



SplrAL

Structures for
inclusive arts learning

METHODS, PRACTICES AND TOOLS FOR INCLUSIVE ARTS



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Structure for Inclusive Arts Learning

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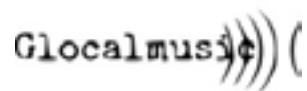
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Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who made the SplrAL project and this publication possible. Our thanks go to the partner organizations, trainers, artists, cultural workers, and above all to participating people living with disabilities and community participants whose active involvement shaped the methodologies and practices presented here. We are also grateful to the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union for its co-funding and for supporting the development of inclusive and accessible artistic practices across Europe.



Tribute to Alexandra Santos

Alexandra Santos was a key member of the Portuguese team, whose commitment and sensitivity deeply marked the SplrAL project.

We wish to pay a special tribute to Alexandra Santos, who left us too soon. Her presence in the project was fundamental, marked by her humanity, solidarity, and greatness as a human being.

We remember her professionalism, her motivation, and her constant dedication to the project — always accompanied by words of encouragement and a smile that inspired everyone around her. Alexandra left in us a deep void, difficult to fill, but also the certainty that we became richer and better human beings for having shared this and other journeys by her side.

For us, colleagues and friends, her memory will remain an inspiration and an inseparable part of the history of SplrAL — and beyond.

EDITORIAL NOTE

This methodological book is one of the main intellectual outputs of the Erasmus+ project SplrAL – Structures for Inclusive Arts Learning. It has been conceived as both a methodological and a practical guide, designed to support educators, artists, cultural workers, and organisations in developing more inclusive and accessible artistic practices.

The publication integrates theoretical foundations, multidisciplinary methodologies, and evaluation tools, all connected to the practice developed throughout the entire project cycle by its participants.

The editorial process followed the values that guide the Erasmus+ programme: participation, equality, accessibility, and cooperation. The book, therefore, reflects both methodological rigour and the lived experience of inclusive artistic creation, affirming inclusion as an expression of cultural citizenship, social innovation, and the development of the arts.

It is also framed within key international and European references, namely the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, the **European Accessibility Act (EAA – Directive 2019/882)**, and the **EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021–2030**.

I wish to express my gratitude to all partners, trainers, artists, people living with disabilities, and community participants who contributed to this collective work. May this book inspire new practices, support cultural policies, and strengthen the belief that the arts are a space of diversity, accessibility, and enrichment for all.

Luís Miguel Rodrigues
Editorial Coordination, SplrAL Project

ABOUT THE SPIRAL PROJECT

SplrAL is a European cooperation project dedicated to developing, testing, and disseminating inclusive arts methodologies with and for people living with disabilities, designed to support the work of artists, educators, and cultural professionals. It brings together organisations from different countries, combining expertise in theatre, dance, music, multimedia and cultural mediation.

The project's objectives are to strengthen the competences of artists, educators, and cultural workers; to promote accessibility and equal participation in artistic creation; to create inclusive artistic training structures; and to develop curricula and programmes in the field of inclusive arts, concretely embodied in this methodological manual as a shared resource. By linking multidisciplinary practices with inclusive evaluation tools, SplrAL contributes to a more diverse and innovative artistic ecosystem.

SplrAL is aligned with key international and European frameworks such as the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, the **European Accessibility Act (EAA - Directive 2019/882)**, and the **EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030**. It reflects the Erasmus+ values of participation, equality, accessibility, and cooperation, highlighting that inclusion in the arts is an expression of cultural citizenship and artistic innovation.



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INTRODUCTION

The **SplrAL - Structures for Inclusive Arts Learning** project was developed within the framework of the **Erasmus+ Program (Key Action 220 - Cooperation Partnerships in Adult Education, KA220-ADU)**, to promote social inclusion through the arts. We believe that everyone has the right to fully participate in cultural life, and that the arts are a powerful tool for expression, encounter, and citizenship.

SplrAL brings together a **European consortium** of organizations from **Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Spain**, combining diverse experiences in inclusive arts, adult education, and community work to build a shared methodological approach. *(The full profiles of the partner organizations and teams can be found at the end of this book, in the section “Partners and Acknowledgements.”)*

THE PROJECT CONTINUES A PATH ALREADY BEGUN:

(In)Different Journey (2021–2023) consolidated this vision by producing a book of good practices in inclusive arts.

<https://tinyurl.com/33wvkas3>

So Far So Near - Inclusive Arts (2019–2021) promoted the exchange of inclusive methodologies among European partners, showing how creativity can bring communities closer together.

SplrAL (2023–2025) marks the next phase, advancing the research and structuring it into inclusive artistic curricula, while offering a robust methodological framework to support training, practice, and knowledge sharing.

This methodological book is one of the main outcomes of the project. It was built collaboratively, bringing together the knowledge and experience of partners from different European countries. Its purpose goes beyond presenting techniques: it seeks to **open pathways for creative and inclusive experimentation**, encouraging educators, artists, and organizations to design accessible and meaningful artistic activities for all.

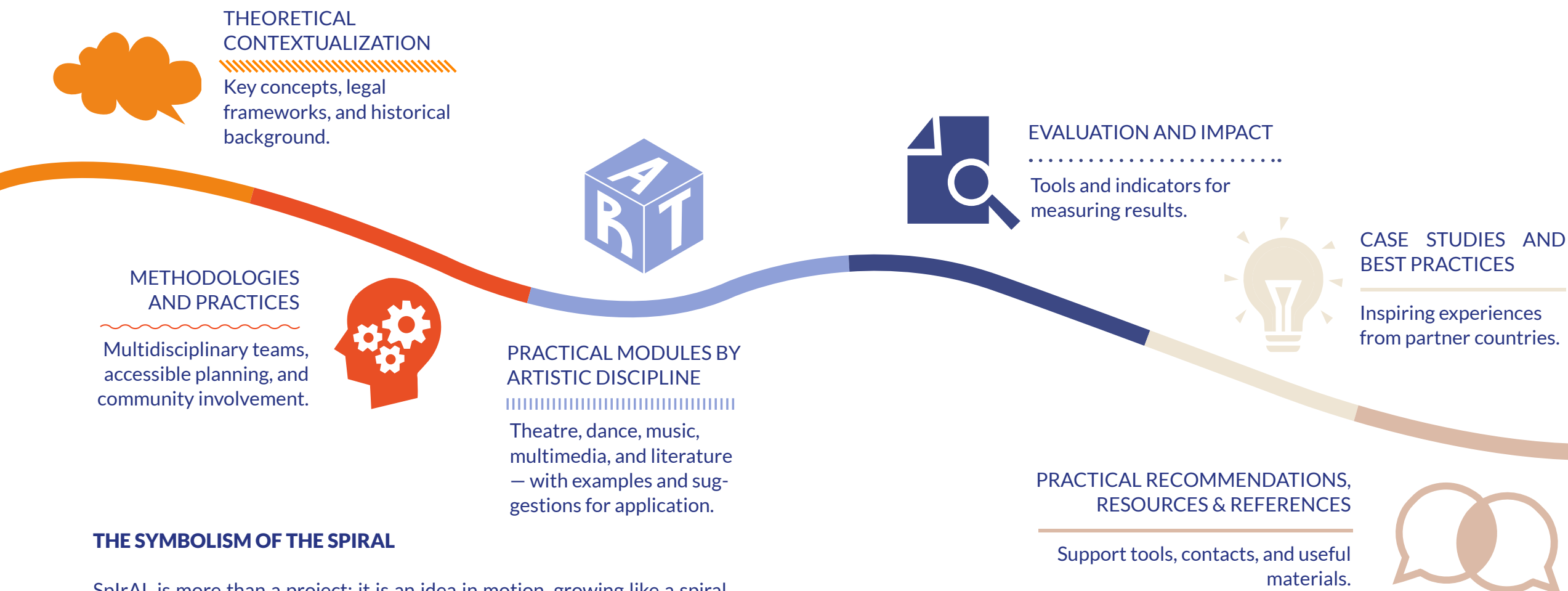
Target audience: this manual is intended for **educators, artists, cultural organizations, social and community workers**. It may also inspire public and private institutions seeking to make their practices more inclusive and participatory.

WHAT WE MEAN BY INCLUSIVE ARTS?

Practices centred on artistic creation (rather than therapy), where disabled and non-disabled artists collaborate as equals. Inclusive arts emphasise high-quality artistic outcomes and recognise the mutually beneficial nature of the process, in which all participants learn and unlearn from each other. They highlight the role of art as a space for expression, citizenship, and social transformation, fostering diverse participation and ensuring that people living with disabilities move from passive recipients to active creators who take ownership and responsibility for the work (Fox & Macpherson, 2021).



To ensure clarity and practical use, the manual follows a progressive structure:



THE SYMBOLISM OF THE SPIRAL

SplrAL is more than a project: it is an idea in motion, growing like a spiral. This symbol represents continuous development, never-ending learning, and the way in which art and inclusion expand from a central point to engage more and more people and communities. The spiral has no end: it is a cycle that never closes, always in evolution — sometimes faster, sometimes slower — but always moving, nourished by sharing, experimentation, and cooperation.

We hope that this manual will be useful, that it will inspire new projects, and that it will help strengthen the conviction that art is — and must always be — a universal right.

Luis Miguel Rodrigues
Project Coordinator

STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL



Art, as a universal language, has always played a central role in building more just and participatory societies. However, it has not always been accessible to everyone. Inclusive arts emerge as a response to this challenge, affirming that artistic creation should not be the privilege of a few but a right shared by all. This chapter provides the theoretical framework necessary to understand the concept of inclusive arts and their social, historical, and legal relevance, serving as the foundation for the work developed within the SplrAL project.

2.1 | Key Definitions: *Inclusive Arts and Accessibility*

Inclusive arts are creative practices that ensure everyone can fully participate in artistic activities. These practices value diversity as a source of creative richness. Each person has a unique contribution to make, regardless of ability, cultural background, or social condition. It is important to stress that inclusive arts should not be confused with therapeutic approaches. While artistic practice may bring therapeutic benefits, in the context of inclusive arts, the focus is on artistic creation, aesthetic value, and the collective experience of participation.

Accessibility is equally central, encompassing multiple dimensions. Building on established accessibility frameworks, this guide identifies eight key areas:

Physical accessibility means ensuring that cultural venues, stages, studios, and galleries are usable by everyone, including people with reduced mobility.

Communicational accessibility refers to the use of clear language, easy-to-read formats, and resources such as sign language interpretation or real-time captioning.

Cognitive and learning accessibility means providing clear structures and instructions, offering information in multiple formats (visual, oral, written), and allowing flexibility in time. Activities should be adapted iteratively to different learning styles and cognitive processing needs, based on participants' responses.

Digital accessibility ensures that online platforms comply with international standards, allowing participation by blind, D/deaf, or otherwise disabled people.

Social accessibility involves creating safe, respectful, and welcoming environments where everyone feels valued, and where participants are actively involved in planning and shaping activities, not only executing them.

Attitudinal accessibility implies combating prejudices and stereotypes that often exclude people with disabilities or minority groups from cultural life.

Sensory accessibility requires adjustments to accommodate sensitivities, such as adapted lighting, sound environments, tactile guides, and relaxed performances.

Economic accessibility means ensuring that cost is not a barrier, for example, by providing scholarships, covering participation expenses, or using funding schemes such as Erasmus+ to support the involvement of disabled participants.



2.2. | Benefits of Inclusive Arts

Inclusive arts generate multiple benefits at the personal, community, and cultural levels. For individuals, they strengthen self-esteem, autonomy, empowerment, and well-being, while also improving agency, skill development, communication, and interpersonal skills. They contribute to mental and physical health, reduce social isolation, and promote intellectual accessibility.

For communities, inclusive arts build networks of belonging and mutual support, reduce stigma and prejudice, and encourage active citizenship and democratic participation. For the cultural sector, they introduce new languages and aesthetics derived from diverse bodies, senses, and forms of expression. They diversify audiences and foster broader social engagement in the arts, reinforcing the conviction that culture is a right for all, not a privilege for some. Inclusive arts are therefore not merely good social practice; they represent a space of artistic quality, social justice, and cultural innovation.

Inclusive arts also redefine the concept of artistic space, creating opportunities for art to exist not only in galleries and museums but also in community contexts and everyday life. They also expand the concept of artistic space, bringing art into community contexts and everyday life, beyond traditional galleries and museums.

2.3. | Historical Context

Inclusive arts have developed through a historical trajectory shaped by social and cultural movements. In the 1960s and 1970s, civil rights and disability rights movements in the USA and Europe advocated not only for physical accessibility but also for cultural participation. Early activism in the UK, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia focused on equal access to education, work, and public spaces, laying the foundations for inclusive cultural practices. In the 1980s and 1990s, community arts projects emerged, reinforcing culture as a tool for social cohesion. In the 21st century, globalisation, migration, and public inclusion policies have highlighted the need for artistic methodologies that foster intercultural dialogue and universal accessibility.

In the SplrAL partner countries, this trajectory took distinct forms:

- In **Portugal**, there was a strong presence of community theatre and inclusive dance experiences, and the National Arts Plan (2019–2024) included accessibility as a strategic priority.
- In **Italy**, the tradition of social and educational theatre was consolidated, while new policies addressed cultural accessibility training.
- **Spain** developed robust legislation on universal accessibility and regional governments launched inclusive culture programs.

- In **Greece**, the reinforcement of community arts emerged in response to the economic crisis and migration, with institutions such as the National Opera and the Onassis Centre leading accessible initiatives.
- After **Hungary's** political transition in the 1990s, civil society organisations began advocating for accessibility, education, and social participation for people living with disabilities, with legislative milestones including Act XXVI of 1998 on accessibility and anti-discrimination, and the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007.

2.4. | Legal and Strategic Framework

The consolidation of inclusive arts is supported by a strong legal and strategic framework at international, European, and national levels.

International Level

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) affirms in Article 30 the right to full participation in cultural and artistic life, while the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) guarantees in Article 27 the right of everyone to participate in cultural life.

European Level

The EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 highlights accessibility and cultural participation as priorities. The European Accessibility Act (Directive 2019/882) establishes accessibility requirements for cultural and digital products and services, effective from 2025. The EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 emphasises access to and participation in culture as priorities. The AccessibleEU resource centre, launched in 2023, further supports knowledge and good practice in accessibility.



National Level

Each partner country has specific measures:

- In Portugal, Law 38/2004, the National Arts Plan, and DGARTES' "Art without Limits" funding line have been crucial.
- In Italy, Law 104/1992, the National Plan for Education to Cultural Heritage, and the PNRR Culture 4.0 program provide a strong base.
- Spain enforces Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, the General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and Royal Decree 1112/2018 on digital accessibility.
- Greece advances inclusion with Law 4488/2017 and accessible initiatives led by the National Opera and the Onassis Cultural Centre.
- Hungary relies on Act XXVI/1998, the National Disability Program (2021–2030), and support from the National Cultural Fund.

2.5. | European and National Perspectives on Inclusive Arts

Across Europe, inclusive arts have evolved from community-based practices into a recognised field within cultural policies. Projects such as Europe Beyond Access have demonstrated that disabled artists are not only beneficiaries of inclusion measures but also leaders of aesthetic innovation.

At the European level, inclusive arts are now integrated into programs such as the Erasmus+ Programme and Creative Europe, reflected in strategies like the Disability Rights Strategy and AccessibleEU. They contribute to redefining the very notion of art by challenging aesthetic canons and production models.

At the national level, each partner country has followed distinct trajectories, but all converge in recognising inclusive arts as a cultural right. Portugal integrates inclusion in its National Arts Plan. Italy combines theatre for social purposes with new investments in cultural accessibility. Spain emphasises legal frameworks and regional initiatives. Greece connects inclusion with migration and institutional leadership. Hungary relies on longstanding legal frameworks and national cultural funding.

Inclusive arts face three key challenges. They operate within productive tensions that define the field. First, they balance social inclusion with artistic excellence - ensuring meaningful participation while maintaining high creative standards. Second, they navigate the evolution from community engagement to professional recognition, as disabled artists move from participants to acknowledged professionals. Third, they reveal gaps between policy and practice - while legal frameworks support inclusion, cultural participation remains unequal across Europe.

2.6. | Implications for Curricula and Evaluation in SplrAL

The theoretical framework outlined above has direct implications for the design of training curricula and evaluation practices within SplrAL. These are not rigid prescriptions but guiding principles that should inform the implementation of the programme.

Training modules should follow key principles:

- Apply universal design to creative processes, spaces, communication, and digital platforms
- Include audiences and disabled artists as regular partners, not occasional participants

- Plan accessibility from the start of every project phase
- Develop multiple skills: artistic, mediation, inclusive production, and ethics of care
- Build technical accessibility skills: sign language interpretation, captioning, audio description, and digital accessibility

Monitoring indicators should be established at the structural, process, and results levels. At the structural level, this includes budget allocation to accessibility, institutional policies, and compliance with the European Accessibility Act, alongside the use of AccessibleEU resources. At the process level, it involves measuring the proportion of activities that provide accessibility services, the involvement of disabled artists in decision-making roles, and the use of participatory methodologies. At the results level, indicators should capture the diversity and number of participants, perceived quality, progression of artists into professional contexts, and the removal of barriers, such as accessible websites, inclusive ticketing, and accessible venues. While SplrAL does not directly implement all these measures, they serve as aspirational benchmarks for cultural institutions seeking to expand or replicate the project's approach.

These principles and indicators serve as an initial reference for designing inclusive curricula. Their full application, however, will be developed in Chapter 5 – Evaluation, Impact and Monitoring, which will present specific instruments, data collection methods, and participatory evaluation strategies. In this way, Chapter 2 establishes a conceptual and methodological bridge between theory and evaluation, ensuring coherence throughout the manual.

2.7. | Synthesis

This chapter demonstrates that inclusive arts are grounded in three essential pillars: a clear concept of artistic creation accessible to all and distinct from therapy; a rich history shaped by social, cultural, and political movements; and a robust legal framework at international, European, and national levels. Inclusive arts generate personal, social, and cultural benefits, are consolidated as a human right, and emerge as an essential creative resource. The SplrAL project translates this framework into inclusive curricula and evaluation methods, ensuring that art is, in every dimension, a universal and transformative space.

03 METHODOLOGIES AND PRACTICES



3.1. | Introduction

Inclusive arts require not only creative inspiration but also rigorous methodological structures grounded in **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, co-creation, and the **ethics of care**. In inclusive contexts, the body and the space are central, but disability culture's scholarship reminds us that these categories are never neutral: bodies are sites of difference, vulnerability, and interdependence, and space is shaped by power, access, and belonging (Kuppers, P., 2003). This perspective reveals that inclusion goes beyond posture, voice, and spatial relations. It asks whose bodies and ways of moving are recognised, valued, and given ownership of the artistic process (Kuppers, P., 2007).

3.2. | Methodological Framework

The methodological framework presented here draws from the contributions of the Dance, Theatre, Music, and Multimedia Subgroups within the SplrAL partnership. These subgroups brought together professionals from different countries who co-developed inclusive practices drawing on their disciplinary expertise. Each subgroup was responsible for collecting and creating curriculum content in its artistic discipline while contributing to the overall structure and content of this methodological guide. Subgroups shared practice in improvisation, theatre, movement, dance, music, and multimedia, anchored in international peer-reviewed literature.

This framework shows that inclusive arts methods need three main elements:

1. Foundations - What guides us:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Accessibility legislation
- Ethics of care

2. Processes - How we work:

- Co-creation with participants
- Improvisation techniques
- Structured rehearsals
- Working across art forms

3. Evaluation - How we measure success:

- Ongoing assessment during activities
- Participants involved in evaluation
- Continuous improvement

The Theatre Subgroup found that exercises and games should never be used as isolated drills but always embedded within the dramatic or artistic intention. Rehearsals and workshops need to be contextualised so that memory, attention, and coordination develop naturally within the flow of the narrative or performance. This approach ensures both artistic authenticity and participant agency.

*** Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is a framework developed by CAST that guides the creation of learning experiences accessible to all participants from the outset. UDL is built on three principles: multiple means of engagement (providing various ways to motivate learners), multiple means of representation (presenting information through visual, auditory, and tactile formats), and multiple means of action and expression (offering alternatives for demonstrating knowledge and skills). In inclusive arts, UDL ensures that creative activities, spaces, and evaluation methods accommodate diverse abilities and learning styles from the planning stage rather than retrofitting accessibility later (CAST, 2018).



3.3. | Profiles Required in Multidisciplinary Teams

Inclusive projects depend on teams that combine artistic excellence, inclusive pedagogy, accessibility expertise, cultural management, and special education knowledge. At the artistic core, trainers in dance, theatre, music, and multimedia co-facilitate sessions, alternating leadership and listening according to the needs of the group and the creative moment. Equally indispensable are the contributions of cultural managers and special education professionals, who support the artistic process by applying their knowledge of participants' specific needs. The smooth functioning of inclusive projects relies on the interplay between these different areas of expertise.

Co-facilitation increases permeability to multiple forms of participation — voice, gesture, sound, image — and creates a common language that reduces dependency on closed disciplinary codes. This approach makes artistic practices accessible while preserving quality through adapted improvisation and inclusive narratives.

Teams benefit from integrating accessibility roles structurally rather than as add-ons: sign language interpreters, real-time captioners, audio description consultants, universal design communication experts, and digital accessibility specialists. This ensures full participation and aligns the project with European references such as the European Accessibility Act (Directive 2019/882) and WCAG 2.2 standards.

Representation is also crucial: disabled artists should take on teaching and decision-making roles, reshaping expectations of excellence and aesthetics themselves. At an organisational level, it is useful to distinguish (and budget for) inclusive production (accessible ticketing, plain-language information, user-friendly websites), community mediation, and evaluation coordination, ensuring quality and sustainability.

3.4. | Practical Guidelines for Planning

3.4.1. Accessible Objectives

Artistic objectives should be clear, accessible, and shared by all participants, aiming to expand expressiveness, refine listening, enhance stage presence, and deepen artistic quality. Strategies to achieve these objectives should be differentiated to accommodate participants' abilities and needs. This approach aligns with the UDL principle of providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression.

In practice, differentiation means one participant may engage through minimal gesture, another through voice, digital instruments, or visual stimuli. Objectives should always connect to the narrative or artistic

purpose of the work, since isolated exercises don't guarantee transferable skills. Every sound, movement, and visual element has intrinsic value in inclusive creation, whether sustained notes, rhythmic gestures, or silences. The approach aims to support participants in reaching a creative state of mind where they can move beyond fixed patterns and generate independent ideas, within a sensitive and safe workshop environment. This activates multiple sensory channels—body and voice, movement and image—ensuring participants become active shapers rather than passive receivers of the creative process.

3.4.2. Flexible Schedules

Flexible schedules ensure that programs adapt to participants' needs rather than the other way around. Predictable routines combined with responsive flexibility reduce anxiety and allow for sensory regulation. Sessions should incorporate planned breaks, vary in intensity, and maintain predictability through visual schedules.

Rehearsals work best when structured into blocks: warm-up, exploration, run-through, and feedback. Temporal clarity with defined beginnings and endings supports safety and engagement. Some participants may have medical needs, recovery times, or fluctuating energy levels—guided activities should allow natural entry and exit without pressure. The key is balancing structure with spontaneity while accommodating varying attention spans within the artistic flow.

3.4.3. Adequate Spaces

Spaces should provide both architectural accessibility, with clear circulation and adapted facilities, and sensory accessibility, including controlled lighting and sound, as well as low-stimulation areas to support participants' comfort and engagement.

The Dance Subgroup recommended spatial layouts that promote equality and contact, often arranged in circles; while the Theatre Subgroup stressed that spatial organization should encourage presence and shared attention rather than hierarchical arrangements. Theatre Subgroup experience also shows that the stage itself can become a barrier: elevated platforms without protections or overly technical scenography may put participants at risk. Priority should always be given to the actor's presence — body and voice — with scenography and technology serving as support. Spaces should incorporate safe points of support, such as handrails, chairs, or resting areas, which can also function as aesthetic elements.

The Music Subgroup adds that musical activities benefit from large, barrier-free spaces with good acoustics and natural light. Circular seating arrangements reinforce equality and mutual listening, while clear visibility of graphic scores or visual cues ensures that all participants can follow the collective flow.

The Multimedia Subgroup emphasized that the “space” must become a meaningful “place” for everyone, carrying psychological significance. A place

where important events occur gains prominence, highlighting and absorbing the activities within it. Finding an appropriate space and guiding participants there required careful planning. The subgroup observed that the physical environment actively shapes the quality and possibilities of the creative process, making conscious spatial design a key lesson of the program. Accessible digital platforms are equally essential, ensuring compliance with WCAG 2.2 standards and the European Accessibility Act.

3.4.4. Community Involvement

Inclusive projects must emerge from and return to the local context. Partnerships with schools, families, associations, and cultural institutions broaden resources, legitimize diverse authorship, and guarantee sustainability. This aligns with Participatory Action Research (PAR), which positions participants as co-producers of knowledge and transformative action.

Public presentations should be framed as „celebrations of process” rather than final tests, reinforcing the collaborative journey and shared achievement. Inclusive projects thrive when families, volunteers, educators, and community musicians are actively involved throughout the creative process. This broader engagement not only enriches available resources but also strengthens belonging and social recognition for participants, creating meaningful continuity between the project and its community environment.

3.5. | Deep Multidisciplinary Approach

True multidisciplinary is the live circulation of stimuli: a gesture in dance may become a rhythm in music, trigger improvisation in theatre, and be translated into multimedia projections. A minimal gesture explored in dance can evolve into a rhythmic motif in music; that motif may then inspire a theatrical improvisation, while multimedia can project visual maps or captions to guide entries and exits. Improvisation plays a central role in inclusive performance, providing both structure and freedom for participants to create narratives together.

Soundpainting, with its more than 1500 gestures, stands out as a methodological „glue,” balancing freedom and structure across disciplines (Thompson, 2025). Pedagogically, Collaborative Creative Inquiry (CCI) shows how arts-based, transdisciplinary research generates situated,

transformative knowledge. Similarly, STEAM education suggests that art-technology integration can stimulate critical thinking and creativity, provided it is grounded in strong curriculum design.

Multidisciplinary also accounts for sensory diversity: participants respond differently to auditory, visual, tactile, or vestibular stimuli. Facilitators should regulate intensity, frequency, and duration of stimuli to avoid overload, ensuring that art forms circulate inclusively. Concrete techniques demonstrate this approach: graphic scores allow visual translation of sound for participants of all abilities; guided improvisation combines structure with personal freedom; and creations based on sensory stimuli provide multisensory entry points that connect music with theatre, dance, and visual arts.



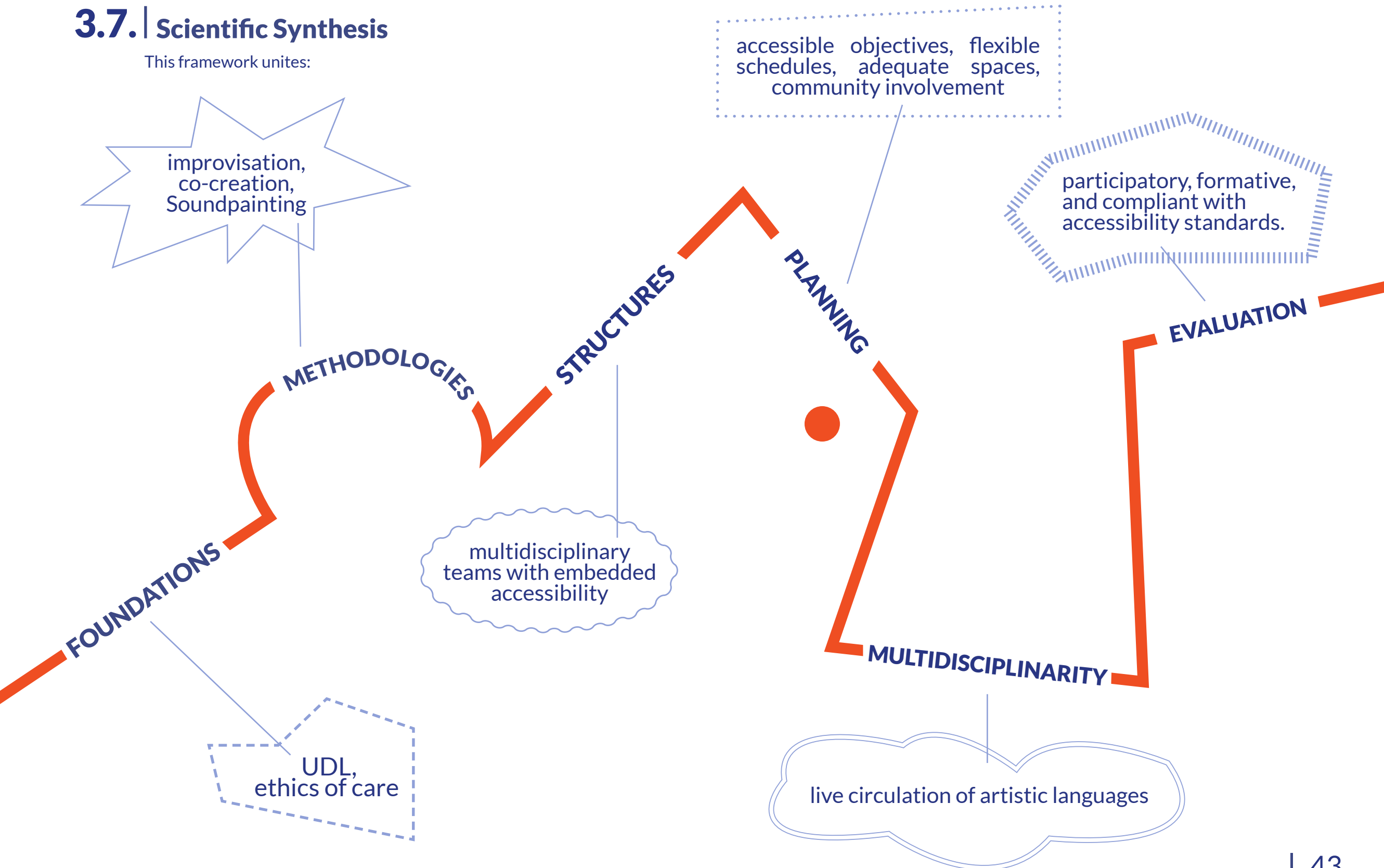
3.6. | Pathway to Continuous Evaluation

Evaluation in inclusive arts must be formative, participatory, and ethical: measuring growth in expression, collaboration, presence, and enjoyment, alongside structural, process, and results indicators. Tools include diaries, video-diaries, feedback circles, and accessible surveys.

Participatory evaluation methods such as feedback circles and collaborative observation allow real-time adjustments and empower participants' voices. Evaluation should also consider the performer's self-perception: understanding of the story, memory of text and space, vocal articulation, and mobility. Inclusive strategies may use recorded stories, visual supports, or adapted vocabulary. Success should be measured not only by external criteria but also by the actor's confidence, safety, and authorship.

3.7. | Scientific Synthesis

This framework unites:





04

PRACTICAL MODULES BY DISCIPLINE



Interdisciplinary Approach to Inclusive Arts

Although this chapter is organised by artistic disciplines (dance, music, theatre, multimedia and literature), it is important to underline that inclusive practice rarely occurs in isolated compartments. On the contrary, the artistic work developed within the **SplrAL – Structures for Inclusive Arts Learning** project demonstrated that interdisciplinarity is a central characteristic of inclusive arts.

Dance exercises incorporated sound and rhythm, exploring their proximity to music; theatre integrated visual narratives and **multimedia** projections; literature was used as a starting point for improvisations in movement or sound; and multimedia enabled new forms of participation and accessibility (subtitles, audio description, tactile interfaces).

The **visual arts**, although not presented here as a standalone module, were also present in various project activities — for example through drawing, collage or the creation of visual materials used as support in theatre and multimedia exercises. These practices reinforce the idea that inclusive artistic work is built through the circulation between languages rather than the separation of disciplines.

This interdisciplinary approach makes it possible to:

- broaden channels of expression and communication (visual, bodily, sonic, textual);
- respond to the diversity of participants' profiles, offering multiple entry points into artistic creation (cf. Universal Design for Learning – CAST, 2018);
- generate innovative practices that challenge aesthetic boundaries and value diverse bodies, voices and imaginaries (Kuppers, 2014; Thompson, 2025).

Thus, each discipline presented in this chapter should not be seen as an isolated territory but as part of an interconnected artistic ecosystem, where collaboration across languages enriches the inclusive experience and expands creative possibilities.

Participatory Methods and Inclusive Facilitation Techniques

A second common thread running through all modules is the centrality of **active participation and inclusive facilitation**. Experience has shown that it is not enough to adapt content or simplify exercises: it is necessary to **reposition participants as co-creators** of the artistic process, recognising the value of their unique contributions.

To this end, the following methodologies were applied:

- **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**, involving participants at all stages — planning, execution and evaluation (Reason & Bradbury, 2008);
- **Feedback circles and co-observation**, allowing for continuous and shared evaluation of the experience;
- **Co-facilitation** between disabled and non-disabled artists, ensuring multiple perspectives and breaking hierarchies;
- **Accessible environments** in all dimensions (physical, communicational, digital, sensory and economic), in line with the **European Accessibility Act (Directive 2019/882)** and the **EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021–2030**.

Inclusive facilitation techniques — such as clear and multimodal communication, flexible structures of time and space, and constant attention to the ethics of care (Tronto, 1993; Kuppers, 2007) — worked as guarantees that participants were not only “present” but could **actively contribute to the artistic creation**.

More than a methodology, it embodies an ethic: the belief that art can only be truly inclusive when everyone has the chance to participate as an author, decision-maker, and protagonist.



DANCE

4.1.1. | Preliminary Considerations

In this chapter on dance, we the SplrAL Dance Subgroup — composed of educators, artists and researchers from partner organisations — uses the term persons with disabilities as a conscious and well-founded choice.

We use the term **persons with disabilities** as a conscious and well-founded choice. This section is based on work developed in Italy, Portugal and Spain in the context of the SplrAL project and includes activities from all partners. In our countries there is nowadays a tendency to use the term *functional diversity* or *functional differentiation* as a synonym. However, this usage serves more as an euphemism, stemming from the prejudice

and stigma that view disability as inherently negative. From a technical standpoint, this second term is not accurate: it is not recognised by international bodies, is not included in national legislation, and lacks support from the majority of disability advocacy organisations. Moreover, it is an ambiguous term that can ultimately contribute to the invisibility of persons with disabilities, as it groups them into a broad concept of “diversity” that could, depending on the criteria, apply to the entire population. Additionally, there are forms of functional diversity that do not necessarily involve disability (e.g., individuals with high abilities, which may be considered a form of diversity but not a disability).

Therefore, disability refers to the social recognition of a person based on the set of barriers they experience when trying to access and participate freely and autonomously in public life, and to develop personally, professionally, and socially.

We acknowledge that in the SplrAL's project team coalesce a diversity of opinions and standpoints regarding terminology. Thus, in other parts of this book you may find other terminology choices. We believe that to be a constructive contribution, as it reflects the diversity of the project staff and their ways of looking at this relevant issue and reflecting on their work. As an interesting fact, we also share that some of us changed their views on terminology throughout the project. That just confirms that it is important to keep looking, discussing and sharing as we work together — staff, participants and community.



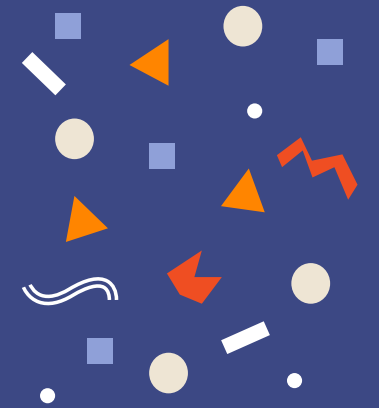
Only movement can bring about change!



Disability arises from the interaction between a person's health condition and the barriers they encounter in their environment. These barriers may include negative attitudes, inaccessible transport and buildings, or limited social support. The environment therefore plays a decisive role: when it is inaccessible, it restricts full and equal participation in society. Improving social participation depends not only on individual capacities but also on removing these external obstacles and ensuring adequate support.

INCLUSION

Inclusion refers to a collective and ongoing process of social transformation. Its goal is to guarantee that all people, regardless of their abilities, can participate on an equal basis. Rather than adapting individuals to existing structures, inclusion implies transforming those very structures so they welcome and value everyone.



INTEGRATION

Integration, in contrast, is a process in which the individual is expected to adapt to the environment. While it can facilitate some participation, it tends to preserve existing barriers, as responsibility for adjustment lies primarily with the person rather than with society.



Building on this conceptual framework, it is essential to highlight that inclusive dance does not pursue "correct" technique but values the body as a space of diversity, expression, and communication. Pedagogy in inclusive dance respects different motor and cognitive rhythms and integrates participants as active agents in the creative process.

Recent research confirms that community-informed recommendations are key: inclusive dance should be developed with and not only for persons with disabilities, recognising them as experts of their own experiences (Ladwig et al., 2024). The environment — physical, social and communicational — plays a central role, as light, sound, spatial organisation, and pace of instruction can either foster or hinder participation.

Inclusive dance pedagogy is supported by two major frameworks:

- The **constraints model** (task, environment, individual) highlights that movement possibilities emerge from the interaction between body, task, and space. (Newell, 1986)
- The **social model of disability** emphasises that barriers are created by society and environments, not by the body itself.

Moreover, communication must be **clear, multimodal and sensory-aware**. Guidance from organisations such as UK-based icandance stresses that inclusivity is shaped not only by what we say but by how we listen, observe and adapt our tempo of facilitation.

Finally, inclusive practice also calls for **neutral and non-ableist terminology** in dance teaching. Internationally, many integrated dance companies have moved away from binary or normative terms (“male/female roles”) and now emphasise role-neutral language such as “lead” and “follow,” affirming that all bodies and all forms of movement hold artistic value.

4.1.2. | Adapted Techniques

This section on adapted techniques in inclusive dance is based on a project carried out in Santiago de Compostela in 2024 as part of the SplrAL initiative, which we introduce below. The project was implemented through a collaboration between the Uxío Novoneyra Foundation (as project partner) and Academia LoDanzas (as a collaborator).

A teaching team was formed with diverse profiles, including people with disabilities. Academia LoDanzas is a dance education center directed by Loli Fojón, who understands dance not only as an artistic discipline but also as a fundamental element for the integral development of individuals. For this reason, the school had already hosted classes and physical work with

people with disabilities. As part of the Academia LoDanzas team, Julia Sueiro participated — a dance teacher and cultural manager with experience in other dance and inclusion projects. Branca Novoneyra, artistic director of the Uxío Novoneyra Foundation and creator, supported the project from the foundation’s side.

In the summer of 2024, research began for the design of the inclusive dance sessions. In September 2024, contact was made with third-sector organisations in the area around Santiago de Compostela (including the city and nearby municipalities) to present the proposal and invite participation from both people with and without disabilities. The school’s network was also contacted, as well as music professionals, and a public call for participation was launched. The call was structured so that participants would commit to the project from beginning to end. Almost all participants did so, with only minor exceptions due to individuals unable to continue the activity.

The sessions began in October 2024. One session per month was scheduled from October through March (six sessions in total), culminating in a public presentation that took place in March. A diverse group with very different profiles was formed. The group included women from the Ambar Association (Ribeira), with six women with intellectual and physical disabilities (aged between 24 and 65), always accompanied by a female staff member from the organisation. Additionally, nine women between the ages of 23 and 60 joined, including one with both physical and intellectual disabilities and one with physical disability, along with one man aged 40.

All participants shared an interest in dance, movement, history, and creative work, which turned the sessions into a space for mutual learning, cooperation, and connection.

The final performance took place on March 30, 2025, at Casa das Máquinas in Santiago de Compostela as part of the 2025 “Danza para a Igualdade” showcase.

Examples of practical activities

All the dynamics and exercises explained below are framed within the project *As Bailadas*. This inclusive dance training project brought together an artistic group under the following learning objectives:

- To reflect on dance as an integral phenomenon, shared by humanity.
- To engage personally in the creation of dances from the diversity of human emotions and bodies.
- To learn about key references from the field of Historical Dance.
- To co-create a text for a contemporary version of a Chacona, drawing from our cultural roots.
- To explore and understand how dance is transmitted today and in the past.

The contextual framework chosen was Historical Dance, specifically forms close to the Chacona and European Renaissance dance. *As Bailadas* takes the Chacona — a Baroque dance that integrates music, movement, and text — as a starting point. Historically symbolizing celebration, emotion, and cultural exchange, it was selected for its transnational nature and connection to the cultural flows of the Camino de Santiago. The Chacona represents

a back-and-forth phenomenon that crossed continents and transformed traditions. Drawing inspiration from Compostela as a place of transit, hospitality, and diversity, the project revisits this historical dance to create a contemporary piece that acknowledges its value as artistic heritage and its potential as a tool for inclusion and collective creation.

Therefore, this project emphasizes the introduction of the language and basic forms of historical dance, the relationship between words as activators of emotions embodied in the body and movement, and walking as an agent of exchange linked to the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.



Beyond the theoretical and contextual basis, the experience in Santiago de Compostela was characterised by the practical adaptations applied to the group. These are documented in the exercises presented in this chapter (*Hello Arch / Goodbye Tunnel, Name Movement, Statues & Release, Lead & Follow, Contact Points, Group Pulse, Trajectory Mapping and Shared Phrase Creation*). For participants living with physical disabilities, complex movements and displacements were simplified, introducing accessible alternatives such as arm and torso gestures, or variations in rhythm and energy. For those living with intellectual

disabilities, instructions were given in simple, repetitive language, supported by key words, images, and rhythm, making them easier to understand and remember. The diverse needs of the group were balanced through collective dynamics, including pair work, circles, and exchanges of movement, which highlighted the diversity of bodies as a creative resource. Participants discovered new ways of moving, strengthened their confidence, and experienced a strong sense of belonging within a diverse group, transforming the artistic experience into an inclusive and enriching journey.



4.1.3. | Body Awareness

This section on body awareness activities reflects experiences drawn from the work done through Fondazione AIDA (Verona, Italy), in collaboration with the Psychiatric Unity of ULSS 9 Scaligera (Verona) and CST Social Services, with a group of 9 young adults with different behavioural, psychological, mental, and cognitive difficulties and disabilities.

The group was created in the context of the Erasmus+ SPIRAL Project, and met once a week for about one year. The work proved important and beneficial for the participants, particularly in strengthening their confidence, self-expression, body awareness, and social interaction. Several also highlighted improvements in emotional wellbeing and a strong sense of belonging, which led them to express the desire to continue meeting and growing together as a group.

Introduction

In a context where many individuals with very different skills work together, movement and dance can count on the solidity of their flexibility. Though apparently a contradiction in terms, movement games and exercises offer in fact high levels of adaptability, both to the different environments and the different individual requirements, both on a physical and on a non-physical level, both as individual and as social work.

Fundamental to this type of work is **rhythm**. Because rhythm is as much an external factor as it is an internal human constituent (think of our rhythmic system, that regulates everything from breathing to metabolism to everyday/everynight life), everyone can explore it inside and outside themselves,

and discover how it can become the basis for artistic body expression.

The main instrument in movement and dance is the human body. It is therefore of the utmost importance to develop first and foremost an awareness of one's body that be joyous, clear, and devoid of judgement. The basic goal is for the individual to become friend with their body, and to discover little by little their own unique physicality and modes of expression. This first step will lead to a discovery and exploration of how the body is linked to emotions, thoughts, self-expression, speech, interaction with others and with the environment, proprioception and sense of occupying a space.

In the context of inclusive dance and movement laboratories, body awareness exercises and games serve as foundational tools for fostering connection, creativity, and embodied understanding across diverse participants. These practices cultivate a deeper sense of presence and self-perception, allowing individuals—regardless of ability—to engage with their bodies in meaningful and empowering ways. Far beyond mere

physical training, body awareness activities offer opportunities to explore movement potential, sensory perception, and non-verbal communication, making them essential for inclusive environments where varied experiences of embodiment are honored and celebrated.

For persons with disabilities, these exercises provide adaptive entry points to movement expression, supporting autonomy, self-confidence, and agency in how they choose to engage. For all participants, they encourage listening—both inward to one's own body and outward to the collective presence of others. In doing so, body awareness practices break down traditional hierarchies of ability, inviting shared exploration, mutual respect, and the co-creation of a safe, responsive, and imaginative space. Whether through stillness, breath, guided touch, or play, these exercises affirm that every body has value, every movement has meaning, and everyone has the right to dance.

Professional and artistic relevance

To further support and cultivate inclusiveness in professional dance and performance environments, body awareness exercises in inclusive dance laboratories play a vital role in supporting dance as a deeply artistic, expressive, and collaborative discipline for all participants. These practices cultivate the dancer's sensory attention, spatial presence, and kinesthetic intelligence, regardless of physical capacity or prior dance experience.

For inclusive environments, body awareness is not just preparatory; it is artistic groundwork that nourishes creativity, expression, and authentic movement language. By attuning to breath, weight, posture, and sensation, dancers begin to move from a place of embodied understanding. This cultivates more than technical skill—it nurtures presence, responsiveness, and the capacity to relate to oneself and others through movement.

In inclusive spaces, where traditional aesthetic norms are reimagined, body awareness practices create an equitable entry point into dance-making, performance, and exploration. They validate diverse physicalities and ways of moving as meaningful contributions to the artistic process.

Moreover, these exercises help to dismantle ableist assumptions in dance by shifting the focus from form to experience and from imitation to invention. They support a democratic studio culture where every body is recognized as a source of knowledge and artistic potential. In this context, body awareness is not merely functional—it is expressive, relational, and transformative. It empowers participants to explore the poetic, communicative, and experimental nature of dance, affirming that artistry emerges from the depth of embodied presence, not from conformity to a fixed ideal.

Pedagogical notes

The examples proposed below include activities that can be adapted for participants with a variety of abilities, including those with reduced mobility, typical mobility, difficulties controlling their bodies, or different mental and social challenges. While they may not be suitable for every possible ability, these exercises have demonstrated flexibility within the context of the project and can be adjusted to meet diverse needs.

It is always advised that the person leading the exercise take the time necessary for each participant to feel complete in their movement or work. Exercises can start slow, accelerate if needed, then come to a closure. A clear opening and closing of each exercise is also essential.

During the activity, spoken words encouraging the participants to notice particular steps of the exer-

cise are also effective, especially when presenting the activity for the first couple of times. A clear (and possibly playful) explanation of the exercise, with a demonstration from the facilitator, is helpful. Demonstrating possible alternatives according to participants' abilities is recommended. Take care to reduce verbal instructions to the essential.

Sharing comments, feelings, or frustrations about any activity can be done in the circle after practicing. In general, it is better to practice, repeat, and deepen an exercise than to interrupt it with excessive discussion.

Lastly, the practices presented can be expanded upon once internalised by the participants. They can also be easily adapted to the particular characteristics of the participants involved.

Additional anchors from somatic practices

The approach described above resonates strongly with well-established somatic disciplines that inform contemporary dance and inclusive practices:

- **Feldenkrais Method:** focuses on small, mindful movements that enhance body awareness and neuromuscular re-patterning, supporting participants in discovering more efficient and expressive ways of moving.
- **Bartenieff Fundamentals:** emphasises dynamic alignment, breath support, and spatial intent, fostering body connectivity and adaptability across abilities.
- **Alexander Technique:** explores postural habits and the release of unnecessary tension, improving freedom of movement and responsiveness.

Studies in dance and somatic education show that such practices improve proprioception, reduce anxiety, and enhance participants' sense of agency (Batson & Wilson, 2014; Whatley, 2010).

By connecting inclusive dance laboratories to this broader somatic tradition, we reinforce that body awareness is not an "add-on" for people with disabilities, but a core component of contemporary dance pedagogy and professional development for all.

Methodological reference practices

In the context of this subchapter, several practical methodologies are highlighted—such as **Our Luminous Bones, Circular Mirror, Statues, The Journey, and Take Your Staff and Wander**. These activities provide concrete tools to develop body awareness in inclusive contexts, combining imagination, rhythm, proprioception, and group connection.

To ensure consistency across the Dance Chapter, the full methodological sheets (with detailed session plans, facilitator notes, learning outcomes, and variations) are gathered at the end of this chapter.

4.1.4. | Collaborative Rhythms

This section on collaborative rhythms is drawn from the work developed with Companhia (In)Diferente, a Portuguese theatre group created in the context of the Erasmus+ KA220-ADU project (In)Different Journey. The company is now integrated within CLAP – Comunidade Laboratório de Ação e Projetos (Lisbon), and engages in inclusive artistic practices with actors with and without disabilities.

Introduction

Rhythm and movement together can play a powerful role in promoting non-verbal communication and inclusion of people with different abilities.

Dance is above all a shared human expression with the capacity to transcend language, culture, and background. When rooted in collaborative rhythms, dance becomes more than movement—it becomes an empowering tool for social connection and may generate emotional resonance.

Dance activities that emphasize group coordination, mutual responsiveness, and co-created rhythms can play a significant role in fostering empathy, cooperation, and co-creation among participants.

In collaborative rhythm-based dance activities, individuals respond to music, or co-created soundscapes, and to one another. This requires a heightened awareness of others' presence, expression, and movements whilst raising awareness of their own contribution to the group. Through mirroring exercises, call-and-response patterns, and improvised group choreography, dancers can learn to attune to each other in real time. This mutual attentiveness builds empathy, as participants begin to sense and respect the emotions and contributions of those around them. These activities dissolve barriers and cultivate a shared experience where everyone's voice—expressed through movement and sound—matters.

Moreover, cooperation is inherent in rhythm-based group dance. Whether forming a circle, working in pairs, or navigating space together, participants must negotiate timing, space, and energy. The success of the dance depends on mutual support and collective effort, encouraging inclusive dynamics where no one leads or follows all the time. Trust is built as dancers rely on each other to sustain rhythm and flow.

Collaborative rhythms and movement may lay the ground for cooperation instead of competition and promote co-creation as opposed to individualism. In fact, co-creation lies at the heart of these practices. As dancers contribute to a shared rhythm and/or co-develop a choreography, they engage in a creative process that values dialogue, diversity, empathy, and inclusion. Each movement becomes a response to others, and the final outcome is something that mirrors a collective experience and that none could have created alone.

These dance experiences are not just artistic expressions—they are exercises in community-building, where empathy and cooperation become embodied practices.

In arts training settings, classrooms, community centers, or therapeutic settings, rhythm-based dance activities can be transformative, offering joyful and deeply human ways to connect, co-create, and care together.

Benefits of Collaborative Rhythm Practices

The reflections that follow are informed both by existing research and by our own practice with inclusive groups. Key studies that underpin these observations include Thaut (2005), Kirschner and Tomasello (2010), Tarr, Launay and Dunbar (2014), and Schlaug (2015).

Neurological & Cognitive Benefits

Rhythm is a universal language accessible across cognitive spectrums. Research in music and neuroscience shows that rhythmic engagement supports executive function, attention, sequencing, impulse control, and memory (Thaut, 2005; Schlaug, 2015). Even individuals with autism, Down syndrome, or dementia can perceive and engage with rhythmic patterns.

Social & Emotional Inclusion

Joint music-making fosters prosocial behaviour, synchrony, and empathy. Rhythm-based activities synchronise participants, building cohesion and acceptance, bypassing communication barriers and boosting self-esteem (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010; Tarr, Launay & Dunbar, 2014).

Physical Accessibility

Drumming, clapping, and stamping can be adapted for various mobility levels. Sensory engagement through tactile and auditory stimulation can be modulated to individual needs, supporting inclusion of participants with sensory processing differences.

Cultural & Emotional Expression

Rhythm allows people to express emotions and cultural identity without requiring formal training. Rhythmic storytelling promotes intercultural dialogue and validates diverse heritages.

Educational & Community Impact

Rhythm bridges mainstream and special needs education, supports peer modelling, and nurtures empathy. It enhances concentration and collaboration in mixed-ability classrooms.

Three main approaches

IMPROVISATION
(RHYTHMIC OR MUSICAL)
Spontaneous rhythms
or soundscapes.

Boosts creativity, adaptability, and confidence
Encourages active listening and resilience.

COLLABORATIVE RHYTHM

GROUP RHYTHMIC ACTIVITIES
(drumming, stamping, clapping).

Promotes cohesion, communication, motor development, and co-regulation.

RHYTHM WITH AND WITHOUT MUSIC

.....
With music — enhances memory, emotional engagement, and movement; without music — strengthens timing, focus, and group interdependence.

Anchors from research and practice

The Ronnie Gardiner Method (RGM) demonstrates how rhythm stimulates neuroplasticity, supporting cognitive and motor function, especially in contexts such as stroke recovery, ADHD, and autism (Altenmüller & Schlaug, 2015). Body percussion traditions (e.g., hambone, pattin' juba) highlight rhythm as both cultural heritage and inclusive practice. Research in community dance confirms that collaborative rhythm fosters empathy, synchrony, and trust (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010; Tarr et al., 2014).

Methodological reference

In the context of this subchapter, several practical methodologies are highlighted—such as **Rhythm and Movement**, **Multisensory Rhythm Exploration** (RGM-inspired), and **Body Percussion (hambone)**. These activities provide concrete ways to explore collaboration, empathy, and co-creation through rhythm and dance.

To ensure consistency across the Dance Chapter, the full **methodological sheets** (with detailed session plans, facilitator notes, learning outcomes, and variations) are gathered at the end of this chapter. This allows the main text to remain focused on conceptual, pedagogical, and reflective dimensions, while offering practitioners a dedicated toolbox of activities for direct application.

4.1.5. | ANNEX – METHODOLOGICAL SHEETS

This annex brings together the practical methodologies referenced throughout the dance chapter. Each sheet offers a step-by-step description, facilitator notes, and learning outcomes to support direct use or adaptation in a range of contexts.



DANCE

A. | Adapted Techniques

1.

HELLO ARCH / GOODBYE TUNNEL



Description:

Participants form two lines facing each other and create an arch by raising their hands. One by one, each participant walks through the “tunnel” created by the group, greeting others with gestures, eye contact, or light touch (as comfortable).

Type of activity: introduction, icebreaker.

Duration: 5–10 minutes.

Learning outcomes:

- Promote group cohesion and recognition of each participant.
- Encourage non-verbal communication and safe physical contact.
- Reduce anxiety at the beginning of the session.

Notes for facilitators:

Ensure accessibility of the tunnel for participants with reduced mobility. Emphasise consent in greetings (e.g., nods, smiles instead of touch).

2.

NAME MOVEMENT

Description:

Each participant says their name accompanied by a unique movement. The group repeats the name and movement together.

Type of activity: warm-up, identity reinforcement.

Duration: 10 minutes (depending on group size).

Learning outcomes:

- Strengthen self-expression and group memory.
- Create a repertoire of movements rooted in participants’ identities.
- Build trust and inclusion.

Notes for facilitators:

Encourage simple movements accessible to all. Use variations: whisper the name, perform in rhythm, or add sounds.

3.

LEAD & FOLLOW

Description:

In pairs, one participant leads simple movements while the other follows, mirroring as closely as possible. Roles are then switched.

Type of activity: cooperative exercise

Duration: 10 minutes.

Learning outcomes:

- Foster attentiveness, empathy, and collaboration.
- Explore dynamics of leadership and trust.
- Promote equality through role exchange.

Notes for facilitators:

Encourage leaders to move slowly at first. Introduce variations: lead with different body parts (hands, shoulders, head).



4.

CONTACT POINTS

Description:

Pairs establish contact with one body part (e.g., elbow to elbow, hand to shoulder) and move together while maintaining contact.

Type of activity: trust-building.

Duration: 10–15 minutes.

Learning outcomes:

- Develop tactile awareness and cooperation.
- Explore creativity in constrained situations.
- Increase comfort with safe physical contact.

Notes for facilitators:

Always clarify boundaries and obtain consent for contact. Offer options for participants preferring non-contact versions (visual or proxemic “contact”).

5.

GROUP PULSE

Description:

Participants stand in a circle and clap, stomp, or vocalise together to establish a shared rhythm. Leadership can rotate as individuals propose variations.

Type of activity: collective rhythm-building.

Duration: 10 minutes.

Learning outcomes:

- Develop group synchrony and cohesion.
- Promote listening and adaptability.
- Create sense of belonging.

Notes for facilitators:

Ensure all rhythms are accessible. Adjust tempo and volume to avoid overstimulation.

6.

TRAJECTORY MAPPING

Description:

Participants explore moving across the space along different trajectories (straight lines, circles, zigzags). Facilitator may propose themes (slow walk, fast march, floating).

Type of activity: spatial exploration.

Duration: 10–15 minutes.

Learning outcomes:

- Expand spatial awareness.
- Encourage improvisation and creativity.
- Explore coexistence of multiple trajectories in shared space.

Notes for facilitators:

Mark boundaries of the space clearly. Encourage respect for personal space and safe navigation.

7.

SHARED PHRASE CREATION

Description:

The group collectively creates a short dance phrase by adding one movement at a time. Each participant proposes a gesture or step that is incorporated into the sequence.

Type of activity: co-creation.

Duration: 10–20 minutes.

Learning outcomes:

- Build a sense of ownership and authorship.
- Experience collective decision-making.
- Create inclusive choreography from diverse contributions.

Notes for facilitators:

Support participants with prompts if needed. Celebrate all contributions equally.



BODY AWARENESS



1. OUR LUMINOUS BONES

Description: Imagine a little ball of light entering from the top of your head and illuminating your skeleton from head to toe. The instructor accompanies the journey of the ball of light in detail by describing it with their voice.

Type of activity: warm-up, meditative and imaginative exercise.

Duration: about 3 minutes, max 5 minutes. It will become a “magic click to illuminate our bone structure” once learned and practiced in a few sessions.

Learning outcomes:

- Develop an imagination of our skeletal structure and how it can move in space carrying the rest of the body.
- Exercise visualisation skills and embodiment of imaginations.

Assignment for the participants: In a circle, eyes closed, follow the voice of the instructor/teacher; try to feel the visualization inside, to unite thought and body sensations.

Notes for facilitators: Keep it alive and fun, while at the same time being precise in the description and daring to go deep. Note at the end how the skeleton can be compared to a bell (skull) with a long, swinging bell clapper — that helps with inviting the participant to move it later (the skeleton will remain “lit up” during the whole lesson. Every now and then just playfully remind the participants about their shining bone structure — a first incursion into realizing their inner Light).

Observations: Some of the participants may have difficulties entering in the imagination and may keep their eyes open and glued onto the instructor to better follow the experience. That is totally fine, it is an opening into discovering imagination and how to relate to it. In order to meet each participant’s way of doing the exercise, it is better for the instructor to keep their eyes open while leading.

2. CIRCULAR MIRROR

Description: Divide the participants in two groups. The two groups will form two concentric circles facing one another. Each participant will have one person in front of them. With music as an inspiration, have each person in the inner circle move with deliberate gestures and movements. They are the leaders. The person in the outer circle in front of them will mirror the movements. These are the followers. Each person moves spontaneously on their own accord.

After a short time, shout “change!”: at this, each participant in the outer circle (the followers) step to their left and place themselves in front of the next person in the inner circle. They will now mirror this new leader. Continue for one complete rotation of the outer circle. Repeat switching the two circles so that now the followers become leaders in the inner circle and the leaders become followers in the outer circle.

Type of activity: warm up, very lively.

Duration: it really depends on the size of the group. It can be 10 to 20 minutes for both circles to complete a rotation.

Learning outcomes:

- Freedom and awareness of body and body movements.
- Observing, responding, and listening to one another; develop a sense of relationship between movement and musical mood (later noticing possible emotions connected with different gestures and movements of the body).

Assignment for the participants: Divide in two groups, stand in two concentric circle, feel free to move and explore, be conscious of your partners.

Notes for facilitators: Demonstrate first! Typically, at the beginning people will move just arms and legs; encourage them to explore movements of the whole body and to be simple enough that others can mirror the movements. Remind them that this is not dancing to a music: it is letting the music inspire movements that can be shared :) It works wonders using different types of musical tracks, with different rhythms, moods, speed etc.

Observations: This is a great exercise both for beginners and for advanced training. It is multi-tiered: it is easy for participants to let go of mental restrictions and conditionings when moving to a music and together with others. This makes it also easier for anyone to notice their body, free and then consciously create their movements, come in contact with their feelings, and in time come to an harmonisation of their inner and outer world.

3. STATUES



Description: Divide the participants in two groups.

Type of activity: quiet and attentive exploration.

Duration: variable, but not too long: a few minutes to model the clay and a few minutes to go around and admire the statues. Ideally, the statues hold their position for the entire time of the visit to the sculptors' laboratory, so it will have to be the right duration for the group.

Learning outcomes: discover the different possibilities of the body; awareness of how different postures communicate different messages. Ability to reproduce a posture after moving out of it (if the second step of the activity is used).

Assignment for the participants: Pair up, decide who is Sculptor and who is Clay. Sculptor models a Statue, making Clay assume a position that ultimately is not too difficult to hold! Please always touch the other person lightly and with respect. Love your creation!

After all Statues have been created, all Sculptors go around the room and admire the Statues. Wonderful visit to the Sculptors' Laboratory!

Exchange roles, Sculptor becomes Clay and Clay becomes Sculptor. Repeat. Enjoy!

(Optional) Step 2: "The One" Exhibition: when all Statues have been created, everyone but one Statue move and admire The One Statue exhibited in the room for a minute or two. Then everyone walks away, including The One. Another Statue stops and takes its posture, and all the others admire. Continue until all Statues have been admired.

Notes for facilitators: It is ok if some of the statues move a little or stretch and come back into position. The idea is that everyone feels their posture, perceives the parts that are in tension and those that are relaxed and so on. This will be fundamental when Step 2 is played, because they will have to reproduce their posture after walking out of it. If you want, you can encourage the participants to notice in their body where the muscles are tense and where they are relaxed, so that the muscles themselves can remember what to do :)

Observations: This is a basic activity that can have lots of developments: the statues can start to move and interact; they can be made so as to represent specific characters (king, animals, butler, fisherman, orchestra director and so on) that start a scene; they can be "copies" of great works of art and continue the movement crystallised in the statue; the instructor could call for a disturbance (a small earthquake, a raid by the police, a robbery, a storm raging in through the windows...) or a different environment (the moon, a forest, a sinking ship...) and see how Statues and Sculptors react, and how they settle once the disturbance is over or the environment has been set. Of course, this exercise can be the starting point for the construction of any character or scene.

4. THE JOURNEY

A practice that has proved liberating and a profound experience for the participants has been what we call “The Journey”. It is a visualisation journey in which a suggestive music is played and images and ambiances are evoked by the conductor of the journey, be it the teacher/facilitator or one of the participants.

Each participant enters their own world following the suggestions of the conductor, who in turn let themselves be inspired by the music in their suggesting. The conductor tries to leave as much space-time as possible for the participants’ imagination to see that world and be in it. All participants move about, feeling as much as possible the ambience around them and their inner and outer response to it, and letting the music guide their movements, let it “dance them”, and simply give themselves permission to live the experience to the max.

The conductor may of course participate in the journey as well.

Music is obviously a great way of stimulating emotions and imaginations, and we saw that even those participants who reportedly had difficulties “visualizing” or “seeing” inner images, had no difficulties immersing in an atmosphere they themselves created out of the musical and verbal suggestions they were getting. The participants with limited hearing were also able to open up to their inner worlds with ease.

This activity opened up a world of different emotions and imagery in the participants, who then reported to have felt free from any limitations, uplifted and inspired, and profoundly moved. Furthermore, it made them feel safe and self-assured. It became an essential activity to reinforce the group and make it feel like one entity. It developed trust and the capacity to tap into one’s deep inner joy. It was gorgeous to witness.

As mentioned, this activity can be conducted by whomever wishes to do so, and we have noticed how this feeling safe in one’s body and in one’s imagination has led some of the most shy among the participants to step forward and propose to lead the exercise.

To start, this is an activity that involves each individual moving in her/his own world. Later on, it could be that a few of these worlds happen to meet and spontaneously interact. We have seen that such interactions were always free and easy — even when conflict would arise in a scene between two “characters” — and that no-one felt constrained in or forced into any interaction. The sharing of different imaginal environments in turn opened up the awareness that connection is possible at many levels and among very different worlds at the same time.

A further development could be bringing this activity out in public spaces, inviting the general population to participate, either with headphones or with amplified music. Imaginative spaces inspired by music make for peaceful interactions and the possibility of expanding and creating communities through dance and music. It is supportive of a healthy faith in oneself and in the possibility of building safe social environments that overcome and eliminate prejudice and awkwardness.

We also have found that, beside informing everyone that anyone is free to step out of the activity at any moment for whatever reason (follow your wellbeing!), it is best to select a small space, a portion of the room, and declare it “safe haven” or “nest” or “egg”: a space where to retreat, were anyone to need a little aloneness. It is understood that no one will be bothered while in the egg. Facilitators obviously always keep an eye on people who choose to step out and go in the egg. It is likewise possible to step out and just sit on the side, without using the egg, if someone simply needs a bit of time out. But a cozy little space to call one’s own for a moment or two give participants a sense of security and trust that is invaluable.

IN SHORT: Providing a cozy little space to call one’s own for a moment or two give participants a sense of security and trust

5. TAKE YOUR STAFF AND WANDER

Another wonderful practice involves learning simple (or even complex!) choreographies. We used a rhyme called “Take Your Staff and Wander”, which has a specific rhythm and a two-row choreography, where the two rows face each other and each participant always has another participant in front of them (see appendix for text and attempt at notation for the choreography itself).

Learning choreographies makes the body internalise rhythmic movement, and gives the possibility to feel and know more strongly one’s physical body and to better take control of it.

This choreography in particular is easily performed by people with reduced mobility, by people with reduced eyesight, by people with difficulties controlling their body movements, by people with reduced hearing.

The rhyme can be read aloud a few times to hear its rhythm and spark imagination around the words and the journey involved in them. We noticed that participants would tap their body or clap hands in rhythm with the reading, and that was already a wonderful modality for the body to be involved.

After that, the choreography is practiced following the rhythm, initially without words. When the moves have been learned, words are added: in the beginning one person external to the choreography recites the rhyme and the rest of the group moves the form, later on all the participants can learn the rhyme and recite it while moving. We could see a fast and joyful improvements in coordination for everyone.

This type of activities is fun and quickly puts participants in touch with their inner beat, with their breath, with their imagination, and with their own way of moving; it helps anyone to feel that all of the above has worth.

When new persons enter the group, sharing in this choreography makes for immediate opening and friendly welcoming, facilitating smooth inclusion of external elements and expansion of the group. Et voilà! Community starts growing and heartfelt connections sprout.



IN SHORT: Have activities that the participants know well and which can readily be used to include the general population in possible improvised learning/practicing environments.



6. CRYSTAL DANCE

Description: Crystal Dance is an improvisational group movement exercise that explores spontaneous connection, bodily awareness, and creative contact.

Type of activity: Movement Improvisation / Group Dynamics / Contact & Body Awareness

Duration: 10-15 minutes, depending on group size

Learning outcomes:

- Composition
- Creative collaboration
- Build trust and spatial awareness

Assignment for the participants: Invite all participants to begin moving freely and intuitively through the space. Encourage a variety of tempos, directions, and qualities of movement. At any moment, one participant may choose to stop and freeze in place — they become a crystal.

As soon as someone freezes, others may begin to approach and “attach” themselves to this still figure, using unusual, creative, or non-traditional points of contact — e.g., an elbow touching a knee, a forehead resting on a shoulder, or a back pressed to an arm. Encourage participants to explore asymmetry, balance, and sculptural thinking in how they connect. Once a crystal is fully formed (2–5 people connected), the initial person may choose to move again. When they do, the formation dissolves, and everyone resumes free movement. Repeat for several rounds, encouraging different participants to initiate the crystal and varying the number of connectors.

Notes for facilitators: Model a few playful or unusual connections to inspire participants before starting. Remind participants that safety and consent are key – encourage slow, mindful connections and respect for personal boundaries.

7. MOVING POINTS

Description: To explore physical connection, spatial awareness, and movement dynamics through non-verbal, partner-based exploration of touch points and shifting body positions.

Type of activity: Partner activity – movement, touch, body awareness, spatial exploration.

Duration: 10 minutes

Learning outcomes:

- Body awareness, creative movement development
- Tactile awareness
- Understanding respectful, intentional touch and contact

Assignment for the participants: Participants form pairs. One partner begins by taking any freely chosen, static body position – standing, crouching, kneeling, or any other form they like. The second partner gently explores where and how they can physically connect to the first partner’s body using different body parts (hands, shoulder, back, etc.). The goal is to find multiple connection points – ideally 4 to 5 – without disrupting the partner’s balance or causing discomfort. These can be:

- Light touches
- Balancing contacts
- Leaning or shared weight points (if comfortable)

Once the partner has established several points of connection, the first person changes their position slowly, for example from standing to sitting, or from kneeling to lying down. As the form changes, the second partner adapts their contact points in real time, maintaining continuous connection. This creates a fluid, co-created movement sequence, where both bodies respond to each

other. After a few minutes, the roles switch: the partner who was moving now becomes the connector, and vice versa.

Optional Reflection:

Invite pairs or the whole group to share sensations, challenges, or discoveries from the exercise.

Notes for facilitators: Create a safe atmosphere, make sure participants feel comfort with touch, ensure they can anytime say no.

8. INVISIBLE CUES

Description: To explore subtle movement initiation, sensitivity to touch, and shared motion through guided contact and non-verbal cues.

Type of activity: trust building, body awareness

Duration: 20 minutes

Learning outcomes:

- Trust-building, Tactile sensitivity, Leadership and following
- Concentration and presence: Staying fully attuned to another body in motion
- Movement awareness: Deepening the understanding of movement initiation from the chest/core

Assignment for the participants: Participants form pairs. One partner closes their eyes, while the other keeps their eyes open and becomes the guide. The person with closed eyes gently places one hand on their partner's chest (ideally over the sternum area, where movement can be clearly felt).

Both partners stand in a relaxed posture, feet grounded, arms neutral. The guiding partner begins to move their chest slowly — forward, backwards, side to side, in small circles, or in slight shifts of weight. These movements communicate direction, speed, and energy to the blindfolded partner, who simply follows, reacting through the hand-to-chest connection. As the movement evolves, the pairs can begin to take small coordinated steps, turning or swaying together in space. The goal is not choreography but a shared, intuitive flow — like a slow-motion dance. The guiding partner gives clear, slow, and intentional impulses:

- Forward/backward pressure
- Side-to-side shifts
- Pauses or changes in tempo
- Energetic or soft impulses

After a few minutes, partners switch roles so that both can experience leading and following.

Notes for facilitators: Create a safe space for participants to explore, make sure they know they can say no.

B. | Collaborative Rhythms

1. RHYTHM AND MOVEMENT

Introduction:

There is no life without rhythm. We can observe it in nature, virtually in all living beings. And we can feel and experience it with and in our own bodies. Thus, rhythm is both universal and individual, common to all of us and unique for each person.

This activity offers a structured and adaptable way to both experience/understand rhythm in different ways and to create a short rhythm/movement performance.

Session plan:

1. Simple and loosely-led body and voice warm-up;
2. In a circle, the facilitator creates accessible rhythms, using the body as a percussion instrument. The group follows and copies;
3. Then, each person creates her own rhythms and the group follows;
4. The group is encouraged to experiment and investigate the sound of different body parts, in creative ways;
5. The group then improvises with movement, following a music chosen by the facilitator, each participant displacing herself across the room;
6. One participant seats on a chair, facing the group and starts a sound improvisation using body percussion;
7. Other participants may join gradually, co-creating an improvised collaborative rhythm performance (to do a few rounds, so that everyone may have the experience);

8. The group is then split in smaller groups and each of them is given the task to, in a short time, create a performance together using movement and rhythm.
(Variations may include: using music: same soundtrack for all groups / different soundtracks or no soundtrack at all).
9. Each group presents their performance to the other groups;

Session content-summary:

- Rhythmic games;
- Rhythms with body improvisation;
- Rhythms with music;
- Creating a group performance with rhythm and movement within a short time.

Goals:

- To become aware of rhythm;
- To become aware of the rhythm in music;
- To explore improvising with rhythm;
- To experience following a rhythmic scheme;
- To experience co-creating a group performance;

2. MULTISENSORY RHYTHM EXPLORATION

Introduction:

This session is inspired by Ronnie Gardiner's Method (RGM).

RGM is a multimodal method of stimulating the brain to the rhythm of music. Based on the principles of neuroplasticity, RGM uses rhythm and music to stimulate movement and cognitive functions, promote general well-being, a good mood and moments of socialization.

This multisensory training uses: audio, visual, tactile and kinetic energy, relies on rhythm, music and simple sound/movement codes. RGM is said to strengthen the connection between the 2 hemispheres of the brain. It is suited for children and adults in general, regardless their abilities and specifically for children with dyslexia. It has been proven very effective when adopted for patients with Parkinson's, in stroke recovery, multiple sclerosis, ADHD and autism.

RGM is designed to improve coordination, memory, concentration, and cognitive function. It uses a combination of rhythm, color, symbol, movement, voice, and music to engage both hemispheres of the brain.

RGM is often used in neurorehabilitation, education, special needs education, elderly care and in community work in general.

This activity offers a structured and adaptable way to introduce activities based on RGM, encourage participants to do basic activities to a rhythm (like clapping, stepping, stamping, voicing different sounds, moving different body parts, etc)

Session plan:

Exercise 1: Clap on Red Circles

- Goal: Build rhythm, attention, and hand coordination.

Instructions:

- Show a red circle (or say „Red“).
- When you see/hear „Red“, clap your hands once.
- Do it slowly at first, then try it in rhythm to a slow drumbeat or metronome (e.g., 60 BPM).

Example flow:

Red - Clap

Blue - (Do nothing)

Red - Clap

Green - (Do nothing)

Exercise 2: Right Hand = Triangle, Left Hand = Square

- Goal: Left/right distinction, cognitive control, and coordination.

Instructions:

- Show a triangle: raise your right hand.
- Show a square: raise your left hand.
- Mix them randomly, and say them out loud to reinforce learning.

Example Sequence:

Triangle – Right hand up

Square – Left hand up

Triangle – Right hand up

Exercise 3: Voice and Movement Combo

- Goal: Engage motor and speech centers together.

Instructions:

- Circle = say “Boom” + stomp right foot
- Star = say “Bah” + stomp left foot

Example Sequence:

Circle – “Boom” + right foot

Star – “Bah” + left foot

Star – “Bah” + left foot

Circle – “Boom” + right foot

3. BODY PERCUSSION

Exercise 4: Cross-Body Movement

- Goal: Stimulate both brain hemispheres (neuro-integration).

Instructions:

- Touch your right hand to left knee when you hear “Cross”.
- Touch your left hand to right knee when you hear “Switch”.

Practice Sequence (with audio cue or facilitator):

Additional Tools:

- Color-coded symbols are often placed on a whiteboard or screen.
- Music (live or recorded) is used as a rhythmic base.
- Voice prompts guide the sequence (done by a facilitator or therapist).

Practice Sequence (with audio cue or facilitator):

Cross – Right hand to left knee

Switch – Left hand to right knee

Cross – Right hand to left knee

Tips for Facilitators:

- Use a whiteboard or flashcards with symbols and colors.
- Start with a slow rhythm, then gradually increase.
- Encourage speaking the cues aloud for extra cognitive engagement.
- Add music or a metronome for fun and timing.
- Exercises may be done seated and tailored to participants' abilities.

Session content-summary:

To introduce rhythmic exercises combining music, movement, symbols, and speech to stimulate the brain.

Goals:

- To learn basic RGM symbols;
- To perform coordinated movements to a steady beat;
- To enhance focus, coordination, memory, and motor skills;
- To allow for engagement in a fun way.

Introduction:

This session is inspired by Steve Hickman's hambone, which is a musical and inclusive form of rhythm-making, accessible for people of all backgrounds and abilities. Hambone (or „pattin' juba“) is a traditional African American body percussion art that uses the body to create rhythms through slaps, pats, and stomps. Steve Hickman teaches hambone as a musical and inclusive form of rhythm-making.

Steve Hickman is known for combining humor, engaging storytelling, and interactive rhythm games, so a session inspired on his work is usually joyful and very hands-on.

Session plan:

1. Basic Hambone Pattern („Pat Juba“)

Movement pattern:

1. Slap thighs – both hands at once
2. Clap hands
3. Slap chest – right hand
4. Slap chest – left hand

Spoken cue:

“Thighs – clap – chest – chest”

Repeat 4 times, staying relaxed and consistent with timing.

2. Call-and-Response Rhythm Game

Steve often uses call-and-response to teach rhythm and timing.

- Leader (Steve or teacher): Slaps a simple rhythm (e.g., clap-clap-thigh-clap)
- Students (you): Repeat it exactly
- Patterns gradually increase in complexity as you improve.



3. Body Part Warm-up Jam

Touch and lightly slap different body parts to get comfortable:

- Clap hands
- Slap thighs
- Slap chest
- Snap fingers
- Stomp feet

Example pattern:

“Clap – thigh – thigh – chest – chest – stomp – stomp”
Say it out loud as you do it to build coordination.

4. Hambone with Counting

Helps with timing and musical phrasing.

Count out loud: “1 – 2 – 3 – 4”

Move:

- 1 = Clap
- 2 = Thighs
- 3 = Chest
- 4 = Stomp

Repeat while staying on beat. Try speeding up or slowing down.

5. Groove with Music

Steve Hickman often plays music (especially old-time or blues tunes) while people hambone. Try doing the basic pattern along with:

- A slow blues track
- A metronome at 80–100 BPM
- A fiddle tune if you’re feeling adventurous

Tips for Facilitators:

- Encourage relaxed movement, smiling and expressiveness;
- Focus more on joy than on technique;
- Adapt all exercises to the participant’s pace and abilities;
- Focus on creating a positive and encouraging group environment;

Session content-summary:

To introduce exercises involves rhythm, coordination, and fun body movements using claps, slaps, and stomps.

Goals:

- To develop a basic sense of rhythm and internal timing.
- To introduce basic body percussion techniques.
- To develop listening and imitation skills.
- To allow for physical engagement and fun.
- To foster musical improvisation and creativity skills.
- To promote interaction and a sense of community through rhythm.

MUSIC

4.2.1. | Accessible Sound Exploration

Introduction

Accessible sound exploration is the entry point to music as a **universal, inclusive, and transformative practice**. Instead of relying on score reading or technical skills, this approach invites all participants to discover sound as an **expressive and relational language**. Voices, bodies, everyday objects, or adapted instruments become vehicles for artistic creation, eliminating barriers to access.

Recent projects in inclusive music, such as the **Inclusive Orchestra (I-Ork)** (Frontiers in Education, 2025), have shown that the use of accessible digital instruments and

collective improvisation strategies allows people with different physical and cognitive conditions to actively participate in music-making, recognizing every sound gesture as a valid contribution.

These practices were not only conceived theoretically: they were tested and applied within the framework of the SplrAL project. Inclusive workshops in, Athens, Verona, Eger and Braga explored collective improvisation, graphic scores, musical dialogues, and sensory-stimuli-based sound creation, demonstrating the real-life application of the methods described here.

Inclusive dimension

Accessible sound exploration rests on four principles:

- **Equal value for all sounds** – there are no mistakes, only different contributions (a breath, a finger snap, a percussed object).
- **Multisensory entry points** – music is experienced through hearing, touch, vision, and vibration. Studies such as Hearing through Vibrations (arXiv, 2020) confirm that people with profound deafness can experience musical emotions through vibrotactile feedback.
- **Elimination of technical barriers** – no previous musical training is required; visual symbols, gestures, and natural sounds replace traditional notation.
- **Flexible participation** – those who do not wish or are not able to produce sound can take part through active listening, gesture conduction, or handling visual and tactile resources.

Pedagogical and social benefits

Research in inclusive music education (Higgins, 2012; Swanwick, 1999; MDPI, 2023) highlights several benefits of accessible sound exploration:

- **Active listening and attention** – learning to hear others and the environment.
- **Creative confidence** – discovering that anyone can make music with simple resources.
- **Social interaction and empathy** – collective creation strengthens bonds and fosters non-verbal dialogue.
- **Bodily and sensory awareness** – vibrations, timbres, and textures expand the perception of the body and space.
- **Autonomy and well-being** – inclusive practices are associated with improvements in self-esteem, communication, and emotional regulation.

Role of the facilitator

The facilitator should act as a mediator and guardian of inclusion, ensuring:

- A **safe and non-judgmental environment** where all contributions are valued.
- **Gradual progression**, starting from individual sound exploration and moving towards collective creation.
- **Variety of accessible resources**, including simple instruments, everyday objects, and assistive technologies.
- **Constant adaptation**, adjusting activities to the motor, cognitive, or emotional needs of the group.

Its role is crucial in creating a **clear and serene environment** where everyone can contribute meaningfully. As Keith Swanwick noted:

“Creating music is a fundamental human need, and the task of the educator is to create situations in which all participants can succeed.” (Teaching Music Musically, 1999)

Examples of practices (to be detailed in methodological sheets in the annex)

1. **Sound Walk** – silent walk where participants collect environmental sounds and later recreate them as a group.
2. **Vocal Explorations** – experimenting with non-verbal vocal sounds: breaths, whispers, onomatopoeia, echoes.
3. **Object Orchestra** – creating an “orchestra” with everyday objects (cups, paper, stones, bottles).
4. **Vibration Sharing** – exploring low-frequency sounds with drums or resonant surfaces, focusing on the vibrations felt in the body.

„The fundamental nature and meaning of music lies in the relationships it creates.”
(Musicking, 1998)

Conclusion

Accessible sound exploration redefines what it means to “make music.” It is not about achieving technical standards but about **opening spaces for participation, discovery, and expression**. Every sound becomes an opportunity for encounter, every gesture a contribution to collective creation. As Small (1998) states in *Music-making*, the true essence of music lies in the relationships it creates — and it is within this relational space that accessible sound exploration finds its greatest strength.

4.2.2. | Inclusive Composition

Introduction

One of the most significant applications of these methods took place during the SplrAL project, particularly in an artistic residency as part of Festival Laços 2025 in Portugal. Using the Soundpainting methodology, the residency combined soundwalks, environmental recordings, and everyday objects, culminating in a public performance at the Auditório Augusto Cabrita (Barreiro). This residency exemplified how inclusive composition can move from theory into practice, reinforcing the European dimension of the project.

Inclusive composition — particularly through **improvised music** — offers a space where every voice is welcomed and celebrated, and where the **energy of the group becomes a shared experience**. For participants living with disabilities, this context represents not only an opportunity for artistic expression but also a chance to redefine their own identity and role within the community (Frontiers in Education, 2025; MDPI, 2023).

In inclusive improvisation, **every sound carries intrinsic value**, regardless of technical ability. The task of the facilitator is to create a **safe, non-judgmental environment** in which personal expression can flourish. As Christopher Small famously argued:

Key principles of inclusive improvisation

- 1. Welcoming and enhancing every sound**
Whether it is a sustained note, a rhythmic gesture, or a moment of silence, each contribution is valid (Higgins, 2012).
- 2. Balancing solo and collective voices**
The improvisational setting should include moments where individuals can stand out, while still remaining embedded in the collective narrative.
- 3. Alternative forms of participation**
For people with motor disabilities or limited mobility, facilitators should provide options such as vocal expression, gesture-based conducting, or assistive technologies (LoopBoxes project, arXiv 2023).
- 4. Respecting the choice not to participate actively**
Presence and listening are also valid ways of engaging with the group process.

Five approaches to composition

- ## 1. Graphic scores:
- Replace traditional notation with shapes, colors, and symbols that represent sonic qualities.
- Remove barriers associated with reading music and invite multiple interpretations.
- Cornelius Cardew emphasized: “Notation is only a means to an end: to provoke imagination and inspire performance.” (Treatise, 1971)

2. Example activity:

Collective music creation using symbols on paper, adapted for participants with motor, cognitive, or sensory differences.

3. Guided improvisation:

The facilitator uses gestures, visuals, or verbal prompts to suggest atmosphere, dynamics, or timing.

The collective sound

Inclusive composition relies on the transformation of individual contributions into a **collective soundscape** that is greater than the sum of its parts. This requires not only musical creation but also **empathetic listening and dialogue** among participants.

Pauline Oliveros (2005) defines listening as:

“Directing attention to what is heard, gathering meaning, interpreting, and deciding on an action.”
(Deep Listening)

To enable collective playing, facilitators should:

- Organize activities where everyone can play together.
- Use **call-and-response** patterns to weave individual and collective voices.
- Introduce **graphic scores** or visual cues to provide a shared reference point (Cardew, 1971; inclusive music education research, 2024).

Balancing individual and collective dimensions

Some of the most powerful moments of inclusive music-making arise from the **dynamic tension between personal autonomy and group cohesion**. Individual expression remains free yet attuned to the collective flow.

Research in **music therapy** and **community music** demonstrates that inclusive group practices improve **communication, emotional**

regulation, and self-esteem, especially when both individual and collective goals are recognized (Higgins, 2012; Bailey, 1993). Importantly, inclusive composition challenges the idea that music only serves a therapeutic purpose. Instead, it **strengthens social ties through shared artistic goals** while also **nurturing personal creativity** through autonomous choices and solo moments.

Music skills and accessibility

One of the greatest strengths of music lies in its **immediacy**: it can be transformed into a collective experience regardless of technical competence or ability to read notation. In inclusive contexts, where participants may have diverse cognitive, motor, or emotional abilities, music becomes a **shared language that transcends words**.

Inclusive Arts

- Provides a flexible structure that still leaves room for personal contributions.
- Derek Bailey reminds us: *“Improvisation is not the absence of rules, but the freedom to negotiate them collectively.”* (Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music, 1993)

4. **Example activity:**

Group improvisation guided by visual cues or thematic prompts, with adaptations for accessibility.

5. **Sensory-stimuli-based creation:**

- Sounds emerge in response to **non-musical stimuli** such as images, textures, or scents.
- Encourages multi-sensory engagement and lowers the threshold for participation.
- Higgins (2012) underlines: “A healthy society encourages every voice to be heard, and every voice to be shaped by listening to others.” (Community Music: In Theory and in Practice)

6. **Example activity:**

Collective improvisation based on tactile or visual stimuli, carefully adapted to avoid overload.

*Detailed methodological sheets for these approaches (**Graphic Scores**, **Guided Improvisation**, **Sensory-Stimuli-Based Creation**) will be provided in the annex at the end of this chapter.*

Conclusion

Inclusive composition creates an **open musical space** where differences are not obstacles but **sources of creativity**. Through improvisation, graphic scores, guided frameworks, and multisensory prompts, participants engage in a **shared artistic journey** that values autonomy, strengthens community, and expands the very meaning of what music can be.

Recent studies confirm that such practices enhance **social cohesion**, **emotional well-being**, and **creative confidence** (Frontiers in Education,

2025; MDPI, 2023; ArXiv, 2020). Moreover, the use of **accessible technologies** such as Skoog, Soundbeam, or modular instruments (LoopBoxes) demonstrates how digital innovation can further democratize music-making,

4.2.3. | Assistive Technology



Introduction

Digital tools such as **Skoog** (a cube-shaped musical interface), **Soundbeam** (a sensor transforming movement into sound), or modular instruments such as **LoopBoxes** (arXiv, 2023) provide new opportunities to include participants with reduced mobility or difficulties in reading music.

Assistive Technology (AT) refers to devices, equipment, or systems that enhance or maintain the functional capabilities of people living with disabilities, enabling them to participate in activities that might otherwise be difficult or impossible — including in music, where AT allows participants with diverse motor, sensory, or cognitive conditions to access, create, and experience music on equal terms.

The use of assistive technology in inclusive music education is not only a practical solution but also a symbolic one: it **empowers voices historically excluded from music-making** and ensures that everyone can take part in creative and collective processes.

Main categories of assistive technology in music

1. **Accessible Digital Musical Instruments (ADMIs)**

- **MAMI Tech Toolkit** – a modular system of physical and software tools co-designed with users to support accessible music-making, reducing reliance on screens and offering tangible interaction.



- **LoopBoxes** – modular instruments designed for collective looping and collaborative creation, tested successfully in special education schools.
- **Research on ADMIs** highlights their potential to empower musicians with disabilities by focusing on creativity rather than deficit correction (Frontiers in Computer Science, 2023).

2. Switches, sensors, and low-tech adaptations

- **Makey Makey** – a simple circuit board that turns everyday conductive objects (fruit, foil, playdough, water, even the human body) into musical triggers. Widely used in classrooms, it allows participants with minimal mobility to control sounds in playful and creative ways.
- **Skoog** – a cube-shaped tactile controller that responds to squeezing, pressing, or twisting, often mounted on wheelchair trays.
- **Soundbeam** – a motion sensor that converts body movement into sound, widely applied in inclusive education and music therapy.
- **EyeHarp** – an eye-tracking instrument allowing participants to play melodies and chords using only gaze or head movements.
- **MiMu Gloves** – wearable gloves that map hand gestures to sound parameters, expanding expressive possibilities.

3. Digital instruments and adaptive controllers

- **Jamboxx** – a digital “harmonica-like” instrument played with breath and head movements, ideal for musicians with limited limb mobility.
- **Clarion** – developed by OpenUp Music (UK), this accessible instrument can be played using tablets, switches, or eye-tracking, enabling children with severe physical disabilities to join orchestras.
- **AUMI (Adaptive Use Musical Instrument)** – free software from the Pauline Oliveros Foundation that uses a webcam to track even the smallest movements (such as blinking) and convert them into sound.

4. Haptic and tactile devices

- **SubPac** – a wearable vest or cushion that transforms low frequencies into vibrations, enabling participants with profound hearing loss to “feel” music.
- **Haptic wearables** – wristbands or gloves that provide vibratory feedback, often used to guide rhythm and tempo.
- **Resonant platforms and surfaces** – allow participants to experience music through body vibrations, offering multisensory access.

5. Apps and accessible software

- **GarageBand Accessibility Features** – Apple’s music app fully compatible with VoiceOver for blind or visually impaired users.
- **Soundtrap (Spotify)** – an online collaborative music platform designed with an accessible interface.
- **Simplified beat-making and DJ apps** – provide intuitive touch interfaces, lowering the threshold for participation.

6. DIY solutions and emerging technologies

- **Arduino-based controllers** – custom-built switches, pedals, or proximity sensors adapted to individual needs.
- **BCI (Brain-Computer Interfaces)** – experimental systems that allow composition or control of music through brainwave activity. Although still in development, they represent a future frontier for accessibility.

Pedagogical considerations

- AT must be **co-designed with users**, ensuring that devices respond to real needs.
- **Physical accessibility:** tools should be mountable, portable, and adjustable to different body positions.
- **Customization:** mapping gestures, breath, or eye movements to meaningful musical outputs enhances a sense of ownership.
- AT should support not only **functional access** but also **creative expression, social interaction, and confidence**.

Practical implications

Assistive technology proves that **everybody can have a voice in an ensemble**. From low-cost solutions like **Makey Makey**, where bananas can become piano keys, to advanced instruments like **EyeHarp** or **Clarion**, these tools democratize access to music-making.

They also expand the palette of artistic possibilities, offering new ways of engaging with sound, vibration, and gesture. By combining low-tech adaptations with cutting-edge innovations, facilitators can design inclusive environments where difference is not a barrier but a source of creativity.

4.2.4. | ANNEX – INCLUSIVE COMPOSITION

METHODOLOGICAL SHEETS

This annex brings together the practical methodologies referenced throughout the music chapter. Each sheet offers a step-by-step description, facilitator notes, and learning outcomes to support direct use or adaptation in a range of contexts.

MUSIC

Practical Examples

1. GRAPHIC SCORES

Type of Activity:

Collective musical creation based on visual support.

Description:

To enable music creation through non-traditional and accessible notation.

Duration:

20–30 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Prepare a set of visual symbols and explain the meaning of each one. Arrange these symbols in a sequence to create a visual score, then perform the score collectively with your group. After the performance, experiment by modifying or rearranging the symbols to produce new variations of your composition. After the performance, experiment by modifying or rearranging the symbols to produce new variations of your composition.

Materials needed:

- Large sheet or whiteboard
- Coloured markers or paint
- Tactile materials (optional)
- Simple instruments and sound objects

Learning outcomes:

- Participation in interpreting symbols.
- Creativity in linking images and sounds.
- Collaborate effectively in the collective performance of a visual score.

2. GUIDED IMPROVISATION

Type of activity:

Facilitated collective improvisation.

Description:

To encourage creativity and interaction through guidance from the facilitator.

Duration:

15–25 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Introduce a theme or environment to the participants. Ask them to represent this theme using sounds or movements inspired by it. Use gestures, visuals, or verbal cues to guide changes in intensity, timbre, and rhythm, shaping the collective expression. Make space for moments of individual contribution, allowing each participant to add their own interpretation within the group performance.

Materials needed:

- Sound objects and instruments
- Cards with visual indications (optional)
- Open space for movement

Learning outcomes:

- Responsiveness to facilitator cues.
- Variety of sounds produced.
- Ability to shift between solo and collective roles.

3. SENSORY-STIMULI CREATION

Type of activity:

Multisensory group composition.

Description:

To stimulate creativity through tactile, visual, or olfactory stimuli.

Duration:

20–30 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Present or distribute a range of sensory stimuli such as objects, textures, scents, or images. Associate each stimulus with a specific musical quality. Create individual sounds or sound gestures in response to each stimulus. Combine the stimuli and their corresponding sounds into a collective group composition. If possible, record the performance for later reflection and discussion.

Materials needed:

- Objects with different textures
- Pictures or short videos
- Perfumed objects (optional)
- Simple instruments or sound objects

Learning outcomes:

- Engagement with stimuli.
- Ability to connect senses and sound.
- Cohesion in group performance.



4. SOUNDPAINTING

Type of activity:

Real-time structured improvisation with gestural language.

Description:

To explore structured improvisation through universal gestural cues (Soundpainting language).

Duration:

30–45 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Teach a set of basic gestures such as start, stop, volume, and continue. Practice responding collectively to each gesture. Combine the gestures to create simple sequences that can guide group performance. Facilitate short improvisations using different combinations of these signs.

Materials needed:

- Open space
- Instruments/voices/objects
- Visual list of basic Soundpainting gestures

Learning outcomes:

- Responsiveness to gestural language.
- Collective coordination.
- Creativity in combining gestures.

5. SOUNDWALKS

Type of activity:

Exploration of environmental soundscapes.

Description:

To develop listening skills and sonic awareness.

Duration

45–60 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Walk silently while focusing on active listening and awareness of the surrounding soundscape. Identify and describe the sounds you hear. Optionally, record selected sounds for later use. Afterwards, share your impressions with the group or create graphic maps that represent what you heard and how you experienced it.

Materials needed:

- Safe outdoor/indoor route
- Recording devices (optional: hydrophones, contact mics, recorders)
- Paper and pencils for mapping sounds

Learning outcomes:

- Active engagement in listening.
- Variety of sounds identified.
- Creativity in post-walk sound mapping.

6. GESTURE-BASED IMPROVISATION

Type of activity:

Improvisation based on physical gestures.

Description:

To use body movement as a source of sound inspiration.

Duration

20–30 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

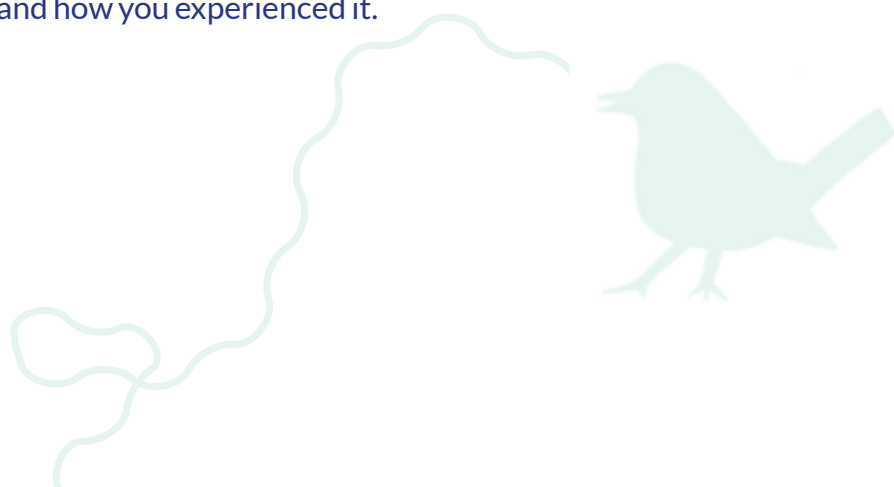
Introduce a set of simple gestures, such as push, wave, or tap. Assign a sound or sound family to each gesture. Improvise collectively by combining gestures, exploring how different movements can shape the group's sound. Take turns leading by proposing gestures, allowing participants to guide the direction of the improvisation.

Materials needed:

- Open space
- Instruments/objects reflecting gestures

Learning outcomes:

- Creativity in gesture-to-sound translation.
- Participation in leading or following.
- Balance between structure and freedom.



7. GRAPHIC SOUND MAPPING

Type of activity:

Drawing soundscapes to guide improvisation.

Description:

To translate listening experiences into visual scores for later musical interpretation.

Duration

30–40 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Ask participants to draw the sounds they hear or remember, capturing their personal auditory impressions. Share the drawings with the group. Translate the visual representations into collective sound improvisations, exploring how individual interpretations can inspire group creativity.

Materials needed:

- Paper, markers, crayons
- Instruments/objects

Learning outcomes:

- Participation in drawing.
- Creativity in visual-to-sound translation.
- Group collaboration in interpretation.

8. THEMATIC SOUNDSCAPES

Type of activity:

Improvisation based on shared themes.

Description:

To co-create collective sound environments (e.g., forest, city, storm).

Duration

20–30 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Introduce a theme, such as “rainforest,” and brainstorm the sounds associated with it. Assign specific sounds or sound roles to participants. Perform and layer the sounds together, gradually building a rich collective soundscape that reflects the chosen theme.

Materials needed:

- Simple instruments
- Objects representing thematic sounds

Learning outcomes:

- Imagination in representing the theme.
- Participation in group layering.
- Coherence of the final soundscape.

9. EVERYDAY OBJECTS ORCHESTRA

Type of activity:

Musical improvisation with non-traditional instruments.

Description:

To reimagine everyday objects as musical instruments.

Duration

20–30 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Provide participants with a selection of objects to explore. Experiment with different ways of producing sounds from each object. Begin by improvising individually, then come together to improvise collectively. Finally, shape the ideas into a short performance piece that showcases the sounds and creativity of the group.

Materials needed:

- Household or classroom objects (cups, bottles, paper, stones, cans)

Learning outcomes:

- Creativity in sound discovery.
- Engagement in group improvisation.
- Collaboration in performance.



10. VOCAL EXPLORATIONS

Type of activity:

Improvisation using the voice as primary instrument.

Description:

To use vocalisation as a tool for communication, creativity, and inclusion.

Duration

15–20 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

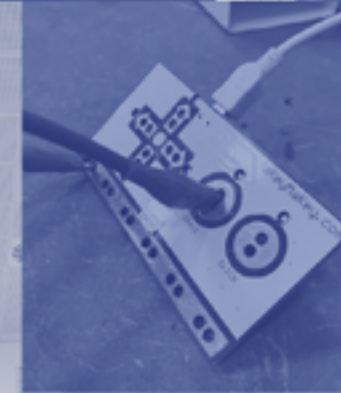
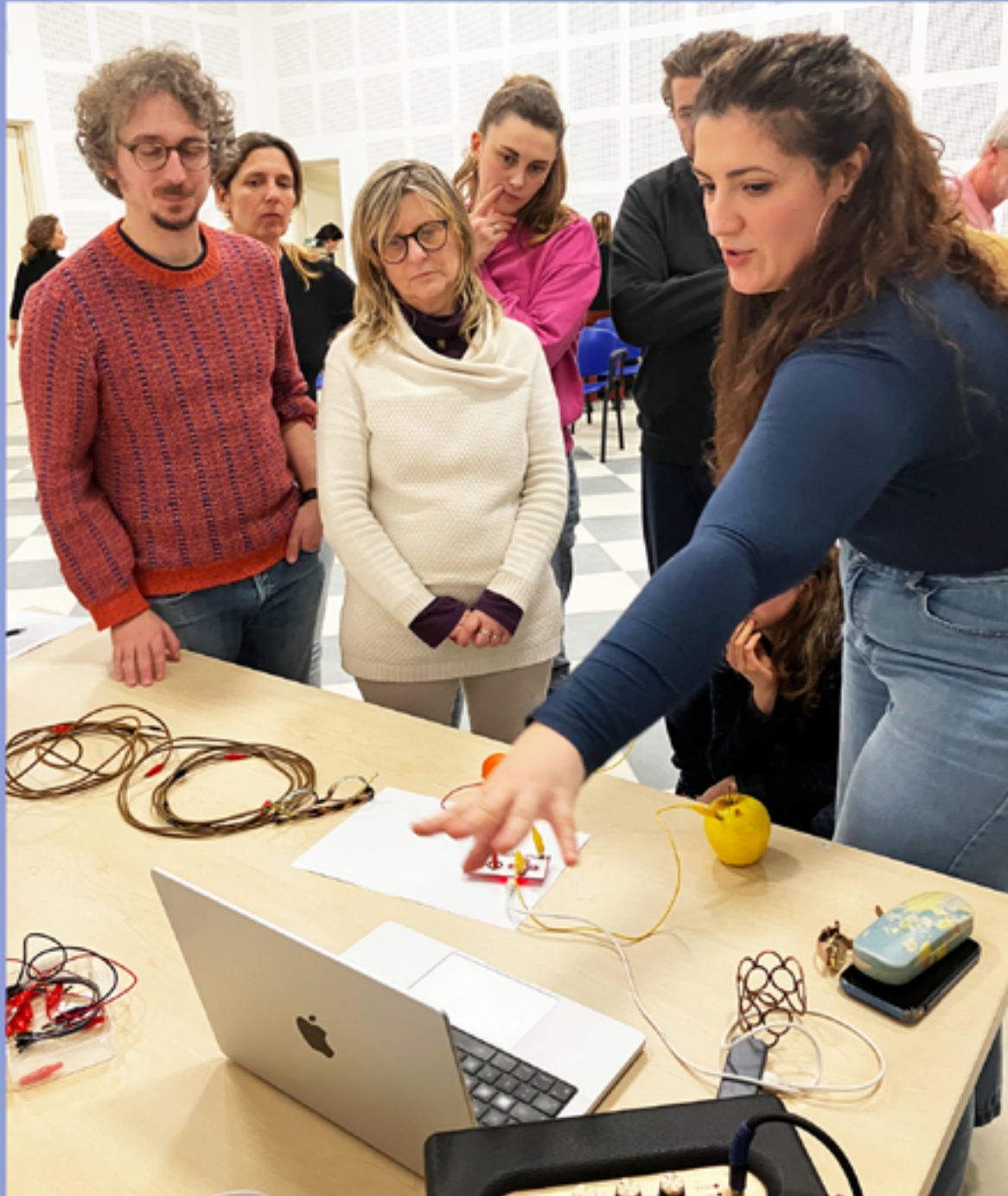
Begin with a warm-up using simple breathing exercises and humming. Explore a variety of non-verbal vocal sounds, such as whispers, sighs, and laughter. Exchange sounds between participants through call-and-response exercises. Finally, create short group improvisations by layering different vocal sounds, exploring texture, rhythm, and dynamics collectively.

Materials needed:

- Voice (no external materials required)

Learning outcomes:

- Confidence in vocal expression.
- Participation in call-and-response.
- Group cohesion in layered improvisation.



Practical Examples

11. MAKEY MAKEY SOUND LAB

Type of activity:

Accessible digital interface with everyday objects.

Description:

To explore music-making by transforming conductive objects into interactive sound triggers.

Duration:

30–40 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Connect the Makey Makey device to a computer and set it up with music software. Attach clips to various conductive objects and explain that touching the objects will trigger sounds or notes. Allow participants to experiment with different materials, exploring how each can be mapped to different sounds. Finally, create a short “object orchestra” performance, combining the sounds of the objects into a collective musical piece.

Materials needed:

- Makey Makey board
- Laptop/tablet with sound software (e.g., GarageBand, Scratch, Soundplant)
- Conductive objects (fruit, playdough, foil, water, etc.)
- Speakers/headphones

Learning outcomes:

- Creativity in choosing mapping objects.
- Participation in triggering sounds.
- Group coordination in final performance.

12. SKOOG ORCHESTRA

Type of activity:

Tactile musical interface for collective play.

Description:

To use tactile interaction (pressing, squeezing, twisting) for accessible music-making.

Duration:

20–30 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Connect the Skoog to the app and introduce each side of the cube, explaining the sounds it produces. Invite participants to press or squeeze different sides to explore the sonic possibilities. Experiment with melodies, harmonies, and rhythms using the Skoog. Finally, build a group performance by layering the Skoog sounds with other instruments or voices, creating a rich collective musical experience.

Materials needed:

- Skoog device
- iPad/computer with Skoog app/software
- Speakers

Learning outcomes:

- Engagement with tactile responses.
- Ability to coordinate with others.
- Creativity in exploring sound.

15. AUMI (Adaptive Use Musical Instrument)

Type of activity:

Webcam-based motion-to-sound software.

Description:

To convert even minimal body movements into sound, enabling participation for those with limited mobility.

Duration:

15–25 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Open AUMI and configure the movement tracking settings. Demonstrate how small gestures, such as blinks, finger movements, or head tilts, can trigger sounds. Allow participants to experiment with triggering and sequencing sounds using these gestures. Combine AUMI-generated sounds with traditional instruments to create a collaborative group improvisation.

Materials needed:

- AUMI software (free)
- Laptop with webcam
- Speakers/headphones

Learning outcomes:

- Success in triggering sounds with minimal movements.
- Creativity in combining sounds.
- Engagement in group improvisation.

16. SUBPAC RHYTHM EXPERIENCE

Type of activity:

Vibrotactile wearable for feeling music through the body.

Description:

To experience rhythm and low frequencies through vibration, supporting inclusive music perception.

Duration:

15–20 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Connect the SubPac to an audio source and play rhythmic patterns or bass-heavy music. Encourage participants to move or improvise in response to the vibrations. Integrate SubPac users into a rhythm-based group performance, exploring how physical sensation can guide collective musical expression.

Materials needed:

- SubPac vest or cushion
- Audio player with bass-rich tracks
- Optional instruments with low-frequency sounds (drums, bass)

Learning outcomes:

- Engagement with vibrotactile feedback.
- Synchronisation with group rhythm.
- Expressiveness in movement or sound response.

THEATRE

4.3.1.

| Accessible Body Language

INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings together theoretical frameworks and inclusive theatre methodologies. Within the SplrAL project, these methods were applied and refined in practice with Companhia (In)Diferente (Portugal), whose experience of rehearsals, workshops, and performances provides the concrete ground for the reflections and methodological sheets presented here.

In inclusive theatre, the actor's instrument is the body in its **full sensory, physical, and imaginative range**. Training therefore begins with awareness: breath, posture, gaze, balance, gesture, and the relationship with space and partners. Rather than drilling generic exercises in isolation, activities are selected because they **serve the story being told** and can be adapted to different sensory and motor profiles. This “context-before-drill” approach keeps rehearsals safe, purposeful, and genuinely accessible.



Why the body first?

Major theatre lineages converge on the primacy of the body–space relationship. **Jacques Lecoq’s** pedagogy places movement, rhythm, and play before psychology, using masks and physical exploration to build roles “from the outside in” (see *The Moving Body*). The aim is to discover a character’s physical truth and then let intention arise from it, an approach particularly compatible with inclusive, concrete, easy-to-grasp tasks.

Jerzy Grotowski’s “poor theatre” pushes in the same direction: strip away technical excess and return to **body and voice** as the core means of expression, minimizing scenic load so that performers can focus on presence, precision, and partner work—conditions that also reduce sensory overload for many actors.

The Drama Teacher

By contrast, **Bertolt Brecht’s** epic theatre uses clear, overt stage choices—direct address, titles, visible transitions—to support comprehension and critical distance (*Verfremdungseffekt*). For inclusion, the-

se devices are helpful because they **chunk information** for actors and audiences, clarify objectives, and make cues legible. make cues legible (Brecht, *Verfremdungseffekt*). At the level of rehearsal-room practice, **Viola Spolin’s** theatre games and **Keith Johnstone’s** improvisation principles provide low-barrier frameworks to train listening, status, spontaneity, and group attunement—skills that anchor accessible body language and ensemble safety (Spolin, *Theatre Games for the Classroom*, 1986; Johnstone, *Impro*, 1979).

Finally, **Stanislavski’s** systemic training—objectives, actions, and the link between physical actions and inner life—remains a useful **translation tool**: concrete tasks (what I do) illuminate emotion (what I feel). For many actors, especially in mixed-ability groups, working via playable physical actions is clearer and safer than starting from abstract emotion (Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, 1938/2010).

An access-first rehearsal ecology

Accessible body language starts with a **sensory–motor scan** and with adaptations that can be dialed up or down in intensity, frequency, and duration:

- **Auditory:** manage volume and density of sound cues; schedule quiet breaks.
- **Visual:** adjust lighting; mark paths and edges with high-contrast tape; avoid glare.
- **Vestibular & balance:** prefer wide bases, gradual level changes, controlled turns.
- **Tactile:** obtain consent for touch; provide fabric/prop options (soft vs. rough).
- **Proprioceptive & effort:** scale weight, tempo, and range of actions; build rest points.
- **Interoceptive:** normalize hydration and self-regulation pauses.

Voice work follows the same logic: short, concrete phrases; articulation and projection drills at comfortable tempos; audio recordings of lines when literacy is a barrier; and pictorial storyboards or icons to cue entrances, spatial patterns, or beat changes (AAC principles). These choices align with inclusive rehearsal practice advocated by participatory traditions such as Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, which systematizes games and image-based techniques that welcome actors and non-actors alike.

(Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 1979)

From warm-up to scene: a clear arc

In many inclusive rehearsal contexts, sessions may begin with whole-group warm-ups that integrate breath, alignment, and spatial orientation (walking at different levels and directions). In the SplrAL project, rehearsal sessions with Companhia (In)Diferente typically followed this arc, adding vocal activation (diction/projection) and an ensemble game such as mirror or pass-the-energy

Scene work proceeds in short, playable beats: mark entrances/exits and anchoring postures; clarify objectives and physical actions (Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, 1938/2010); test status offers (Johnstone, *Impro*, 1979) to re-shape gesture, eye line, and proximity; and explore tempo-rhythm and mask/physicality (Lecoq, *The Moving Body*, 2002). Where comprehension or memory are challenges, Brechtian signposting (Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 1964) keeps the ensemble oriented and reduces cognitive load.

Inclusive methods you can lean on (and adapt)

Safety, agency, and story

Accessible body language is not about limiting ambition; it is about **designing conditions** where each actor's agency grows. That means matching tasks to bodies (e.g., seated mirroring or hand-led gestural scores), staging for **fall prevention** and clear travel lanes, and distributing lines and actions so no performer faces multi-task overload (complex text + fast choreography + prop handling) at once. As Boal (*Theatre of the Oppressed*, 1979), Lecoq (*The Moving Body*, 2002), Spolin (*Theatre Games for the Classroom*, 1986), Johnstone (*Impro*, 1979), Brecht (*Brecht on Theatre*, 1964), and Grotowski (*Towards a Poor Theatre*, 1968) in their different ways remind us, the aim is a stage language in which gesture, rhythm, and relation are legible and shareable by all.

Within the SplrAL project, these principles were applied in practice with the Portuguese inclusive theatre group Companhia (In)Diferente. Through rehearsals and workshops, the group explored accessible warm-ups, partner exercises, and adapted improvisation, which significantly enhanced participants' confidence, stage presence, and collective authorship. This lived experience directly fed into the methodological sheets that follow, ensuring they reflect concrete practice rather than abstract theory.

*Detailed methodological sheets (e.g., **Levels & Lanes**, **Mirror Circles**, **Gesture Bank**, **Weighted/Light**, **Vocal Shapes**, **Access-First Warm-Up Flow**) will be provided in the annex at the end of this chapter.*

4.3.2. | Adapted Improvisation

Introduction

Improvisation is at the heart of theatre practice: it develops spontaneity, attention, imagination, and collaboration. For inclusive contexts, **adapted improvisation** provides the same benefits but within a framework that ensures **safety, accessibility, and participation** for all. Improvisation can be both a **creative tool** to generate material for a production and a **pedagogical strategy** to strengthen social skills, confidence, and empathy.

Classic practitioners such as **Viola Spolin** (*Theatre Games*) and **Keith Johnstone** (*Impro for Storytellers*) developed improvisational techniques that remain central in actor training and theatre education. Their methods emphasize **play, presence, and acceptance** ("yes, and"), principles that are particularly powerful for diverse groups because they foster a culture of listening and mutual support.

Adaptation and accessibility

Improvisation activities must be carefully adapted so that **rules, pacing, and modes of participation** are accessible:

- **Clear structures:** games with simple instructions and a limited number of rules.
- **Multiple modalities:** participants may respond with movement, voice, gesture, or sound, depending on ability and comfort.
- **Flexible timing:** allow pauses, repetitions, and extended response times.
- **Scaffolded complexity:** start with mirroring and call-and-response; progress to open-ended scenes only when the group is confident.

Research in applied theatre demonstrates that adapted improvisation improves **communication, self-regulation, and cooperation** among participants with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Studies also

show that improvisation fosters empathy and creativity in mixed-ability groups, contributing to social inclusion and reducing stigma.

Methods and traditions

Several traditions support the use of adapted improvisation in inclusive theatre:

- **Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed:** techniques such as **Forum Theatre** or **Image Theatre** transform improvisation into a tool for dialogue and social change, inviting actors and audiences to rehearse alternatives to oppression.
- **Spolin's Theatre Games:** more than 130 improvisation games that stimulate creativity, concentration, and group dynamics, many of which can be easily adapted by modifying pace, space, or mode of response.
- **Johnstone's Improvisation:** focus on **status, narrative offers, and spontaneity**, which can be explored through short, playful exercises with high levels of accessibility.
- **Applied improvisation in education and therapy:** used in occupational therapy and drama therapy as a way to practice **flexibility, resilience, and collaborative storytelling**.

Examples of adapted strategies

- **Status exercises:** instead of abstract role play, status is explored through concrete postures (e.g., tall vs. crouched) or simple vocal qualities (loud vs. soft).
- **Story-building games:** group creates a narrative one gesture or one word at a time, with the facilitator moderating pace and providing visual cues.
- **Mirroring games:** performed seated, standing, or with only hands/arms, so all participants can take part regardless of mobility.
- **Role substitution:** if memorisation is a barrier, participants can “feed” lines or gestures to one another, reinforcing collaboration.

Pedagogical value

Adapted improvisation strengthens both **individual expression** (autonomy, confidence, creativity) and **collective cohesion** (listening, cooperation, empathy). It reflects Augusto Boal's principle that theatre is a “rehearsal for real life” — and when accessible improvisation is practised, every participant rehearses not only theatrical presence but also **shared citizenship, agency, and dialogue**.

*Detailed methodological sheets (e.g., **Status Walks**, **Story-Building Circles**, **Image-to-Scene Improvisation**) will be provided in the annex at the end of this chapter.*

4.3.3. | Inclusive Narratives

Introduction

Theatre has always been a medium for telling stories, whether through words, movement, images, or objects. In inclusive contexts, **narratives become collective creations**: they are not only about characters and plots but also about the lived experiences of participants, their identities, and the communities they represent. The actor is not simply “performing” a role but, as Stanislavski suggested, *living truthfully under imaginary circumstances* — and in inclusive practice, this truth emerges from **embodied stories shaped by diverse voices**.

Principles of inclusive storytelling

1. **Co-creation over representation** – Inclusive narratives are built with participants, not about them. Community-based theatre traditions, such as those documented by Jan Cohen-Cruz in *Local Acts: Community-Based Performance in the United States*, highlight the importance of shared authorship to empower marginalised voices.
2. **Accessibility in content and form** – Scripts, images, and rehearsal processes are adapted to different literacies and abilities: text may be simplified, supported by pictorial storyboards, or replaced by gestural scores, ensuring that everyone can access the story.
3. **Multiple modalities of narration** – Narratives may be expressed not only through dialogue but also via movement, masks, puppetry, or objects, following traditions like Jacques Lecoq's *théâtre du geste* or object theatre.
4. **Balance between structure and improvisation** – A clear framework helps participants orient themselves, while improvisation allows for authentic input. This mirrors the approaches of Augusto Boal's *Forum Theatre*, where actors and audiences explore alternative storylines together.

Adaptation strategies

- **Cognitive accessibility:** recording scripts for audio rehearsal; using colour-coded or image-based scripts for non-readers; repeating key plot points in rehearsal.
- **Physical accessibility:** designing narratives that allow for seated roles, minimal movement parts, or collective storytelling formats where mobility differences do not limit participation.
- **Sensory regulation:** avoiding overwhelming stimuli in stories (e.g., chaotic soundscapes or flashing lights), or preparing participants with clear cues when intense moments are necessary.
- **Role distribution:** ensuring all actors have meaningful contributions, even if through non-verbal roles such as narrators, movers, or chorus members.

Examples of inclusive narrative practices

- **Community Playback Theatre:** participants share personal stories which are immediately re-enacted by actors, creating empathy and validation. Playback Theatre International highlights its role in fostering dialogue across differences.
- **Storytelling circles:** adapted from oral tradition, each participant contributes a fragment of a story, which the group then weaves into a performance. This method is particularly powerful for groups with mixed verbal abilities.
- **Forum Theatre (Boal):** participants dramatize a situation of oppression and invite interventions from the audience to test alternative endings. This approach demonstrates how narratives can become **rehearsals for social change**.



- **Puppetry and object theatre:** using external objects as “story-bearers” reduces performance anxiety and allows participants to channel emotions and identities through metaphor. Research in inclusive education confirms puppetry as a successful tool for participation among children with disabilities.

Pedagogical value

Inclusive narratives enhance:

- **Self-expression** – participants see their own realities reflected on stage.
- **Collective identity** – groups negotiate meaning together, fostering cohesion.
- **Critical reflection** – audiences and actors are invited to question social structures.
- **Imagination and empathy** – narratives broaden perspectives by weaving multiple lived experiences into shared performance.

Process in practice

The preparation of an inclusive play often follows the same phases as traditional theatre – script analysis, character exploration, scene building, technical rehearsal – but with adaptations that ensure all actors can participate meaningfully. Group discussions, improvisations, and visual supports are used to clarify storylines, while feedback circles allow the ensemble to reflect on both process and meaning. What matters most is that every actor feels: “**I am the story, and the story belongs to me.**”

*Detailed methodological sheets (e.g., **Storytelling Circles**, **Image Theatre Improvisations**, **Object & Puppet Narratives**, **Forum Story Rehearsals**) will be provided in the annex at the end of this chapter.*

4.3.4. | ANNEX – THEATRE METHODOLOGICAL SHEETS

This annex gathers the practical methodologies referenced across the theatre chapter. Each sheet includes a step-by-step description, facilitator notes, and learning outcomes to enable direct implementation or adaptation in diverse contexts.

THEATRE

A. | Accessible Body Language

B. | Adapted Improvisation

1. LEVELS & LANES

Type of activity:

Spatial awareness exercise.

Description: To explore body movement in different levels and directions while maintaining safety.

Duration: 10–15 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Participants walk through lanes in different directions. The facilitator calls out “low,” “medium,” or “high” levels, guiding participants to adjust their body height and posture accordingly. Introduce variations in tempo, encouraging participants to change the speed of their movements while maintaining awareness of space and others around them.

Materials needed:

- Open space
- Marked lanes (tape or cones)

Learning outcomes:

- Responsiveness to cues.
- Awareness of group spacing.
- Ability to shift between levels.

2. GESTURE BANK

Type of activity:

Creation of a limited gesture vocabulary.

Description: To provide actors with clear, repeatable non-verbal tools for storytelling.

Duration: 20–25 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

The group invents a small set of gestures, such as “anger,” “joy,” or “greeting.” Practice the gestures collectively, exploring their physical expression and clarity. Use the gestures in short improvised scenes, experimenting with how they convey emotion and meaning within a group performance.

Materials needed:

- Open space
- Cards with symbols/images (optional)

Learning outcomes:

- Recall of gestures.
- Expressiveness in performance.
- Integration in storytelling.

3. STATUS WALKS

Type of activity:

Improvisation with physical status.

Description: To explore power dynamics through posture and presence.

Duration: 15–20 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Participants walk while embodying different status levels, ranging from 1 to 10. Pair up and interact with a partner holding a contrasting status level, exploring how posture, movement, and gestures communicate power dynamics. Rotate roles so that each participant experiences different status positions and perspectives.

Materials needed:

- Open space

Learning outcomes:

- Creativity in physical expression.
- Interaction awareness.
- Role adaptation.





C. | Inclusive Narratives

4. STORY-BUILDING CIRCLES

Type of activity:

Collaborative improvisation.

Description: To create stories collectively, one action or sentence at a time.

Duration: 15–25 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

The group forms a circle. Each participant adds a word, gesture, or sound to continue the story, building on what came before. The facilitator guides the pace and flow, helping the story develop coherently while allowing space for individual creativity.

Materials needed:

- Talking stick/object

Learning outcomes:

- Turn-taking.
- Creativity of contributions.
- Group story coherence.

5. IMAGE-TO-SCENE IMPROVISATION

Type of activity:

Improvisation based on static images.

Description: To generate scenes from embodied tableaux.

Duration: 20–30 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Participants are asked to create frozen images in response to the given prompts. These tableaux should then be slowly animated and developed into short improvisations. After each improvisation, the group should discuss what emerged from the process and then repeat the exercise, introducing variations based on the discussion and new ideas.

Materials needed:

- Open space
- Image prompts (photos, drawings)

Learning outcomes:

- Clarity of physical images.
- Group collaboration.
- Transition into action.

6. STORYTELLING CIRCLES

Type of activity:

Oral and embodied storytelling.

Description: To share and re-enact personal or collective stories.

Duration: 20–30 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Participants begin by telling short stories, which the others gently echo through fragments of gesture and voice. As the process unfolds, these individual stories start to intertwine, gradually forming a shared, collective narrative.

Materials needed:

- Open space
- Optional props

Learning outcomes:

- Participation.
- Respect for each voice.
- Collective creativity.

7. OBJECT & PUPPET NARRATIVES

Type of activity:

Storytelling through objects.

Description: To reduce performance anxiety and foster imagination.

Duration: 20–30 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

Objects or puppets are distributed among the participants, who bring them to life through simple, expressive actions. Gradually, these small moments evolve into a shared story created collectively by the group.

Materials needed:

- Puppets or everyday objects

Learning outcomes:

- Creativity in object use.
- Story coherence.
- Participation level.

D. | Example of Practical Activities

8. FORUM STORY REHEARSALS

Type of activity:

Improvisation of social scenarios.

Description: To explore alternative outcomes to real-life challenges.

Duration: 30–40 minutes.

Assignment for participants:

The group enacts a short scene that explores a moment of conflict or oppression. Members of the audience are then invited to suggest interventions, and the actors replay the scene, incorporating these changes. Afterwards, the group reflects together on the different outcomes and what they reveal.

Materials needed:

- Simple props
- Chairs

Learning outcomes:

- Engagement in proposing alternatives.
- Empathy in role-play.
- Group reflection.



Introduction

The preparation of an inclusive theatre performance is structured, but also flexible enough to adapt to the needs of the ensemble. A typical rehearsal process can be organised in progressive weekly stages:

- **Weeks 1–2:** table reading, exploration of themes and characters, and initial improvisations.
- **Weeks 3–4:** building small scene blocks, working on intentions, rhythm, and first stage movements.
- **Weeks 5–6:** consolidating larger units of the play, rehearsing transitions, and introducing technical elements such as props, light, and sound.
- **Weeks 7–8:** technical rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and final adjustments before the premiere.

Rehearsal Structure in Practice

In the **SplrAL project**, rehearsals with **Companhia (In)Diferente** typically followed a four-part structure: **warm-up, scene work, run-through, and feedback/reflection**. This structure, already outlined in the introduction as a general rehearsal arc, proved highly effective in inclusive contexts, creating continuity, focus, and a shared rhythm for all participants.

A typical 3-hour rehearsal included:

- **20 minutes of warm-up** (body stretches, breathing, voice exercises, ensemble games);
- **two working blocks of one hour each** (scene work, blocking, or transitions, with a short break in between);
- **a 20-minute run-through** of the day's material;
- **a final 10 minutes for feedback and closure.**

The **warm-up** had two intentional dimensions:

1. **Preparatory** – exercises and games to relax the actor, stimulate creativity, and make them available for action and interaction with others.
2. **Contextual** – exercises directly connected to the circumstances of the story being told, aligning the actor's body and voice with the temporal and spatial universe of the play.

This **dual focus** ensured that rehearsals were not only technically effective but also artistically meaningful, allowing each actor to enter the stage both grounded and imaginatively engaged

10. WARM-UP FLOW

Type of activity:

Daily rehearsal preparation.

Description: To prepare body, voice, and ensemble focus

Duration: 20 minutes.

Assignment for Participants:

The session begins with breathing and stretching exercises, followed by walking in varied rhythms and levels to explore physical awareness. Participants then engage in vocal activation activities focusing

on diction and projection, and the warm-up concludes with a dynamic group energy game.

Materials needed:

- Open space

Learning outcomes:

- Energy alignment.
- Vocal projection.
- Group connection.

11. SCENE WORK BLOCKS

Type of activity:

Progressive rehearsal structure.

Description: To develop characters and scenes in manageable units.

Duration: 60 minutes per block.

Assignment for Participants:

The group begins with a table reading of the text, followed by discussion to clarify meaning and intention. Scenes are then blocked in short units, which are gradually linked together to form longer sequences.

Materials needed:

- Script/audio recordings
- Props gradually introduced

Learning outcomes:

- Comprehension of story.
- Consistency of actions.
- Collective cohesion.

12. DAILY RUN-THROUGH & FEEDBACK

Type of activity:

Continuous rehearsal and reflection.

Description: To strengthen continuity and integrate feedback.

Duration: 30–40 minutes.

Assignment for Participants:

Scenes are run continuously without pauses, encouraging participants to focus on the overall flow and energy rather than on precision. The session concludes with a feedback circle, where reflections and observations are shared.

Materials needed:

- Stage space
- Feedback tools (cards, log-book)

Learning outcomes:

- Scene continuity.
- Actor self-reflection.
- Group cohesion

VISUAL ARTS

4.4.1. | Introduction

The recognition of the works of people living with intellectual disabilities was a long process that unfolded in several waves, beginning internationally in the mid-20th century. Early initiatives focused primarily on care and protection. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, more and more professionals and advocacy organisations began to emphasize that people with intellectual disabilities are capable of meaningful, creative work if they receive adequate support and the right environment. This led to the creation of the first sheltered workshops and developmental employment models, which aimed not only to create job opportunities, but also to strengthen independence and promote social integration.

In the last decades of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, the idea of inclusion gained further momentum. The emphasis gradually shifted to changing social attitudes. There was growing interest in works of art and handicrafts created by people with intellectual disabilities. Today, these works are no longer seen merely as products created for therapeutic purposes, but as independent works of aesthetic value that are displayed in galleries, exhibitions, and art fairs.

“The line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible.”

Allan Kaprow

The beginning – Art Brut

It was French artist Jean Dubuffet who first began to consciously collect and exhibit works created by non-professional artists, often people living with psychiatric or intellectual disabilities. He was greatly inspired by the earlier collection of a Swiss psychiatrist from the 1920s. He was the first to examine the works of psychiatric patients not as medical documents, but as art. When Jean Dubuffet coined the term „raw art” (Art Brut) in the 1940s, he consciously defined it in opposition to high art. He believed that professional art was „corrupted” because it was institutionalized, regulated, and market-driven. In his eyes, this was true art. Art Brut was initially deliberately outside the world of high art—it was an alternative to it, a critique of it. However, from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, the art world (galleries, museums, curators) took notice of these works:

- Exhibitions and collections were created (e.g., Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne, 1976).
- Art historians (e.g., Roger Cardinal) began to refer to it as “outsider art,” which is a broader, more inclusive category.
- More and more contemporary artists (such as Basquiat and Dubuffet’s followers) were inspired by these works.

Thus, Art Brut became partially integrated into the discourse of high art: it appeared in major galleries, gained recognition as “authentic” art, and influenced modern, expressive, and conceptual trends. In recent decades, it has been accepted by art institutions and now exists on the fringes of high art, but is recognized nonetheless.

Inclusive art and outsider art

Roger Cardinal is a key figure in the history of outsider art because he was the one who made „raw art” (Art Brut) internationally visible and theoretically interpretable. If Hans Prinzhorn was the basic researcher and Jean Dubuffet the ideologist, then Roger Cardinal was the one who

placed the movement as a whole in an academic and international context. At that time, art therapy workshops began to operate in psychiatric institutions and homes for people with disabilities in Western Europe. The 1970s saw the emergence of the first generation of artists with disabilities who created not only as therapy but also as a form of self-expression and professionally.

4.4.2. | Professional and Artistic Relevance

During the Spiral project, workshops using visual arts and multimedia methods were developed in Hungary and Greece. The practices collected in this chapter were not only conceived theoretically: they were tested and applied within the framework of the SplrAL project during the inclusive workshops in Athens, Verona, Eger.

Introduction to Art Buddies and Ergastiri

The greek Art Buddies joined the SplrAL program following an invitation from the Greek project partner, Aeroplio Theatre. The Association of Parents, Guardians & Friends of Disabled People “To Ergastiri” was founded in 1978 in Athens and has since grown into one of Greece’s leading organisations dedicated to supporting people living with intellectual disabilities. Today, it serves around 100 beneficiaries through its certified Day Care Centre, offering vocational training in fields such as bakery, ceramics, weaving, gardening, and arts & crafts, while also operating five Supported Living

Houses that provide semi-autonomous housing for 42 residents. With a membership base of more than 350 families and friends, To Ergastiri combines long-standing community roots with strong international experience. The Association has participated in numerous Erasmus+ projects across Europe—both as coordinator and partner—focusing on inclusive education, assistive technologies, mobility initiatives, and cultural exchange. Its mission remains centered on promoting independence, professional development, and social inclusion for people living with disabilities.



“We love to learn about famous artists, listen to music, read lyrics, myths, and stories — and then transform them all into art! Whatever inspires us, moves us, or makes us think, we turn into images.”

“We are the Art Buddies, and we enjoy every moment! Together, we are a force — filling the world with art and color!”



Art Buddies is an artistic group of adults living with intellectual disabilities and pervasive developmental disorders, affiliated with the Day Care Center “To Ergastiri” in Ano Liosia, Attica. The group consists of seven members, most of whom live with intellectual disabilities. Founded in 2021, the group has grown from a shared interest in art into a close-knit community that explores self-expression, creativity, and imagination through painting and other visual activities. Guided by instructors Menia and Vasiliki, members of Art Buddies draw inspiration from music, literature, myths, and the works of famous artists, transforming these influences into unique artworks.

In the transnational trips, a few members of the artistic team of Art Buddies traveled to Hungary and Portugal, while in Verona, the two heads of the Visual Arts Department and a musician colleague represented the group.

Throughout their participation, Art Buddies attended all workshops and lectures, presented both their organisation and the artistic group itself, and, together with Aeropllo Theatre, organized their own art workshops focused on painting. After completing the program and returning to Greece, they immediately began applying the knowledge gained, conducting art workshops with groups of disabled participants as well as with mixed

groups. These workshops were inspired by the techniques presented by the international partners during SplrAL, but always adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of their own community.

Through these activities, Art Buddies continues to develop as a vibrant artistic community, sharing their work with diverse audiences and aspiring toward independent artistic careers.

Examples of Practical Activities

The group’s approach is guided by principles of accessibility, emotional safety, and creative exploration. Step-by-step guidance is provided through visual and verbal prompts, while participants are encouraged to make free choices in materials, colours, and themes. Positive reinforcement is used consistently to celebrate each individual’s effort and expression. Through this methodology, activities support multiple areas of development: emotional growth by recognising and expressing feelings; social skills such as sharing, listening, and collaboration; fine motor skills through painting and handling tools; cognitive skills including decision-making and planning; and, importantly, self-esteem, by valuing personal creativity and contribution. Inclusiveness remains at the heart of every activity.

The subgroup draws inspiration from several sources: art therapy principles that highlight the therapeutic value of self-expression; observations from previous sessions where participants became more open and communicative through visual art; insights from colour psychology and its impact on mood and emotional states; inclusive education practices that adapt artistic processes to diverse abilities; and participation in various European art and inclusion programs.



Introduction to MSMME and ÉNO Újpalota

At the request of the Hungarian Special Arts Workshop, the Újpalota Day Care Center for People with Intellectual Disabilities is participating in the SPIRAL program. The Hungarian Special Art Workshop Association (MSMME) was founded in 1988, becoming one of the first organisations in Hungary to recognize the works of intellectually disabled artists as having artistic value. This represented a major change in attitude compared to the socialist era, when people with disabilities participated in artistic activities in institutional settings primarily for therapeutic purposes.

Újpalota Day Care Center for People with Intellectual Disabilities operates in the 15th district of Budapest and provides day care for people with intellectual disabilities.

The institution has been running an experimental visual workshop for more than a decade, which has provided a stable foundation, experience, and tools for the work. Various disciplines—dance education, theater education, creative music—were organized around this, creating the fusion teaching-learning framework that was used in our sessions. In addition to theater professionals, dance teachers also led the sessions.

The twice-monthly sessions provided continuity, while leaving enough freedom to ensure that the learning and creative experience did not become burdensome or coercive. The creative experience should not become a burden or a compulsion.

The program was primarily implemented in an institutional setting. The group participating in the workshops consisted of adults with moderate intellectual disabilities. The participants were of different ages, genders, social and cultural backgrounds, and individual ability profiles.

The aim was not only to bring together different art forms in the sessions, but also to create a genuine dialogue between them. The fusion of different tools and methods—movement, sound, visual elements, and dramatic play—created an interdisciplinary framework.

Research and Pedagogical Anchors

The visual arts and multimedia workshops in Hungary were inspired by the pedagogical and artistic practices of Miklós Erdély and Dóra Maurer, particularly the creativity-developing exercises and courses they created (e.g., FAFEJ - Fantasy Developing Exercises, Indigo), which break down conventional frameworks through playfulness, rule-breaking, and associative thinking.

The art courses run in factories like Ganz were part of the socialist state's workers' education program, which

aimed to democratize culture. In particular, the workshops held within the framework of the „Indigo Group” (1978–1986) provided an inspiring start for those who would later become leading figures in Hungarian art. These courses were innovative not only in terms of fine arts, but also from a conceptual, philosophical, and pedagogical point of view, offering an alternative to official art education. The pedagogical legacy of the Indigo Group is that it interpreted art not as a finished work, but as an open thought process.



“Creativity has been described as an interpersonal agency that triggers unconventional thinking and is able to break down the conceptual hierarchies, logics, and routines of the status quo, reorder elements of reality, and inform the structures that organize social life.”

**Dóra Hegyi, Zsuzsa László, Francis-
ka Zólyom - Creativity Exercises:
Emancipatory Pedagogies in Art and
Beyond**

Instead of individual achievement, they encouraged collective creative processes. By dissolving the roles of teacher and student and developing and transforming the exercises together with the participants, they realized how these collective experiences could break down traditional ways of thinking, that is, they realized that creativity should be considered a collective value.

The visual arts and multimedia workshops of the SPIRAL project were shaped not only by Hungarian art education traditions, but also by international artists and movements who interpreted art as a radically social and communal space.

We were also inspired by the theories and ideas of Arthur Koestler and the work of Joseph Beuys, who interpreted creativity not only as artistic talent but also as a basic human ability. Furthermore, Robert Filliou's thinking had a significant influence on us, especially his realization that creativity „does not begin when someone can draw or compose well,” but when a person is able to connect with the world in a playful, free, and sensitive way. According to Filliou, art is not the preserve of a privileged few, but „a state of eternal beginning” that can arise at any moment.

Examples of Practical Activities

The conceptual backbone of the work was provided by a Gypsy folk tale that straddles the boundary between reality and magic, which also guides the learning and creative process, providing the narrative framework. The adaptation of the tale was built around symbols that are capable of activating the participants' personal experiences, feelings, and memories.

The story is rich in symbols and abstract content, which inspires the imagination and can also pose serious interpretative challenges,

especially for participants with cognitive difficulties. The symbols developed by the fairy tale are therefore metaphorical building blocks from which we can create endless possibilities.

Accordingly, when processing the symbol system, we must consciously strive to approach more complex content step by step, in a variety of ways. It is worth exploring concepts and motifs using different techniques and exercises—such as movement, visual, dramatic, or musical tools—so that the same ab-

stract content can be experienced and interpreted through multiple senses and channels, which also strengthens the ability to recognize connections. This multi-layered approach not only promotes understanding, but also encourages creativity and the formation of independent thoughts.

Contemporary art working methods had a major influence on the concept, as one of the characteris-

tics of contemporary art is precisely its conscious use and mixing of different media and techniques – this way of thinking was reflected in their creative practice.

During the workshop sessions, they used inspiring and unusual materials, which created opportunities for novel spatial experiences and experimental creations that stimulate not only perception but also creative thinking.

Pedagogical Notes

It should be noted that the emphasis is not on the transfer of knowledge, but on learning and creativity that arise from shared thinking, play, and experimentation. During the workshop sessions, a creative environment is created where individual competencies do not exclude but complement each other, and where knowledge is not conveyed but discovered together. In the space of joint creation, the contribution of each participant is valuable and valid, and authorship is realized as a communal event—a process in which individual voices do not merge, but enter into dialogue with each other. This equal participation affects not only artistic products but also learning experiences: it reinforces self-expression and cooperation.

4.4.3. | ANNEX – METHODOLOGICAL SHEETS

This annex gathers the practical methodologies referenced across the visual arts chapter. Each sheet includes a step-by-step description, facilitator notes, and learning outcomes to enable direct implementation or adaptation in diverse contexts.

VISUAL ARTS

1. CLOSE YOUR EYES AND YOU WILL SEE

Type of activity:

Artistic/Creative Expression – Group Storytelling.

Description: To paint freely to music with closed eyes and collaboratively create a short story.

Duration: 60 minutes

Assignment for participants:

With eyes closed and listening to music tracks with different rhythms, participants paint freely whatever they feel. After painting, the facilitator guides them to identify shapes or symbols in their artwork. The group then works together to create a short story inspired by these shapes.

Materials needed:

- Paper, cardboard, or canvas
- Colors (paints, markers, crayons, pastels, etc.)
- Music player with tracks featuring clear changes in rhythm and atmosphere

Learning outcomes:

- Enhance sensory perception (hearing, touch)
- Encourage emotional expression through art
- Build self-esteem and pride in their creations
- Develop basic cooperation and communication skills

Notes for facilitators:

Select music with clear changes in rhythm and atmosphere. Encourage free expression and imagination. In storytelling, make sure everyone has the chance to contribute and build on each other's ideas. Use guiding questions to stimulate storytelling, e.g., "What does this shape remind you of?" or "Who could live here?"

2. MY COLORFUL STORY

Type of activity:

Visual storytelling.

Description: Participants create a small personal story using simple drawings and words to express their feelings and experiences.

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Assignment for participants:

Through simple drawings and words, participants express their thoughts and emotions by creating a small personal story. They can choose to share their story at the next session. The facilitator provides supportive, simple instructions and helps participants express their ideas verbally if needed.

Variations:

Introduce a theme or prompt – Instead of fully open-ended drawing, give a gentle theme, e.g., "a small adventure today" or "my safe place," so participants reflect on something concrete but still personal.

Pairing or collaborative element – Have participants exchange stories with a partner and illustrate a small response

to each other's story. This adds social interaction without pressure.

Add movement or gesture – Before or after drawing, ask participants to use their body to express a feeling from their story. This combines visual and kinesthetic expression.

Materials needed:

- Paper or drawing notebooks
- Markers, colored pencils, paints
- Templates with simple phrases or words (e.g., "I feel...", "Today I liked...")
- Comfortable space for discussion and creation

Learning outcomes:

- Develop expressive and communication skills
- Enhance self-awareness and emotional expression
- Support mental well-being through creativity
- Encourage positive self-perception

Notes for facilitators:

Provide supportive, simple instructions and assist with expressing words. Use positive questions like "What makes you happy?", "What color do you like today?". Create an atmosphere of acceptance and trust.

3. PAINTING SOUNDS

Type of activity:

Painting and listening activity.

Description: Painting the sounds of birds.

Duration: 45 minutes

Assignment for participants:

After participants selecting their colours, brushes, and water for cleaning, the facilitator asks for silence to listen to the first bird. Once they hear it, participants try to identify which bird is singing. When someone recognizes it, they briefly discuss the bird and its role in nature. This process is repeated for all the birds on the list. After listening and identifying the bird sounds, participants begin to draw or paint the singing. Each new bird is added one after another on the same sheet of paper, creating a collective “sound map” of the environment.

Materials needed:

- Papers, pencils, crayons, felt-tip pens, glasses for paintings
- Sound system
- Wifi/internet/laptop
- Projector

Learning outcomes:

- Develop an active listening,
- Recognition of birds by their singing activate memory and cognition
- Develop environmental awareness

Notes for facilitators:

Ensure the audio quality is clear. In the end, spread the paintings on the floor until they dry. Encourage participants to approach the activity with an open mind and no expectations.

4. BRINGING PAINTINGS TO LIFE

Type of activity:

Group painting and simple theatrical expression.

Description: Participants explore a simple painting by reproducing it with colors and shapes, then “bring it to life” through body movements, combining visual art, creativity, and group collaboration.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Assignment for participants:

Participants are divided into small groups and choose a simple painting to explore with easy-to-understand subjects. Using photocopies as a guide, they paint the basic shapes and colors on large paper. With the facilitators’s guidance, participants learn a few key facts about the painting and its artist. Finally, the group recreates the painting using simple body movements, “bringing the picture to life” in the space.

Materials needed:

- Photocopies of simple, well-known paintings (e.g., suns, houses, trees, animals)
- Large paper and colors (markers, crayons, finger paints)
- Space with enough room for

comfortable movement

- liked...”)
- Comfortable space for discussion and creation

Learning outcomes:

- Familiarization with art in a simple and accessible way,
- Strengthening cooperation and team spirit,
- Developing basic motor skills and expression,
- Improving attention and understanding through repetition.

Notes for facilitators:

Choose simple paintings with clear and distinct shapes. Provide short, clear instructions and demonstrate examples. Support group organisation and encourage every participant to contribute. Ask simple questions to support storytelling, e.g., “What do you see here?”, “What color is this?”.



5. WHO'S NEXT?

Type of activity:

Collaborative activities – imagination.

Description: Group art activity which combines painting and music.

Duration: 60 minutes

Assignment for participants:

Participants stand in front of individual canvases arranged in a circle. Music begins to play, and everyone starts painting freely, inspired by the rhythm, tempo, and mood of the music. When the music stops, participants rotate to the next canvas and add their own elements to the existing painting. The process repeats until each person has contributed to every canvas. At the end, all the canvases are displayed and participants are invited to create a story and they can describe their artwork. Together, the group can also create a collective story inspired by the sequence of artworks.

Materials needed:

- 10 (or more) blank canvases
- Acrylic or tempera paints
- Paintbrushes, sponges, and other painting tools, aprons
- Music player and a playlist

Learning outcomes:

- Strengthen collaboration and communication
- Foster creativity and free expression
- Boosts self – esteem through contributing to a common artwork

Notes for facilitators:

Encourage creation. Give instructions when the music stops. Use different types of music. Present and discuss the finished pieces. For participants with mobility challenges, adapt by passing the canvases instead of moving the people.

6. COLLABORATIVE DRAWING

Type of activity:

Visual creation, cooperation-based imagination-developing game.

Description: Participants start drawings and pass them around, with everyone adding their contributions until the images return to their original creators.

Duration: 30 minutes

Assignment for participants:

Each participant begins by making a simple drawing – either concrete or abstract. Once everyone has created a starting motif, they pass their drawing to the person next to them. Each participant then interprets, develops, and adds to the drawing they receive before passing it on again. The process continues until all drawings return to their original creators. The result is a set of collaboratively shaped compositions, where each person has contributed to everyone else's work.

Materials needed:

- Paper, pencils, felt-tip pens or crayons
- Music player and music

Learning outcomes:

- Development of cooperation
- Encouragement of creative thinking and imagination
- Experiencing the communicative possibilities of visual language
- Openness to others' ideas and their integration

Notes for facilitators:

Emphasize that the goal is not to create “beautiful” drawings, but to provide starting points that inspire others' imagination. Encourage participants to think freely and avoid judging or evaluating each other's work. The focus should be on the experience of collective creation rather than artistic skill. It is helpful to close with a group conversation, giving everyone the chance to reflect on how it felt to see their original drawing evolve through the group process.

7. DREAM INSTALLATION

Type of activity:

Visual, creative, cooperative, fantasy enhancement activity.

Description: Participants explore the concept of “installation” and create a symbolic, dream-inspired composition using objects and drawings.

Duration: 50 minutes

Assignment for participants:

Participants first get acquainted with the idea of an “installation.” After viewing a few inspirational examples, they discuss abstract concepts that can be associated with everyday objects. Once they understand what an installation is, they work in pairs to create a dream-inspired physical composition, complemented with drawings. At the end, each pair presents their installation verbally, explaining what it represents. The installation is a visual projection of a dream or imaginary story, combining symbolic and abstract elements.

Materials needed:

- Collected/Found objects (fabric scraps, yarn, bottle caps, etc.)

- Paper, pencils, markers, scissors, glue
- Large cardboard sheet or tabletop surface for the installations
- Small cards for keywords

Learning outcomes:

- Development of imagination, associative skills, and collaborative creation
- Development of abstract and symbolic thinking
- Strengthening visual and spatial expression skills
- Development of cooperation and communication skills
- Deepening conceptual understanding (e.g., dream, memory, story)
- Gaining experience in the genre of installation

Notes for facilitators:

At the beginning, discuss with participants what “installation” means in contemporary art, emphasizing that this exercise is not about arranging ready-made objects neatly, but about transforming an internal image, dream or thought into a visual narrative. Encourage experimentation and unexpected object associations.

Provide guidance if participants get stuck, for example, by asking stimulating questions like, “What is the first image that comes to mind when you think of a summer dream?”

8. PATH-SPACE MAP COMPLEX ACTIVITY

Type of activity:

Complex visual-movement activity.

Description:

Four connected game sections, structured clearly as A–B–C–D. Each part functions as a separate unit.

Duration: 60-90 minutes

Assignment for participants:

A. / From Free Scribble to Path

Participants create continuous line patterns on a large sheet of paper to music, without lifting the pencil or brush. These free, expressive scribbles emerge in a meditative state, supported by soft, slow music. Once the scribble network is complete, the group collectively selects a short segment of the lines, which becomes the basis for a movement-based interpretation exercise.

B. / Path in Space

The previously created line segment is transformed into a movement form. Participants attempt to “walk” the line as if it were a path—paying attention to di-

rection, curves, and rhythm. The line can be enlarged, reduced, repeated, or reinterpreted. The goal is to internalize the character of the line and then translate it into motion. Both individual and group movement sequences may emerge.

C. / Animated Paper Strips

Participants choose pre-prepared paper strips of various shapes, lengths, and colors, representing imaginary “paths.” They attach these strips individually to different points in the space. After sensing the shape, direction, and dynamics of the strips, participants create movement sequences and body positions—as if following the path of the strips or becoming the path themselves.

D. / Paper Map

Using the paper strips from previous exercises, participants build a complex paper sculpture. The facilitator attaches the first strip to a cardboard sheet (the starting point) and explains that the strips represent paths. As the strip is folded and bent in space, it may touch other strips, creating intersections or crossings. The participants then work together to guide

the remaining strips through folding and twisting in the space. When two paths meet—by chance or design—they can be glued or connected, symbolizing connections and encounters. The endpoints of the strips must also be fixed to the cardboard (representing the path's end).

Materials needed:

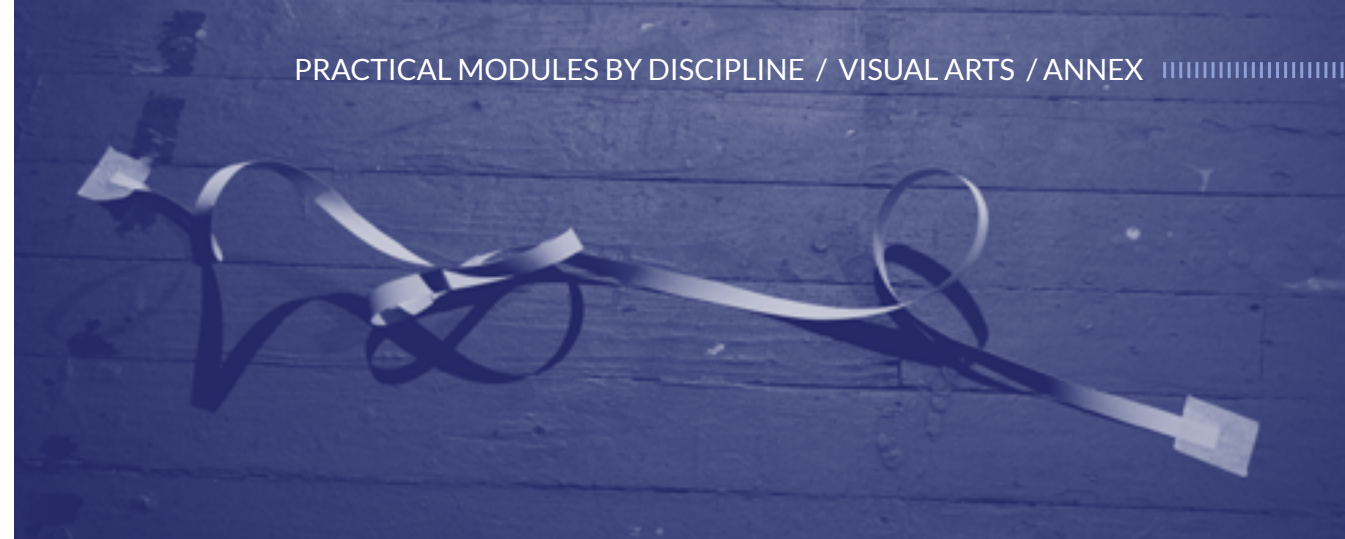
- Large drawing sheets,
- thick markers or crayons,
- meditative music, a music player,
- paper strips of various lengths and shapes,
- adhesive tape, pins, cardboard sheets, and scissors

Learning outcomes:

- Connecting visual marks with bodily movement
- Translating visual cues into movement-based interpretation
- Reinterpreting the line as a symbol in space and motion
- Developing spatial awareness
- Fostering symbolic and abstract thinking
- Representing connections and encounters
- Encouraging individual and group creative decisions and self-expression

Notes for facilitators:

Emphasize relaxation and encourage participants not to aim for “perfect” results, but to focus on the freedom of movement. Offer movement suggestions if participants get stuck; exercises can be done individually or in pairs. Encourage them to experiment freely: they can attach the strips to the floor, wall, or objects. As a starting point, it's helpful to discuss the metaphors of “journey” and “encounter,” which can support participants' understanding and engagement.





MULTIMEDIA

Why are visual arts and multimedia tools valuable for people living with disabilities?

Visual arts and multimedia tools are particularly valuable for people living with disabilities because they open up new creative expression opportunities that go beyond traditional methods. Contemporary visual and multimedia approaches offer tools that allow for the development of personal perspectives, the expression of independent ideas, and engage participants in a genuine, reflective creative process. Multimedia tools are part of the vi-

sual language of the 21st century, so their use also leads to a more inclusive culture. Disabled people are users just like anyone else: everyone has a smart device, uses apps, and consumes digital content, yet they can face significant barriers in their creative work. Multimedia-combining with visual, audio, moving, and interactive elements - allows a work to appeal to multiple senses.

Digital technologies offer alternative ways to support the creative process. They lead to innovative art forms that expand the toolkit of creation and offer new experiences for both creators and audiences. It is important to better understand how these tools can help disabled creators express themselves, become more independent, and develop their creativity, as well as how they can contribute to social inclusion and broader participation in the arts.

By making the works of people living with disabilities more widely visible through digital arts, they contribute to breaking down prejudices about disability and strengthening social acceptance. The incorporation of multimedia tools and contemporary approaches not only brings about a change in attitude, but also provides access to technologies that open up real and relevant creative opportunities for people with disabilities.

4.5.1. | Preliminary Considerations

The time frame and rhythm of the sessions should be adapted to the needs of the participants. It is worth moving away from frontal structures and instead creating frameworks that allow for slowing down, deepening, and spontaneity. In line with the principles of inclusive arts education, accessibility, flexibility, sensitivity, and openness must be ensured.

It was important that the complex or abstract tasks that arose during the workshops be broken down step by step in a transparent and predictable manner. This approach allows participants to engage with the tasks in a safe and understandable way, and to develop independent, successful solutions. Flexible time management is therefore not only an organisational principle, but also a pedagogical strategy that supports problem solving, understanding, and gradual deepening of knowledge.

Personal experience, enjoyment, and active participation are essential conditions for lasting learning and self-expression. Research has shown that the more senses are activated during learning and the more movement-based tasks are given, the better participants remember. The combined activation of different sensory channels, body and sound, movement and image, rhythm and association, helps participants to become not only recipients but also creators of the creative process.

Adequate spaces

The activities require spaces that are safe, easily accessible, flexibly furnished, and comfortable for participants. It is essential that the „space” becomes a „place” with added psychological significance for everyone. The place where significant things happen becomes important. The distinguished place absorbs and highlights the events.

During a creative process, the need may arise to move certain activities to new or different spaces, which poses organisational and infrastructural challenges. Finding the right space and getting participants there always requires careful planning, as the physical environment actively influences the quality and possibilities of the creative work.

Definition of accessible objectives

The first step in planning is always to formulate clear, accessible, and achievable objectives that take into account the abilities and needs of the participants. These objectives are not exclusively knowledge-based expectations, but must also target emotional, social, and creative development.

The goal is for participants to reach a creative state of mind during various artistic practices—theatrical scenes, dance improvisations, visual creations, sound and space experiments—that promotes deviation from patterns and the emergence of independent thoughts and original solutions. To this end, it is essential that the workshop sessions create a sensitive, reflective, open, and safe environment.

4.5.2. | Examples of Practical Activities

The SPIRAL project's multimedia workshops were inspired by Miklós Erdély's art theory thinking on the principle of montage, which draws attention not only to the layered nature of visual language, but also to the radical possibility of rearranging reality. Montage is not only a formal technique, but also a critical attitude: placing things side by side, revealing new connections, a tool for restructuring meaning. The sum of two frames must always carry some additional meaning. According to Erdély, the principle of montage plays an important role in both the visual arts and theater.



“However, montage is not only an avant-garde creative gesture, but can also be understood as a metaphor for human thought.”
Erdély Miklós

Stop motion animation – Paper collage storytelling

The stop-motion animation exercise occupied a special place in the workshop. Participants moved collage elements, photos, and drawings made of paper frame by frame, creating their own story based on motifs from the Gypsy tale Vályogvetok, which played a central role in the program.

During the process, they experienced the importance of planning, precise movement, and patience, as every tiny change meant a new frame. While making visual and dramaturgical decisions, the children developed their systematic thinking, concentration, fine motor skills, and teamwork, as the creation of the animations required close cooperation.

Understanding the basics of audiovisual language (photography and video)

Teaching the basics and tools of audiovisual language is not a new initiative at the institution. The film and visual workshop, which has been running for years, has provided a stable foundation for the work, where participants learn the basics of film language and editing techniques, make their own short films, participate in domestic and international film festivals, and have won several awards over the years. They regularly attend film camps, where they try out new techniques and genres while working on the visual expression of their own stories.

Elements of learning the basics and tools of audiovisual language:

- composition,
- conscious use of light and shadow
- alternating viewpoints and perspectives
- interpretations of color effects

This knowledge is key for participants not only on a technical level, but also on a creative and self-expression level. In addition, an integral part of the workshop is learning how to use various digital and audiovisual tools. Participants practiced how to record a scene with a mobile phone, how to position a camera in space, and how to move light sources to achieve the desired visual effect.

Technical equipment:

- smartphones,
- projectors,
- tablets
- tripods, lamps

Familiarization with the use of digital and audiovisual tools:

- use of a phone and tripod
- lighting adjustment
- operation and setup of a projector or tablet
- handling basic media files (photos, videos, audio files)

Classic flipbooks, which are suitable for illustrating stop motion, are excellent for demonstration purposes. It is worth starting with simple movements. By arranging the images in sequence and connecting them logically, a sequence, or „story,” emerges between the images. Then you can try out what kind of position changes, what kind of movements, and what kind of illusions result. You can experiment with zooming and different settings. Examples can be given for smooth (even transitions) and dynamic movements (rhythm and acceleration). Natural and artificial movements can be imitated (e.g., jumping, falling, movement of objects). The creation of spatial compositions in terms of balance and harmony should be discussed. Attention should be drawn to technical errors (frame drops, image shake, or recognizing and correcting lighting problems, smoothing transitions).

Definition of accessible objectives

It is important that the warm-up exercises are in sync with the conceptual content of the workshop, so that the knowledge gained through practice and experience can be more easily integrated.

The goal is not just the passive use of tools, but their conscious, creative application, introducing participants to basic technical concepts step by step through practical examples. When learning about the tools in practice, a user-friendly, accessible approach is essential so that participants gradually dare to use and adapt these tools to realize their own ideas.

This type of technical knowledge not only aids the creative process, but also gives participants the confidence that they can use digital tools to create their own content.

Pedagogical Notes

The diversity of the group is not only a challenge but also a source of inspiration. Fusion is created not only by combining different artistic fields but also through the joint creative work of artists with different backgrounds. Special attention must be paid to creating opportunities for joint creation and co-authorship during the workshops, so that disabled and non-disabled participants, professional artists, and amateur creators can participate in the creative process as equals. The conscious dismantling of hierarchical roles—teacher and student, leader and follower—allows for the development of true community authorship.

The language of digital technology allows disabled participants to transform their own world and inner voice into images, movement, and stories. These creations are not only forms of expression, but also bridges: they connect the viewer with a perspective that often remains invisible in everyday life. The stories that appear in the animations reflect the participants' own points of view, creating a rare and valuable opportunity for social exp-

ression. In the process, the subjective world of the disabled creators not only becomes visible, but also actively shapes the creation of a more diverse and inclusive common culture.

During the course of the project, a new pedagogical experience began to take shape: the involvement of participants in the role of practice leaders. Since the workshops were based on playful, creative processes—whether dramatic, musical, theatrical, or visual exercises—the participants became familiar with a number of task types in which instructions and ideas played an important role. After a while, the question arose: what if the disabled participants were entrusted with leading a practical task or game? This approach was first tried during international mobility in Portugal, where disabled and non-disabled participants led games together as equals. This experiment not only represented a new level of inclusivity, but also created a deeper form of shared learning and experience sharing.



Interactive audio narration

One of the most unique and innovative practices of the SPIRAL project was interactive audio narration, which participants listened to through headphones in a personalized manner. The essence of the method is that sound, as a medium, creates an intimate and direct connection: the narration is not just heard text, but a personal call to action, feeling, and connection. Each participant heard their own story, which invited them into an inner world – while they were in the same space with the others, listening to each other but reacting to each other's presence without words.

Definition of accessible objectives

Our primary goal was to support creative self-expression and experience, develop the inner world and imagination, and practice body awareness, presence, and quiet connection. The session provides an individual yet shared experience, during which participants shape their own story through movement and attention, embedded in a playful, fairy-tale setting. Participants perform

subtle, guided movement tasks (e.g., slow walking, stopping, following, imitating, closing their eyes, touching objects), which develop body awareness and movement coordination. The development of connection skills takes place on a nonverbal level, with participants „meeting” each other in quiet, physical presence. The narration provides an opportunity to practice empathy, listening to others, and accepting closeness. In addition to developing emotional awareness, it also allows for the fine-tuning of perception. The activity carried out in a quiet space supports immersion and maintaining a state of concentration.

Pedagogical Notes

It is important to mention the technical equipment requirements. Preparing the audio material, setting up the technical equipment, and familiarizing participants with it is a lengthy process. A high degree of instruction is necessary, as participants receive instructions not verbally, but as audio recordings. Individual guidance and presence greatly assist in the correct use of the equipment and understanding of the task. It is advisable to gradually sensitize participants to the use of technical equipment, especially headphones. The novelty of the audio-based, individual spatial experience method is not immediately comfortable for everyone, so it may be worthwhile to incorporate a kind of „tuning-in preparation” into the course of the sessions on subsequent occasions. For example, repeated, playful listening to music for short periods of time, with headphones, accompanied by simple and easy-to-follow instructions. These small steps would help participants accept and use the device naturally, while also increasing their independence and ability to immerse themselves in the experience.

Audio narration is a new, sensitive, and adaptable tool in the development of people with intellectual disabilities. We believe that methodological developments of this kind not only make participation smoother, but also promote deeper processing of experiences in the long term—whether at the level of music, movement, or connection. Small, personal successes boost participants' self-confidence and prepare the ground for more complex activities.

Definition of accessible objectives

- Developing creative thinking and association skills in response to visual stimuli.
- Strengthening body awareness and movement coordination through movement exercises.
- Practicing empathy and group cooperation in joint creation.
- Developing visual and movement self-expression, supporting spontaneity and emotional communication.
- Developing spatial perception and visual interpretation in live image and movement situations.

The essence of process-oriented activities is not „beautiful drawings” or technical results, but the quality of connection. The goal is for participants to understand that this is not merely a drawing exercise, but an experiential and experimental game, and that creation is a process, not an end result. It is advisable to choose a large, freely movable space with empty walls as the location for the task. If possible, the room should be dimly lit due to the projected light.

- Interactive projection surface, camera or motion sensor system (projector, laptop, tablet)
- Music or sound base – to support rhythm and movement
- Graphics software, - Ibis paint, Sketch
- Large projection surface

4.5.3. | Reflections from practice

“Relax, Orsi! We’re just looking for the stars!”

Gábor (participant)

This sentence was uttered by one of the participants during the animation process, while they were moving cut-out paper shapes for a night scene. This playful yet deeply poetic sentence perfectly reflected the process in which the group worked together. The metaphor of searching for stars – joint discovery in creation, bringing inner worlds to the surface. In these moments, every participant had the opportunity to become a star in their own universe.

In summary, it can be said that the visual and multimedia exercises not only supported creative self-expression, but also opened up opportunities in an unconventional way that are extremely rare for people with moderate intellectual disabilities living in the social care system. Participants were able to work with contemporary multimedia tools, such as digital drawing, animation, and audio narration. One of the most important outcomes of the project was that these tools were not just presented as “techniques to try out,” but as real creative media through which participants could create their own visual worlds. With this practice, the project went beyond the traditional social institutional framework and created an inclusive artistic space where access was realized not only in a technical sense but also in an ideal sense: everyone could participate—according to their own abilities, as creators of equal value.

4.5.4. | ANNEX -

MULTIMEDIA METHODOLOGICAL SHEETS

This annex gathers the practical methodologies referenced across the multimedia chapter. Each sheet includes a step-by-step description, facilitator notes, and learning outcomes to enable direct implementation or adaptation in diverse contexts.

MULTIMEDIA

1. PERSONAL JOURNEYS IN COLLECTIVE SPACES

Type of activity:

Immersive Audio Experience Workshop.

Description: Interactive guided experience with auditory stimuli and participatory instructions.

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Assignment for participants:

This workshop combines personal reflection and group awareness through pre-recorded auditory instructions. Participants listen individually through headphones, following prompts that encourage mindfulness, creativity, and sensory awareness. The experience highlights the relationship between bodily sensations, environment, and human connections, creating a personal journey within a collective space. Participants' experiences are unique, as they receive different sets of instructions without prior knowledge.

Instructions for participants:

Bring your smartphone and headphones or earbuds. You will be divided into two equal groups: one group listens to the instructions while the other observes. Then, switch roles so everyone experiences both perspectives. Pay attention to your body, your surroundings, and the interactions between yourself and others as you follow the prompts.

Have a look around and find your spot in the room. Put your headphones into your ears. Be present and let yourself be engaged with the auditory instructions. Try to respond intuitively to the prompts without overthinking. This is a safe space; you can stop anytime you wish to. Please keep in mind that you are all alone, and you are all together. Enjoy your journey.

Materials needed:

- Headphones, phones for each participant, Wifi/internet
- Pre-recorded guided instruction tracks
- Paper, notebook, crayons, markers for writing

Learning outcomes:

- Develop enhanced sensory awareness, creativity and focus through auditory stimuli.
- Explore the interplay between individual and collective experiences.
- Cultivate mindfulness and an appreciation for shared environments.

Notes for facilitators:

The use of audio devices should be discussed at the beginning of the session. Ensure the audio quality is clear. Encourage participants to approach the activity with an open mind and no expectations. Create a safe and supportive environment for participants to explore. Ensure participants that they can always stop the activity.

2. STOP MOTION WITH THE PAINTING SOUNDS ACTIVITY

Type of activity:

Stop motion animation creating.

Description: Creation of an animated film with the 'Painting the sounds of birds' activity. In this workshop, participants will collect all the materials created by each participant and use them to make a short animated abstract video based on the paintings inspired by the singing bird.

Duration: 45 minutes

Assignment for participants:

First, prepare the table for the stop-motion activity. Then ask the participants to collect their paintings and organize them into categories such as dots, lines, stains, or any other patterns that allow grouping. After selecting and categorizing the paintings, invite the participants to bring them one by one to the setup for stop-motion and start taking frames of each painting. Participants can take turns moving the paintings slightly or placing them in sequence while the facilitator or the participants themselves capture each frame. When

the process is finished, show the final result to the group and have a short sharing moment together.

Materials needed:

- Projector, laptop, smartphone, or camera (choose the system that works best for your setup)
- Stop Motion Studio Pro software (<https://www.cateater.com/>) – compatible with both computer and smartphone
- Stand for a smartphone or a camera
- Wifi/internet

Learning outcomes:

- Develop creativity
- Recognition of birds by their singing, activate memory and cognition
- Non-verbal communication

Notes for facilitators:

Encourage participants to approach the activity with an open mind and no expectations. Create a safe and supportive environment for participants to explore.

3. DRAWING YOU IN

Type of activity:

Multimedia-based visual and imagination development activity.

Description: Participants digitally draw on each other's bodies, playfully transforming them with symbolic or imaginative elements.

Duration: 30–45 minutes

Assignment for participants:

Participants draw digitally onto each other's projected body images, adding creative, symbolic, or playful elements. Through the real-time projection, the participant's body image transforms and gains new meanings.

Everyone will now have the chance to draw on a partner's body image, adding elements that give them a new character or personality. Use your imagination: your partner could become a superhero, an animal, an astronaut, a fairy, or even a completely invented creature. Choose colors, shapes, and patterns to complement their body or to give them an entirely new role. The goal is not resemblance but play and creative transformation.

Materials needed:

- Projector, tablet (with drawing software, e.g. Sketchbook)
- Laptop for projection
- Large projection surface or wall
- Spacious open area

Learning outcomes:

- Development of creativity and imagination
- Character building through visual tools
- Practising the use of digital drawing tools
- Building individual and collective narratives
- Development of social sensitivity

Notes for facilitators:

It is important to create a safe and accepting space during this activity, so that no one feels uncomfortable with being "observed." Encourage playfulness and experimentation, and support participants who may be less familiar with using digital drawing tools. At the end of the exercise, offer a short sharing round where participants can reflect on how they saw themselves or their partner through the drawing.

4. DRAWN TO LIFE

Type of activity:

Multimedia-based, visual and movement activity.

Description: The facilitator draws a scene live that is projected for participants, who respond with movement, embodying what they imagine from the evolving image.

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Assignment for participants:

The facilitator draws a scene or environment live (e.g., a mountain, a field, the sea, a flying bird), which is projected onto a screen. Participants respond with movement to the visual stimulus, entering the space and using their bodies and gestures to enact what they perceive or imagine based on the projected imagery. The image is continuously evolving, as anyone can become a drawer, adding new elements and causing movements and roles to constantly shift.

Materials needed:

- Projector, Tablet/laptop for drawing
- Canvas for projections

- Spacious room for movement
- Meditative/ambient music (optional)

Learning outcomes:

- Development of creative thinking and visual perception
- Development of body awareness and movement improvisation
- Immediate reaction and interpretation of live visual stimuli
- Strengthening group dynamics and collaboration
- Development of abstract thinking and encouragement of storytelling through live images

Notes for facilitators:

This exercise works particularly well at the intersection of live visual creation and bodily expression. The facilitator must draw gradually and slowly, giving participants time to observe and develop their movement responses. There should be no expectation of “beautiful movement”; the focus is on imaginative immersion and personal responses to visual stimuli. Observe how participants react to the changing images, as this can provide opportunities for later reflection. From a group dynamics perspective, it can also be useful to rotate roles so everyone has the chance to experience both drawing and performing.

5. LINEDANCE COMPLEX ACTIVITY

Type of activity:

Visual and movement activity (interactive, performative)

Description:

Two connected game sections, built sequentially in a clear A–B structure. Each functions as a separate unit.

A. / I Am the Line

The facilitator draws abstract lines live on a tablet, while participants move freely in the space, following and expressing the movement of the projected lines with their bodies and gestures.

B. / Live Drawings – Moving Bodies

Based on the participants’ movements, a drawing is created by a designated artist on a tablet in real time. The artist traces the participants’ movements dynamically with lines. The goal is collaborative motion and synchronized creation.

Duration: 30 minutes

Instructions for participants:

A. / I Am the Line

Observe the projected lines! Move your body according to the shapes and directions you see. You can be wavy, angular, fast, or slow—transform into a living line!

B. / Live Drawings – Moving Bodies

Now you are drawing—not with your hands, but with your bodies! The live artist “follows” your movements. Every motion leaves a visual trace on the screen. Watch each other: when does someone move? How can you move together in sync? Try to create a shared drawing through your combined movements

Materials needed:

- Projector
- Tablet or laptop for drawing
- Screen or projection wall
- Large space for movement
- Meditative or mood-setting music (optional)

Learning outcomes:

- Embodying abstract shapes
- Enhancing mutual attention and synchronization
- Developing individual and group creative thinking

Notes for facilitators:

It is important to create a safe and accepting space during this activity, so that no one feels uncomfortable with being “observed.” Encourage playfulness and experimentation, and support participants who may be less familiar with using digital drawing tools. At the end of the exercise, offer a short sharing round where participants can reflect on how they saw themselves or their partner through the drawing.

A. Briefly demonstrate how participants can follow and express the projected marks with their bodies. Position participants so everyone can see the projection clearly and avoid casting shadows on the screen.



LITERATURE

The literature section of SplrAL project was coordinated by the **Fundación Uxío Novoneyra**, based in Galicia (Spain). The Foundation preserves the legacy of poet Uxío Novoneyra and plays a central role in promoting literature and reading in the region, especially in rural and intercultural contexts. Through programs that foster reading, creative writing, and cultural participation, the Foundation has long connected diverse audiences with literary expression. Within SplrAL, their contribution focused on bringing participants closer to the shared reading experience, showing how literature can be both an inclusive practice and a tool for dialogue.

Introducing **literature** into inclusive educational and cultural programmes **can be a powerful tool for both personal and collective development**. When facilitated with care, shared reading enables participants living with disabilities to access literary texts, discover new ways of expression and strengthen their sense of belonging in a group. For professionals working in social, educational or cultural fields, **literature provides an adaptable methodology** that fosters creativity, empathy and critical thinking.

The role of literature

Literature—whether poetry, narrative, essays or letters—invites readers to explore complexity, ambiguity and emotional depth. Unlike purely informational texts, it encourages imagination, reflection and dialogue. Research shows that reading literary fiction stimulates empathy and perspective-taking, strengthens attention and memory, and reduces stress and anxiety. For people with disabilities, literature also provides a safe channel for self-expression, identity construction and relational development.

4.6.1. | Methodological framework

Shared reading sessions can be organised with groups of 8 to 20 participants. Heterogeneity in age, abilities and experiences is not a limitation but a resource, since multiple perspectives enrich interpretation. Sessions should follow a clear structure to support comprehension and participation:

- Pre-reading phase: activate prior knowledge by asking participants to share experiences or associations linked to the theme of the text. This builds motivation and personal connection.
- Reading phase: texts are read aloud, alternating between facilitator and participants. Reading aloud ensures collective rhythm, while pauses allow clarification of vocabulary and concepts.
- Post-reading phase: reflection consolidates understanding. Participants identify main ideas, share personal impressions and discuss characters, values and themes. Facilitators encourage critical analysis adapted to the group's cognitive and communicative abilities.

The facilitator's role is to ensure accessibility, equity and respect. Adaptations may include simplified or easy-to-read texts, audio versions, or the use of pictograms and sign language, depending on participants' needs.

4.6.2. | Practical exercises

The following exercises can be integrated into inclusive literature sessions:

1. Voice in the Margin

Participants imagine the perspective of a secondary or silent character in the text. Speaking in first person, they give that character a voice. This develops empathy and creative thinking.

2. Sentence Resonance

Each participant chooses a sentence or phrase that resonates with them, writes it down (or records it orally) and explains why it was meaningful. This exercise highlights emotional responses and creates a bridge between text and personal experience.

3. Role-Switch Dialogue

In pairs, one participant speaks as a character, while the other responds as themselves. Roles are then reversed. This fosters perspective-taking and develops listening skills.

4. Echo and Question

Participants repeat one word or phrase from the text and formulate a question inspired by it. These questions guide collective discussion and promote critical reflection.

Learning outcomes

When implemented in inclusive contexts, literature sessions generate a wide range of benefits:

- Cognitive: improved comprehension, attention, memory and problem-solving skills
- Emotional: reduced stress and anxiety, stimulation of imagination and creativity, and development of empathy.
- Social: stronger communication and listening skills, creation of safe spaces for expression, and reinforcement of critical citizenship.

Conclusion

For professionals working with people living with disabilities, literature offers more than a cultural activity: it is a methodological resource to promote inclusion, participation and personal growth. By selecting appropriate texts, creating supportive environments and applying simple facilitation techniques, literature can become a transformative practice, enabling every participant to explore meaning, emotion and imagination on an equal footing.

In addition to literature-based activities, the Foundation also collaborated in dance-focused workshops, underlining SplrAL's commitment to interdisciplinarity and the dialogue between artistic languages.



05 EVALUATION, IMPACT AND MONITORING

5.1. | Purpose and Principles

Evaluation within inclusive arts is not an external appendix but an intrinsic part of the creative process. It ensures continuity between design, implementation, and artistic and social impact. Its purpose is to guarantee artistic quality, inclusive participation, and learning, while also informing cycles of improvement. The guiding principles are formative, participatory, ethical, and accessible-by-design, reflecting the values introduced in Chapter 3.

Tools, forms, and feedback sessions should follow Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2018), comply with the European Accessibility Act (EAA - Directive 2019/882), and meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.2). This comp-

rehensive approach ensures accessibility across architectural, sensory, linguistic, and digital dimensions, making evaluation itself fully aligned with the project's ethics.

The scope of evaluation is multi-layered, covering the individual level (participants and artists), the ensemble level (groups and teams), the audience and community, and the organisational and partnership context. As highlighted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) - Regional Office for Europe (2019), the arts generate psychosocial, educational, and community benefits when participation is equitable. Within SplrAL, this means valuing both the quality of artistic work and the structures of access that sustain it.

5.2. | Evaluation Methods

The evaluation methods adopted in SplrAL follow a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative tools include observation notes, reflective logs, video diaries, focus groups, and peer or self-assessment exercises. Quantitative dimensions include attendance, participation rates, cue-response counts in music and theatre, adherence to timing in dance, or accessibility compliance checks in multimedia.

Participatory design is central, meaning that criteria are co-defined with participants themselves. Rehearsals structured in blocks – warm-up, exploration, run-through, feedback – naturally open spaces for micro-evaluation moments, while circles of reflection at the end of each rehearsal create a sense of security and voice for all members.

Evaluation also includes sensory-aware approaches, structured around the eight sensory systems (visual, auditory, olfactory, oral, tactile, vestibular, proprioceptive, and interoceptive). The Summary

Session Template developed within SplrAL illustrates how sensory observations are documented and later used for adaptation.

Discipline-specific contributions enrich this methodology. In theatre, evaluation considers comprehension of the story, memory of spatial positions, vocal articulation, and safety. In dance, indicators include presence, timing, collaborative rhythm, and embodied awareness. In music, evaluation focuses on responsiveness to cues, sound diversity, and transitions from solo to collective play through guided improvisation, graphic scores, and sensory stimuli. In multimedia, evaluation covers captioning, clarity of visual cues, pacing, and compliance with accessibility standards. Evaluation should also recognise the value of improvisation and process, not only final results, positioning evaluation as a celebration of co-creation.

5.3. | Feedback Instruments

Feedback instruments are crucial to make the evaluation concrete. The SplrAL Summary Session Template provides a flexible framework, documenting background, objectives, rituals, activities linked to the senses, and outcomes. This model ensures that every session can be recorded in accessible and structured ways. Observation checklists complement the template and are adapted to each discipline. The following table illustrates how observation grids can be designed across the four artistic fields:

Table 5.1. Example Observation Grids by Discipline

DISCIPLINE	EXAMPLE CRITERIA
THEATRE	Story comprehension, spatial memory, vocal articulation, safe staging
DANCE	Presence, timing, collaborative rhythm, mirroring, negotiated contact
MUSIC	Responsiveness to cues, diversity of sounds, transitions solo > ensemble, graphic score use
MULTIMEDIA	Technical stability, accurate synchronisation, supported interactivity and user experience, WCAG compliance, understanding the application of multimedia language

Self and peer reflection are also widely used. The Dance and Theatre Subgroups recommend prompts formulated in plain language and supported by visual symbols, for example, „When did I feel most seen?“ or „Which moment helped me participate today?“. Audience feedback is collected through short and accessible forms, emphasising appreciation of the process, consistent with the approach of framing presentations as „celebrations of process.“

5.4. | Indicators in Inclusive Arts

Indicators in inclusive arts need to be clear, layered, and non-ableist. They are grouped into four categories, as summarised in the following table.

Table 5.2. Indicators in Inclusive Arts

TYPE OF INDICATOR	EXAMPLES	REFERENCES / SOURCES
Structural	Accessibility roles filled (sign language, captions, AD), quiet zones, predictable schedules	EAA, WCAG, Theatre Subgroup
Process	% activities with multi-modal entry points, co-facilitation balance, reflective moments	UDL, Dance Subgroup, Music Subgroup
Results (Outputs/ Outcomes)	Growth in presence/confidence, text recall (theatre), timing/flow (dance), sound diversity (music)	WHO Europe, Theatre Subgroup
Artistic Quality	Clarity of artistic intention, coherence, integration of accessibility as aesthetic; balance between structure/freedom in Soundpainting	Thompson (2006), Music Subgroup

These categories ensure that evaluation captures both enabling conditions and outcomes, always emphasising participant agency and artistic authenticity.

5.4. | Continuous Reflection

Evaluation in inclusive arts is continuous, occurring at micro, meso, and macro levels.

At the micro level, rituals at the beginning and end of sessions, fast feedback cards, and sensory check-ins allow immediate reflection. At the meso level, across rehearsals, after-action reviews, and quick adjustments sustain progress. At the macro level, periodic meetings of all subgroups and advisory partners consolidate learning and update tools.

The Dance and Music Subgroups underline that collective reflection circles are essential for creating ownership, while the Theatre Subgroup stresses that reflection should also include the actor's self-perception: comprehension of story, memory of cues, and articulation of voice. Documentation of reflection is kept accessible, combining short narratives, video excerpts with captions, plain-language summaries, and dashboards that bring together numbers with participant quotes.

5.6. | Impact Indicators

Impact indicators are distinguished across short, medium, and long-term horizons. The following table summarises examples.

Table 5.3. Impact Indicators

TIMEFRAME	EXAMPLE INDICATORS	REFERENCES / SOURCES
Short term	Increased engagement, reduced anxiety, clearer cue-following, safer staging, stronger group listening	Theatre & Dance Subgroups, Music Subgroup
Medium term	Participant retention, autonomy, audience comprehension, and transfer of practices across disciplines	WHO Europe, Theatre Subgroup
Long term	Sustainable participation pathways, leadership of disabled artists, continuity of partnerships, recognition in cultural policy	Erasmus+ impact framework, project partners

These dimensions echo the evaluation framework of WHO Europe (2019) on arts and health, combined with the practical experience of the SplrAL Subgroups.

5.7. | Ethics, Safeguarding and Data

Ethical principles guide all evaluation processes. Consent procedures are adapted for accessibility, ensuring that photo or video documentation is opt-in and anonymised when required. Safeguarding means recognising sensory thresholds, offering alternative forms of participation, and protecting participants from fatigue or overload. The Music Subgroup particularly stresses that participants should be able to enter and exit improvisation freely and without pressure.

Reporting of results also needs to be accessible, using plain language, alternative text for images, captioned video, and compliance with WCAG.

5.8. | Exemplars

To illustrate the methodologies described, SplrAL developed several exemplars that can also be annexed in Chapter 8. The Summary Session Template provides a framework for recording inclusive sessions. The Theatre Subgroup created a sensory and voice checklist to observe story comprehension and vocal articulation. The Music Subgroup developed observation cards for guided improvisation, focusing on responsiveness to cues and transitions between solo and ensemble. The Dance Subgroup uses mirroring and rhythm evaluation grids. The Multimedia Subgroup contributed digital accessibility rubrics aligned with WCAG. These exemplars show how evaluation can be consistently applied across art forms while respecting their specificities.



5.9. | Scientific Synthesis

This chapter consolidates evaluation as an integrated, inclusive, and participatory practice. Building on the methodologies of Chapter 3 and the practices of Chapter 4, it translates them into concrete tools for monitoring quality, inclusion, and impact.

Evaluation criteria within SplrAL combine discipline-specific indicators, emphasising both the embodied perspective of performance and the central role of process and improvisation. These internal contributions are complemented by external references that provide a scientific foundation, including CAST (2018) on Universal Design for Learning, WHO Europe (2019) on the health benefits of the arts, and seminal works such as Thompson (2006), Small (1998), Oliveros (2005), Bailey (1993), and Higgins (2012).

Evaluation in SplrAL is not a bureaucratic obligation but a creative, ethical, and transformative practice. It ensures that inclusive arts flourish as vibrant spaces of participation, innovation, and excellence.



06 CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICES

6.1. | Inspiring projects by country

Across Europe, inclusive arts have evolved from community experiments into a recognised field that combines artistic excellence with cultural rights. This chapter showcases exemplary initiatives that illustrate how companies, networks, and cultural institutions integrate accessibility from concept to performance. We begin with five cross-border projects that have shaped the European discourse, followed by country snapshots with concise, practitioner-friendly notes on scope, focus, and key contacts. The aim is practical: to help readers identify trusted peers, credible partners, and proven methods they can adapt to their own contexts.

European reference projects (2018–2027)

Europe Beyond Access (2024–2027) - Creative Europe

Coordinator: Skånes Dansteater (SE). The leading European network for internationalising Deaf and disabled artists; residencies, co-productions, professional networks, advocacy and institutional accessibility.

europebeyondaccess.com | info@europebeyondaccess.com

PASS - Promoting Accessible Shows (2024–2026) - Creative Europe

Coordinator: Fondazione Arturo Toscanini (IT). A multidisciplinary accessible production (music, dance, theatre, visual arts) with universal-design methods, professional up-skilling and EU-wide dissemination.

letspass.eu/project | info@letspass.eu

ImPart - Immediate Performing Arts (2018–2020) - Creative Europe

Co-lead: Un-Label (DE) & SMouTh (GR). Pioneered “aesthetics of access” (creative AD, integrated captions) through labs and international presentations, including Greek National Opera contexts.

un-label.eu/en/project/impart | info@un-label.eu

Create to Connect - Create to Impact (2018–2022) - Creative Europe

Coordinator: Bunker Ljubljana (SI). A 16-partner network testing co-creation with communities and measuring social/cultural impact.

ctc-cti.eu | info@ctc-cti.eu (project) / info@bunker.si (lead)

SDIT - Self-Determination & Inclusion by Theater (2023–2025) - Erasmus+

Coordinator: ISCTE (PT). Inclusive theatre for autistic adults; European course, multilingual handbook, professional training and conferences. Partner: Autism-Europe (BE).

autismeurope.org | secretariat@autismeurope.org

Greece – Inclusive artistic companies and organisations

ARTimeleia (Athens)

ARTimeleia is an inclusive theatre group formed by actors with and without disabilities. It focuses on embodiment, improvisation and integrated performance, aiming to dismantle barriers through artistic exploration. Its projects combine stage presentation with awareness-raising activities, contributing to the discourse on disability and creativity in Greece. artimeleia.com | annitio28@gmail.com

EXIS – Inclusive Dance Company (Athens)

EXIS creates contemporary dance works with mixed-ability performers, combining choreographic experimentation with pedagogical practice. Its collaborations with THEAMA and other organisations have strengthened the inclusive arts sector in Greece, particularly in training contexts. EXIS is recognised for its workshops, performances and projects linking movement research to social inclusion.

exisdancecompany.gr | exis.dance.company@gmail.com

liminal (Athens)

liminal is a cultural organisation dedicated to accessibility and pluralism in the arts. It provides inclusive productions, professional training and consultancy services in audio description, captioning, sign language and accessible communication. liminal has become the country's leading expert in cultural accessibility, collaborating with museums, theatres and festivals to implement universal design.

liminal.eu | via site contact form

THEAMA – Theatre for the Disabled (Athens)

Established in 2010, THEAMA is Greece's first professional theatre ensemble composed mainly of disabled artists. It produces inclusive performances that integrate captioning, audio description and Greek Sign Language, ensuring accessibility for audiences. THEAMA also coordinates training for emerging artists with disabilities and has led international projects such as Inclusive Theater(s) under Creative Europe. theamatheater.gr | theaterndisability@yahoo.com / theamaproduction@gmail.com

Hungary – Inclusive artistic companies and organisations

ArtMan Association / Tánceánia Ensemble (Budapest)

ArtMan Association promotes dance and movement therapy and is home to the Tánceánia Ensemble, the first Hungarian mixed-ability contemporary dance group. Its work merges artistic creation with therapeutic principles, offering workshops, performances and inclusive improvisation “jams”. The ensemble’s methodology has influenced Hungarian dance education and cross-disciplinary collaborations.

artman.hu | info@artman.hu / artman.dance@gmail.com

Baltazár Színház (Budapest)

Founded in 1998, Baltazár Theatre is Hungary’s only professional company composed entirely of actors with intellectual disabilities. It has a stable repertoire presented in Budapest and across Europe, with productions that mix contemporary theatre, music and visual elements. Beyond stage work, Baltazár runs educational workshops and community mediation programmes, empowering its artists and raising public awareness.

baltazarszinhaz.hu | info@baltazarszinhaz.hu

Lampas ’92 Foundation

Lámpás ’92 Foundation has been working for 30 years to support people with disabilities by providing family-like housing, employment opportunities, and access to artistic education, as well as assistance for children and families in need. The foundation has offered art training for talented adults with intellectual disabilities across Hungary and the Carpathian Basin for over 20 years. Its programme focuses on talent development, individual growth, and self-expression through visual arts, enabling participants to share their thoughts and emotions as naturally as anyone else in society.

lampas92.hu | lampasmuhely@gmail.com

MáSzínház

MáSzínház is a community theatre company where people with intellectual disabilities and people without disabilities work together with educators and theatre professionals. Their work combines theatre and education, focusing on creativity, inclusion, and self-expression. The company’s aim is not only to stage performances but also to build communication, empathy, and cooperation through shared artistic processes. MáSzínház is an excellent partner for projects promoting inclusive art and social participation.

mas-zinhaz.hu | kozossege@mas-zinhaz.hu

Nem Adom Fel Foundation (Budapest)

Meaning “I Don’t Give Up”, this foundation empowers people with disabilities through employment, culture and advocacy. It runs the Nem Adom Fel Café & Restaurant staffed mainly by disabled workers, and organises cultural and awareness-raising events. While not a performing company, its community-based artistic initiatives and social entrepreneurship make it an important partner for inclusive arts projects in Hungary.

nemadomfel.hu | via site contact form



Italy – Inclusive artistic companies and organisations

AL.DI.QUA Artists (Italy-wide)

AL.DI.QUA (Artists with Disabilities Italian Association) is the first disability-led organisation in Italy advocating for cultural rights, accessible working conditions and fair treatment of disabled artists. Created in 2020, it campaigns for systemic change while providing peer support and collective representation. The association has collaborated with major festivals and institutions, including Oriente Occidente, ensuring that disabled artists' voices are central to policy and artistic discourse.

aldiquaartists.org | via public contact channels

Centro Documentazione Handicap / Progetto Calamaio (Bologna)

Founded in the 1980s, the Documentation Centre on Disability (CDH) and its Progetto Calamaio have long combined education, training and inclusive theatre. The project involves mixed groups of actors (with and without disabilities) in workshops, school programmes and stage productions, raising awareness of diversity while providing professional-level artistic practice. It remains a cornerstone of inclusive arts and social pedagogy in Emilia-Romagna.

accaparlante.it | cdh@accaparlante.it

Oriente Occidente (Rovereto, Trentino)

One of Italy's leading centres for contemporary dance, Oriente Occidente has positioned inclusion at the core of its activities. Through its annual festival, international residencies and training programmes, it has created sustained platforms for disabled artists and mixed-ability ensembles. The organisation developed an access rider to ensure accessibility in artistic creation and touring, and has partnered in European projects such as Europe Beyond Access and ImPart.

orienteoccidente.it | info@orienteoccidente.it

Portugal – Inclusive artistic companies

Companhia (In)Diferente - CLAP Associação (Lisbon)

Founded in 2023 within CLAP – Comunidade Laboratório de Ação e Projetos, Companhia (In)Diferente brings together performers with and without disabilities to create interdisciplinary work across theatre, dance, music and multimedia. The company develops rigorous, process-led creation with community partners and cultural venues, prioritising co-creation, accessible communication and professional standards on stage and off. In July 2025 it premiered Transformações at Boutique da Cultura (Lisbon), consolidating its artistic identity and its commitment to inclusive, high-quality production and audience development.

clapassociacao.org | geral@clapassociacao.org

Vo'Arte / CiM – Companhia de Dança (Lisbon)

Vo'Arte (est. 1994) coordinates CiM – Companhia de Dança, one of Portugal's pioneers in inclusive contemporary dance since 2007. CiM's ensembles integrate disabled and non-disabled dancers in creations that tour nationally and internationally, combining choreographic experimentation with accessibility principles and learning pathways for emerging artists. The company also organises InArte/InMotion, a festival fully dedicated to inclusive dance, which functions as a platform for exchange, professional development and sector visibility.

voarte.com | voarte@voarte.com

Dançando com a Diferença (Madeira / Lisbon)

Established in 2001 by choreographer Henrique Amoedo, Dançando com a Diferença is internationally recognised for inclusive dance that brings together disabled and non-disabled performers. The company collaborates with renowned choreographers (e.g., Clara Andermatt, Tânia Carvalho, Rui Horta), maintains strong education and audience programmes, and tours widely in Europe and Latin America. Its practice couples artistic excellence with sustained training opportunities, helping to shape the national and international field of inclusive dance.

danca-inclusiva.com | info@danca-inclusiva.com



Terra Amarela - Plataforma de Criação Artística Inclusiva (Queluz, Lisbon region)

Founded in 2018, Terra Amarela is a multidisciplinary platform that develops inclusive performance, cultural mediation and community participation projects. Working with mixed ensembles and local partners, the organisation fosters collaborative authorship, accessible rehearsal processes and public presentations that foreground cultural rights and civic engagement. Its projects often bridge theatre, dance and social practice, strengthening local ecosystems for inclusive arts.

terraamarela.pt | terraamarelacultura@gmail.com

Spain – Inclusive artistic companies and organisations

Asociación AMBAR (Galicia)

Founded in 1984, Asociación AMBAR works for the rights and social inclusion of people with disabilities in the Barbanza region of Galicia. It combines social services with cultural and artistic initiatives, fostering inclusive participation through workshops, festivals and collaborations with local institutions. In recent years AMBAR has engaged in projects that reinterpret Galician traditions, linking heritage with inclusive artistic practice.

asociacionambar.org | ambar@asociacionambar.org

Danza Mobile (Seville)

Founded in 1995 under the direction of Esmeralda Valderrama, Danza Mobile is one of Europe's flagship inclusive dance companies. It integrates dancers with and without disabilities in professional productions that combine contemporary dance with powerful visual language. Its works have toured across more than 20 countries, and the company runs an academy offering inclusive training for young dancers. Each year, Danza Mobile organises the Festival Escena Mobile in Seville, a unique international showcase dedicated exclusively to inclusive dance.

danzamobile.es | info@danzamobile.es / distribucion@danzamobile.es

Fundación Psico Ballet Maite León (Madrid)

Created in 1986 by choreographer Maite León, this foundation pioneered inclusive methodologies that merge dance, theatre and therapeutic practice. It combines a training centre with hundreds of students, a professional company and a broad programme of performances, workshops and educational materials. The Psico Ballet has developed specific pedagogical tools adapted to people with different disabilities and continues to influence both Spanish and international practice in inclusive performing arts.

psicoballetmaiteleon.org | psicoballet@psicoballetmaiteleon.org

Liant la Troca (Granollers / Barcelona)

Established in 2011, Liant la Troca is an integrated dance collective that gathers artists with and without disabilities. It develops weekly laboratories, stage works and site-specific projects, often in partnership with Catalan cultural venues. The group's methodology is rooted in collective authorship and bodily research, fostering inclusion through movement, improvisation and performance. Liant la Troca has become a reference point in Catalonia for inclusive dance education and public presentation.

liantlatroca.com | via site contact form

6.2. | Testimonials

The voices of learners (participants and facilitators) are at the heart of SplrAL. Their words illustrate the real impact of the project, going beyond numbers and methodologies. Testimonials capture personal journeys, moments of discovery, challenges and achievements that make the inclusive arts more tangible. In order to reflect the diversity of experiences across Europe, the following quotes are organised by country.

Dóra (project manager, Hungary):

"It's about a team that came together to make something greater than the sum of its parts." – Emma Stone. This sentence deeply resonates with me. Beyond another partnership and international collaboration, I have come to believe that the love for artistic creation, the trust we place in one another, and a truly mutual, hierarchy-free way of working together can lead to something greater than ourselves."

Giovanni
(beneficiary, Italy):

"Before Spiral, I was shy and didn't talk much. Through the workshops, I learned to express myself and work with others. Now I feel proud of what we created together and I also found a job that I really like thanks to this project."

Timea (facilitator, Hungary):

"For me, the most defining experience was witnessing that our shared experimentation truly worked — that participants engaged enthusiastically and freely in the activities we had originally brought as ideas. The program strengthened my belief that art has the power to bring people with different abilities into a shared space, and that inclusion is not a technique, but an inner attitude. What will stay with me the longest is the experience of partnership — the realization that true achievement does not necessarily lie in a "successful" workshop, but in the network of relationships that emerge through these processes."

Emilia (facilitator, Hungary):

"My participation provided me with an exceptional professional and personal experience, as I was able to actively follow the transformation of initial ideas into practice over the course of two years. I have developed in thinking through complex processes, combining different art forms, and adapting programs to make them accessible and engaging for participants. The international trips and the preparation of the group posed considerable professional challenges, yet they also reinforced my belief that proper preparation provides both a sense of security and a rewarding experience for participants. Overall, the program taught me to value and appreciate diversity — in artistic expression, cultural perspectives, as well as within the professional and creative communities."

Alice (facilitator, Italy):

"Spiral showed me how creativity can build bridges. Each session was full of energy and discovery! The participants taught me as much as I taught them and I'm very happy with what we created! It was really challenging and inspiring."

Uxío Novo

(Director of Cultural Affairs, A Coruña City Council / Current board founder Secretary of the Uxío Novoneyra Foundation, Spain)

„Spiral was an extraordinary opportunity to advance the training of cultural and arts professionals through non-formal education in DEI – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion— policies applied to the cultural and creative sectors at European level.

Its methodology helped strengthen the micro-skills of diverse profiles – professionals, creators, mediators, and prosumers— providing them with tools to embed these values in their everyday cultural practice and to translate them into the planning, production, and evaluation of cultural policies and projects, both in the public and private spheres.

From the Uxío Novoneyra Foundation, as an organisation based in a rural and remote context, we consider it especially meaningful to have contributed our know-how in the fields of literary bibliotherapy and inclusive dance within integrated groups, engaging in dialogue and mutual learning with other European organisations committed to cultural inclusion.

This experience became a shared learning space around universal accessibility, equal opportunities, civic participation, and the transformative role of the arts in individual and community well-being.

The Spiral Project reinforced our conviction that European sociocultural innovation is only possible when it fully embraces the diversity of functions, bodies, languages, and territories that shape our living culture and our shared European heritage.”

Loli Fojón (trainer at As Bailadas, Spain)

„Participation in The Spiral Project through our proposal As Bailadas meant, for me as an experienced dance teacher, starting from scratch when it came to designing a dance class — one that considered the broadest and most diverse range of potential participants and, as a result, employed a wide variety of resources in service of the language of movement. It also led to an awareness that this is only possible when supported by well-developed public cultural policies. Furthermore, it was truly enriching to realize that this effort was being carried out in other cultural contexts different from my own, and the collaboration with the other partners has been absolutely fascinating.”

Branca Novoneyra
(Spiral project manager to Uxío Novoneyra Foundation, Spain)

„The Spiral Project was a valuable opportunity to deepen the practice of bibliotherapy with groups of women in both urban and rural settings. Exploring a cyclical format made up of thematic sessions around various motifs—such as Winter Recipes, Wild Capacities, Rooms and Nights, Mirrors of Memory, or Botanical Lyricism—enhanced my development as a bibliotherapist, particularly within the field I focus on: literature written by women.”

Julia Sueiro
(trainer at As Bailadas, Spain)

„The Spiral Project has been a great opportunity to explore, research, and put into practice working methodologies that translate into action what we defend (as a society and as citizens — myself included) on a more theoretical level. It has been both an exciting and rewarding challenge in the direct work with the participants. It has also been a space for dialogue with the project partners on such relevant issues as barriers to access to culture, participation, disability, and the need for professionalization among those who develop projects shaped by inclusion. This period has helped me to envision (and also to imagine) new horizons in cultural practices and has fostered a constructive exercise of (self)criticism regarding the approach to and treatment of disability in its intersection with culture and the exercise of citizens' rights. A reality that resonates deeply with me as a citizen, a woman with a recognized disability, and a cultural professional.”

Marisol Creo
(participant in As Bailadas, Spain)

„For me, the As Bailadas project was wonderful because I truly enjoyed it. Although there were moments during the classes when I felt a bit lost, I was able to keep going and not freeze in the middle of the session. At home, my motivation was very strong — I would go down to the storage room and try to work on the steps we were learning. When you sent us the video, I practiced every day whenever I was alone. At first, I just focused on the steps, but since the video felt a bit fast, I started saying the steps out loud while watching it and following the movements with my hands. There was even a moment when, despite being reluctant to dance in front of people, I asked my sister to play the video and guide me through it. It was such a great source of encouragement for me. And when we finally danced in front of an audience, I felt very good with all of you — integrated. You were so thoughtful and respectful of my slower pace compared to the others. I feel such deep gratitude. I was just telling some friends today how happy I am to have taken part. I want to thank both you (Julia) and Loli, because you helped me take a big step forward at a time when I felt I was taking steps back. Thank you so much — sending you both a big hug and lots of love.”

Jorge Linheira
(cultural mediator on Auditorio de Galicia -
Santiago de Compostela's City Hall, Spain)

„Thanks to the project, I discovered different practices, actions, and methodologies aimed at fostering inclusivity in the performing arts, which I am currently applying in my professional life as Head of Cultural Mediation at the Auditorio de Galicia. At the same time, I had the opportunity to learn about the realities of the professional performing arts sector in different parts of the European Union and to see how cultural precarity knows no borders.”

Myrto Pantazopoulou
(participant, Greece)

Did you enjoy traveling with the group?

„I enjoyed it so much! I want to go on a trip with you again!”

What did you like most about the trip? (e.g. the place, the walks, the new things you saw)

„I really liked that we went for walks. That we all had breakfast, lunch, and dinner together! When will we travel again? I really want to!”

Did you feel comfortable and happy on the trip, on the plane?

„A baby was crying on the plane but I wasn't scared!”

António Gonçalves (actor, trainer, Portugal):

Being a person means...

„Being a person means being me. Being me means being unique. Being unique means being different. We live with other selves. They are them, you are you. We are us. What do we do? We live! And how? We seek joy for ourselves and for others! And how? Through the beauty of what we do. What we chose to do. It was to compose the body, the sound, the colours. In the end, we make ourselves by making art.”

Kirenia Martínez Acosta
(Director of Kirenia Danza and
choreographer of the inclusive dance piece “Cicatriz”, Spain)

„The Spiral project was a profoundly transformative experience in my journey as both a dancer, coreographer, trainer and company director. The project offered me the opportunity to explore new approaches to inclusive dance and to the performing arts as languages of accessibility and encounter, where bodily and functional diversity becomes a creative force rather than a limitation. The process of creating my piece “Cicatriz”, together with Antón Reixa, took place in parallel with our participation in the project and became a shared learning space where we were able to rethink the concepts of aesthetics, technique, and stage presence, opening movement to new forms of perception, sensitivity, and communication with all audiences. This experience allowed me to deepen my understanding of the social, emotional, and poetic dimensions of dance, strengthening my conviction that the performing arts are a privileged tool to activate processes of care, autonomy, and cultural participation. Thanks to the dialogue with European partners and participants, I learned to integrate new methodologies and to value dance as a practice of shared freedom, where every body has voice and space.”

Melpomeni Dimou
(psychologist and trainer, Greece)

„My participation as a psychologist and trainer for people with disabilities in the European Spiral Project was a deeply meaningful experience that contributed significantly to both my personal and professional development. I chose to take part because I strongly believe in the power of art as a means of empowerment, self-expression, and social inclusion for individuals with disabilities. Through the program, I gained valuable knowledge of contemporary European inclusion practices, developed new skills in the use of artistic tools, and established important international collaborations. The exchange of experiences with professionals from different countries enhanced my empathy and broadened my understanding of equal participation in the creative process.

What impressed me most was the way the program combined creativity with the strengthening of participants' social skills. Art functioned as a universal language of communication, transcending linguistic and physical barriers, and highlighting the unique voice and potential of each individual.

This experience inspired me to continue my work with even greater passion, reinforcing my belief that inclusion is not merely a goal, but a way of life and a fundamental approach to understanding and supporting every human being with dignity and equality.”

Roula Brembou (participant, Greece)

If you had to choose, what did you like the most?
(the trip – the friends – the artistic activities)

„All the activities we did! And especially the games! I will never forget the walks we went on, and especially that place in Braga with the green grass and the lake!”

What would you like to do again in a future program?

„I would like to paint again and create stories like action and present my painting in front of everyone! I haven't done something like this before!”

What do these trips mean to you?

„These trips are a life experience, knowledge, meeting other friends, feeling free and many things!”

Giorgos Tampakis
(participant, Greece)

Do you like meeting new people?

„I like it a lot! I made very nice friendships with my Italian friends!”

In what way did you feel the happiest?

(e.g. when you talked, when you laughed, when you did something together)

„When we all ate together and each one of us sang a song from our country – I sang Kazantzidis! What I will always remember is the love I received and the farewell hugs!”

Did you make new friends or feel close to someone?

„I made many new friends from Italy, Portugal, and Hungary!”

Which activity did you enjoy the most?

„I liked painting on the vests in Eger and dancing with my Italian friends! Also expressing moves and gestures with music and theatre.”

Giannis Lyritzis (participant, Greece)

Did you enjoy the artistic activities (painting, theater, music, dance)?

„I liked all the activities! But moving with music is very new to me.”

Which activity did you like the most?

„In Eger I loved dancing! I stopped feeling shy anymore!”

How did you feel when you participated?

(e.g. joy, relaxation, excitement)

„Every time I remember what I did there I feel moved and happy and I always get emotional.”

Which moment do you remember the most?

„I remember when I fell off the chair and broke the statue in Eger! I felt a bit embarrassed. But the girls made me feel safe again. And I remember when I got on the airplane for the first time! I had never flown before!”

Diana Mota
(dance facilitator, Portugal)

„This project represented for me a huge personal growth. It pushed me forward, in terms of looking for new methodologies to work and collaborate with many different people. Finding new possibilities to communicate with people with diverse needs and capabilities was a creative endeavour. The process was very rewarding and enriching. I became more aware of the need to listen, be attentive and receptive when working together with different nationalities and in new contexts. Above all, to know the participants from the other countries and be in workshops and social situations with them was a big learning curve, a honour and a deep and beautiful human experience.”

Luis Fernandes
(musician, trainer, Portugal)

„My experience in the SplrAL project was truly the consolidation of an entire journey, both as a trainer and as a participant. It was very important to gain a deeper understanding of the key principles that can guide the creation of an artistic training programme for people with special needs through the arts. Although we embarked on a challenge that still has a long way to go — whether in structuring content for more inclusive training or in defining strategies that engage communities and institutions — this project was a crucial step forward. In this context, the project fostered a careful reflection on all these dimensions — psychological, psychomotor, socio-educational, artistic, and institutional — as well as on the methodologies that can be used, thus expanding the range of techniques and processes that can be applied in this type of initiative. I feel that with each project I evolve as a conscious citizen and as a trainer, as I am constantly challenged to adapt methodologies according to each person's reality. I also grow as an artist, increasingly valuing the blend of people with and without artistic experience, and with and without special needs. In my view, art, being for everyone, is a space of encounters and divergences, but above all, a space for growth.”

Luís Rodrigues
(project leader, Portugal)

„Leading SplrAL has been a deeply meaningful journey. Beyond developing methodologies, it was about connecting people, ideas, and organisations around a shared belief in the power of the arts to include and transform. Throughout this process, I witnessed how our partners grew stronger — professionally and humanly — and how collaboration itself became a form of inclusion. Together, we built not only accessible artistic practices but also a community that values diversity, empathy, and creativity. I leave this project with the conviction that SplrAL has helped each organisation evolve and that we have truly worked in the name of inclusion and the arts.”

Raquel Vieira
(performer, Portugal)

„Being part of SplrAL was an opportunity to grow — as an artist and as a person. The project gave me the chance to express myself freely and to work in a team where everyone was valued for who they are. Through the workshops and performances, I discovered new ways to communicate and create together. SplrAL showed me that inclusion in the arts is not just possible — it's beautiful.”

6.3. | Lessons learnt

The journey traced throughout this book – from conceptual frameworks and pedagogical approaches to practical tools, case studies and artistic testimonies – offers a set of lessons that are relevant across disciplines, institutions and policy levels. These lessons emerge not only from the projects documented in this chapter, but also from the broader reflections developed across the entire volume.

1. INCLUSION IS A PROCESS, NOT A FINAL STATE.

All chapters highlight that inclusion must be continually re-negotiated, tested and adapted. Whether in theatre rehearsals, dance studios, classrooms or museums, accessibility is never fully “achieved”: it is cultivated as a daily practice.

2. THE BODY, VOICE AND IMAGINATION ARE UNIVERSAL ENTRY POINTS.

Throughout the book we have seen how simple tools—movement, rhythm, image, storytelling—become bridges between people with very different abilities. These tools transcend linguistic, cultural and cognitive barriers, enabling shared artistic experience.

3. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS ARE ESSENTIAL.

One recurring theme has been the gap between community participation and professional opportunities for disabled artists. Building long-term structures for learning, mentoring and career development is a lesson stressed in multiple contexts.

4. CO-CREATION ENHANCES BOTH ART AND COMMUNITY.

Methodologies described in earlier chapters show that when people with and without disabilities co-create, the process enriches artistic outcomes and strengthens social cohesion. This lesson applies equally to small workshops and large European collaborations.

5. PARTNERSHIPS MULTIPLY IMPACT.

From local schools and NGOs to European networks, alliances have proven indispensable. The most successful practices are those in which cultural organisations collaborate with social, educational and health institutions, aligning artistic vision with community needs.

6. ACCESSIBILITY MUST BE HOLISTIC.

The book demonstrates that accessibility cannot be reduced to ramps or captions alone. It includes communication strategies, governance, recruitment, digital access and the design of pedagogical materials. Holistic accessibility benefits all participants, not only disabled people.

7. VISIBILITY AND ADVOCACY MATTER.

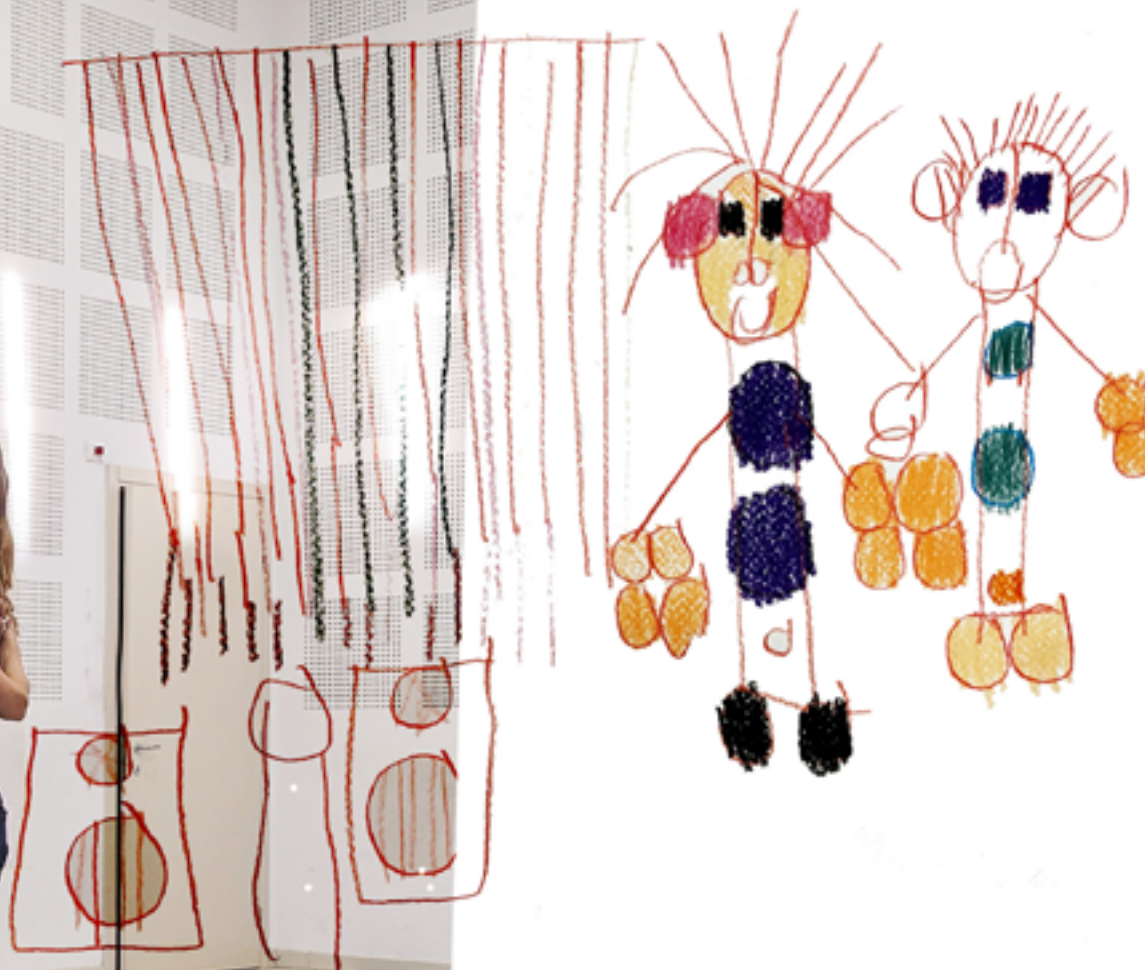
Dissemination, festivals, and public showcases are more than presentation platforms: they are advocacy tools that influence policy, funding and public attitudes. Artistic visibility contributes to the recognition of disabled artists as cultural leaders.

8. SUSTAINABILITY REMAINS THE CENTRAL CHALLENGE.

Across contexts, the sustainability of inclusive arts depends on stable funding, supportive policies and organisational resilience. Projects that combine artistic ambition with strategic planning, training structures and long-term partnerships are best positioned to endure.

The overarching lesson of this book is that inclusive arts are not a niche activity, but a transformative practice that redefines both art and society. They reveal how cultural participation can be a driver of equality, creativity and civic belonging. To carry these lessons forward requires commitment from artists, educators, cultural managers and policymakers alike: to embed inclusion not as an afterthought, but as a principle guiding every stage of artistic and institutional practice.

07 RECOMMENDATIONS



7.1. | Best Practices

Based on analysis of inclusive arts experiences across diverse disability communities, this framework identifies core practices that guide practitioners and artists in developing inclusive projects.



How these practices activate the SplrAL Theory of Change:

According to the SplrAL External Impact Evaluation, four key Mechanisms (M1–M4) structure the Theory of Change: Mechanism 1 (M1) – Accessibility; Mechanism 2 (M2) – Methodological adaptation; Mechanism 3 (M3) – Capacity building of facilitators; Mechanism 4 (M4) – External visibility.

- M1 – Accessibility: identification and testing of solutions (different rhythms, accessible language, empowerment) occurred in national activities and were stress-tested in international mobilities. Impact medium/high.
- M2 – Methodological adaptation (Theatre, Dance, Music, Multimedia): experimentation + joint reflection = medium/high impact.
- M3 – Capacity building of facilitators: medium progress due to high diversity of profiles; reinforce theoretical sessions and mentoring.
- M4 – External visibility: medium impact; presentations and some external recognition, but digital communication below targets.

Co-creation as a Foundation

At the heart of these practices is co-creation: disabled participants are not passive recipients, but active co-authors of the creative process. Experience shows how gestures, silences, and fragments of movement can be woven into a collective choreography, enabling each participant to contribute meaningfully regardless of their communication preferences or neurological differences. This approach is expressed through jointly taken artistic decisions, valued space for non-verbal contributions, the natural rotation of leadership among participants, and careful documentation of shared authorship. The fundamental principle is that every form of expression, regardless of linguistic or conceptual complexity, possesses intrinsic artistic value.

For practitioners and artists, this means moving away from hierarchical models in which professionals create while participants merely execute. Instead, it calls for the development of methodologies where ideas arise through genuine interaction – where silence can be as eloquent as words, and where individual rhythms of reflection and creation are acknowledged and artistically integrated.

*„This is about accessibility, but not only about ramps.
It's about communication”*

Structural Accessibility for Intellectual Disabilities

Accessibility for people living with intellectual disabilities goes far beyond physical adaptations, focusing fundamentally on cognitive and communicational accessibility. This structural approach must be planned from the start and included in budgets as a specific expenditure line. Cognitive accessibility is materialised through information presented in plain language and easy-to-read formats, extensive use of pictograms and visual supports to complement or replace complex text, structuring activities into clear and sequential steps, creating predictable routines to reduce anxiety, and providing additional time for information processing and decision-making.

Accessible communication requires clear language with short sentences, avoidance of abstract concepts without concrete explanation, consistent repe-

tition of important instructions, use of multiple sensory channels to convey the same information, and the creation of alternative communication systems for people with speech limitations. The physical environment should be organised clearly and logically, with abundant visual signage, reduction of excessive sensory distractions, and the creation of calm spaces where people can withdraw when needed.

Adequate budgeting for cognitive and intellectual accessibility should allocate between 10–15% of the total budget for adapted materials, 5–10% for specialised training of staff in accessible communication, 15–20% for lower participant-to-facilitator ratios enabling individualised support, and 5% for resources such as visual timetables, pictograms, and sensory materials.

Artistic Quality and Intellectual Disability

Artistic work with people with intellectual disabilities does not imply a decrease in ambition or quality. On the contrary, different ways of perceiving and interpreting the world often result in unique and innovative artistic perspectives that enrich creative languages. Emotional authenticity, expressive spontaneity, and freedom from rigid social conventions can produce moments of extraordinary artistic power.

Case example: a participant integrated a professional production (Rita Ribeiro/Filipe La Féria) with television projection — illustrating how inclusive arts can open professional pathways. For practitioners and artists, this means learning to recognise and value forms of excellence that may differ from conventional standards, developing quality criteria that include originality, emotional authenticity, and communicative impact, and creating contexts where natural creativity can flourish without being constrained by limiting expectations.

Structured Flexibility for Different Rhythms

People with intellectual disabilities particularly benefit from clear and predictable structures, but these must be flexible enough to accommodate different processing rhythms, fluctuating energy levels, and individual needs for breaks or withdrawal. Experience shows that well-defined routines reduce anxiety and increase participation, but must allow adaptations when necessary.

An effective structure for people with intellectual disabilities is organised into clear but adaptable time blocks. The arrival period, lasting 10–20 minutes, allows for gradual transition into the creative space, recognising that some people need more time to adapt. The warm-up phase, with predictable duration but variable activities, establishes reassuring routines that create a sense of safety and belonging. Main activities are best structured into 15–30 minute segments, recognising that concentration spans may be shorter but can be repeated multiple times. Breaks are not interruptions but essential

components that allow for emotional regulation and processing. A closing ritual of 10–15 minutes provides a clear transition back to everyday life.

Multimodal Communication and Diverse Expression

For people with intellectual disabilities, particularly those with limited verbal communication, multimodal artistic expression is crucial. When movement, sound, image, and touch are combined, multiple pathways of expression and understanding are created, transcending specific limitations. This approach recognises that intelligence and talent manifest in diverse ways, and that creativity does not depend on conventional linguistic skills.

For practitioners and artists, this means developing fluency in multiple artistic languages, learning to recognise and interpret non-verbal forms of communication, and designing activities that allow for choice among different modes of expression. Careful observation becomes a key competence, enabling facilitators to identify moments of engagement and creativity that may not be evident through traditional verbal indicators.

Person-Centred Evaluation

Evaluation of artistic work with people with intellectual disabilities must focus on the person, not just on external products or performances. This means valuing creative processes, personal growth, confidence development, expression of preferences, and enjoyment of participation. Artistic quality is measured not only by technical criteria but also by expressive authenticity, emotional engagement, and contribution to individual and collective well-being. This approach is materialised through careful observation and documentation of moments of discovery, recording of expressed preferences and choices, evaluation of comfort and enjoyment, and recognition of the development of social and communication skills. Evaluation becomes a tool for celebration and planning, not for judgement or comparison.

“I liked the work environment... we are starting a process for a common methodology.” — Facilitator

7.2. | Guidelines for Implementation

Impact in Numbers (SplrAL 2023–2025)

- 5 countries, 5 organisations; 25 facilitators/trainers involved
- 63 learners (participants) with and without disabilities
- 17 workshops in mobilities (planned target: 5)
- 5 European mobilities completed with 100% execution
- Communication: 494 social media followers; website visits below target
- (Source: External Evaluation — SplrAL)

Disability Support Organisations

Organisations specialising in intellectual disability possess essential knowledge about individual needs, effective routines, and communication strategies. They should integrate the arts as a component of personal development and social inclusion, not just as an occasional recreational activity. Effective integration requires specialised staff training in adapted artistic methodologies, partnerships with professional artists experienced in inclusive work, creation of appropriate spaces for regular artistic activities, and dedicated budgets for materials, equipment, and professional fees.

Artistic and Cultural Institutions

Theatres, museums, cultural centres, and art schools can play a fundamental role, but this requires significant structural change. Accessibility must be integrated into the organisational mission, not treated as a peripheral social responsibility. This means regular programming involving people with intellectual disabilities as participants, artists, and audiences; training of staff in accessible communication and adequate support; adaptation of spaces for

different sensory and cognitive needs; and sustainable partnerships with specialised organisations.

Independent Artists and Practitioners

Independent artists and practitioners need specialised training and continuous support to develop competences for working with people with intellectual disabilities. Training must go beyond general awareness to include practical understanding of different conditions, adapted communication strategies, flexible facilitation techniques, and knowledge of community resources. Professional development should involve supervised practice, networking with experienced practitioners, access to specialised training resources, and communities of practice that provide mutual support.

7.3. | Practical Tools for Practitioners and Artists

Session Preparation

Effective preparation balances structure and flexibility. Each session should have clear but achievable goals, alternative activities in case adaptations are needed, organised and accessible materials, and a communication plan that includes multiple modes of instruction. The physical space must be prepared with appropriate lighting, reduced noise, clear organisation of materials, and a calm zone. Emotional preparation of staff is equally important, involving review of participant information, discussion of strategies, and a calm working rhythm.

Adapted Facilitation Techniques

Facilitation requires clear communication, attentiveness, and real-time adaptation. Instructions should be given in simple language, broken down into steps, demonstrated visually, and repeated without impatience. Time management must be flexible, allowing extension or condensation of activities, planned pauses, and celebration of small successes. Behaviour ma-

nagement is understood as communication: agitation may signal sensory overload, withdrawal a need for rest, and repetitive behaviours a self-regulation strategy. Facilitators learn to interpret rather than eliminate these behaviours.

Accessible Materials

Materials should prioritize visual clarity, conceptual simplicity, and versatility. Written materials should be presented in easy-to-read formats, using short sentences, simple vocabulary, and a clear logical structure. Visual design should incorporate ample white space, legible large fonts, and consistent use of colours and symbols. Pictograms and images should be simple, expressive, and culturally relevant. Complex information should be broken down into manageable steps and presented sequentially. Whenever possible, materials should be tested with people living with intellectual disabilities before wider distribution.

Evaluation and Documentation

Evaluation must focus on individual development, well-being, and quality of creative experience. Documentation should include observations of engagement, creativity, social interaction, and emotional expression. Photographs and videos may be useful but require careful consent and should focus on processes rather than outcomes. Evaluation results should be shared with participants in accessible formats, celebrating achievements and identifying future goals.

Note: Annexes from the Evaluation Report provide ready-to-use tools that complement these instruments, including (i) System of Evaluation with questions/indicators/sources/calendar; (ii) Interview/Focus Group script; (iii) Accessible learner questionnaire.



7.4. | Managing Specialised Teams

Team Composition

Effective teams combine artistic expertise with specialised knowledge. Core teams should include artists with inclusive experience, support specialists, professionals trained in alternative communication, and, where possible, people with intellectual disabilities as co-facilitators. Ideal staff-to-participant ratio is one facilitator for every four or five participants.

Specialised Continuous Training

Training must be practical and specific, covering intellectual disability types, accessible communication, adapted facilitation, positive behaviour management, and strategies for autonomy. Training should include experiential practice, observation of expert-led sessions, ongoing mentoring, and regular supervision.

Staff Support

Work in this field is emotionally and physically demanding. Staff need supervision, continuous training, adequate workload recognition, and professional networks for peer support. Fair remuneration and appropriate ratios are essential to prevent burnout.

7.4.1. Pathway to Co-facilitation by People with Functional Diversity

- 1) Pre-diagnosis of interests/strengths;
- 2) Shadowing (micro-task assistance);
- 3) Co-leading short segments;
- 4) Peer mentoring;
- 5) Specific training on communication & group management;
- 6) Proportional remuneration;
- 7) Accessible feedback & evaluation.

Rationale: professionalising facilitators with disabilities creates role models, deepens empathy in facilitation, and strengthens learning outcomes.

7.5. | Adapting Artistic Practices to Diverse Learning and Cognitive Needs

Mild intellectual disability: focus on simplification of instructions, gradual introduction of complexity, repetition, and confidence-building.

Moderate to severe intellectual disability: emphasis on sensory experience, emotional expression, and process rather than product.

Autism spectrum conditions: structured environments, predictable routines, respect for individual interests, and accommodation of sensory sensitivities.

Mental health conditions alongside intellectual disability: additional focus on emotional safety, management of anxiety, fluctuating energy, and integration of self-regulation strategies.

Field findings to strengthen adaptation:

- Truly inclusive mixed groups require design “for all”, not “for some” with add-ons.
- Diverse terminology (e.g., “disability” vs. “functional diversity”) created practical confusion; it is important to adopt a shared glossary and establish a common methodological baseline across all partners.

7.6. | Sustainability and Development

Sustainable Funding Models

Funding must recognise both social and artistic value. Effective models combine structural long-term support with project-based funding. Partnerships with health, social, and educational services ensure sustainability, while arts funding fosters innovation.

Quality Assurance and Standards

Developing quality standards for inclusive arts with people with living with intellectual disabilities is essential. Standards should cover staff qualifications, participant safety, artistic quality, accessibility practices, and evaluation. Reviews must involve participants, families, professionals, and external experts. Continuous improvement should be embedded in all programmes.

Operational recommendations for sustainability & visibility:

- Establish a denominator of common practices (baseline techniques, documentation formats) to enable comparability and continuous improvement.
- Convert the Manual into modular training programmes for local/regional networks.
- Use “lighthouse” venues with higher cultural projection for public presentations to reach audiences beyond the inclusion sector.
- Strengthen communication with an accessible editorial plan (alt-text, captions/SLI, short video summaries) and simple KPIs (e.g., +25% reach per quarter; ≥1 article per mobility; ≥1 local media partnership per country).

“Impact in Numbers (SplrAL 2023–2025)” box may be placed here if not inserted in 7.2.)

Artistic collaboration with people with intellectual disabilities can be deeply meaningful and transformative for everyone involved. It calls for a combination of artistic skill, specialist knowledge, and a genuine commitment to inclusion. Success is reflected not only in artistic outcomes but also in personal growth, shared joy, and a sense of belonging.

For practitioners and artists, ongoing learning is essential. Each person is unique, and effective practice combines evidence-based strategies with sensitive response to individual differences. Many artists report that working in this field transforms their own practice, opening new forms of expression and deepening their understanding of the arts’ power to connect, heal, and inspire.

Through attention to best practices, continuous professional development, respect for people living with intellectual disabilities as creative agents, and commitment to quality and innovation, practitioners can create transformative artistic experiences that benefit all participants and contribute to wider social change towards inclusion and acceptance.

Practical Tools for Implementation

A. Accessibility Checklist

DIMENSION	KEY ACTIONS	EXAMPLES OF APPLICATION
Physical	Ensure barrier-free access to spaces	Ramps, elevators, adapted toilets, wide circulation
Communicational	Provide clear and adapted communication	Easy-to-read documents, pictograms, sign language
Digital	Guarantee digital accessibility according to WCAG 2.2	Screen-reader compatibility, alt-text, captions
Sensory	Adjust light, sound and space for sensory regulation	Relaxed performances, dimmed lights, tactile guides
Cognitive	Adapt content for different learning and processing rhythms	Visual schedules, simple instructions, repetition
Financial	Remove economic barriers to participation	Free entry, covered transport, scholarships

B. Template for Participatory Evaluation

EVALUATION DIMENSION	METHOD USED	EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS/ INDICATORS
Process Experience	Feedback Circle	"How did you feel during today's activity?"
Authorship & Agency	Self-Assessment Cards (symbols/pics)	Participants choose a card showing how much they felt creative.
Confidence & Safety	Facilitator Observation	Signs of autonomy, willingness to take initiative.
Artistic Development	Collaborative Observation (peer input)	Group notes originality, expressiveness, innovation moments.
Well-being & Joy	Participant Reflection (oral/visual)	Draw/write how the activity made you feel.

C. Inclusive Communication Guide (Quick Reference)

PRINCIPLE	PRACTICAL GUIDANCE
Clarity	Short sentences, simple vocabulary, concrete instructions
Repetition	Repeat key information consistently
Multimodality	Combine spoken, visual, tactile and written forms
Consistency	Use same symbols, colours, terms across all materials
Emotional Safety	Calm tone, respectful body language, opportunities to pause
Feedback Integration	Always check comprehension and adapt according to responses

08
CONTRIBUTORS

This book is the outcome of a collective journey. Each contributor offered their expertise, creativity and lived experience, enriching the methodologies and practices presented here. Artists, educators, cultural workers and researchers from Portugal, Italy, Greece, Hungary and Spain worked together to design and test inclusive approaches in music, dance, theatre, multimedia and literature. Equally essential were the learners (participants) – people living with disabilities who practised these methodologies with us and gave us the privilege of working alongside them. Their voices, creativity and commitment are at the heart of this publication, which reflects not only professional knowledge but also the values of accessibility, participation and co-creation that define the SplrAL project. The following names acknowledge the individuals whose dedication made this work possible.



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Over two years, partners worked closely with local communities, learners and educators to explore how the arts can become a true space of equity and participation.

SplrAL was not only about developing methods, but also about building connections and giving voice to those often unheard.

This book is one of the main outcomes of that journey. It gathers the methodologies, reflections and activities created and refined during the project.

More than a publication, it is a testimony to the work with learners with disabilities, their families, facilitators and artistic teams, and to the shared belief that inclusion in the arts is not abstract, but something to be lived and practised every day.

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Italian Team

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Greek Team

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Spanish Team

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Portuguese Team



10

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

10.1. | Contacts of organisations

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10.2. | Glossary

This glossary brings together terms used throughout SplrAL. Some definitions are adapted from official frameworks such as the UN CRPD, the European Accessibility Act and WCAG guidelines. Others are based on inclusive arts pedagogy (e.g., Boal, Spolin, Lecoq) or on concepts and practices developed by the partners during the project. Additional entries such as Disability and Inclusion were included to ensure clarity and alignment with Erasmus+ terminology.

Accessibility Plan – A structured framework to ensure activities, spaces, communication and platforms are physically, cognitively, sensorially and socially accessible.

AccessibleEU – EU knowledge and good-practice resource centre supporting accessibility implementation across sectors. Cited in SplrAL as a reference for monitoring and planning.

Actor's Presence – Prioritising body, voice and safety on stage; scenography and tech serve the performer rather than creating barriers.

Arduino-based Controllers – Custom switches/sensors adapted to individual needs for inclusive interaction in sound or media.

Audio Description (AD) – Verbal narration of visual content for blind and partially sighted audiences; in SplrAL, part of integrated accessibility and “aesthetics of access”.

BCI (Brain-Computer Interfaces) – Experimental systems enabling composition/control via brain activity; listed as an emerging accessibility frontier.

Celebration of Process – Framing sharings/performances as recognitions of collective journey and learning, not final “tests”.

Co-facilitation – Shared leadership between disabled and non-disabled artists/educators to rebalance power and diversify methods.

Collaborative Creative Inquiry (CCI) – Arts-based, transdisciplinary research approach generating situated, transformative knowledge in creative processes.

Community Arts – Practices foregrounding participation, co-creation and local engagement where process and inclusion weigh as much as outcomes.

Community Involvement – Partnerships with families, schools, associations and cultural institutions to broaden resources and ensure sustainability.

CRPD (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) – Core international framework underpinning cultural rights and inclusive arts in SplrAL.

Deep Listening – Heightened awareness of sound, silence and environment fostering empathy and connection; concept extended to presence in other art forms.

Differentiation – Adapting goals, content and methods to varied profiles so each person participates meaningfully (voice, minimal gesture, digital tools, visual cues).

Digital Accessibility – Compliance with WCAG and EAA in online content, tools and platforms (e.g., captions, alt text, plain language).

Disability – A social and cultural construct as well as an embodied reality. In SplrAL, disability is understood in line with the UN CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), which frames it as the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal/environmental barriers that hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Embodied Awareness – Conscious attention to body, space, rhythm and relation; used as an indicator in dance assessment.

European Accessibility Act (EAA – Directive 2019/882) – EU legislation establishing accessibility requirements for products and services, referenced for planning and evaluation.

Ethics of Care – Relational principle privileging attentiveness, responsibility and empathy in facilitation, curricula and evaluation.

Evaluation (Formative & Participatory) – Continuous, ethical, accessible-by-design evaluation at micro/meso/macro levels using mixed methods and co-defined criteria.

Evaluation Indicators (Structural/Process/Results/Artistic Quality) – Layered, non-ableist indicators spanning roles/resources, participation modes, outcomes and artistic coherence.

EyeHarp – Eye-tracking instrument enabling melody/chord playing via gaze/head movement; integrated into group music-making.

Feedback Circles – Short, accessible reflective moments that empower participants' voices and enable real-time adjustment.

Flexible Schedules – Predictable yet adaptable pacing (breaks, intensity, "what's next" boards), respecting energy/medical needs and reducing anxiety.

Forum Theatre – Participatory theatre where spectators intervene to propose alternative actions; used for empowerment and dialogue.

Graphic Scores – Visual symbols/colours/forms standing in for conventional notation; also used multimodally to guide collective creation.

Guided Improvisation – Improvisation within a shared framework of gestures/visual or verbal prompts across music, dance and theatre.

Haptic Wearables / Resonant Platforms – Devices or surfaces converting sound into vibration to support vibrotactile perception (e.g., rhythm guidance, shared pulse).

Inclusion – The active, intentional and continuous process of ensuring equitable access, participation and representation for all, particularly people living with disabilities and other groups on the margin. In SplrAL, inclusion refers to artistic and learning contexts where difference is recognised as a source of creativity, not a barrier.

Inclusive Composition – Creative processes valuing all contributions equally (music/dance/theatre/multimedia), nurturing autonomy and ensemble coherence.

Inclusive Narratives – Dramaturgies and story frames that integrate diverse bodies/voices and avoid reinforcing ableist norms.

Inclusive Pedagogy – Adaptable teaching that ensures meaningful engagement for all learners (participants), linking objectives to artistic purpose rather than isolated drills.

Interdisciplinarity (Deep Multidisciplinary Approach) – Live circulation of stimuli across art forms (gesture-rhythm-scene-projection) with Soundpainting as "glue".

Interoception (Sensory Systems) – Perception of internal bodily states; one of the eight sensory systems considered in sensory-aware evaluation.

Learners / Participants – People with and without disabilities who engage as co-creators, shaping methods through practice.

Makey Makey – Simple circuit board turning conductive objects into triggers for sound/media, lowering entry barriers and encouraging play.



MiMu Gloves – Wearable tech mapping hand gestures to sound parameters, expanding expressive possibilities.

Multimedia Accessibility – Clarity of visual cues, pacing, captioning/subtitles, and stability/usability in interactive setups, aligned with WCAG.

Object Animation / Object Theatre – Using everyday objects as expressive, symbolic or narrative devices to open non-verbal creative pathways.

Object Orchestra – Collective creation using everyday objects as instruments/props for sonic or performative textures.

Observation Checklists / Grids – Discipline-specific tools to document presence, timing, cue-response, safety, accessibility and artistic intention.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) – Method positioning participants as co-researchers in planning, doing and evaluating the work.

Plain Language / Easy-to-Read – Communication strategies (and formats) that maximise clarity and reduce cognitive load in information and evaluation.

Quiet Zones / Low-Stimulation Areas – Spatial features supporting sensory regulation and comfort for participants.

Sensory-Stimuli-Based Creation – Sound, movement or scene work emerging in response to tactile/visual/olfactory cues; manages intensity to avoid overload.

Sign Language Interpreting / Real-Time Captioning – Structural accessibility roles budgeted and integrated into rehearsals, sharings and public events.

Skoog – Tactile cube interface responding to squeeze/press/twist for accessible ensemble play, often mounted on stands or wheelchairs.

Soundbeam – Motion-to-sound sensor interface converting body move-

ment into music; links music and dance through movement exploration.

Soundpainting – Real-time composition language (1500+ gestures) used across music/dance/theatre/visuals to balance freedom with structure.

Soundwalk – Attentive listening to environmental soundscapes followed by creative mapping/re-enactment in rehearsal or performance.

STEAM (Art-Technology Integration) – Framework highlighting art/tech synergies to foster critical and creative thinking when supported by strong curricula.

SubPac – Wearable vibrotactile device translating low frequencies into bodily sensation to support rhythm perception or shared pulse.

Summary Session Template – SplrAL's cross-disciplinary session log capturing aims, rituals, sensory activities and outcomes for consistent documentation.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – Educational framework guiding multiple means of engagement, representation and expression across all chapters.

User-Centred Customisation – Mapping gestures, breath, gaze or switches to meaningful outputs; co-designed device setups increase ownership and confidence.

WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) – International standards for digital accessibility; referenced for evaluation, reporting and multimedia usability.

“What’s Next” Boards / Visual Schedules – Predictability tools that clarify session flow, reduce anxiety and support transitions.

WHO Europe (2019) – Evidence base on arts and health benefits referenced to frame evaluation scope and social impact.

Voice-in-the-Margin / Role-Switch Dialogue / Echo-and-Question – Inclusive literature techniques for empathy, perspective-taking and critical reflection.

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Dedication

SplrAL was not only a project, but also a journey of encounters, creativity and inclusion. The methodologies and experiences shared in this book are seeds for future practices. We invite readers to adapt, transform and expand them in their own contexts, so that the arts may continue to build bridges and open spaces for everyone.

We dedicated this book to all those who believe in the transformative power of the arts to create inclusion, equity and beauty.

Luís Miguel Rodrigues
Editorial Coordination, SplrAL Project



