



**“Start with Self”. Inclusive Training Proficiency**  
*A competence model for business trainers and  
educators who care*

# Part 2

# Designing Inclusive Trainings



Co-funded by  
the European Union

# Designing Inclusive Trainings

Inclusion doesn't happen by accident — it's designed. Designing Inclusive Trainings focuses on how to build learning experiences that meet the needs of every participant, regardless of background, ability, or learning style. It's about embedding accessibility, representation, and flexibility into the structure of your sessions from the start, not as an afterthought. By mastering this competence, you'll create environments where all learners can engage meaningfully and fully — and where diversity becomes a resource, not a challenge.

## From this e-book, you will learn:

1. What is Designing Inclusive Trainings competence?
2. What might hold you back?
3. How to identify excluding behaviours
4. How to do it differently?
5. Good practices that will help you develop this competency
6. How to begin

**Grow your inclusive  
competencies!**

Check out other competencies from  
our model!

INCLUDE Project Team





# 2 Designing inclusive trainings

## 1. What is Designing Inclusive Training?

### 1.1 Definition

Designing Inclusive Trainings is the intentional process of creating learning experiences that are accessible, engaging, and responsive to the diverse needs, backgrounds, and learning styles of all participants. It goes beyond one-size-fits-all approaches to embrace adaptive design that anticipates and accommodates different cultural contexts, physical abilities, cognitive processing styles, and life experiences.

This competency involves thoughtful preparation of training structures, materials, and activities that remove barriers to participation whilst actively incorporating anti-discrimination elements and diverse perspectives throughout the learning journey.



### 1.2 If you're interested in expanding your knowledge about research and sources:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), UDL provides a framework for creating learning environments that are accessible to all learners from the start, rather than retrofitting accommodations later. The framework emphasises multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression (Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice, Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014).
- Cultural Responsiveness in Education: Gloria Ladson-Billings' research on culturally relevant pedagogy demonstrates that learning improves when educational content connects with learners' cultural references and lived experiences (The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children, 1994).
- Cognitive Load Theory: John Sweller's research shows that learning is optimised when instructional design considers the limitations of working memory, supporting the need for varied presentation methods and structured learning experiences (Cognitive Load Theory: Advances in Research on Managing Complexity, 2010).



# 2 Designing inclusive trainings

## 1.3 By working on this competency, you will:

- Increase training effectiveness across diverse groups: when materials and methods are designed inclusively from the start, all participants can engage more fully, leading to better learning outcomes and higher satisfaction scores across demographic groups.
- Reduce last-minute accommodations and stress: proactive, inclusive design prevents the scramble to retrofit training materials when specific needs arise, saving time and creating smoother experiences for both trainers and participants.
- Build a reputation as a thoughtful, professional trainer: organisations increasingly value trainers who demonstrate cultural competence and accessibility awareness, leading to more opportunities and referrals.

## 2. What might hold you back?

### 2.1 Common thinking traps:

Beliefs	Possible consequences
Inclusive design takes too much extra time and effort.	This belief leads to rushed, generic training materials that fail to engage diverse learners effectively. The "extra time" spent on inclusive design actually saves time later by preventing the need for multiple revisions and accommodations.
Most people learn the same way, so standard approaches work fine.	This assumption ignores extensive research on learning differences and cultural variations in communication styles. It results in training that only works well for participants who match the trainer's own learning preferences and cultural background.
If I try to include everyone, I'll dilute the content and make it less effective.	This false dichotomy assumes that accessibility and rigour are mutually exclusive. In reality, inclusive design often enhances content quality by forcing trainers to think more clearly about learning objectives and varied pathways to achievement.



## 2 Designing inclusive trainings

### 3. Identify excluding behaviours

Before you can change something, you need to notice it first. Here are some behaviours that might exclude people. Do any of these ring a bell? You might have seen them in yourself, participants, or fellow trainers.

In the second column, we explain exactly why these behaviours are excluding, so you can get a fuller picture.

Behaviour	Why does it exclude?
Using only one type of activity or learning method throughout the training.	This approach only serves participants who learn best through that particular method, leaving others disengaged or struggling. Visual learners may be lost in discussion-heavy sessions, whilst kinesthetic learners may disconnect during lecture-style presentations.
Including examples and case studies that only reflect one cultural or demographic perspective.	When all examples feature the same type of people or situations, participants from different backgrounds can't see themselves in the content, making the learning feel irrelevant or unwelcoming.
Designing activities that require specific physical abilities without alternatives.	This creates barriers for participants with disabilities, mobility issues, or different physical capacities, effectively excluding them from full participation in the learning experience.
Scheduling intensive sessions without adequate breaks or considering different attention spans.	This approach favours participants with high energy levels and neurotypical attention patterns whilst disadvantaging those who need more frequent breaks due to health conditions, caregiving responsibilities, or neurodivergent processing styles.



# 2 Designing inclusive trainings

## 4. How to do it differently?

The best way to learn? Get concrete and hands-on! Now that you know what excluding behaviours look like in designing inclusive trainings, let's flip the script. In the third column below, you'll find inclusive approaches for these exact same situations.

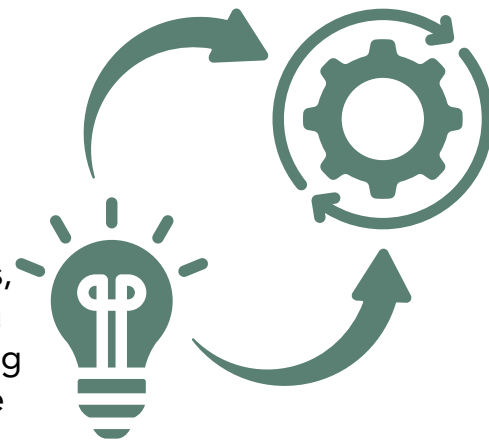
Excluding behaviour	Why does it exclude?	Including behaviour
Using only one type of activity or learning method throughout the training.	This approach only serves participants who learn best through that particular method, leaving others disengaged or struggling.	Incorporate multiple learning modalities in every session. Include visual elements (infographics, diagrams), auditory components (discussions, music), kinesthetic activities (role-plays, movement), and reading/writing tasks. This ensures every participant encounters content in their preferred learning style.
Including examples and case studies that only reflect one cultural or demographic perspective.	When all examples feature the same type of people or situations, participants from different backgrounds can't see themselves in the content.	Actively diversify your examples across cultures, industries, age groups, and life experiences. Before finalising materials, review them specifically for representation. Ask yourself: "Would participants from different backgrounds see themselves reflected here?"
Designing activities that require specific physical abilities without alternatives.	This creates barriers for participants with disabilities, mobility issues, or different physical capacities.	Design activities with built-in alternatives from the start. For every physical activity, include seated or low-mobility options. Provide multiple ways to participate in role-plays (observer, note-taker, facilitator) so everyone can contribute meaningfully.
Scheduling intensive sessions without adequate breaks or considering different attention spans.	This approach favours participants with high energy levels and neurotypical attention patterns.	Build in regular breaks every 45-90 minutes and vary the intensity of activities. Follow high-energy activities with reflection time. Communicate the schedule in advance so participants can prepare and self-advocate for their needs.



## 2 Designing inclusive trainings

### 5. Good practices

- Conduct pre-training accessibility surveys. Before designing your session, send participants a brief survey asking about learning preferences, accessibility needs, dietary restrictions, and any other accommodations. This information allows you to design inclusively from the beginning rather than adapting afterward. If it's impossible to cover all needs, ask about the one you can cover.
- Create a "representation audit" checklist. Develop a systematic way to review your materials for inclusive representation. Check that your examples, case studies, and images reflect diversity in gender, age, ability, family structures, and industry contexts. Make this review a standard part of your preparation process.
- Develop modular content delivery. Structure your training content so it can be delivered through multiple channels - visual presentations, hands-on activities, small group discussions, and individual reflection. This flexibility allows you to adapt in real-time based on group needs and energy levels.
- Partner with community representatives. Establish relationships with people from different communities who can review your materials for cultural sensitivity and accessibility. Their feedback helps you catch blind spots and ensures your content resonates authentically with diverse audiences.
- Build a library of inclusive activities. Collect and document training activities that work well for diverse groups. Include variations for different group sizes, time constraints, and accessibility needs. This resource saves time and ensures you always have inclusive options ready.





## 2 Designing inclusive trainings

### 6. First step

Great, you've got the theory down and probably have a good sense of what we mean by Designing inclusive trainings. Now we encourage you to tune into the emotions, thoughts, and reactions you had while working through this competency. You can take your first step right now. No need to call anyone, set up meetings, or make any arrangements. Just stick around for a few more minutes and tackle one of the questions below.

Or go ahead and try all of them:

- How did it feel working on this competency?
- What behaviours can you start using immediately?
- Did anything bug you?
- What parts did you want to skip?
- What does your reaction tell you about yourself?



# “Start with self” Inclusive Training Proficiency. A competence model for business trainers and educators who care.

This e-book is a part of “Start with self - a competence model for business trainers and educators who care” which is the product of the project INCLUDE. Inclusive Competence Development & Evaluation 2024-2-PL01-KA210-VET-000277155

Authors: Agnieszka Brongiel, Martyna Orlik, Hazel Nicholl, Joe Cabello

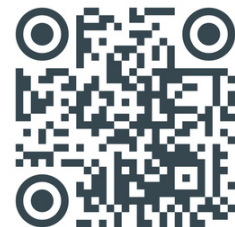
Editors: Hazel Nicholl, Joanna Zwolińska, Paula Pain

Layout & Design: Paula Pain, Joanna Zwolińska  
Powered by Canva

Language editing and proofreading: EN - Hazel Nicholl

© 2025. Contributing authors of INCLUDE Project

This publication is free of charge and is also available at:  
[www.includetraining.eu](http://www.includetraining.eu)



Project partners:



Agnieszka Brongiel



Open licence:



**CC BY-SA 4.0 DEED**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

