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The Doors Are Open for Everyone!

A guide to diversity, equality and inclusion at The Finnish Youth Association

Riikka Rantapolku & Annina Laaksonen



Co-funded by
the European Union



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Text:

Riikka Rantapolku ja Annina Laaksonen

Content support for the guide:

Riikka Jalonen, Hanna Mithiku and Jasmin Ruokolainen,
The Peace Education Institute

Proofreading:

Julius Juutistenaho ja Pia Matilainen

Illustrations and layout:

Mikko Sinervo

The guide has been produced in collaboration with
Citizen's Forum (SKAF) and with their support.

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1. Introduction

According to our strategy adopted in autumn 2021, the key values of the Finnish Youth Association include **inclusion, equality, diversity and sense of community**. Inclusion means belonging to the youth association community and taking part in its activities. Everyone is able to have a say in these activities and contribute to them.

We are committed to ensuring that all people at the association are equal. Our activities are open and respectful, and they are easy to join. We value diversity, and everyone is welcome as they are. In our activities, everyone will feel safe and good. The sense of community means that we do things together and get joy out of the activities. It includes interaction, a sense of belonging and shared experiences. Our communities are inclusive and safe.

The themes of diversity and equality are, in many ways, personal for all of us. They are about you and me, and the fact that everyone can be involved in the association's activities as they are – as unique and amazing individuals. We should be aware that not everyone is able to join the activities the same way as others, for example due to health reasons, finances, geographical location or some other reason. That is why we wanted to create this guide, so that together we could make the association's activities more accessible and inclusive, and factor in a little bit better all the different realities that people live in.

We all have different cognitive biases, such as prejudices, assumptions or stereotypes, which can influence our thinking and behaviour, particularly when it comes to things and people that feel unfamiliar to us. Cognitive biases can be caused e.g. by the media, past life experiences, a generally held belief or even a stereotype. Many of these beliefs, stereotypes and opinions formed based on them are a result of inadequate information or ignorance. By expanding and correcting our beliefs, we can learn more.

The good news is that we can become aware of our cognitive biases. Once we do, it will be easier to tackle them and change our thinking and behaviour.

The purpose of this guide is to provide practical assistance in planning youth society activities while keeping diversity in mind. The guide explains the key terminology pertaining to diversity and equality, and approaches the subject through practical tips and exercises. The guide also includes tips for literature, films, and educational and training materials, which can be used to further explore the topic either by yourself or in a hobby group.

Before activities can be further developed, we must recognise racism and inequality, but recognising personal privileges and positions of power also involves a lot of negative emotions. However, I encourage everyone to undertake this challenging yet highly rewarding task. None of us will ever be fully finished

with this topic, and it is important to allow ourselves to continue to learn new things. Learning new things requires an open mind, curiosity, recognition of personal biases and a positive attitude.

This guide has been produced in cooperation with the Citizens' Forum (SKAF). We received assistance with the content from Julius Juutistenaho, and Riikka Jalonen, Hanna Mithiku and Jasmin Ruokolainen from the Peace Education Institute.

Helsinki, November 2021

Annina Laaksonen

Secretary General

Finnish Youth Association

2. Purpose of the guide

This guide was created in order to provide tangible information and material on equality, diversity and inclusion to youth associations. It is a concise and concrete package for discussions on the themes, particularly in the field of cultural youth work, and it offers support when planning hobby activities and events. Further information, tools and methods for delving deeper into the topics can be found through the links used for the guide. We have compiled a list of tips and links at the end of the guide.

A survey on equality and diversity carried out at the end of 2020 amongst the staff of the Finnish Youth Association served as the foundation in the design of the guide material. The aim of the survey was to identify the staff members' skills in equality, diversity and inclusion and the concepts they were familiar with, the way in which equality and diversity are considered in their work and the wishes that the staff members have regarding discussions about the subject.

In particular, respondents requested an increase of information and open discussions, which we hope this guide will also inspire amongst those that plan, carry out and instruct activities. We can never fully learn all the aspects of these themes and the need for development will never end, but increasing knowledge and awareness will help us achieve the greatest possible level of equality and diversity.

Here are a few comments on the topic from the survey respondents:

"I am sure that we should look at the structures, and we are still working towards the ultimate destination which we may never reach."

"I think that it (equality) means that all people I meet in my role are entitled to a positive encounter with me, regardless of their background."

3. Terminology

The guide includes a selection of the most common concepts concerning equality, diversity and inclusion, which may be useful for planning cultural youth work, hobby activities and events, understanding the existing structures, encountering people and reaching a variety of participants, including those belonging to different minorities. Explaining this terminology may also help organisers recognise and eradicate their own assumptions and biases.

Discrimination and harassment

According to the website of the Finnish Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, discrimination means that a person is treated less favourably than others in a similar situation because of one or more personal attributes. For example, if a waiter refuses to serve a person because of their ethnic origin, this is illegal discrimination. **Direct discrimination** means treating a person more poorly than others in a similar situation because of a personal attribute. Direct discrimination occurs when e.g. a Romani is required to pay for their meal before being served, unlike other customers. Another example would be a landlord refusing to rent a flat to a same-sex couple because of their sexual orientation.

Discrimination can also be indirect. **Indirect discrimination** means that a seemingly neutral rule, reason or practice puts one person at a disadvantage compared to others based on a personal attribute.

Indirect discrimination may occur e.g. when hiring staff if requirements that are irrelevant to the job are set for an applicant; e.g. the employer expects the applicant to be perfectly fluent in Finnish even though that is not necessary for carrying out the work. Another example of indirect discrimination is an environment that is not accessible. For example, if a person who uses a wheelchair or some other aid equipment cannot access the premises of an authority or a service provider, it constitutes indirect discrimination.

Authorities, education providers, employers, and the providers of goods and services must make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled individuals. These will ensure the equality of disabled people under individual circumstances. Denying reasonable adjustments is discrimination.

Instructions or orders to discriminate are also illegal. For example, a supervisor who instructs a shop's employees not to serve individuals with foreign backgrounds is guilty of discrimination. This is discrimination even if the employees have not yet complied with these instructions. Furthermore, compliance with a discriminatory order or instruction is discrimination.

Multiple discrimination means discrimination on the basis of two or more reasons. The Finnish Non-Discrimination Act also applies to multiple discrimination when one of the grounds for discrimination is gender. Otherwise, discrimination based on gender is monitored by the Ombudsman for Equality in Finland.

The Non-Discrimination Act also applies to such multiple discrimination where two or more personal aspects only lead to prohibited discrimination together. This is called **intersecting discrimination**.

Minorities, in particular, may be vulnerable to multiple discrimination. For example, a disabled person belonging to an ethnic minority may be discriminated against for both their disability and ethnicity.

Harassment

Harassment is a continuous form of negative speech or intimidation against a person. Harassment can also be sexual, in which case a person's right to mental or physical integrity is violated by sexual-toned, unwanted behaviour. In addition to the subject of harassment, people witnessing the harassment can also find it distressing. Harassment must always be addressed. When an employer receives information about harassment, they are obliged to intervene. If harassment that has come to light is not addressed, it constitutes prohibited discrimination under the Equality Act. At events, harassment can be addressed by a harassment contact person or a non-discrimination agent, who will provide advice and support when incidents involving harassment are processed.

Source: <https://syrjinta.fi/en/discrimination>

Racism and racialisation

According to the website of the Finnish Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, racism can manifest itself as e.g. an intentional and conscious act between individuals and groups or as unintentional racialising behaviour that is based on prejudice and fear. Furthermore, racism can take place as discriminatory practices and processes in structures such as working life, education and services, where organisations, companies, institutions and public agencies discriminate either directly or indirectly against certain groups of people.



Racism is a system in which politics, institutional practices, culture and other norms maintain racialised societal power structures. It is part of the social, economic and political systems to which everyone belongs.

The extent and severity of racism are best understood by those who are subjected to it. Many studies also indicate the prevalence of racism. Racism can take the form of hate speech, discrimination, violence or seemingly neutral practices that in reality exclude certain people. Discrimination and hate crime should

not be seen as isolated cases. Instead, we must become aware of the underlying structural discrimination and racism.

Racialisation is a process through which society assigns hierarchies, assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices about people's abilities, customs and morals based on their skin colour or perceived ethnic background.

Racialisation occurs e.g. when a person born in Finland experiences daily or weekly moments of exclusion even in everyday situations due to their appearance. It arises from the idea that individuals with certain characteristics are fundamentally different from the majority. Many stereotypes associated with the identity of a non-white person are often unrecognisable to the person themselves.

The racialisation process leads to racist and discriminatory behaviour, i.e. treating people either consciously or unconsciously in an unequal way based on stereotypes. In fact, racialisation is, first and foremost, a societal process that results in racism.

Source: syrjinta.fi/en/racism

Hate speech

Inappropriate words that are particularly directed at minority groups and incite or encourage hatred, racism or discrimination is hate speech. These days, hate speech occurs especially on online discussion forums.



Norms

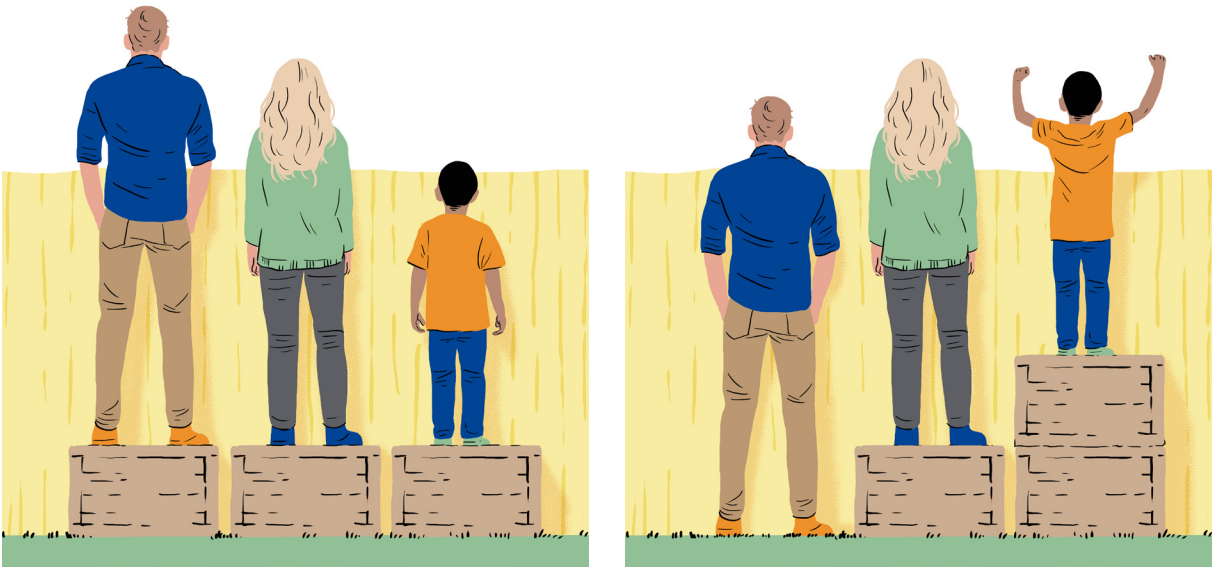
Norms regulate our behaviour as members of society and define, among other things, the behaviours and actions that are either acceptable or forbidden. Norms are governed by laws, religions, accepted values and traditions, and they change as society changes. For example, heteronormativity, i.e. the norms and assumptions that couples are always heterosexual, has begun to change and expand since the gender-neutral Marriage Act was passed in 2017 in Finland.

Equality and its various forms

Equality means that a person's gender or sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, disability, opinions, health or other personal reason does not affect their worth in relation to others. This means that all people are equal. In Finland, the promotion of equality and the prohibition of discrimination in the field of cultural youth work are governed by the Finnish Constitution, the Youth Act and the Non-Discrimination Act.

Equality can be divided into the subconcepts of **formal equality and equality of outcome**. Formal equality means that people in a similar situation are treated the same way. This may work, but it may also increase inequality if people's different circumstances are ignored. Successful equality of outcome requires that we identify inequality that is based on discrimination in our activities or society and take active measures to eliminate it.

Equality in youth association activities
A youth association building may be formally equal for all participants. However, if it is not accessible, a participant using a wheelchair is not in a genuinely equal position.



Positive discrimination

Formal equality, i.e. the equal treatment of all those in the same situation, is not enough to ensure equality of outcome. In other words, equality is achieved in theory, but not in practice. If that is the case, it may be necessary to emphasise the special needs of a more disadvantaged population group in order to ensure equality of outcome.

This is called positive discrimination, and it involves active promotion of equality. Positive discrimination enables certain under-represented groups to be supported through special measures if they are otherwise at risk of being discriminated against. Such measures may apply to individuals with disabilities, or those belonging to sexual, gender or linguistic minorities.

Positive discrimination must be justified and systematic. In practice, positive discrimination takes into account the attributes of those target groups that would otherwise be unable to participate in the activities. It helps end favouritism towards a small group through long-held practices. Positive discrimination is not the same thing as favouritism, where certain groups or individuals are granted privileges in a discriminatory manner.

Positive discrimination in youth association activities

Activities may be formally open for all: for example, everyone may be formally welcome to the events, regardless of background. However, a participant who is of a non-binary gender or has a disability may not be a genuinely equal participant, for example, if the toilets are only of “normal” size and intended for only women and men. In this case, additional arrangements that take a wider group into account are required, i.e. positive discrimination. This also allows the current norms to be challenged.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality means the formation and definition of an individual's identity and social status without being determined based on individual aspects, such as gender, age, skin colour, religion, disability, health or socio-economic status, but as the sum of intersecting elements. Intersectionality is a framework that helps us examine how **different forms of discrimination can affect an individual's ability to have an influence and participate**. We all have intersecting attributes and groups to which we belong. Some of our attributes, such as gender or skin colour, may put us at a disadvantage in certain environments, while others may give us privileges in another context.

Minority stress means stress experienced by **minorities** as a result of experiences of **discrimination** or fear of it. Discrimination by the surrounding society can cause a person to feel different and inferior, stressed and an outsider.

Feeling like an outsider and experiencing minority stress are often connected to the expectations or assumptions regarding the participants and who is welcome to an activity. Among other things, minority stress is caused by fear (and often also experience) of being harassed and discriminated against. Belonging to a minority is not in itself a source of minority stress, but rather the way in which others around us view minorities.

While almost all of us have attributes or identities that put us at a disadvantage in society, we also have attributes and identities that give us privileges. That is why intersectionality is often context-specific, as the combination of different identities looks different depending on the situation.

Intersectionality in youth association activities

Intersectionality can manifest itself in youth association activities in various ways, e.g. a dark-skinned boy in a wheelchair can feel like an outsider or experience minority stress while taking part in a hobby because of both his skin colour and disability. This can be because he is the group's only non-white person and because he is the group's only person in a wheelchair.

Diversity

Diversity is defined through the attributes of age, gender, disability, health, ethnic origin, nationality, language, religion, beliefs and sexual orientation. These are also **discrimination criteria defined by law**, based on which people may not be treated in an unequal way, for example as students, employees or customers.

Other elements of diversity also include people's different education levels, experiences, skills, ways of working, personalities, financial situations, circumstances in life, abilities to work and values.

Acknowledging diversity means that we recognise the fact that people differ from one another in many respects and keep this fact in mind. The promotion of diversity means that we recognise norms that exclude people in our activities and strive towards changing them. Diversity does not mean emphasising differences, but providing more equal opportunities for all people to participate.



Diversity in youth association activities

The working and hobby groups of youth associations may include individuals who belong to different religions or sexual minorities. In a group that promotes diversity, this is recognised. Additionally, the language use supports the elimination of assumptions regarding gender, family, religion and other things, and promotes the right to self-determination. Diversity promotion may also mean that the employees' skills resulting from their backgrounds are recognised and given space within the work community.

Inclusion

Inclusion is a term used in teaching, in particular, and it means that all pupils are integrated into the same general education. Inclusion in youth association activities can be seen as an objective of organising events and recreational activities that are genuinely open to all children and young people, regardless of disabilities or other factors.

Diversity of participants

Diversity of gender and sexual orientation

There are numerous terms connected to the diversity of gender and sexual orientation. New definitions are constantly being added and quickly become modified as well. When encountering participants who come from a variety of backgrounds and belong to different population groups, it is vital to understand that every participant has a right to define their own identity and gender, and this must be respected. Gender or sexual orientation may not be visible on the surface, so the fewer assumptions we make through words or actions, e.g. about the sexuality or gender of participants, the more members of minorities will feel that they are genuinely part of the activities and belong to the group.

Gender diversity

In many respects, our western culture supports the assumption of two genders. Gender diversity means recognising that the forms of gender can be more diverse than the forms of the two socially opposite gender majorities. These are (cis)women and (cis)men. Gender diversity includes both gender majorities and gender minorities. The cis-prefix describes a person who experiences their gender and gender identity as corresponding to the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gender identity

Everyone has a sense of their own gender. A gender identity can either match the gender assigned to a person at birth or not, and it may or may not correspond to the two legally recognised genders.

Gender minorities

The gender, gender identity or its expression of a person belonging to a gender minority usually differs in some way from the normative gender concepts, or the individuals do not experience the gender assigned to them at birth as their own. Gender minorities

Sexual minorities

The sexual orientation of people belonging to sexual minorities is something other than heterosexual, i.e. sexual interest solely towards the opposite sex. Sexual minorities include, among others, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual and queer people.

Gender sensitivity

Gender sensitivity is a way of thinking that factors in gender norms and their effects on individuals and society. The aim is to recognise the individuality and sensitivity of each participant and to dismantle gender-biased practices. Gender-sensitive action is not about erasing or ignoring genders. Nor does it refer to activities only connected to or involving gender minorities. Gender-sensitive education and mindset allow everyone to be the type of girls, boys or participants of other genders that they are.

Read more about the terminology of diversity of participants:

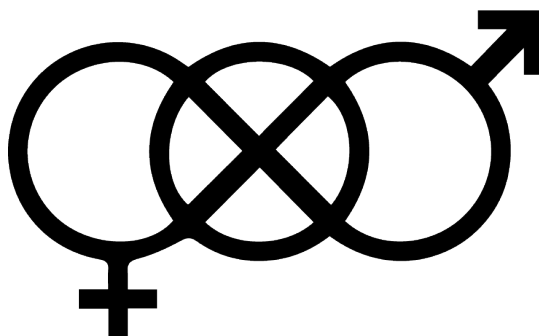
<https://seta.fi/sateenkaaritieto/sateenkaarisanasto/> (in Finnish)

In English: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/list-lgbtq-terms>

Read more about gender equality: <https://thl.fi/en/web/gender-equality>

Read more about acknowledging gender diversity when providing instruction:

<https://peda.net/kansalaisfoorumi/yhdenvertaisuus-ja-tasa-arvo-koulutuksissa/tasa-arvolaki> (in Finnish)



*Unisex-merkki WC:n ovessa tekee näkyväksi,
For example, the unisex toilet sign indicates
that all genders can use the facility.
Image: Pekka Piippo/Hahmo.*

How can we promote the inclusion of gender and sexual minorities in youth society activities?

- **Gender diversity:** we can talk about children and young people instead of girls and boys.
- We should not emphasise gender, e.g. when casting a theatre group or dividing a dance group into pairs or groups.
- **Eradicating the assumption that everyone is heterosexual:** respecting everyone's right to self-determination. We should not ask people whether they have a girlfriend or a boyfriend. Instead, we should indicate that everyone has a right to tell as much about themselves as they want to and not pry.
- **The safer space principles** factor in gender sensitivity and verbalise it.
- **Confidentiality:** If a young person openly states their sexual orientation or belonging to a gender minority, do not assume that this is common knowledge. Ask the young person how they would like to be referred to and who knows about their situation. It may be that the parents of a young transgender person or young individual dating a person of the same gender are not aware of it, and the participant does not dare or want to reveal this outside the hobby group. Recreational activities may be the only safe space for a child or a young person to express themselves and be accepted.
- **We must not make jokes about sexual or gender minorities or use terminology in a derogatory way.** We must intervene if offensive speech occurs. When doing so, you should remind the individuals about following the principles of a safer space.
- We must provide **dressng and sanitary facilities** for all genders.
- **The symbol bank of the Culture for All Service contains downloadable symbols connected to accessibility**, such as gender-specific and disabled toilet signs, which can be used freely for non-commercial purposes. A link to the symbol bank: https://www.kulttuuriakaikille.fi/accessibility_symbols_for_communication_culture_for_all_symbol_bank

Diverse relationships and families

Recognising diverse relationships and families helps different and as many people as possible experience inclusion. In this context, the promotion of diversity can mean that we do not make assumptions about heteronormativity or the nuclear family. When talking about a family, we can use the word “spouse” instead of “husband” and “wife”. Not every family has two parents, and the parents or guardians may not necessarily be mothers or fathers. This can be taken into account by using the word “parents”, “the adults of the family” or “guardians”.

You can find more information in Finnish in this guide: https://monimuotoisetperheet.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/monimuotoiset_perheet_tyuelamassa_2021-1.pdf

In English: <https://www.monimuotoisetperheet.fi/in-english/>



Health and physical special needs

Visual impairment: A person whose vision loss causes significant difficulty in everyday life is referred to as visually impaired. Both blind people and people with poor eyesight are visually impaired. Visually impaired individuals may use a white stick or a guide dog to help them move around.

Hearing impairment: Hearing impaired people have hearing loss, which can range from mild hearing impairment to deafness. Depending on the degree of their hearing impairment, a person may use sign language, lip reading or a hearing aid to help them with communication.

Mobility impairment: According to the Disability Services Act, a disabled person is a person who, due to a disability or illness, has long-term special difficulties in performing ordinary daily activities. This means that the experience of the degree of difficulties resulting from disability or illness is highly personal. It varies according to illness or disability, but also depends on the circumstances and overall situation. For example, navigating an accessible environment is easier than moving around an environment that has stairs and steep ramps, which may even be impossible.

Chronic illnesses: for example, asthma, allergies, diabetes and epilepsy are chronic conditions that may not be visible on the outside, but it is important that the instructor of an activity is aware of these in case a participant is suddenly taken ill. People with chronic illnesses may have a piece of medical alert jewellery or card with them, which can help direct them to treatment in the event of a medical emergency



Image: Diabeteskauppa.fi

Neuropsychiatric difficulties

The Finnish abbreviation “nepsy” is short for neuropsychiatric difficulties. Neuropsychiatric difficulties can be diagnosed as ADHD, Tourette or autism, among other things. These conditions may also be associated with various learning and cognitive disabilities. Neuropsychiatric difficulties may cause challenges in learning, completing education or work assignments, or social relationships. If the arising problems go undetected and are not addressed sufficiently early, the worst-case outcome may be social exclusion. Support with life management and social situations, as well as factoring in different ways that people learn when planning education, helps with the challenges of children and young people with neuropsychiatric difficulties.

Mental health challenges

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which a person is able to see their own abilities, cope with the challenges that life may bring, work and take part in the activities of their community. Mental health is influenced by genetics, temperament, social relationships and the environment, as well as social and cultural elements. Mental health can be divided into psychological, physical, social and spiritual dimensions.

A mental health diagnosis does not automatically mean that a person feels mentally unwell, as they may feel well in psychological terms, just as a person with no mental health diagnosis may feel psychologically unwell. In youth association activities, taking the importance of mental health promotion and vulnerable participants' needs into account can enhance mental well-being and guarantee a sense of inclusion for those suffering from mental health challenges.

Read more about mental health and its promotion on MIELI (Mental Health Finland)'s website:

<https://mieli.fi/en/>



Body peace

Every participant has a right to body peace. This means the right to be within your own body without fear of comments on weight, appearance, or the size or nutritional content of a meal. The purpose of body peace is to promote body positivity and the acceptance of all body types.

Read a statement by the Eating Disorder Association of Finland regarding body peace:

<https://etelansyly.fi/en/>



Taking health, accessibility and physical special needs into account in youth association activities

- **Make sure that your hobby and event facilities are as accessible as possible**, for example with ramps, if possible.
- **Communicate in a language that is as clear as possible** and provide accessibility information on your website as well.
- **Make sure that your hobby or event facility has clear signage.**
- **Use respectful and non-labelling language.** Note that physical, visual or hearing impairment (alone) does not affect the person's intelligence or understanding.
- If a person uses a sign language interpreter, address the speaker, not the interpreter.
- **Ensure everyone's bodily peace and peaceful mealtimes.** Honour the fact that everyone has a right to eat their meals in a positive environment, either alone or together with others, without fear of comments on the consistency, portion size or appearance of their food.
- **If someone tells you about their chronic illness, do not pity them or be horrified by it.** Take the matter as a simple fact that you as an instructor should be aware of. You can ask for more

information by saying something like “Is there anything I should be aware of or take into account as an instructor?” You can also use a registration form to ask “Is there anything that the instructor should be aware of?” Emphasise that the matter will remain absolutely confidential and be positively neutral about it if a participant tells you something connected to special needs.

Age and generation

The participants of youth association activities do not just include children and young people, and there are people of all ages amongst the volunteers and instructors. At the same time, the activities are joined by young people who also have a lot of new ideas and suggestions for developing the activities further. Well-functioning activities have room for all age groups.

You can take people of different ages into account as follows:

- **Do not judge age in any way**, e.g. by saying “you cannot know anything about this because you are so young” or “you probably do not understand IT because you are so old.”
- **Do not create a conflict between young people and older people;** working together across all ages can be very fruitful and effective.
- **Do not criticise** the appearance or any other personal aspect of people of different ages.
- **Intervene** if you hear someone speaking with a bad attitude about people of a different age.

Cultural background and the whiteness norm

Cultural background often refers to the ethnic or cultural origin of a person. These may include a national culture, regional culture, local culture, the culture of a person’s own ethnic group or some other culture. A name or appearance may not necessarily reveal anything about a person’s cultural background.

The whiteness norm does not refer so much to skin colour as to invisible social hierarchies and power relations in which being western and European are seen as the norm that defines the social structures. Normativity only emerges when it is made visible or deviated from.

Today, racism is often about comparing cultures in terms of their perceived value. Furthermore, even if a person does not behave consciously in a racist manner, it pays to keep in mind that we live in a racially built society. Many children and young people have likely faced racism due to their name or appearance, if they differ from “**the Finnish norm**”, i.e. what a Finn is **expected** to look or sound like. The whiteness norm affects us all, but it often becomes visible only when someone’s appearance breaks this norm.

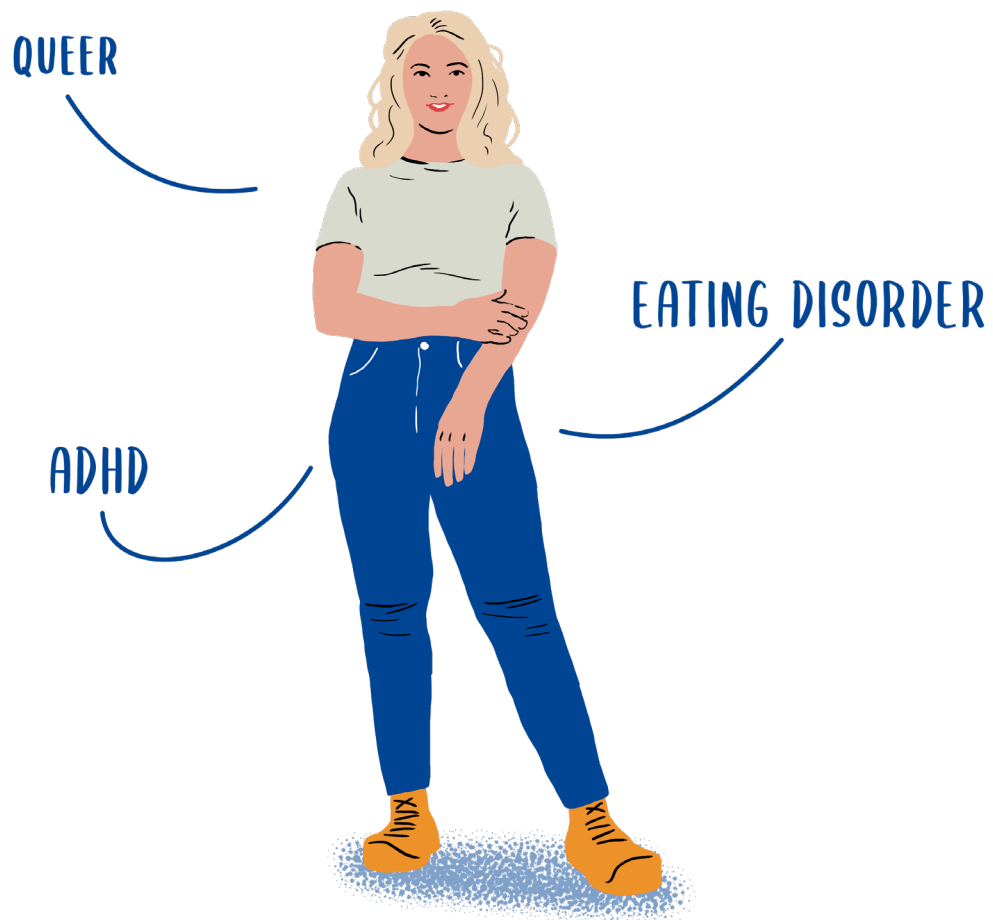
Because racism is often structural, we may act in a racist manner without realising it, or at least on the basis of unconscious biased assumptions. However, these assumptions can be eradicated.

Watch a video recording of Valerie Alexander's TED Talk about our unconscious biases (video language and subtitles in English): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP-cqFLS8Q4>

Tips

- **Recognise racism as a phenomenon** and the way it affects the participants' assumptions, for example about the safety of a space.
- **Do not assume anything based on a name, appearance or language skills.** For example, you can ask "Do you follow a special diet?" or "Is there anything you would like us to take into account?"
- **Do not assume that a person does not speak Finnish.** You can ask if you do not know.
- **Do not be surprised if a person speaks Finnish well.** Many people whose name does not sound Finnish speak Finnish as their mother tongue.
- Do not ask them where they come from just because they look different from you.





The safer space principles

The safer space principles are guidelines for and attempts at creating the most open and safest place possible for participants to be and participate in. These principles are always determined according to the relevant needs and activities. It is also important to note that any challenges, minority identities and/or other attributes that the participants have may not necessarily be externally visible, and no one is obliged to share any more information about themselves than they want to. It is therefore important to avoid stereotypes and eradicate assumptions, e.g. regarding gender, orientation or partnership norms, beliefs or functional capacity, in speech. You should also tell the participants that they can tell their hobby instructors in confidence of any learning or other challenges.

An example of the safer space principles

We comply with the safer space principles in the youth association activities. We aim to ensure that everyone is seen as they are and no one needs to fear discrimination or harassment. We therefore ask all those participating in our activities and events to comply with the following principles.

1. **We are equal and diverse.** Everyone has a right to participate in youth association activities. We commit to non-discrimination and anti-racism.
2. **We do not make assumptions.** We respect everyone's right to self-determination and do not make assumptions about other people's gender, sexual orientation, religion, family relationships or any other elements connected to a person's background.
3. **Everyone has a right to participate.** We give room for everyone to get involved. We pay attention to our word choices, treat everyone with respect and encourage participation.
4. **We intervene in harassment and do not tolerate hate speech.** We intervene in harassment and hate speech if we witness them or if any come to our attention. Our events and activities have equality agents/harassment contact persons in place. They can be contacted by phone, message or through an anonymous communication channel.
5. **We are curious together.** Our activities are relaxed, and asking questions and making mistakes is allowed. We learn from our experiences.

The sources for the example include the principles of a safer space by the Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi and the Culture for All Service: <https://nuorisoala.fi/the-finnish-national-youth-council-allianssi/principles-of-safer-premises> and <https://nuorisoala.fi/the-finnish-national-youth-council-allianssi/principles-of-safer-premises/>



4. Steps for planning equality and inclusion

The journey towards cultural youth work that is as equal and diverse as possible can begin with equality and inclusion planning. When drawing up an equality & inclusion plan, you and the members of your community should consider what you really want and what can be done within the available resources. You do not need to focus on everything at once, and instead those who plan the activities should pick objectives that are relevant and possible for the activities.

There are no specific form or content requirements for an equality and inclusion plan. It is about assessing your activities and stimulating open discussions, and it serves a roadmap to creating a safe environment. At its smallest, a plan can be a list of a few items, a household code or a mind map. It is important to make sure you know which resources and tools you have for evaluating the activities. The plan should be based on an assessment of the current state of equality. It should focus on identifying discrimination and intervening in it, as well as on means to enhance equality.

Before you start your equality planning, ask yourself the following questions:

- On whose terms do I do my job?
- What are the key values that guide my work?
- How do they relate to the Non-Discrimination Act, the Youth Act and the professional ethics of cultural youth work?
- Am I supporting the uniqueness of a young person or strengthening a normative behaviour with which a participant is “adapting” to the group?
- How do I feel about unfamiliar things?
- Am I able to recognise racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism and discrimination against disability or culture?
- Do I have sufficient tools to intervene in bullying and hate speech?

This list of questions is an adaptation of an equality guide compiled by Koordinaatti and Allianssi. The guide is in Finnish and can be found here: https://rauhankasvatus.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/kaikkimukana_o.pdf

Guidance on assessing the existing state of equality can be found on the Peace Education Institute’s website: <https://rauhankasvatus.fi/yhdenvertaisuusavain/> (in Finnish)



5. Exercises

The purpose of these exercises is to help you plan activities that support equality and examine your own position.

Do you recognise your privileges?

The purpose of the exercise is to recognise the types of situations in which you may be privileged compared to others and the types where someone else is clearly more privileged than you.

Course of the exercise:

The participants are shown a circle of privileges. The circle is available at <https://ccrweb.ca/en/anti-oppression>



Discuss the following in small groups:

- In what type of situations do you recognise yourself as being privileged? What about when you are not? Few people are privileged or discriminated against in every area. This is what we call intersectionality, which has been explained on page 12 of this guide.
- -What kind of people/groups do you recognise as being privileged? Why? What about the least privileged ones? Why?

Final discussion:

- Why is it important to recognise your privileges?
- How do privileges affect our society?

Our society is based on certain assumptions of the attributes of those who are part of it. In western culture, being white, being middle-class, heteronormativity, healthiness and absence of disability are the norms favoured by society. In other words, the lives of those who remain within the norms and are in a privileged position are easier, because society has been designed based on them. On the other hand, those who do not adhere to the general norms are in a more difficult position and may experience discrimination or racism.

Examining your own (privileged) position will help you understand people in a more disadvantaged position, e.g. due to disability or skin colour, and the way in which the structures of society appear outside of our privileged position. Additionally, examining your own position allows you to realise that the range of privileges is broad – and that a person who is privileged one way may be less so in another. The aim of discussing privileges is never to elicit guilt or assign value, but to become aware of inequality. The topic may cause strong, even uncomfortable emotional reactions, however, but it is worth stopping and listening to what they are trying to tell us.

More information about stereotypes and privileges is available in Finnish in the Citizens' Forum's training material: <https://peda.net/kansalaisfoorumi/yhdenvertaisuus-ja-tasa-arvo-koulutuksissa/identiteetti-ennakkoluulo-ja-etuoikeudet>



Exercise on prejudice

Think of a prejudiced attitude that you grew up with or was raised to believe and how you came to believing it. To what system (or systems) of oppression does it belong? Have you ever acted on the basis of this prejudice? Do you still believe this idea? Why or why not?

The exercise has been borrowed from the Peace Education Institute's guide Tackling Discrimination, My learning diary, p. 71: https://rauhankasvatus.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/DIARY_1905_2021_small.pdf



Teflon test

With the following test, you can study your own position in society, become aware of the privileges that you have and discover whether you are discriminated against according to the Non-Discrimination Act. Every participant should write down the points they score. You do not need to reveal your points to the others, because the test is, above all, about improving your own awareness. You can either take the test alone or as a group and share your thoughts on the results afterwards. The Teflon test question is: how often do you encounter uncomfortable situations in your life or receive uncomfortable attention due to the following attributes?

- Age
- Ethnic background
- Nationality
- Mother tongue(s)
- Religion or beliefs
- Gender, gender identity and gender expression
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- State of health
- Political views/convictions

Often: 3 points, Sometimes: 2 points, Seldom: 1 point, Never: 0 points

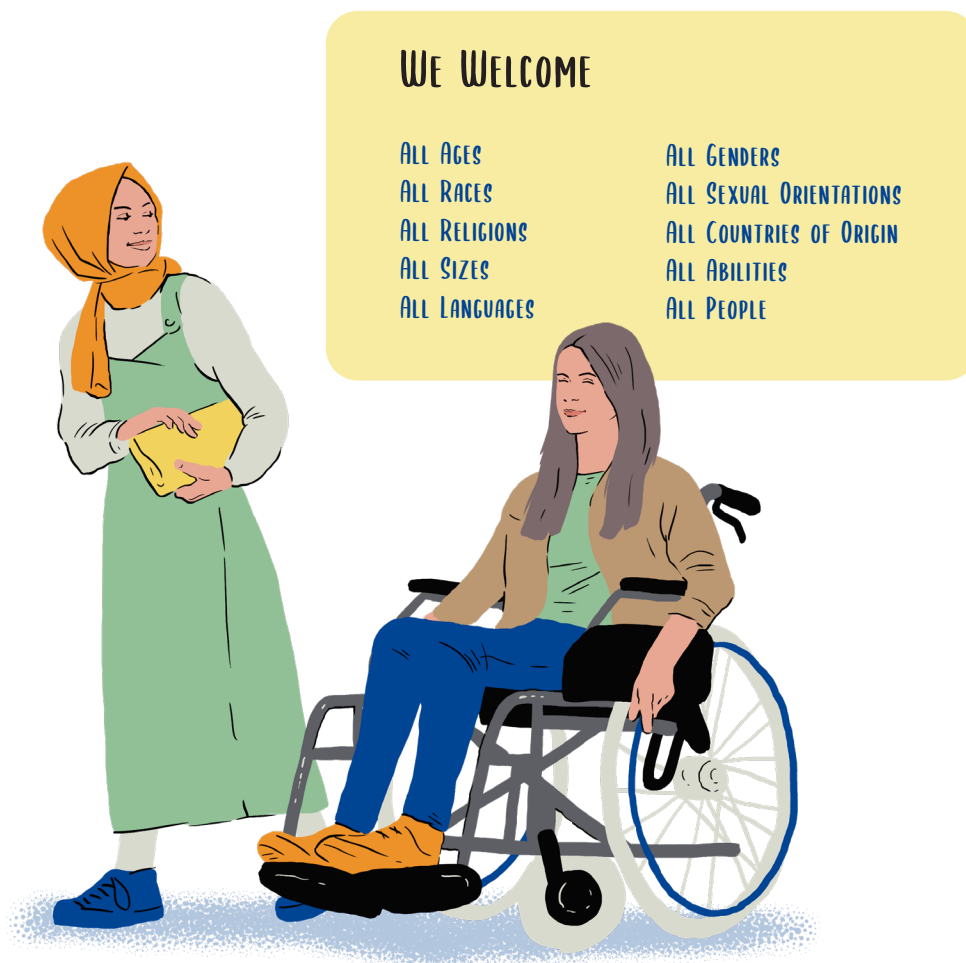
Everyone then calculates their score on a scale from 0 to 3 for each attribute. The total score will be between 0 and 30.

Finally, tell the participants that the lower the score, the less often they are discriminated against.

The name of the test refers to the fact that we form a sleek surface like Teflon if we are not exposed to discrimination. This makes it more difficult for us to detect discrimination and the existing unequal power structures. That is why we must actively learn to detect discrimination.

This version of the Teflon test exercise was created by the Peace Education Institute.

Read more: A Finnish-language publication, Avarakatseiset oppilaat, contains exercises linked to prejudice, understanding others and diversity. You can find it at <http://www.walter.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Avarakatseiset-oppilaat-VERKKO.pdf>



6. Tips and thoughts to support practical work

Everyday situations in youth association activities

- Do we use gendered norms when we talk about e.g. relationships, partnerships or families?
- Could we replace gendered words with more neutral ones, where possible? Instead of girls and boys, we could talk about children and young people.
- Could we expand our definition of a family from the nuclear one in our speech? Perhaps we can talk about the adults of a family, guardians or parents instead of fathers and mothers.
- If we encounter people who cause us a sense of strangeness, are we aware of our stereotypes and can we break them down?
- Which holidays do we observe in our activities? Are they connected to religions or non-belief?
- Are we aware of the way that assumptions guide our actions?
- What sort of role models do our activities offer to children and young people?
- Could we introduce the safer space principles at our youth association and go over them at the beginning of each hobby season, on camps and at meetings, among other places?

In event production

- Are our events accessible to people with physical, hearing or visual impairment? How can I ensure that this is the case?
- Do our events take gender diversity into account in terms of toilet and dressing facilities?
- Is there a harassment contact person or a non-discrimination agent present at the events, and have people been informed about it? Do you know how to intervene in harassment?
- Is there any training or material available to the employees and volunteers involved in the event for taking equality and diversity into account?

The event accessibility checklist is a good tool for event production: http://www.kulttuuriakaikille.fi/doc/tarkistuslistat/Tapahtumien_saavutettavuuden_ja_moninaisuuden_tarkistuslista.pdf (in Finnish)

In communications:

- Who do we communicate to? Are we taking minority groups and the eradication of assumptions into account with our word choices? What about the choice of images?
- Do we use language that is as accessible as possible, free from assumptions and gendered vocabulary, and sensitive to minority groups?
- Are our online communications accessible?
- Who are the participants and target groups of our events? Do we marginalise some groups?
- Could we invite some minority group organisations or operators to our event or communicate with minorities?
- How are the participants represented, i.e. what is our perception of them? Are various types



of participants visible in our communications? If not, could we do something about it, for example in the induction of employees or volunteers?

- Could we communicate the safer space principles and non-discrimination in all of our operations (events, hobby activities)?

“People should not be seen and encountered as representatives of a population group, but as individuals. All forms of categorisation and labelling must be avoided at all levels: in thought, word and deed. An individual has a right to define themselves.

A population group is a group of people who are connected by something that affects their everyday lives, shapes their reality and potentially affects their social status, such as their ethnic, national or social origin, skin colour, mother tongue, religion, beliefs, political activity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, belonging to a minority, wealth, health, disability or other reason.”

Source: Community Mediation Centre

7. Further information



Ethnicity and nationalities

Ombudsman for Minorities: <https://syrjinta.fi/en/the-non-discrimination-ombudsman>

Finnish Refugee Advice Centre: www.pakolaisneuvonta.fi

National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs: www.romanit.fi

Sámi Parliament: <https://www.samediggi.fi/?lang=en>

Finnish League for Human Rights: <https://ihmisoikeusliitto.fi/english/>

Diversity of gender and sexual orientation

Ombudsman for Equality: <https://tasa-arvo.fi/en/front-page>

Women's Studies and Equality portal: www.minna.fi (in Finnish)

Gender Diversity & Intersex Centre of Expertise: <https://sukupuolenosaamiskeskus.fi/english/>

Human rights and social sector organisation Seta: <https://en.seta.fi/>

Stand-up show: Hannah Gadsby: Nanette, Douglas (Netflix)

Documentary: Sincerely Amanda: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOw9CkQaNEA>

Disability and mental health:

Autismiliitto: www.autismiliitto.fi (in Finnish) Guide in English: <https://autismiliitto.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Saavutettava-Autismiliitto-esite-ENG-2021.pdf>

ADHD association in Finland: <https://adhd-liitto.fi/information-about-adhd/>

Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disability: <https://vane.to/en/frontpage>

Threshold Association: <https://kynnys.fi/en/threshold-association/>

Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities: <https://www.invalidiliitto.fi/en/finnish-association-people-physical-disabilities>

Finnish Disability Forum: <http://vammaisfoorumi.fi/en/frontpage/>

Selkokeskus: www.papunet.net/selkokeskus (in Finnish)

Information about accessibility planning: www.nkl.fi/tietoa/esteettomyys (in Finnish)

MIELI: <https://mieli.fi/en/>

Finnish Central Association for Mental Health: <https://www.mtkl.fi/mtkl-in-english/>

Prevention of discrimination and racism:

Alexander, Valerie 2018. Ted Talks. How to Outsmart Your Own Unconscious Bias: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP-cqFLS8Q4>

Eddo-Lodge, Reni 2021. Miksi en enää puhu valkoisille rasismista. <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000007783264.html> (in Finnish)

Short films about different forms of discrimination and use of power: www.yksittaistapaus.fi (in Finnish)

A guide to family diversity: <https://monimuotoisetperheet.fi/tyo-ja-perhe/vinkkeja-perheystavallisuuteen/> (in Finnish)

Peace Education Institute 2021. Tackling Discrimination, My learning diary: https://rauhankasvatus.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/DIARY_1905_2021_small.pdf

Citizens' Forum 2021, a Finnish-language guide on equality for trainers: <https://peda.net/kansalaisfoorumi/yhdenvertaisuus-ja-tasa-arvo-koulutuksissa/identiteetti-ennakkoluulot-ja-etuoikeudet> Citizens' Forum 2021, webinar on equality in hobby activities: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3E6vS9c7HoI> (in Finnish)

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