



INCLUSIVE MOBILITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: FROM BARRIERS TO EQUAL PARTICIPATION



Why Mobility Is Important for Young People with Disabilities?

International mobility can play an important role in the personal, social, and professional development of young people with disabilities. Programmes such as Erasmus+, youth exchanges, international training courses, study visits, and other cross-border learning activities offer much more than the opportunity to travel. They create spaces where young people can meet others, experience different cultures, develop new skills, and become more confident in unfamiliar environments.

For young people with disabilities, these experiences can be particularly meaningful because they may also contribute to greater independence and self-confidence.

Travelling to another country, participating in an international group, expressing opinions, making decisions, and managing daily activities in a new environment can all support personal growth. Mobility can also help young people with disabilities expand their social networks. Many international programmes are based on teamwork, intercultural learning, peer exchange, and non-formal education. These activities create opportunities for young people to form friendships, strengthen communication skills, and feel part of a wider community.

When young people with disabilities take part in Erasmus+, youth exchanges, training programmes, and international events, they are not simply beneficiaries of a project. They become active participants who contribute their ideas, experiences, knowledge, and perspectives.

This is important because inclusion is not only about providing access to a building or activity. It is also about ensuring that young people with disabilities have the same opportunities as others to learn, participate, build relationships, and develop their potential.

Inclusive mobility can therefore become a powerful tool for empowerment. It can allow young people with disabilities to discover new abilities, challenge personal and social expectations, and gain experiences that can positively influence their everyday lives after returning home.



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What Does Truly Inclusive Mobility Mean?

A truly inclusive mobility programme requires more than inviting young people with disabilities to apply. Inclusion has to be integrated into the entire organisation of the activity.

It begins before the mobility takes place and continues throughout travel, accommodation, training activities, communication, and daily support. One of the first aspects is accessible transport. If a participant uses a wheelchair or requires support during travel, assistance should be planned in advance. Airlines and airports may need to be informed about wheelchair use, assistance during boarding and disembarking, or other individual support needs.

Training venues and accommodation should be checked in advance to ensure accessibility. Depending on the participants, this may include ramps, lifts, accessible toilets, wide corridors, appropriate room layouts, and sufficient space for wheelchair users to move independently. Materials should also be available in formats that participants can use. A young person with a visual impairment may need enlarged text, digital materials compatible with assistive technology, or verbal descriptions. A person with cognitive or intellectual support needs may benefit from simplified language, shorter instructions, and clearly structured information. Information can be provided in several ways at the same time: verbally, in writing, and through visual materials. Trainers should use clear language and an appropriate pace. Non-formal learning activities can be adapted to different abilities and learning styles. Activities that require running or standing can be redesigned so they can also be completed while seated. Visual exercises can include verbal descriptions. Personal assistance may also be necessary for some participants. Assistants, mentors, or accompanying persons can help with orientation, communication, emotional support, or practical needs. However, this support should always respect the participant's independence and dignity.



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Equal Conditions, Not Special Treatment

Inclusive mobility is not about giving special treatment to young people with disabilities. It is about recognising that people start from different circumstances and may require different forms of support in order to participate equally.

Providing a ramp to a wheelchair user is not an advantage.

Providing accessible materials to a person with a visual impairment is not an advantage.

Allowing additional processing time, providing a quiet space, adapting an activity, or arranging personal assistance is not preferential treatment.

These measures remove barriers that would otherwise prevent participation.

The objective should therefore not be to make people with disabilities fit into systems that were designed without considering their needs.

The objective should be to design mobility programmes that recognise diversity from the beginning.

Future inclusive mobility will require stronger accessibility standards, better staff preparation, personalised support, assistive technologies, and closer cooperation between organisations, families, professionals, and communities.

Most importantly, young people with disabilities themselves must have a voice in decisions about their participation.

They should be asked what support they need.

They should be involved in planning.

They should be able to make choices.

And they should have the opportunity to evaluate whether an activity was truly accessible.

Inclusion is achieved not when a young person with a disability is simply present at an activity, but when that person is able to participate, communicate, learn, make decisions, build relationships, and develop independence on an equal basis with others.

Inclusive mobility is not about giving special treatment. It is about creating equal conditions for participation.