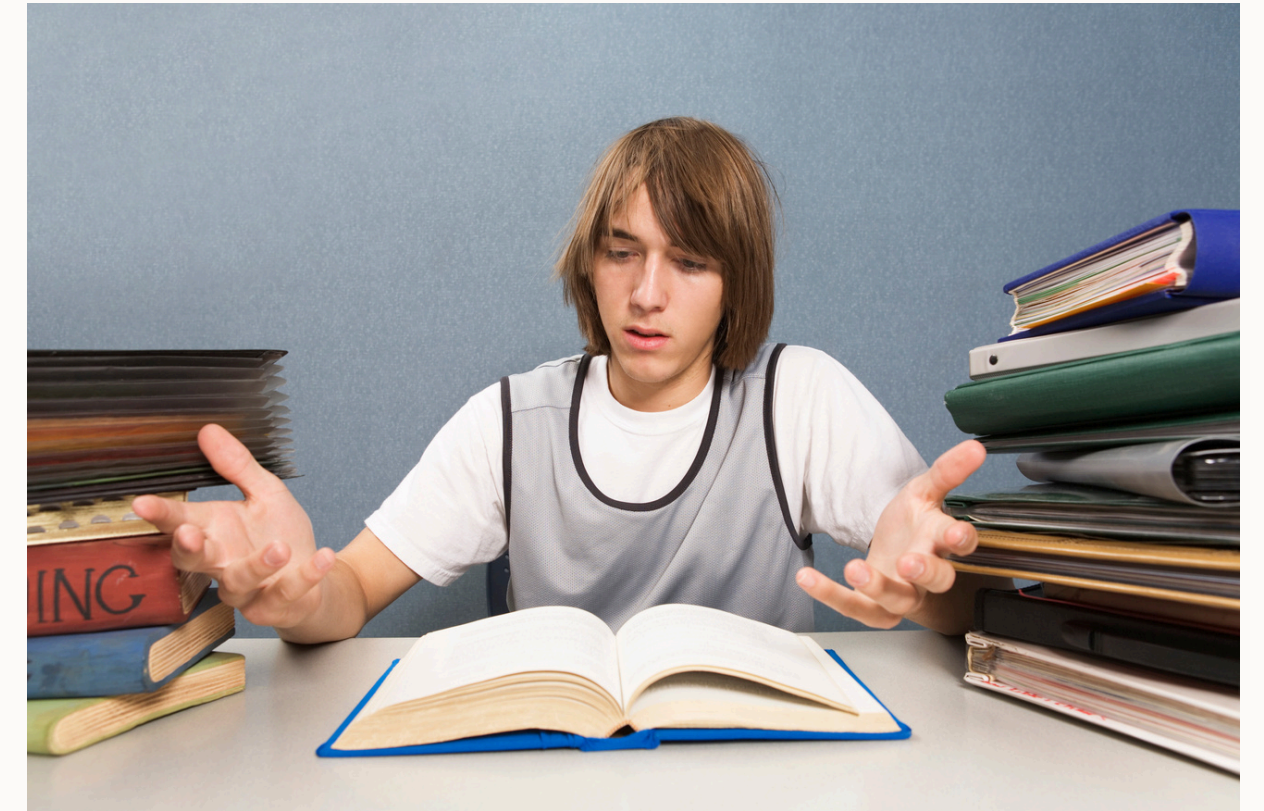
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling overwhelmed by long or complex information
- Avoidance of administrative or official communication
- Increased stress when reading unfamiliar content



# Situational and invisible barriers

Examples:

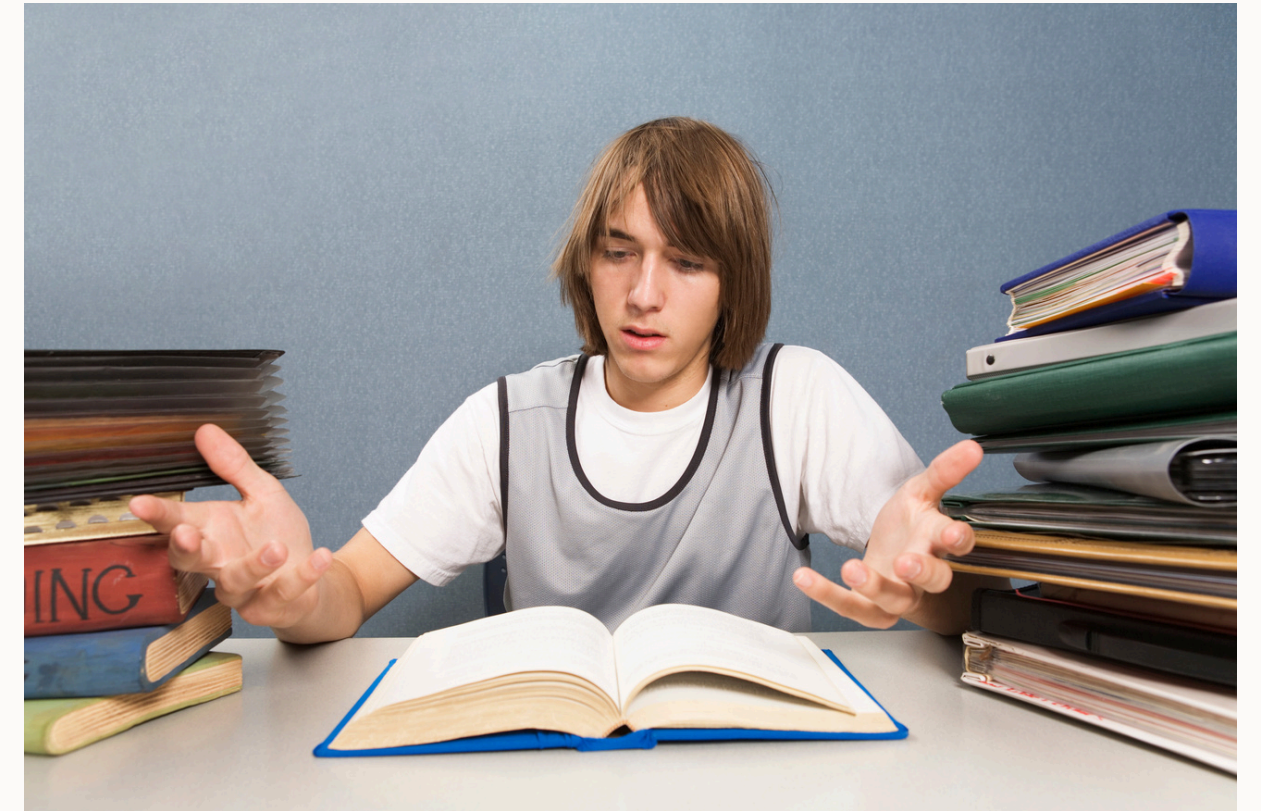
- Fatigue
- Stress
- Illness
- Illiteracy
- Low literacy
- Non-native language
- Temporary cognitive overload
- Limited digital skills



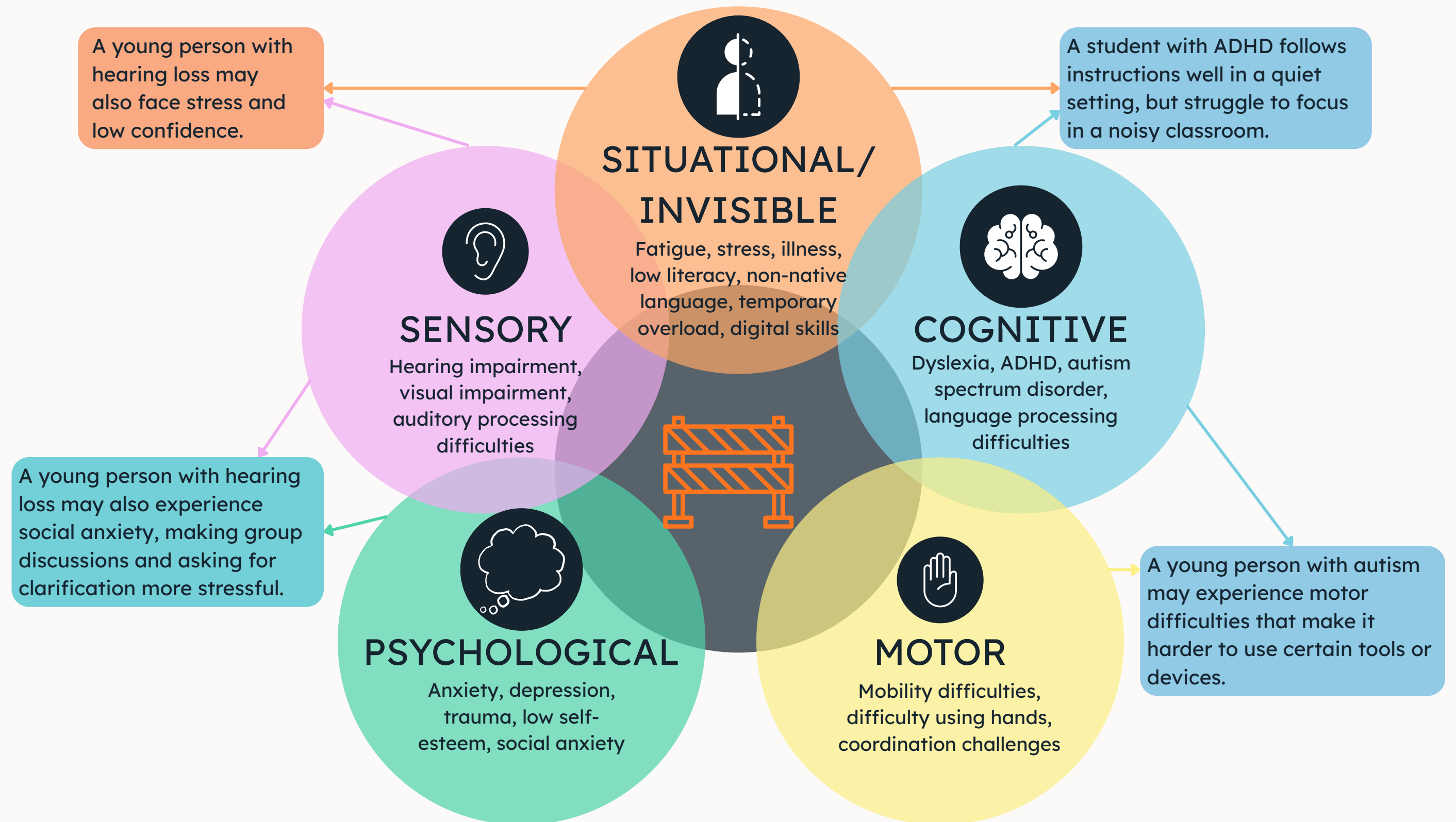
# Situational and invisible barriers

Possible communication impacts:

- Misunderstanding instructions
- Difficulty identifying key information
- Needing more time to process content
- Avoiding services or support systems



# Overlapping barriers



# Overlapping barriers

Barriers rarely exist alone.  
They can overlap, interact and make  
communication more difficult.

And they all affect one's literacy skills.



# What are literacy skills?

“The ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts to participate in society, achieve one’s goals, and develop one’s knowledge and potential.” (quote after: OECD PIAAC framework)

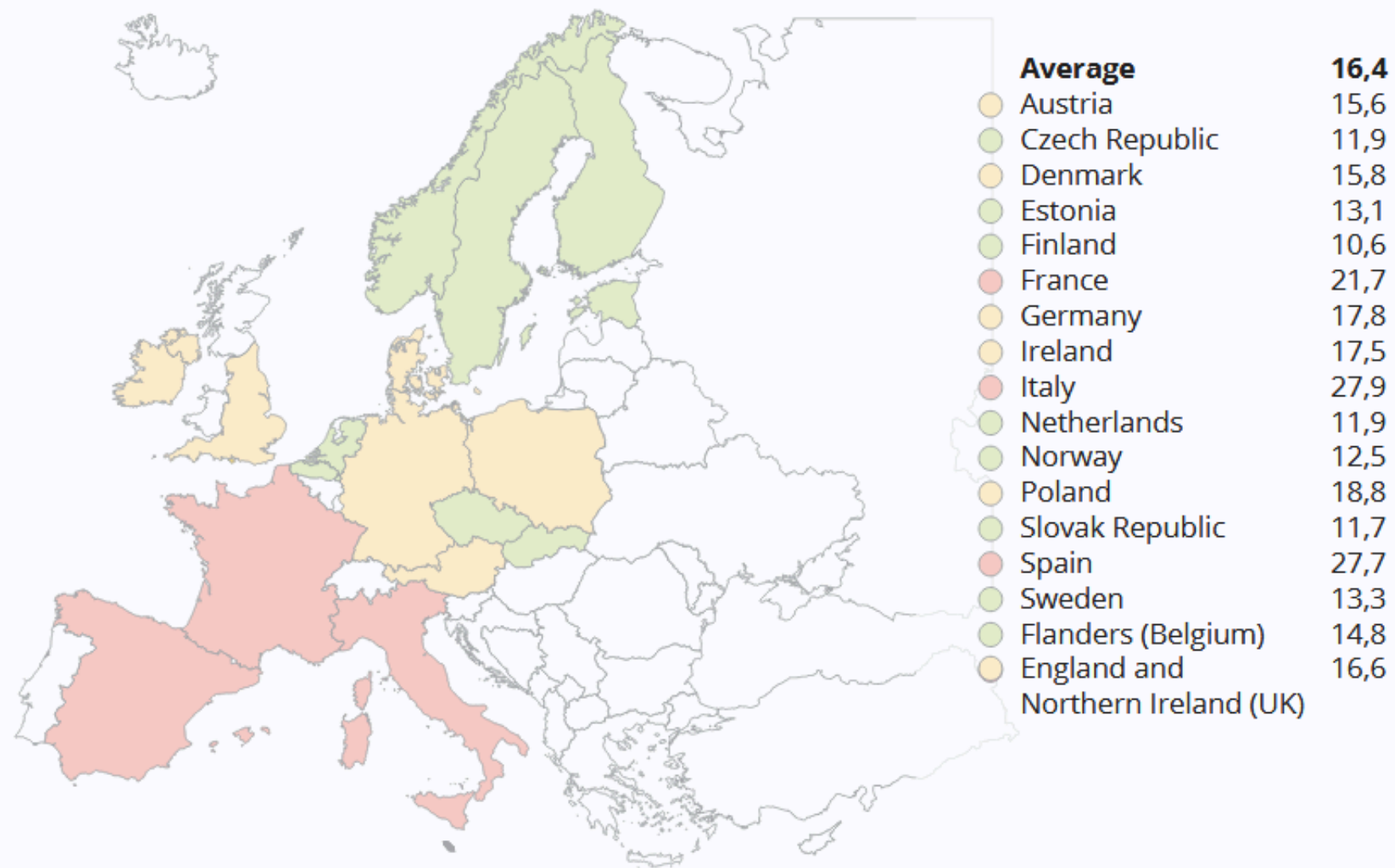
Literacy skills help people:

- Understand information
- Navigate daily life
- Access education, work, and services



# Literacy skills in Europe

Percentage of adults between 16 and 65 years with literacy difficulties.



# Measuring literacy

## PIAAC

Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies.

- A test used for measuring literacy, mostly in rich countries. Administered in app. 30 countries.
- By OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

## LAMP

Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme

- Collecting quality data on literacy through new national household surveys repeated on a five to ten-year cycle.
- Developed by and validated in six countries.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics

# PIAAC's literacy proficiency levels

Person scoring below level 1:

- Can read very short texts on familiar topics
- Finds one clearly stated piece of information
- Struggles with longer or more complex texts

Person scoring level 1:

- Understands short sentences and simple paragraphs
- Identifies basic information
- Has a limited ability to process multiple pieces of information



# PIAAC's literacy proficiency levels

## Person scoring level 2:

- Can compare information and make simple inferences
- Understands short digital and printed texts
- Begins to evaluate the relevance of information

## Person scoring level 3:

- Understands dense or longer texts
- Can interpret, compare, and evaluate information
- Handles everyday literacy demands independently



# PIAAC's literacy proficiency levels

Person scoring level 4:

- Analyses and compares complex texts
- Integrates information from multiple sections or sources
- Understands nuanced or abstract information
- Evaluates the relevance of information for a specific task



# PIAAC's literacy proficiency levels



## Person scoring level 5:

- Critically evaluates complex arguments and evidence
- Interprets highly detailed or technical texts
- Identifies reliability, bias, or inconsistencies in information
- Synthesises information from multiple complex sources independently

# Impact on daily life

Better literacy proficiency means:

- Lower likelihood of unemployment
- Higher incomes
- Reporting good health
- Engaging more often as volunteers,
- Have more trust in others
- Feeling that they can have a say in what the government does.



# Coffee break

15 minutes



# The workshop

You will experience what it feels like to access information when you don't fully understand the language. It will provide insight into how young people with low literacy may experience youth services.



# Communication barriers – step 1

15 min 🕒



1. We split into four (4) language groups.
2. Each group receives materials about a certain organisation in a language not native to them.
3. Each group tries to figure out what services and for whom the organisation provides. **IMPORTANT! Please do not use translation tools.**
4. Each group answers a few feedback questions on what they've learnt.



# Materials to explore



French: [https://  
www.solidaritesje  
unesse.org/](https://www.solidaritesjeunes.org/)



Italian: [https://  
giovani2030.it/](https://giovani2030.it/)



Spanish: [https://  
www.madrid.es](https://www.madrid.es)



German: [https://  
www.bundjugend.  
de/](https://www.bundjugend.de/)

# Communication barriers – step 1

15 min 🕒



1. What does this organisation do?
2. Who are its services for?
3. How can someone benefit from/  
engage in its services/offer?
4. Do you feel encouraged to get in  
touch with them?

**IMPORTANT!** We're not assessing language skills. We're diagnosing communication barriers.



# Communication barriers – step 2

10 min 🕒



1. A mosaic of needs.
2. Each group presents the materials they explored.
3. They name the difficulties they faced.
4. We write their feedback down.



# Communication barriers – step 3

20 min 🕒



1. Each language-fluent team analyses the obstacles faced by non-native speakers.
2. They create a more inclusive version of the starting material
3. You can use [studio.polonto.com](https://studio.polonto.com) for that.
4. Each team presents their more inclusive version, explaining what and why they changed.



# Evaluation

## STEP 1

I'll ask you to finish the three simple sentences:

- One thing that surprised me...
- One thing that helped me understand...
- One thing I would change in youth communication...

## STEP 2

Inbound and outbound emoji

- Choose one expression representing your emotions at the beginning of our module.
- Choose one expression representing your emotions at the end of our module.





# Thank you!

Any questions? Doubts?

Let's discuss

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# Credits

- Slide 5: Ludolf Bakhuysen, “Warships in a Heavy Storm”, ca. 1695, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://id.rijksmuseum.nl/20026546>
- Slides 20: <https://ourworldindata.org/how-is-literacy-measured>
- Remaining slides: Canva photo database, 2026.

# That's clear!

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