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Supporting The Employability of Young Disabled People (DIS-Employability)



DIS-Employability

Project Code:

2021-1-RO01-KA220-YOU-000028932

Result 2: Guidebook on Critical Thinking Skills for Employability





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I. Introduction

A. Overview and objectives of the Project

The DIS-employability project, a collaborative effort of partners from Romania, Germany, Italy and Greece designed to enhance the employability of people with disabilities. Its focus is on developing critical thinking skills, recognized as crucial for innovative and creative problem-solving in challenging business environments. This initiative aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which asserts the fundamental right to work and employment for all.

This project is rooted in the European Union's commitment to inclusion, particularly for people with disabilities. This dedication is reflected in the historical evolution of EU policies and directives, notably with the ratification of the UNCRPD, which mandates member states to align policies with the convention's principles, encompassing domains like accessibility, participation, equality, education, social protection, and health.

The core objective of DIS-employability is to provide people with disabilities with employability skills through critical thinking enhancement. This approach is vital for enabling them to participate actively in the labor market. The need for such initiatives is underscored is crucial not only for everyone in the workforce, regardless. This is even more evident in today's fast paced environment of technological developments and shifting working environment.

Critical thinking is essential for young people with disabilities, enabling them to navigate and excel in various life aspects. It fosters problem-solving abilities, independence, effective communication, and advocacy skills. Furthermore, it is crucial for academic engagement, allowing them to pursue education and interests despite challenges. In the workplace, critical thinking is highly valued, offering people with disabilities opportunities for career advancement. It also plays a significant role in social and emotional well-being, decision-making, and lifelong learning. Overall, it empowers youth with disabilities to overcome challenges, advocate for themselves, and participate actively in society, leading fulfilling lives and contributing meaningfully to their communities.

The team of the DIS-employability project aims to contribute to breaking down barriers faced by people with disabilities in education and the labor market by equipping them with critical thinking skills. This approach not only enhances their employability but also ensures their active and meaningful participation in various life domains, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.



B. EU Commission Priorities in the Field of Inclusion

The European Union (EU) has progressively established a robust framework for inclusion, with a strong emphasis on the rights and needs of people with disabilities. This commitment is rooted in a historical context that has evolved significantly over time, shaped by key treaties, directives, and strategic initiatives.

In the early stages, EU policies related to disability were largely embedded within broader social and employment policies. However, the 1990s marked a significant shift, with the EU beginning to recognize disability rights as an essential part of human rights. The Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 was a watershed moment, embedding the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of disability into EU law.

The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) by the EU in 2010 further solidified this commitment, obligating member states to enact policies and legislation aligned with the convention's principles. The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 followed, providing a comprehensive approach to disability rights across various domains, including accessibility, participation, equality, education, social protection, and health.

Notable Legal Cases and Legal

Framework

Throughout the years, several cases brought before the European Court of Justice (ECJ) have been instrumental in shaping EU disability policies. This proves the necessity of a solid legal framework protecting fundamental rights of people with disabilities, as well as the existence of such cases demonstrates that those need to be actively defended and analyzed through the evolving context of technology and economic changes. For instance, the 'Coleman Attridge Law' case extended discrimination protection to those associated with people with disabilities, while the FOA v Billund Kommune case addressed the issue of obesity as a potential disability. At the end of the chapter you can find even more notable examples of such cases.

Below are some key categories of rights and the legal framework protecting them:

Key directives like the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC) and the Web Accessibility Directive (2016) have been pivotal in combating discrimination and enhancing accessibility. The Accessibility Act (2019) further ensures that a range of products and services are accessible to people with disabilities, while the Directive 2016/2102/EU (known as the Web Accessibility Directive), requires EU member states to ensure that websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies are accessible to people with disabilities.

Adding to that, the Directive 2000/78/EC establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, this directive prohibits discrimination based on disability in the job market.



Also, broader legal frameworks like the:

- **The European Accessibility Act (EAA)**, adopted in 2019, acts as a cornerstone aiming to improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services by removing barriers created by different national requirements. Through this (the EAA) there is a broad coverage of a range of products and services, including computers, smartphones, ATMs, banking services, e-books, e-commerce, and transport.
- **The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020** has been instrumental in advancing the rights of people with disabilities, focusing on accessibility, participation, equality, employment, education and training, social protection, health, and external action and the Accessibility Act (2019) further ensures that a range of products and services are accessible to people with disabilities.
- **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**: The EU ratified this convention, committing to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by all persons with disabilities with entry into force: 3 May 2008.
- **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights**: Article 26 of the Charter specifically addresses the rights of people with disabilities, ensuring integration and participation in the community.
- **Directive 2000/43/EC**: Implements the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, which includes addressing issues faced by people with disabilities.

Initiatives and Programs

The EU's approach to inclusion extends beyond legal frameworks to encompass a variety of initiatives and programs:

- **Public Employment Services**

EU countries have developed specialized services within their public employment frameworks to support people with disabilities, focusing on tailored job placement, career counseling, and workplace adaptation.

- **Financial Incentives**

Various financial incentives are offered to employers who hire individuals with disabilities, such as grants, tax benefits, and subsidies for workplace adjustments.

- **EU Funding**



Significant funding for inclusion initiatives comes from various EU sources, such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and Horizon 2020. These funds support projects that aim to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and promote their full participation in society.

- **Inclusive Education and Lifelong Learning**

Policies and programs have been implemented to ensure inclusive education systems and lifelong learning opportunities for people with disabilities. This includes funding for accessible educational materials and teacher training on inclusivity.

- **EU Health Strategy**

Under this strategy, actions like the Joint Action on Chronic Diseases and Promoting Healthy Ageing Across the Life-Cycle (JA-CHRODIS) address health issues relevant to people with disabilities.

- **Technology and Digital Inclusion**

The EU has placed a significant emphasis on technology and digital inclusion as a means to empower people with disabilities:

- **Assistive Technologies**

EU funding has been instrumental in developing and refining assistive technologies such as screen readers, speech-to-text software, and customized input devices. These technologies are crucial for enabling people with disabilities to access digital content and services.

- **Digital Accessibility**

Following the Web Accessibility Directive, the EU has been proactive in ensuring that digital platforms, especially those of public sector bodies, are accessible. This includes requirements for websites and mobile apps to be usable by people with various disabilities, such as visual or hearing impairments.

- **Innovative Projects under Horizon 2020**

The Horizon 2020 program has funded numerous projects focusing on improving the lives of people with disabilities through technology. These include research and development in areas like robotics, wearable technologies, and smart home systems designed to enhance independence and quality of life.

- **EU's Digital Single Market Strategy**

Part of this strategy focuses on enhancing digital skills, including for people with disabilities. This initiative recognizes the importance of digital literacy in ensuring equal participation in the digital economy.



- **Public-Private Partnerships**

Through these collaborations between government bodies, technology companies, and disability organizations to develop and implement technology solutions that address specific needs of people with disabilities.

Brief overview Legal Cases
pertaining to Inclusion and discrimination

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) has presided over numerous cases that have significantly influenced EU disability policy:

- Case C-13/05 *Chacón Navas v Eurest Colectividades SA* (2006): This case expanded the scope of what constitutes a 'disability' under EU law, emphasizing a broad interpretation in line with evolving social and medical understanding.
- Case C-335/11 *HK Danmark on behalf of Ring v Dansk almennyttigt Boligselskab* (2013): This ruling reinforced the notion that employers must accommodate employees with disabilities, setting a precedent for workplace inclusion.
- Case C-303/06 *Coleman v Attridge Law and Steve Law* (2008): Extended protection against discrimination to carers of people with disabilities, acknowledging the broader impact of disability discrimination.
- Case C-354/13 *FOA, acting on behalf of Karsten Kaltoft v Billund Kommune* (2014): Addressed obesity as a potential disability, broadening the interpretation of what might constitute a disability under EU law.
- Case C-312/11 *Commission v Italy* (2014): Focused on the rights of people with disabilities in the context of state aid rules, ensuring fair competition does not override essential services for people with disabilities.
- Case C-267/12 *Sharon Coleman v Attridge Law and Steve Law* (2008): This case was significant for enhancing the understanding of indirect discrimination, particularly as it affects carers of people with disabilities.



C. Introduction to Critical Thinking

Critical thinking, a term frequently cited in educational, professional, and personal development contexts, refers to the ability to think clearly, rationally, and independently, understanding the logical connection between ideas. It involves actively conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information gathered from observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication.

In the contemporary world, where information is abundant and diverse, critical thinking is a vital skill for making decisions, solving problems, and understanding complex issues.

It is essential for several reasons, by enabling individuals to make informed decisions to assessing various arguments and positions. In a world often cluttered with misinformation and bias, it helps distinguish between fact and opinion and fosters independence by equipping individuals with the skills to reason and question rather than passively accept information. Moreover, in the professional realm, critical thinking can be rather crucial for innovation and problem-solving, as it encourages looking at situations from multiple perspectives and devising creative solutions.

Core Elements of Critical

Thinking

- **Analysis**

This involves examining ideas, detecting arguments, and breaking information into components to understand the structure of reasoning.

- **Evaluation**

It requires assessing statements and arguments to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to distinguish between facts and opinions.

- **Inference**

Either Inductive or Deductive, meaning drawing reasoned conclusions from available information and making logical connections between concepts is a key aspect of critical thinking.

- **Explanation**

Articulating the reasoning behind one's conclusions and presenting them clearly is crucial for effective communication.

- **Problem-Solving**

This entails approaching problems in a consistent and systematic way, using evidence to support decisions.



Critical Thinking in Practice

In real-life scenarios, critical thinking can manifest in various ways. For instance, in a workplace setting, it might involve analyzing a project proposal to identify its potential risks and benefits. In personal life, it could be used to evaluate the credibility of news sources or to make informed decisions about health and finances. In academic contexts, it is integral to understanding complex theories, conducting research, and engaging in meaningful discussions.

Challenges and Opportunities

While it is universally acknowledged as essential, teaching and applying it can be challenging. Biases, emotional reasoning, and over-reliance on intuition can interfere with objective thinking. Therefore, educational approaches must address these barriers and encourage an open-minded, questioning, and analytical mindset.



II. Theoretical Framework of Critical Thinking

A. Importance of Critical Thinking for Young People with Disabilities (Physical and Slight Cognitive)

Critical thinking is considered an important methodology for the development of employability skills. People with a high level of critical thinking and reasoning are likely to be innovative, bringing new ideas and creative solutions to even the most difficult business challenges. “UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” recognizes the right to work and employment as a fundamental right.

DIS-employability aims at providing people with disabilities useful employability skills through the development of critical thinking for promoting their inclusion in the labor market.

To fully understand the matter, it is necessary to recognize the value of critical thinking for access to the labor market. Critical thinking is a key soft skill in the workplace. Employers seek job candidates who can evaluate a situation using logical thought and offer the best solution; someone with critical thinking skills can be trusted to make decisions independently and will not need constant hand holding. Hiring a critical thinker means that micromanaging won't be required. That is why critical thinking abilities are among the most sought-after skills in almost every industry and workplace.

Focusing on the transition to job for young people with disabilities, multiple researches has examined the capacity of individuals with slight cognitive disabilities to solve problems and has suggested that people with cognitive disabilities exhibit a largely inflexible pattern of problem-solving skills (Ellis, Woodley-Zanthos, Dulaney & Palmer, 1989; Ferretti & Butterfield, 1989; Ferretti & Cavelier, 1991; Short & Evans, 1990). This pattern “is characterized by repetition of past strategies to solve current problems without adapting to new stimuli or new task demands” (Short & Evans, 1990, p. 95). Wehmeyer and Kelchner (1994) examined the social problem-solving skills of adults with slight cognitive disabilities and found that this group generated fewer potential solutions to social problems and that a greater proportion of the solutions generated were irrelevant. Gumpel, Tappe, and Araki (2000) compared the social problem solving of adults with and without developmental disabilities and found that adults with developmental disabilities exhibited greater difficulty solving social problems related to employment and vocational outcomes than did people with disabilities. On the other hand, other researches showed how teaching students with slight cognitive disabilities to use problem-solving skills to achieve self-set educational goals means an immediate and dramatic improvement in goal attainment as a function of their use of the problem-solving strategy.

Decision-making can be included into the critical thinking skills, there has been relatively little research pertaining to the capacity of people with slight cognitive and developmental disabilities to make decisions. The exceptions involve research and model development by Tymchuk (Tymchuk, 1985; Tymchuk, Andron, & Rahbar, 1988) and by Hickson, Khemka, and colleagues (Hickson, Golden, Khemka, Urv, & Yamusah, 1998; Hickson & Khemka, 1999; Khemka, 2000; Khemka & Hickson, 2000; Khemka, Hickson, & Reynolds, 2005). This research and development illustrate the relevance of linking instruction in decision making to real-



world issues and contexts. Both these lines of research suggest that, not surprisingly, people with intellectual disabilities who are not provided explicit instruction on decision-making skills are not as capable of making effective decisions and, in high-risk situations (such as those involving abuse) or in situations where decisions may have considerable consequences (such as parenting), are at risk for negative outcomes. It should be emphasized, however, that even in high-risk situations, which tend to be where research has been conducted, people with intellectual disabilities have been shown to have some capacity, a finding often ignored.

With that being said, critical thinking is a crucial skill for young people with disabilities, whether physical or cognitive, as it empowers them to navigate and excel in various aspects of their lives.

There are different kind of reasons why critical thinking is important for young people with disabilities:

- **Problem Solving**

Critical thinking enables individuals to analyze situations, identify challenges, and develop effective solutions. For young people with disabilities, this skill is particularly valuable in overcoming obstacles related to mobility, communication, and daily activities. They can devise creative ways to adapt and find solutions that cater to their unique needs.

- **Independence and Autonomy**

Developing critical thinking skills empowers young people with disabilities to become more independent and self-reliant. It encourages them to take initiative, make informed decisions, and manage their daily lives more effectively, ultimately reducing their reliance on others for assistance.

- **Communication and Advocacy**

Critical thinking enhances communication skills, enabling young people with disabilities to express their needs, preferences, and opinions more effectively. This is especially important for advocating for their rights, accessing appropriate services, and participating in discussions about their own care and well-being.

- **Education and Learning**

Critical thinking is essential for effective learning. It helps young people with disabilities engage with academic material, ask insightful questions, and analyze concepts. By developing strong critical thinking skills, they can excel in education and pursue their interests, regardless of the challenges they may face.

- **Employability and Career Advancement**

Critical thinking is highly valued by employers across various industries. Young people with disabilities who possess strong critical thinking skills can excel in the workplace by adapting to different tasks, problem-solving, and contributing innovative ideas. This can lead to greater career opportunities and advancement.



- **Social and Emotional Well-being**

As they develop critical thinking skills, they become adept at navigating the intricacies of social interactions, forming authentic connections, and managing the emotional nuances associated with their disabilities. Furthermore, the introspective nature of critical thinking contributes to heightened self-awareness, allowing them to embrace their strengths and weaknesses, ultimately fostering a more robust sense of emotional regulation.

- **Decision Making**

Critical thinking enables informed decision-making, allowing young people with disabilities to weigh pros and cons, consider potential outcomes, and make choices aligned with their goals and aspirations. This skill is valuable for both day-to-day decisions and more significant life choices.

- **Advocacy and Social Change**

Equipped with critical thinking skills, young people with slight cognitive disabilities emerge as discerning evaluators of prevailing societal norms, policies, and attitudes toward disabilities. This discernment empowers them to become advocates for transformative change, challenging ingrained biases and advocating for inclusivity, accessibility, and positive societal shifts. Critical thinking becomes a tool for not only personal empowerment but also a force for reshaping community perceptions and fostering systemic change towards a more inclusive and accommodating society.

- **Lifelong Learning**

The ability to think critically encourages a mindset of continuous learning and adaptation. Young people with disabilities who embrace critical thinking are more likely to seek out new experiences, explore their interests, and pursue personal growth throughout their lives. Overall, critical thinking equips young people with disabilities with the tools they need to overcome challenges, advocate for themselves, and actively participate in society. It empowers them to lead fulfilling lives, contribute meaningfully to their communities, and create a more inclusive and accessible world.



B. Eight Elements of Critical Thinking

Self-Reflection

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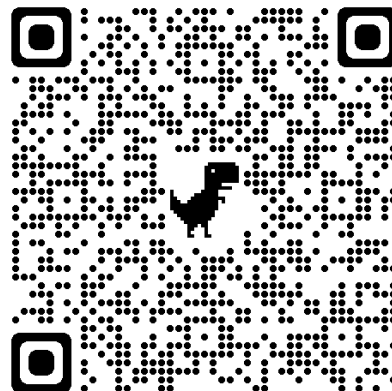
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Skill Self-Reflection

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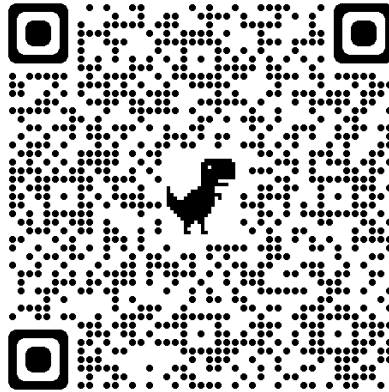
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Analysis

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Acquisition of Information

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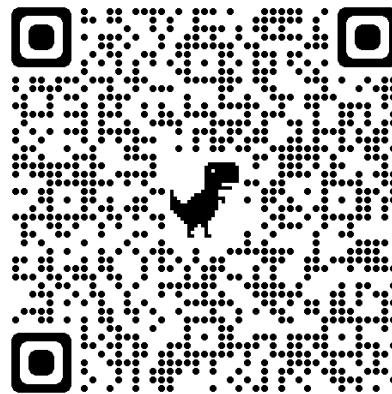
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Creativity

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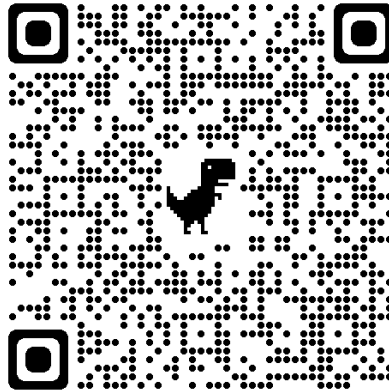
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Structuring Arguments

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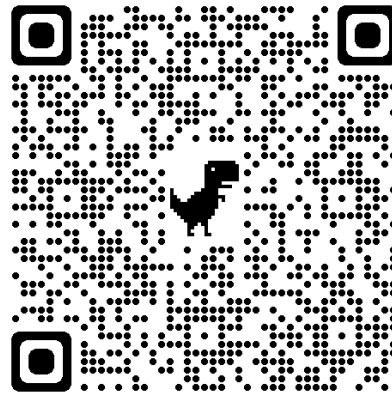
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Decision Making

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Skill Decision Making

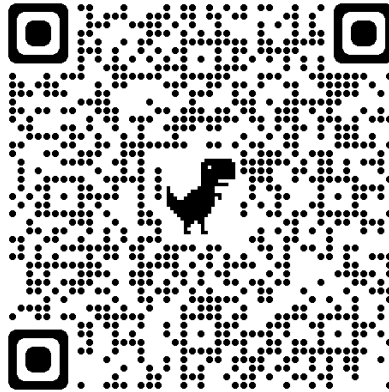
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Commitment

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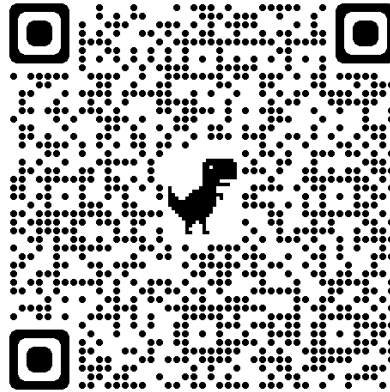
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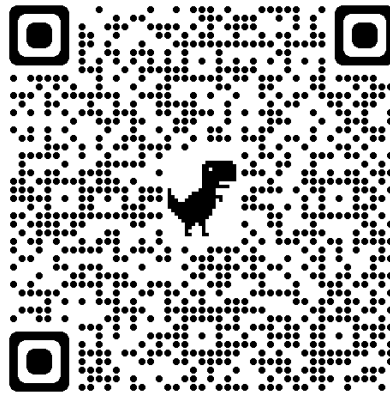
DIS-Employability

Debate

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The graphic is a rectangular slide with a blue border. At the top left is the European Union flag and the text 'Co-funded by the European Union'. At the top center is the title 'DIS-EMPLOYABILITY' in large blue letters. Below the title, the words 'Skill Debate' are centered. The main visual is an illustration of two people, a man and a woman, standing at blue and black podiums respectively, with speech bubbles above them. At the bottom, there are five logos: 'eduforma' (with the tagline '...strumenti su misura per la persona'), 'Innovation Frontiers' (with the tagline 'Mind is the limit'), 'Babilon Travel' (with a house icon), 'NGO NEST Berlin' (with a bird icon), and 'Mine Vaganti NGO' (with a globe icon). A blue and white striped decorative element is in the top right corner.

Please scan the QR code to reach the whole presentation on Debate





III. Description of Local Programs and assessment

The local programs integrates a phase of thematic education, where participants are provided with an understanding of Critical Thinking concepts, methodologies, exercises and co-designed approach and a proper phase of co-working, in whose context the participants work cooperatively on exercises exploring the deconstruction of stereotyping and narratives about disability and the staging of positive messages of equality and inclusion of people with disabilities, as well as peer-cooperation on an equal footing between people with and without disability. The role of the educators in the phase of co-design is the supporting of the process of co-creation through overseeing the group dynamics and providing orientational support.



A. Asociatia Babilon Travel

Local Program Report	
Country:	Romania
Short description of the activity implemented (preparation, methodologies, participants, facilitators, etc.):	<p>The first step in the preparation of the Local Program was to establish the goal and objectives for the activity. The main goal was to develop critical thinking for the employability of youngsters with disabilities, based on the activities from the first result, the Training Format, which had been piloted previously in the Learning, Teaching, Training activity.</p> <p>General objectives for the activity were set, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding critical thinking concepts. ● Enhancing elements of critical thinking. ● Increasing social inclusion and equity. <p>As for participants, the target was to involve 5 young people aged 18+ with physical impairments, 5 young people aged 18+ with slight cognitive disabilities, and 5 young people without disabilities. In total, 18 young participants fell into these categories.</p> <p>The process of selecting participants involved collaboration with three strategic partners from Cluj-Napoca: the Special Technological High School of Hearing Impaired, the Special High School of Visual Impaired, and "Horea" Secondary School. Together, they successfully gathered the targeted participants.</p> <p>The preparation continued with developing the agenda and selecting two activities/workshops from the Training Format, taking into account the participants' needs and understanding. Presentations were created, and the workshops were adapted, considering their ages and special needs.</p> <p>The facilitators for the program were two staff members, youth workers, who had participated in the Learning, Teaching, Training activity during the piloting phase of the Training Format.</p> <hr/> <p>The venue for the program was the Special Technological High School of Hearing Impaired in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.</p>
Brief agenda/topics:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Official welcome to the Local Activity b) Get to know each other c) Introduction of the project, its aim and objectives d) The Training Format 2. First Workshop - Managing conflicts in group 3. Second Workshop - Empathy Mapping



Resources used:	<p>The main resource that we used was the Training Format. Based on the selected workshops that we wanted to implement and information about the project and critical thinking we created some presentations. Additionally, we searched and selected inclusive name games, ice breakers and energizers.</p>
Feedback from the participants:	<p>Participants' initial feedback was overwhelmingly positive, expressed through their enthusiasm, curiosity, and smiles. They eagerly inquired about the next activity.</p> <p>Afterward, a Google Form for evaluation was distributed via email. The feedback was highly satisfactory, with over 80% praising the activity's structure and presentations.</p> <p>Seventeen out of 18 participants found the activities very useful, though some had preferences between the workshops. A few participants suggested longer durations for better comprehension, while others found the time management well-balanced.</p> <p>The clarity of the workshop content received positive reviews from 15 out of 18 participants. The project adapted and adjusted explanations to cater to each individual's needs, which took more time than anticipated.</p> <p>Participants found the presentations and discussions highly beneficial, and their motivation for future activities showed their increased curiosity and ambition.</p> <p>The facilitator received excellent and very good evaluations from 14 out of 18 participants.</p>
Achievements and challenges encountered during the activity:	<p>The biggest achievement that the project had was the unplanned questions and answers session at the end of the activity regarding topics such as abilities/needed abilities and skills in increasing employability. The project considers that the most successful outcome is when the participants get curious, and a seed is planted that can start to bloom. The project's participants, some of them already working after classes, others in their last year of high school, wanted to learn more about increasing their chances in employment. The project focused more on two abilities during the workshops: empathy and problem-solving skills.</p> <p>The project faced also challenges; one of them was the required extra time for extra-explanations and sign language translations. It was realized at the beginning that even if efforts were made to prepare and adapt the workshops in a much simpler way and explain according to the participants' understanding, it wasn't enough. During the workshops, the project needed to be flexible, to stop, to adapt, and to give extra information to be able to proceed with the activity. For example, such a challenge was at creating an empathy map, when an extra 40 minutes were needed to explain and discuss what is empathy.</p>



Overall, the achievements were more than the challenges, and every challenge can be overcome.

Pictures from the local program:





B. Mine Vaganti NGO

Local Program Report	
Country:	Italy
Short description of the activity implemented (preparation, methodologies, participants, facilitators, etc.):	<p>The activity was implemented during two days in August 2023 by Mine Vaganti NGO in cooperation with the Association A Ruota Libera Onlus from Nettuno, in their educational Social Farm "Asino Chi legge" while integrated in their daily activities.</p> <p>For the preparation of activity, the educators and project manager were introduced to the methodology of the Training Format "Critical thinking for employability". After a review of the methodology, the educators were asked to choose the activities they think are adapted (or adaptable) to the working target group.</p> <p>Working in team, educators and the project coordinator prepared an adaptation to the activities.</p> <p>The participants, who are able to participate were asked to be present during the specific days, the working hours were split into evening and morning sessions. Totally, there were 12 participants: 10 in the 1st session, 12 in the second session (2 extra participants joined). Not all participants were able to participate in the first session.</p> <p>Two facilitators, Professional Educators in the Fattoria Sociale Asino Chi Legge were in charge of activities.</p> <p>The first session included the energizers and team building activities. The second session included the selected activities from the training format "Critical thinking for employability" focused on improving soft skills, abilities and transversal competencies, exercises for enhancement of critical thinking and several good practices.</p>



<p>Brief agenda/topics:</p>	<p>The activity was divided into two sessions, according to the agenda of the Social Farm’s daily activities.</p> <p>1st session, evening session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Energizers and Team building activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DUE VERITA' E UNA BUGIA, STAI CERCANDO QUALCUNO CHE... ○ Fotovoice <p>2nd session, morning session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Activities from the topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Educational Needs ○ Critical thinking ○ Soft skills ○ Conflict management & Critical Thinking ○ Selected Good Practices
<p>Resources used:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Training Format “Critical thinking for employability” ● 4 hours of preparation, activity adaptation and reporting ● 5 hours of workshops ● Others: paper, pens, smartphones, blackboard, books
<p>Feedback from the participants:</p>	<p>Some participants faced difficulties in reading and/or writing, necessitating adaptations to certain activities. The theoretical aspects of the activities proved challenging to grasp, as the concepts were somewhat abstract for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The initial parts of the activities, which involved introducing the topic (such as presentations and PowerPoint presentations), were challenging to follow due to the attention deficits of some participants.</p> <p>These challenges were addressed by simplifying and adapting the activities. This involved initially focusing on the practical aspects and combining the introduction with reflection, as well as adjusting the questions to match the participants' abilities.</p>
<p>Achievements and challenges encountered during the activity:</p>	<p>After the activities, a raised interest in non-formal education activities was observed as participants inquired about repeating some of them or trying something similar. Despite meeting each other almost daily, the targeted energizers and team-building games improved the team's communication skills and deepened their understanding of each other, their families, and their backgrounds. Some participants made progress in expressing themselves orally, especially in front of the group, when required to communicate their ideas to contribute to group tasks. There was an improvement in analytical skills, as participants delved deeper into topics,</p>



formulated questions, actively listened to answers, and summarized gathered information.

The conflict management session was combined with the empathy session, using real-life situations that had occurred within the group. The examples included individuals considered "troublemakers" by the group. With the support of the educator, this allowed the youngsters to reflect on the needs of others, understand the reasons behind certain behaviors, build empathy, and propose solutions to various situations. It enabled participants to apply this knowledge to improve their future interactions with team members. Participants not only developed empathy skills but also reflected on their own needs and preferences, enabling them to better understand themselves and effectively communicate with educators and the group.

Pictures from the local program:







C. Eduforma

Local Program Report	
Country:	Italy
Short description of the activity implemented (preparation, methodologies, participants, facilitators, etc.):	<p>For the Local Activity in Italy, Eduforma has organized an inclusive online workshop via Google Meet, designed to foster a supportive environment for learning and social interaction for young individuals aged 18-30 with and without disabilities. In fact, the workshop brought together individuals aged 18-26 with and without disabilities. The workshop was guided by two certified facilitators, transposing and adapting to the context what they learned from Dis-Employability materials and Train for Trainer.</p> <p>The workshop aimed to develop essential cognitive skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. The agenda for the 4 hours of the workshop featured a blend of theoretical learning and interactive activities that allowed participants to engage in participatory exercises designed to reinforce these skills through application and promote social interaction. The interactive nature of the workshop facilitated a robust and inclusive learning environment, ensuring the engagement of all participants.</p>
Brief agenda/topics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Official welcome to the Local Activity ○ Get to know each other ○ Introduction of the project, its aim and objectives



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Training Format ● First Part of the Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Theoretical instruments and definitions to learn about thinking, critical thinking ○ “The Liberty Key” activity: critical thinking in practice ○ Linking critical thinking to problem solving and decision making ○ Real Life situation: critical thinking and decision making in practice ● Second Part of the Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Barriers and obstacles to critical thinking: Biases and Logical Fallacies ○ Linking critical thinking to problem solving and decision making ○ Real Life situation: critical thinking and decision making in practice ○ Logidetect Activity: Bias in real life scenarios ○ Analysis and Logical linking ○ Quality Reasoning ○ Deconstructing Stereotypes Brainstorming ● Final feedback, conclusions, survey submission, greetings
<p>Resources used:</p>	<p>In order to prepare the workshop, Eduforma facilitators deployed all the tools, concepts and methodologies elaborated during the project, drawing on the Non-Formal Education Training Format for Youth Institutions and Operators and activities from the Training for Trainers.</p> <p>During the workshop, the resources used have been the following:</p> <p>Slides - the slides contained everything that was said and done during the workshop. The presentation supported the whole workshop, from the theoretical parts, during which definitions and conceptual maps were displayed, to the engaging activities, during which key words and rules were displayed.</p> <p>Two PDF documents were sent to each participant with tables illustrating the most common and important Biases and Logical Fallacies. These sheets were thought to be an interesting material for them to keep and consult also in the future, as well as an helpful supporting tool for carrying out the “LogiDetect Activity”.</p>
<p>Feedback from the participants:</p>	<p>Feedback is an invaluable tool for measuring the success of any educational, formative endeavor. In the case of the Local Activity held by Eduforma in Italy on September 1, 2023, the feedback received</p>




	<p>from participants both during the activities and at the end has been extremely valuable in assessing the quality of the event.</p> <p>At the conclusion of this Local Activity, which took place via Google Meet, a questionnaire was sent to all participants. This questionnaire was designed to measure their perceptions of the workshop's content, organization, and delivery. It included both closed and open-ended questions, giving participants the opportunity to express their opinions openly (and anonymously).</p> <p>The responses collected from this feedback mechanism were encouragingly positive, affirming the overall success of the Workshop. Participants shared their appreciation for various aspects of the workshop, providing insightful commentary that helped identify strengths to build upon - in particular, the exercises on the biases and logical fallacies - and areas for potential improvement.</p> <p>The closed questions, answered on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, revealed that the participants found the Workshop to be satisfactory, effective, and suitable for their needs. The structure of the event, the trainers' presentation, interactive activities, clarity of content, and the usefulness of the content were all rated as "Very Positive." The workshop's duration was also seen in a positive light.</p> <p>In the open-ended feedback section, participants highlighted the strengths of the workshop. The exercises on biases and logical fallacies were particularly praised for their role in promoting critical thinking. It was evident that the workshop not only motivated the participants but also contributed to increasing their self-awareness.</p> <p>All these feedback gatherings can be verified by consulting the Quality Report on the Local Activity held by Eduforma. The positivity of this feedback underscores the effectiveness of the workshop, demonstrating the high-quality results obtained. This success is to be attributed to the work done within the Dis-Employability project, the Training Formats produced, and the knowledge and methodologies transferred within the project.</p> <p>This positive feedback on the Local Activity's usefulness instills confidence in the quality of the outputs and results of the Dis-Employability project. It highlights the value of the work carried out by the Project Partnership over the course of several months. This positive feedback encourages Eduforma and the other Partners to continue its mission of disseminating and promoting Dis-Employability educational materials, awareness-raising content, and other project-related results.</p>
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	<p>In conclusion, feedback collected from participants in the Local Activity held by Eduforma in Italy not only reflects the success of the event but also encourages the organization to continue its vital work in spreading knowledge and awareness through the Dis-Employability project.</p>
<p>Achievements and challenges encountered during the activity:</p>	<p>The workshop was held online with participants aged 18 to 26.</p> <p>We, as organizers and facilitators were prepared to face some difficulties related to some factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age disparities of the participants • Disability disparities of the participants • Difficulties related to the digital tools (connection issues, platform utilization and functioning etc.) • Fear to not engage participants enough <p>Anyway, none of these represented a problem during the workshop, thanks to good preparation and a bit of luck.</p> <p>Both activities and presentations on theoretical frameworks were designed to be not too complex and boring, for the youngest participants, nor too banal, for the oldest. No activity requested obligation to expose oneself, in order to not force people to do something potentially embarrassing for him/her. However, participation and engagement was encouraged, with facilitators constantly asking many questions to the audience. Nonetheless, engagement and participation from the attendees has been positive and constant throughout the whole workshop, beyond expectations. Moreover, at the end of the workshop, participants expressed satisfaction with the workshop, being both enjoyable and useful, as emerges from the feedback collected via questionnaires.</p> <p>Challenges related to the online means have been tried to be faced by explaining to participants individually the functioning of Google Meet. Anyway, problems with digital tools should always be taken into account, and one preventive strategy is to have the mobile numbers of participants to allow them to reach us with a phone call in case of need. The most critical challenge may be to carry out the activities and maintain a high level of participation, despite the length and the presence of a potentially wide range of disabilities. to make the workshop a good alternation between active and passive moments of learning, with necessary adjustments to make sure that everyone had an inclusive and enriching experience.</p>



	<p>Concrete and reasoned efforts, depending on the composition of the group participating in the workshop, are necessary to stimulate engagement.</p>
<p>Pictures from the local program:</p>	 <p>The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main slide displays the 'eduforma' logo (with the tagline '...strumenti su misura per la persona' and 'Eduforma srl Italia'), the 'DIS-Employability' logo, and the text 'DIS-Employability LOCAL ACTIVITY 2023'. It also includes the European Union flag and 'Co-funded by the European Union'. The top right of the slide shows the date '01-09-2023'. On the right side of the Zoom window, there is a grid of participant video thumbnails with names: Gaia Tiozzo, Andrea Pantalei, Davide Pistoro, Luciano Capucci, Sofia Zama, Simoni Ranzato, Gaia Tiozzo, and Davide Destro.</p>



D. NGO Nest

Local Program Report	
Country:	Germany
Short description of the activity implemented (preparation, methodologies, participants, facilitators, etc.):	The activity was developed over a timeframe of circa 1,5 hours and included activities aimed at testing the training material about critical thinking skills for employability. The implemented program involved an audience of 15 learners, belonging to different target groups as people with physical disabilities, people with slight cognitive disabilities and people without disabilities. The testing was carried out by expert trainers trained as part of the international training happened in May. The local program incorporated a phase of thematic education, during which participants gained an understanding of critical thinking concepts and methodologies. They engaged in cooperative activities aimed at exploring and enhancing the 8 elements of critical thinking, including self-reflection, analysis, acquisition of information, creativity, structuring arguments, decision-making, commitment, as well as debate.
Brief agenda/topics:	<p>Local program agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction (15 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Welcome and icebreaker activities ○ Overview of the program's goals and objectives ● Thematic education (30 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction to critical thinking concepts and methodologies ○ Explanation of the 8 elements of critical thinking ○ Discussion and Q&A ● Cooperative activities (30 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participants working in small groups ○ Activities focusing on critical thinking elements, including ○ self-reflection, analysis, creativity, and decision making ● Peer cooperation (15 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encouraging collaboration between participants with and without disabilities ○ Sharing insights and experiences ● Closing and feedback (10 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recap of key takeaways ○ Participants provide feedback and reflections
Resources used:	The resources used for the implementation of the local program were:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trained operators: the person who received training as part of the international Piloting. ● Educational materials: this included printed materials used for the thematic education phase. The trainer provided handouts, reference materials on critical thinking and a copy of the Training format developed by all the partners. ● Discussion topics: topics and prompts for discussions and activities related to deconstructing stereotypes and narratives, promoting equality and inclusion, and encouraging peer cooperation. ● Feedback and evaluation tools: tools for gathering feedback and evaluating the program's effectiveness, such as surveys or questionnaires.
<p>Feedback from the participants:</p>	<p>The participants provided favorable feedback regarding various aspects of the local program and the training format. They expressed contentment with the logistics of the event, which implies that the program was well-organized and efficiently managed. Additionally, they reported acquiring new skills related to critical thinking, indicating that the program successfully achieved its educational objectives.</p> <p>The materials used during the program were well-received, indicating that the resources and content provided were engaging and beneficial. Overall, the participants' feedback suggests that the local program was successful in various aspects, fostering a positive learning environment between people with different backgrounds and bodies capabilities.</p>
<p>Achievements and challenges encountered during the activity:</p>	<p>Achievements during the local program encompassed the notable development of critical thinking skills among participants. The positive feedback from participants signified that the program effectively met its objectives and engaged the learners.</p> <p>However, the program also faced challenges. One challenge was accommodating the diverse needs of participants, including those with physical and cognitive disabilities, within the limited timeframe of the 1.5-hour sessions. Managing time constraints was particularly demanding when striving to cover the program's content comprehensively. These challenges required careful planning and adaptability to ensure an inclusive and effective learning experience for all participants.</p>



Pictures from the
local program:







E. Innovation Frontiers

Local Program Report	
Country:	Greece
Short description of the activity implemented (preparation, methodologies, participants, facilitators, etc.):	The activity/workshop took place on 30th of November in Impact Hub event center in Athens, Greece. For the preparation of activity, the presenter and his colleague familiarized themselves with the material and prepared presentations on critical thinking and goal setting in a group setting. The methodology took inspiration from literature like “Thinking, Fast and Slow” by Daniel Kahneman and “The Art of Being Right” by Arthur Schopenhauer. Also, the goal setting methodology was based on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) model as well as it’s connection to logical fallacies that can hinder a successful goal setting plan. The first session included the energizers and team building activities. The second session included group discussions, polls and reflection on examples from every day life in goal setting.
Brief agenda/topics:	<p>The workshop was divided into two sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1st session, evening session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Energizer/Team building activities ○ Critical thinking skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Structuring Arguments as a Critical Thinking Skill ● Common fallacies (Ad hominem attack, Appeal to authority, Straw man, Red herring etc.) ● Understanding and structuring arguments and counter-arguments ● Plausible vs Probable (Conjunction fallacy). ● 2nd session, morning session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inductive and Deductive reasoning ○ Common reasoning fallacies (confirmation bias, anchoring bias, Availability bias) ○ Methodology of setting S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, relevant, Time-bound) goals ○ Application of Matrix quadrant on Important/Non important & ○ Urgent/Non-urgent tasks.

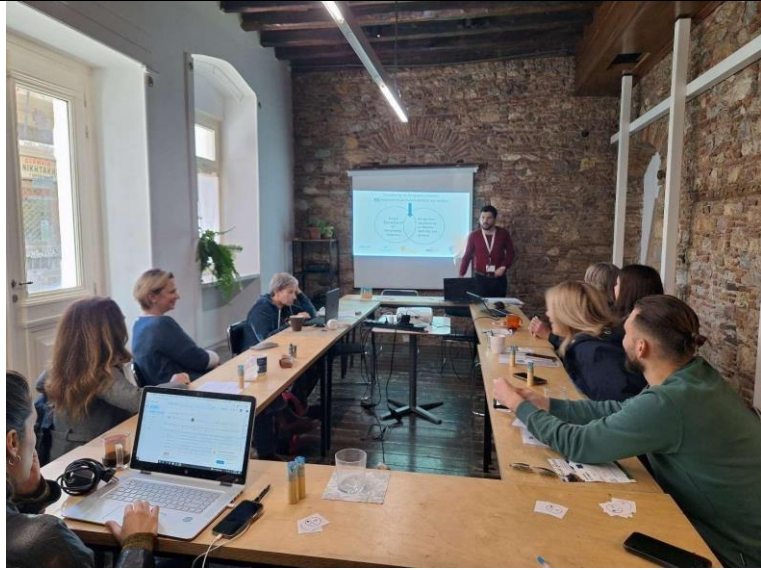


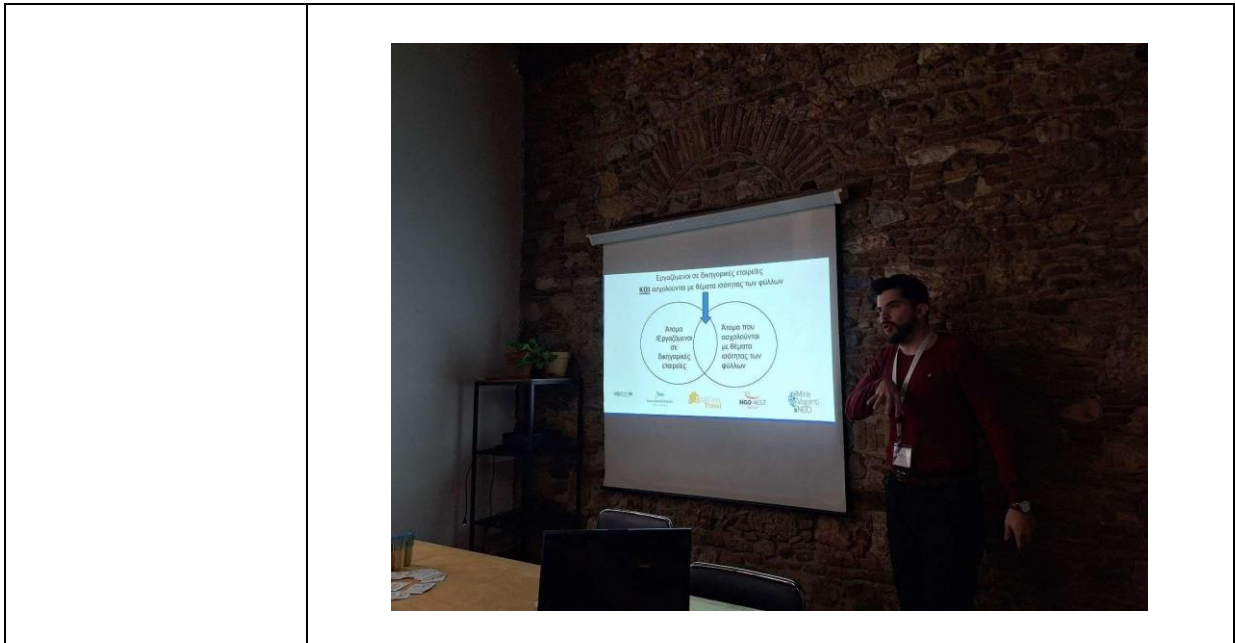
Resources used:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The training format “Critical thinking for employability” ● PowerPoint presentations ● Paper, pens, smartphones, whiteboard
Feedback from the participants:	<p>The participants engaged enthusiastically with the SMART methodology, appreciating its practical, step-by-step application. They found it valuable for distinguishing between essential and non-essential tasks, particularly when integrated with the Urgent-Important Matrix quadrant. The exploration of logical fallacies, especially in everyday arguments and narratives involving people with disabilities, captured their interest. The plausible vs probable exercise underscored the importance of analytical thinking over intuitive reactions when evaluating information. Despite facing challenges related to the discussion on the use of stereotyping to exclude individuals with disabilities, participants acknowledged the real-world examples presented. Drawing parallels to debating techniques and workplace biases, they collectively agreed that empathy, understanding, and open dialogue serve as powerful tools to overcome such challenges and foster inclusivity.</p>
Achievements and challenges encountered during the activity:	<p>As for the achievements, the participants were very interested in the SMART methodology due to its practical step-by-step application. They thought that it’s a good way of differentiate between essential and non- essential tasks which combined with the Urgent-Important Matrix quadrant found that they would use them themselves. The logical fallacies presented also seemed to raise interest particularly in every day arguments and even discriminative narrative that people use regarding people with disabilities. Furthermore, the plausible vs probable exercise demonstrated the need of everyone involved to not take information as face value but to analyze it first logically and not always intuitively.</p> <p>As for the challenges there was a discussion of how often people use stereotyping as to consciously or unconsciously exclude people with disabilities from working and even social life. The discussion brought forth numerous real life examples of such incidents and participants found that the narratives were very similar to debating techniques such as “straw man” and “ad hominem attacks” as well as conformation biases by people in the workspace. It was agreed however that these fallacies are common pitfalls for all and that empathy, understanding and open dialogue can overcome such biases and prejudice in a good number of cases.</p>



Pictures from the
local program:









IV. Guidelines for Operators Supporting Programs

A. Introduction to Supporting Programs

Critical thinking is a vital skill for learners and educators of all ages and levels, especially in the digital age. It involves analyzing, evaluating, and creating information, arguments, and solutions in a logical and reflective way. The use of 21st-century tools and, more importantly, thinking skills, underpins the development of traditional essential skills for critical thinking, which include:

- Communication and Information skills
- Thinking and Problem-Solving skills
- Interpersonal and Self-Directional skills
- Collaboration skills

These four skill sets are indispensable for learners in any field and at all levels of education. Thus, the answer to the question is clear: we need to teach our learners to think critically and independently. One of the educational goals is to equip learners with the ability to learn through discovery. Providing opportunities to practice critical thinking will assist learners in analyzing others' thinking and evaluating the logic of others. Understanding others is crucial for collaboration and daily life. Critical thinking allows learners to do more than simply memorize knowledge. So, how can we achieve this goal? One recommendation is for educators to incorporate in-depth questioning strategies into their lesson launches. They should pose thoughtful questions that encourage answers with sound reasoning. Subsequently, shape conversations and communication to mold learners' thinking. Quick answers, which often result in very few words and lack of eye contact, are not skills we want to promote. Utilizing critical thinking skills can be viewed as a shift in the teaching and learning paradigm. Engagement in education will enhance collaboration between educators and learners. It will also provide a path for learners to succeed even if the school system had to start over.

CONCRIT – Community Narration for Critical Thinking

One notable initiative in the realm of critical thinking and inclusive education is CONCRIT, which stands for Community Narration for Critical Thinking. CONCRIT's primary aim is to contribute to the development of a socially cohesive Europe by nurturing self-confident, fully informed, and educated citizens. It recognizes that Europe is replete with isolated solutions and recurring challenges that demand collective attention.

In the initial assessment, CONCRIT partners identified a range of needs that a general learning path could address. These needs encompass issues like a lack of insight into how participation works, the disenchantment of marginalized communities with politics, and the digital exclusion of certain groups. Educators and learners alike seek tools and methods that empower self-driven learning, community building, and the deconstruction of discriminatory



stereotypes. The learning path provided by CONCRIT emphasizes digital tools, storytelling, and group narratives as potent tools for civic education.

B. Developing Critical Thinking Involving Learners with and without Disabilities

Engagement, application, and collaboration are enduring skills. The integration of critical thinking into instructional methods is promoted. To facilitate this integration, lessons or units can commence with probing questions that transcend simple 'yes' or 'no' answers. These questions are designed to inspire discovery-based learning and problem-solving.

Creativity is encouraged, and it has been observed that educators often pre-prepare projects, such as designing snowmen or other "creative" tasks. However, when the design work or pre-cutting of materials is done in advance, it can limit the options for creativity, resulting in uniformity among the projects of learners. In such cases, learners may not be encouraged to think independently or engage in problem-solving.

Not having everything "glue-ready" in advance is considered advantageous. Instead, learners should be provided with all the necessary supplies to create a snowman and be allowed to complete the project independently. Granting independence empowers learners to develop critical thinking skills, as they must create their own product with the materials provided. This approach can be applied to various grade levels and projects.

It is advisable not to rush to offer assistance too quickly; learners should be allowed to work through productive challenges independently. Opportunities should be incorporated into the learning process to help learners identify connections in their studies. Encouraging learners to establish connections to real-life situations and identify patterns is an effective means of practicing their critical thinking skills.

Several other techniques that can foster critical thinking include the use of analogies, promoting interaction among learners/peers/trainees, posing open-ended questions, allowing time for reflection, incorporating real-life problems, and facilitating opportunities for thinking practice. Critical thinking plays a vital role in preparing learners to think independently throughout their lives. It is also believed that critical thinkers are less likely to conform to the crowd, as they actively engage in independent thought.

So how can educators and learners foster and practice critical thinking in the training context or online? Here are some tools or apps that can help.

- **Ask questions**

Asking questions, especially open-ended questions, gives learners a chance to apply what they've learned and build on prior knowledge. It also allows them to problem-solve and think on their feet, and boosts self-esteem by providing an opportunity for learners to express themselves in front of their peers.



- When asking learners questions and they provide a solution, educators can use the following prompts to foster further thinking:
- Could you elaborate further on that point?
- Will you express that point differently?
- Can you provide an illustration?
- Could you offer an example?
- Will you provide more details?
- Can you be more specific?
- Should we consider another point of view?
- Is there an alternative perspective on this question?

- **Encourage decision-making**

Since a large part of teaching critical thinking skills revolves around applying knowledge and evaluating solutions, educators should encourage decision-making as much as possible. This enables learners to apply what they've learned to different situations, weigh the pros and cons of a variety of solutions, then decide which ideas work best.

- **Work in groups**

Group projects and discussions are another excellent way for educators to encourage critical thinking skills. Cooperative learning not only exposes learners to the thought processes of their peers, it expands their thinking and worldview by demonstrating that there's no one right way to approach a problem.

- **Incorporate different points of view**

Some of the very best critical thinking exercises for learners involve exploring a concept from multiple perspectives. This tactic not only establishes that an idea should be assessed from different points of view before an opinion is formed, it gives learners a chance to share their own viewpoints while listening to and learning from others.

- **Connect different ideas**

Connecting different ideas is key to educating critical thinking. For example, educators can ask learners if they know anyone who has to take a bus to work, and if so, why it would be important for that person to also have a train schedule. Questions like these help children consider different situations (delayed buses, for example) and potential solutions (taking the train instead), helping them apply prior knowledge to new contexts.

- **Inspire creativity**

Imagination is key to educating critical thinking. Educators should seek out new ways for learners to use information to create something new. Art projects are an excellent way to do



this. Learners can also construct inventions, write a story or poem, create a game, sing a song—the sky's the limit.

- **Brainstorm**

Brainstorming, a time-honored tradition in special needs education, is an excellent learning tool. It's also an excellent critical-thinking exercise, especially when paired with visual elements that bring original thinking and discussions to life.

- **Mind mapping**

Mind mapping is a visual technique that helps organize and connect ideas, facts, and questions. It can be used for brainstorming, outlining, summarizing, and problem-solving. There are many free or low-cost mind mapping apps available, such as MindMeister, XMind, or Coggle. These apps allow users to create, share, and collaborate on mind maps online, with features like color-coding, icons, images, links, and notes. Mind mapping can enhance critical thinking by stimulating creativity, memory, and comprehension.

- **Socratic questioning**

Socratic questioning is a method of inquiry that challenges assumptions, clarifies concepts, and explores perspectives. It can be used for discussion, debate, and reflection. There are several online resources that provide examples and guidelines for Socratic questioning, such as the Critical Thinking Foundation, the Socratic Method Research Portal, or the Socratic Questioning App. These resources can help educators and learners design and apply effective questions that stimulate critical thinking.

- **Logic puzzles**

Logic puzzles are games or problems that require deductive reasoning, pattern recognition, and problem-solving skills. They can be fun and engaging ways to practice and improve critical thinking. There are many types and genres of logic puzzles, such as Sudoku, riddles, crosswords, or escape rooms. There are also many online platforms that offer logic puzzles, such as Logic Grid Puzzles, Brainzilla, or The Logic Zone. These platforms can provide different levels of difficulty, hints, feedback, and explanations for logic puzzles.

- **Argument mapping**

Argument mapping is a graphical technique that helps structure and evaluate arguments. It can be used for writing, reading, and debating. It involves identifying and diagramming the premises, conclusions, and relationships of an argument, as well as assessing its validity, soundness, and strength. There are some online tools that facilitate argument mapping, such as Rationale, Argunet, or DebateGraph. These tools can help users create, edit, and share argument maps online, with features like templates, evaluation criteria, and comments. Argument mapping can enhance critical thinking by developing reasoning, communication, and analysis skills.



- **Simulation and gaming**

Simulation and gaming are interactive and immersive ways to learn and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes. They can be used for exploring scenarios, testing hypotheses, and making decisions. There are many types and formats of simulation and gaming, such as role-playing, virtual reality, or board games. There are also many online platforms that offer simulation and gaming, such as Simulations for Learning, iCivics, or Kahoot. These platforms can provide different topics, objectives, and feedback for simulation and gaming.

- **Peer feedback**

Peer feedback is a process of giving and receiving constructive comments and suggestions from peers. It can be used for improving work quality, learning from others, and developing self-regulation. There are some online tools that support peer feedback, such as Peergrade, FeedbackFruits, or Peerceptiv. These tools can help users create, submit, and review assignments online, with features like rubrics, criteria, and ratings. Peer feedback can enhance critical thinking by fostering collaboration, reflection, and evaluation.

C. Key Considerations and Best Practices for Operators

In the pursuit of fostering critical thinking and promoting inclusive education, there are key considerations and best practices that operators can employ to create effective learning environments. These considerations revolve around harnessing the power of community narration, utilizing educational tools, adopting diverse teaching methods, and modeling critical thinking skills. Let's delve into these aspects and explore their significance.

To cultivate critical thinking skills in learners, operators can employ various teaching methods. These methods prioritize productive interactions, open discussions, and collaborative teamwork. By fostering an environment where learners can share their ideas, expand their perspectives, and explore diverse topics, educators play a pivotal role in nurturing critical thinking. Moreover, educators must offer support, encouragement, and the necessary knowledge to guide learners on their critical thinking journey. The approach involves not only conveying information but also instilling the mindset required for effective critical thinking. Encouraging learners to think independently and critically is at the core of these teaching methods.

You can find more information here: [How to teach critical thinking in education](#)

Operators can further enhance the development of critical thinking skills by modeling best practices. This involves raising awareness about critical thinking, sharing ideas, and setting an example for learners to follow.

Some of the most effective techniques for modeling critical thinking skills include:

- **Asking Open-Ended Questions:** Engaging learners with open-ended questions encourages reflective thinking and stimulates their intellectual curiosity.



- **Providing Guidance and Debriefing Moments:** These moments help learners stay on the right path of thinking, promoting self-reflection and continuous improvement.
- **Offering Multiple Resources and Perspectives:** Exposing learners to a variety of resources and viewpoints broadens their horizons and enhances their understanding of complex topics.
- **Encouraging Teamwork and Fruitful Model Discussions:** Collaborative interactions with peers and educators help learners develop critical thinking skills through engaging conversations and debates.
- **Self-Assessment and Reflection:** Learners benefit from self-assessment and reflection, which allow them to identify areas for improvement and focus on their goals by reviewing their past performances.

You can find more information here: [Best Practices for educators](#)

In summary, operators play a crucial role in shaping the learning environment for critical thinking and inclusive education. By implementing these key considerations and best practices, they contribute to the development of self-assured, critical-thinking citizens who are equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world.



V. Guidebook methodology and conclusions

A. Pondered Analysis of Reports on Local Activities

The reports reflect a common commitment to inclusivity, adaptability, and practical application in implementing critical thinking programs for diverse participant groups. Each program faced unique challenges, yet the achievements and positive feedback underscore the success of the initiatives in fostering critical thinking skills and promoting social inclusion.

Asociatia Babilon Travel

Strengths:

- **Clear Goals and Objectives:** The program's main goal and specific objectives were well-defined, focusing on critical thinking for employability.
- **Inclusive Participant Selection:** Collaboration with strategic partners ensured the inclusion of participants with various disabilities, fostering diversity.
- **Effective Workshop Design:** Workshops on managing conflicts and empathy mapping, adapted from the Training Format, were positively received.
- **Positive Participant Feedback:** Overwhelmingly positive initial feedback indicated high participant engagement and enthusiasm.

Challenges:

- **Extra Time for Adaptations:** Challenges in adapting workshops, especially for activities like creating an empathy map, required additional time and flexibility.
- **Communication Barriers:** Sign language translations and extra explanations posed challenges despite efforts to simplify and adapt content.

Achievements:

- **Unplanned Q&A Session:** The unplanned session at the end, addressing employability questions, demonstrated participants' increased curiosity and ambition.
- **Focus on Soft Skills:** Emphasis on empathy and problem-solving skills contributed to a valuable learning experience.

Mine Vaganti NGO

Strengths:



- **Integration with Daily Activities:** Integration with the Social Farm's daily agenda showcased adaptability and creativity in implementing the Training Format.
- **Progress in Soft Skills:** Improvement in communication, analytical skills, and conflict management demonstrated positive outcomes.
- **Interest in non-formal Education:** Participants expressed interest in repeating activities, indicating a positive impact on their perception of non-formal education.

Challenges:

- **Reading/Writing Difficulties:** Adaptations were needed for participants with difficulties in reading/writing during theoretical aspects of activities.
- **Attention Deficits:** Attention deficits posed challenges during presentations and initial parts of activities, requiring adjustments.

Achievements:

- **Improved Communication:** Team-building activities improved communication skills, deepening participants' understanding of each other.
- **Empathy and Reflection:** The combination of conflict management with empathy sessions facilitated reflection, enhancing empathy skills.

Eduforma

Strengths:

- **Inclusive Online Workshop:** The online workshop via Google Meet catered to individuals with and without disabilities, fostering a supportive learning environment.
- **Positive Participant Feedback:** Positive feedback on structure, presentations, and engagement indicated a successful and enjoyable workshop.

Challenges:

- **Digital Tool Issues:** Potential difficulties related to digital tools were addressed by explaining Google Meet's functioning and providing contact numbers for support.
- **Varied Disabilities:** Efforts were made to stimulate engagement while being inclusive of different disabilities and age groups.

Achievements:

- **Positive Workshop Impact:** Participants' progress in critical thinking skills and expressed satisfaction highlighted the workshop's success.



- Valuable Feedback: Open-ended feedback provided insights into strengths and areas for improvement.



Strengths:

- **Thematic Education and Cooperation:** The combination of thematic education and cooperative activities fostered understanding and engagement among participants.
- **Favorable Feedback:** Positive feedback on logistics, materials, and educational content indicated successful achievement of objectives. Challenges:
- **Time Constraints:** Managing diverse needs within a limited timeframe was challenging, requiring adaptability to ensure inclusivity.
- **Inclusive Learning:** Ensuring an inclusive experience for participants with varying disabilities required careful planning.

Achievements:

- **Development of Critical Thinking:** The program successfully developed critical thinking skills, as reflected in positive feedback and participant insights.

Innovation Frontiers

Strengths:

- **Practical Application of SMART Methodology:** Participants found practical value in the SMART methodology for goal setting, distinguishing between essential and non-essential tasks.
- **Exploration of Logical Fallacies:** The exploration of logical fallacies, especially in everyday arguments, captured participants' interest.

Challenges:

- **Discussion on Stereotyping:** The discussion on using stereotyping to exclude individuals with disabilities posed challenges and required sensitive handling.
- **Time Management:** Managing time constraints for comprehensive coverage of content within the workshop duration was demanding.

Achievements:

- **Engaged Participation:** Participants engaged enthusiastically, demonstrating interest in the practical application of critical thinking skills and goal setting.
- **Real-world Relevance:** Examples from everyday life and workplace biases resonated with participants, fostering discussions on empathy and understanding.

B. Conclusions

The DIS-employability project emerges not only as a collaborative endeavor but as a transformative force that underscores the immense impact achievable through united efforts in addressing pressing societal challenges. At its essence, this project embodies a resolute commitment to enhancing critical thinking skills among individuals with disabilities, seamlessly aligning with the broader vision of the European Union to champion inclusivity and uphold the rights of every individual, regardless of ability.

The theoretical framework meticulously detailed in preceding chapters casts a spotlight on the multifaceted importance of critical thinking. It goes beyond being a mere cognitive skill; critical thinking is the bedrock upon which individuals build their ability to solve complex problems, foster independence, communicate effectively, engage in education, advance in careers, nurture social and emotional well-being, make informed decisions, advocate for change, and embark on a lifelong journey of learning.

Explicit recognition of critical thinking as a fundamental skill for young people with disabilities lays the groundwork for the practical applications undertaken in the project. It is not merely a skill to be acquired but a gateway to empowerment, enabling individuals to navigate and excel in various facets of their lives. The DIS-employability project stands as a testament to the belief that with the right skills and opportunities, people with disabilities can not only participate actively in society but also contribute meaningfully.

The European Union's unwavering commitment to inclusion, reflected in a robust legal framework and landmark court cases, not only provides a solid foundation for initiatives like DIS-employability but also sets a precedent for societal expectations. By aligning with these principles, the project not only contributes to breaking down existing barriers in education and the labor market but actively participates in the ongoing narrative of creating a society where inclusivity is not a mere goal but a lived reality.

Within the guidelines for operators supporting critical thinking programs, there lies a roadmap for creating effective learning environments. These guidelines are not just directives but a manifesto for educators and organizations to champion a shift in mindset, encouraging independent thought and in-depth engagement. The inclusion of practical tools and applications serves as an arsenal, empowering educators with diverse resources to tailor their approaches to the unique needs of their learners.

The pondered analysis of reports on local activities unveils a mosaic of challenges and triumphs, each program contributing to the collective understanding of how critical thinking programs can be implemented in diverse settings. Asociatia Babilon Travel's emphasis on soft skills and conflict management, Mine Vaganti NGO's integration with daily activities, Eduforma's success in an inclusive online workshop, NGO NEST Berlin's thematic education and cooperation, and Innovation Frontiers' practical application of the SMART methodology—all enrich the discourse on effective methodologies, adaptations, and successes in fostering critical thinking skills.



In conclusion, the DIS-employability project transcends the confines of a singular initiative; it stands as an emblem of a collective aspiration for a society that values the contributions of every individual, irrespective of their abilities. Beyond being a project focused on employability, it is a catalyst for societal transformation—a catalyst that encourages us to reconsider our societal norms, challenge biases, and work towards creating a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

As we reflect on the journey of this project, its impact reaches far beyond the realms of employment—it lays the groundwork for a more inclusive, understanding, and compassionate world. The lessons gleaned from this collaborative effort serve as an inspirational guidepost for future endeavors in the pursuit of social justice, equality, and the realization of human potential. The DIS-employability project's legacy extends beyond its immediate goals, standing as a testament to the profound transformations possible when diverse stakeholders unite in a shared commitment to building a more inclusive and equitable future.



VI. Sources

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