



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

# INCLUSIVE TOOL GUIDE

## INCLUSION ASPECTS WHEN USING EDUCATIONAL (BOARD) GAMES



**Inclusion:** the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure.

**Social inclusion:** the process of individual's self-realisation within a society, acceptance and recognition of one's potential by social institutions and integration in the web of social relations in a community.

**Inclusive:** an adjective referring to creating the conditions which are particularly welcoming to all kinds of people.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When in the recent past, more attention was given to exclusion (processes), this has moved towards a more constructive focus: inclusion. It is a keyword in the youth field, and supported by several European educational programmes. In our perception, youth work -including ours- is still far from being consciously focused on inclusion. In particular: on aiming to be inclusive.

There are now many publications, manuals and booklets tackling both '[social] inclusion' and 'inclusivity'. This on the level of theoretical approaches, study cases and practical educational exercises. This guide does not intend to do the same. It is a practical hands-on guide for our daily youth work. Containing tips and dangers, reflection questions and dilemmas, especially when it comes down to 'how' we organise our educational settings and 'how' we can/should rethink the use of some educational tools and objects. Within our consortium we realize that it all comes down to making pondered choices in our own practice. And in particular, the eradication of the lack of conscious awareness.

This guide is a short practical reflection booklet, composed by contributions of different project members. Very much based upon questioning, and by preference, of seemingly obvious elements in using games in educational settings. We have used the expertise present in the project organisations and the feedback received during the several test phases of the Value Card set and the Value Board Game '4 Headed Monkey'. Additionally, this Inclusive Tool Guide has been completed with comments by members of the large group of associated partners, including also concretely several 'inclusion groups'.

It aims both at less and more experienced youth workers and educators. For some an enjoyable discovery, for others a confirmation or a confrontation. It is short and snappy. Easy and quick reading. With questions inviting you to consider more inclusive answers.

More information on: <https://bb-games.eu/>

Note: when using the word 'game', we refer here to a 'gamified educational exercise', or tools in 'game-based learning'.

## 2. THE 'BORDERLINE BOARD GAME LEGACY' PROJECT

This educational material was developed by the partnership between 7 countries under the project Borderline Board Games Legacy, funded through a Strategic Partnership KeyAction 2 in the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission.

The main objective: the creation of different intellectual outputs to support a more conscious understanding of values and to work towards a better living together.

The Borderline Board Game Legacy partnership - including contact persons:

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The Associated Partners: a variety of organisations and institutions who expressed previously their interest in the topic and the concrete intellectual project-outputs.

**Belgium:** Kras Noord, Kras Dam - City Pirates - Centrum Kauwenberg - Educators/psychologists Antwerp - Highschool and University Antwerp \*\* **Croatia:** Primary School Petar Hektorovic of Stari Grad, Primary School Queen Jelena of Solin - Primary School don Lovre Katic of Solin - Primary School Vjekoslav Parac of Solin - Committee of Crime Prevention City of Solin \*\* **Finland:** Sami Sorjonen TMI \*\* **France:** 2 MJC youth clubs - Le Secours Catholique Saint Etienne - Regional Department of Scout et Guide - Informal group Enneagram Loire - Canopé Loire - The city of Rive de Gier - Luciole - Singa \*\* **Italy:** HREYN Human Rights Education Youth Network - Youth and Equal Opportunities Department of the City of Turin - The Museum "A come Ambiente" of Torino - Cascina Macondo - EDECO - Associazione Agrado - Vedogiovane Asti \*\* **Lithuania:** Rudiskiu Gymnasium - Lentvaris Gymnasium - Lentvaris Youth Centre - Žalianamis - Open Youth Centre - Druskininkai Youth Activity Center - Druskininku Stalo Zaidimu Klubas \*\* **Portugal:** Ministério das Imperfeições - H20 - City hall Cascais: department Employability - Youth Service City hall Fundação - Mental8Works \*\* **Spain:** La Milagrosa y Santa Florentina - Kindergarten, Primary & Secondary School from Valladolid - Scout Group Cruz del Sur 532 - Scout Group Laguna 589 - Scout Group Resurrección 533 \*\* **Bulgaria:** Institute for Social Integration \*\* **Germany:** JuSeV \*\* **Norway:** Nordland County Council, Norway \*\* **Romania:** Roman 2002 - American International School of Transylvania - Association Go Romania - Actions for Change - Playlearn Concept s.r.l. \*\* **Serbia:** AzBuki Slovenia: - Zavod Dobra Pot \*\* **United Kingdom:** CCW Training Academy

### 3. EDUCATIONAL GAMES AND VALUES

Everything we do has an impact for the better ... or the worse. Especially when we set up educational programmes and use a variety of tools and methods. From small energizers, icebreakers and name games towards bigger -more complex- exercises. Some of those impacts are not the ones we desired, and sneak -many times unconsciously and hidden- inside the tools we use.

#### 3.1. THE STRUCTURE BEHIND GAMES

When planning (educational) games, the “**GaMe TaiLoR**” principle can be used as a check during your preparation phase. The consonants stand for Group, Material, Time, Location and Rules. Below a quick view on few basic, yet essential, elements.

##### Group

Do you have a good view on your target group? How will you get more information beforehand? Such information will allow you to tailor the game and make it customised. Increasing hereby the learning potential for each one. Here already some interesting questions to ask:

- Do some or all participants have different needs or abilities?
- Are games a tool-format known by the participants?
- What kind of cultural sensitivities are present in the group?
- Will you lead the game alone or do you have a co-facilitator?
- Is it a newly composed group, or an existing group with settled norms?
- Is the game adaptable to the possible size of the group?

##### Material

Double checking if your material is complete, is never a bad idea. Nicely produced materials create an inviting start atmosphere and create initial hopeful expectations.

Consider

- When using texts, how readable is this for all. Not only language wise, but also in the size of the letters?
- How eco-friendly is the material you use? Is there a possibility of some recycling and up-cycling? It creates another value based dimension to your materials.
- How diverse are your game pieces? Are they distinct enough, not only in colours but also in shape, touch and size? How inclusive are the play-pieces for any kind of group?

##### Time

Foresee adequate time for the game towards the outcomes you aim to have. If possible, test the game beforehand in order to have a better view how to structure the game and the debriefing. When the time is too short, choose another game/method.

Be aware that some groups or participants need more time to understand or play the game, according to their knowledge, age, learning possibilities, previous experiences etc. Some might have a maximum attention span to remain concentrated.

Few questions to consider:

- Are all the participants experienced and/or have a fast understanding of game structures?
- Is the time frame flexible or rather strict?
- Can the game be shortened or prolonged if needed/desired? And still remain meaningful?

### Location

Choose your location according to the game, or do exactly the opposite. Both influence each other. A mystery game in an old dusty attic, is quite a different setting than the middle of a bright green park.

Outside: take the weather into account. Wind and rain might not only damage your game material, but also create discomfort with the group. Too much sun, wind, rain or cold will have an impact on the safety and concentration of your group.

Inside: do you have enough space? Accessible tables and chairs for everybody? If relevant, is it private enough without any other groups passing by and through?

- Is the noise level a constructive element for the game?
- Is there too little or too much distraction around?
- Is the chosen location easily and/or equally accessible? Also with a wheelchair?

### Rules

Rules for games are by preference easy, explainable and understandable. Do not hesitate to change and adapt rules of existing games, if this is beneficial to fit the target group and the set objectives.

Rules in games also reflect values. Rules have an impact on the behavior, possible learning and value practice of the players. Check beforehand which values are promoted through the game itself and if you wish this. Understanding and identifying these values will support greatly the quality of your debriefing process. See the next chapter for an easy overview of stimuli and inhibitors to support this value exercise.

- An overload of too many rules at the start of a game, discourages and confuses many players. Consider building up the different rules as you go along. Very often: less is more.
- Be aware that many unspoken rules exist. They are copy-paste rules of the society in which we live, often without questioning. Players unconsciously 'assume' these unspoken rules. E.g. every game seems to be about competing against other players. Yet, the final aim might be the opposite: to promote cooperation.

### 3.2. THE STIMULI IN GAMES

Some elements within our tools are stimuli for participants in their learning process, while others have a rather negative effect and become inhibitors for an efficient and effective learning in a safe physical and mental environment. The below stimuli and inhibitors refer rather to learning on the level of a group, than towards a single individual. After all, each person has their own particularities to certain stimuli. On an overall, consider the below overview. How many of these aspects/values characterizes the tool you intend to use?

STIMULI	INHIBITOR
Group formation and inclusion	Exclusion
Cooperation	Competition
Experience and enjoyment	Passivity and resignation
Creativity and imagination	Aggression and roughness
Solidarity	Individualism
Self-confidence	Fear
Pleasure and humour	Power and strength
Autonomy	Dictatorship
Active involvement	One person doing everything
Playing (learning) is the most important	The 'game-result' is the most important
Taking each other into account	Emphasise existing differences

Clearly, competing is a driving force in many of our actions. And on itself, not a bad aspect considering the world around us is still based greatly upon individualism and competing. Nevertheless, there is a very significant difference between competing against another person(s) or competing as a group against a set time, a predefined mission or a record to be set. Looking at the grid, your tool can have several characteristics. We believe it is important to be aware of them.

Example: most of us are familiar with the 'Musical chair game'. All are seated on a chair placed in a circle. When the music plays, all walk around. Music stops, all have to sit, knowing that each time one chair is taken away, and consequently, 1 person drops out of the game. This goes on till one person is left (=the 'winner'), while all the others ... simply wait for the end. What about: it all stays the same, but each time: all the people have to sit anyway. Imagine the human tower on top of 1 chair, at the end.

#### 4. TIPS TO DESIGN OR ADAPT BOARD GAMES TOWARDS BECOMING MORE INCLUSIVE

With the below overview, we are aware that this is not complete. With this booklet, we wish to highlight different aspects towards inclusivity, and this in a short and snappy appetizer manner. We hope it questions more and invites all to explore also other dimensions not approached here. As we went along in this project, we discovered many shortcomings in the development of our new educational tools when it comes down to 'being more inclusive'. We have also included those aspects here.

Accessible games are ones where people can still play your game even if they have extraordinary usability needs. An inaccessibility is any feature of a game that presents a barrier to enjoyment. Mostly it's about how information is presented and how the game is manipulated, but I also include aspects of cultural inaccessibility and representation.

Dr. Michael Heron

<https://brandonthegamedev.com/how-to-develop-inclusive-board-games/>

Having also this quote in mind, below tips, thoughts but mainly reflective questions to make your games more inclusive.

Board games have different visual aspects: the board, the text on game rules or cards, the game pieces etc. We invite you to explore the following realities.

##### Blindness and Partial vision

Is the game you are using easily accessible for everyone of your target group? Would that also include persons with partial vision or no vision? If the game was not developed to facilitate those needs, it is important to know until what extent your participants can see the game and/or read the needed info. Or maybe more interesting to change those game elements into an inclusive dimension from the very start.

Worth to consider:

- Ask your participants what vision they have and what support can be useful for them.
- Is it possible to play the game in pairs (vision-no vision)?
- What kind of support can help to remember the rules?
- How can you make sure everybody has an overview of what happens in the game?
- Can the rules be sent beforehand? People can use their own tools to understand the rules prior to the activity?

## Color Blindness

More frequent than one might think at the start. In a simplified way, we could divide color blindness into 'total' or 'partial'. Total color blindness means not seeing colors at all and rather seeing different shades of grey instead. Partial color type blindness means people see different colors but have challenging difficulties distinguishing some colors from each other: "Red and green" is the most known form. We can distinguish the following main 3 categories. Just to give an idea of the possible challenge in making your exercise color blind-proof

**Protanopes** are more likely to confuse: black with many shades of red, dark brown with dark green, dark orange with dark red, some blues with some reds, purples and dark pinks and/or mid-greens with some oranges.

**Deutanopes** are more likely to confuse: mid-reds with mid-greens, blue-greens with grey and mid-pinks, bright greens with yellows, pale pinks with light grey, mid-reds with mid-brown and/or light blues with lilac.

The most common color confusions for **tritanopes** are light blues with greys, dark purples with black, mid-greens with blues and oranges with reds.

Some tips:

- Avoid using similar tones within the same color spectrum: Pale- blue, Mid-blue, Dark blue
- Limit the number of similar tones used. E.g. avoid red, orange, brown, pink and purple together.
- Use additional symbols, patterns, shapes or other non-color identifiers, thereby avoiding color to be the only differentiating factor.

## Visual Dyslexia

Different forms of dyslexia exist. You can additionally support people with visual dyslexia by using the "Dyslexie font". One of such existing fonts has been developed by Christian Boer. The font is free downloadable on: <https://www.dyslexiefont.com/en/typeface/>

It's designed to have unique letters that will be less swapped, rotated or flipped (particularly the "b, d, p and q"). The font has extra distance between the letters and the space between words to decrease the crowding effect (the apparent fusion of letters). Capital letters are bolder to make the beginning of the sentences easier identifiable.

## Intersectional Accessibility: visual and physical

Intersectional accessibility is not a very documented dimension when it comes to the inclusiveness in game-based learning. A "hidden hand of cards" could be ok for someone with visual impairments if they can bring them up close for examination. It might be fine for someone with physical constraints because a card holder can keep the cards in place without causing discomfort. However, if someone has to take into account visual and physical impairments, there's a problem that comes from that intersection. It's about dealing with the fact that accessibility issues are often cross-category and there are implications with that.

Verbalising instructions might be fine if someone has physical restrictions, but that compensation may not be feasible if paired with a communication impairment.

We thought these were important facts, if you really wish to engage in a fully proof inclusive game-based learning experience.

## 4.2. LANGUAGE BARRIERS

### Language literacy

Many game-based tools use more text than image. Yet, we do not always realize how restricting this can be for many 'players'. The fact you are able to read this guide, makes you belong to a minority in the world when it comes to literacy.

- What's the level of literacy in the group? Could this be an inhibiting factor to fully participate?
- Are there different mother tongues in the participant's group?
- Does the group speak a common language, also in terms of 'slang words'?

### Reducing language dependency

To lower the language dependency of your 'game', iconography is an effective way to work on this. Take time to explore which icons you will use, once a bad iconography will only contribute to confusion.

There are multiple advantages of going very visual with icons:

- You increase the age range of potential players
- Language literacy level becomes less important, same for dyslexia.
- Easier for players with different mother tongue language
- Increased accessibility for those with 'poor' vision

## 4.3. DIFFERENT MOBILITY

People's mobility can be limited due to disease, injuries, or birth consequences. Conditions like spinal cord injuries, head injuries, amputations, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, and cerebral palsy also can limit mobility. Mobility may be limited in the lower body, upper body, or both.

People with limited mobility may:

- use splints, casts, leg braces, canes, crutches, walkers, or wheelchairs
- need extra time, as well as help, moving around
- use assistive technology to help with writing and other activities
- need extra time to complete assignments
- need special seats and desks or tables, and extra space for wheelchairs or other equipment
- need other people's assistants to take notes for them; move play pieces (in case of the board game) and more

If you are planning to have a workshop with the people with limited mobility or at least one of participants is with limited mobility you need to find the venue that would be accessible. **Accessible** generally means that people with any type of (dis)ability can get to, in, around, and out of a building and meeting room. So why not make it from the start a good principle to assure this is possible.

Several aspects we invite you to think about before setting up (a board game) workshop

- Is the working room accessible?
- Is there enough space for people with wheelchairs to move freely?
- What size and height the working tables should be? (e.g. if you have 6 people in wheelchairs and you need to place the board game map on the table).
- Are all the tasks in the boardgame relevant to this target group? (e.g. action cards that say „stand up if...“, „raise your hand if...“ and etc.)
- Do I need someone to support me (co-facilitator)?

#### 4.4. CULTURAL ASPECTS

It is complex to be fully aware of the entirety of human identity and belonging, and to keep in mind all the shadows that represent the beauty of diversity. However, creating a game-based learning activity, a couple of elements should be kept in mind.

It is fundamental to approach diversity in these cultural/identity aspects, keeping in mind the intersectionality concept. For “intersectionality” we intend an analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which identity components intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and discrimination.

For this reason, if the game you are designing has characters, playable or not, please aim to include as much diversity of the human species as possible in a respectful manner. This includes sexual identity (sex, gender, sexual orientation and gender expression), ethnicities, religions, beliefs, lifestyles, occupations, mental health, disabilities, and anything else you can think of, being aware that these characters will take on a role in your game and at the same time, gamers can empathize directly with them projecting personal experience. It is important to avoid limiting the potential of a player identifying a character as themselves, and avoid them thinking that the character that best represents them is useless or portrayed in a bad light.

In designing a game, serious attention should be given to the risk of cultural appropriation: cultural appropriation is defined as a culture taking elements from another culture, without permission, and using these elements outside their original context (The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature 2007). Cultural appropriation is often determined by very low cultural awareness that could lead to false information that could reinforce stereotypes, which lead to a poor understanding of other cultures and their tradition. The worst case scenario when an item is appropriated is that the cultural value of this item is lost forever as the item becomes generic.

- Are you aware of the different belonging of your group?
- Are you aware that diversity sensitivity covers a big spectrum of identities?
- Are you aware that everyone has stereotypes and self bias?

#### 4.5. EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS

Educational barriers are not always easy to detect. They come from the learning possibilities someone has or had. This can be linked with different aspects such as: education, learning capacity, the age, habits when using learning tools and online or technical access, cultural background, etc.

If you work with a new target group or you support the target group of another organization, you can start from the following questions before choosing or developing your educational tool:

##### Age Group

- What is the average concentration span of the participants?
- Is the topic attractive to the target group?
- Is the vocabulary used understandable for the age group?
- What kind of competence does your game require and how can you overcome this when people don't have the (full) competence?

##### Language

- Do you need to be able to read and write to participate?
- Is the language used understandable for the target group?
- Is it possible to use symbols instead of words?

### Mathematics and logic thinking

- Is there a need to calculate to be able to play the game?
- How can we support people on the mathematical aspects?
- Is the game based on strategy and logical thinking?
- How can we make this visible and accessible to all players?

### Culture and education

- Are the players used to games as a pedagogical tool?
- What kind of personal game culture do the participants have?
- Do the cultural values play a role in your game?

### Accessibility

- When playing a game online, what kind of tool is needed, and do the participants have access to it?
- Is everybody's internet stable enough?

## 4.6. GAMIFICATION TECHNIQUES: PRO & CONTRA

As educators active in the non formal educational field, many of us do particularly enjoy 'gamifying' the learning. Adding an exciting game-spice to topics traditionally approached rather formal, very sensitive or quite abstract. We also invite you to consider how constructive (or deconstructive) such a gamification can bring with it.

Few examples:

- **Collecting:** many people like to collect, it is a gamified element in our reality and it has been made 'normal' to us. Think of all the 'loyalty cards with points', different collection gadgets you receive with each purchase. And eventually ... the aim of collecting also money, goods, properties. Do we wish to continue feeding this 'collecting fever' also in our educational gamified exercises?
- **Reaching a status:** most likely everyone knows some games where you level up from 'beginner-apprentice-teacher-master-guru'. Or 'volunteer-soldier-sergeant-captain-etc'. And reality depicts the same push for progress in status. This leaves many people very -unjustified- unsatisfied with the social level reached in reality. A social gamification technique we are subdued to. Shall we repeat this gamification technique in our educational board games? Or shall we rather go against that.

## 5. SOURCES

Some free publications on Inclusion:

**Going international opportunities for all!** Salto Youth Inclusion: A booklet with practical inclusion methods and advice for preparing, implementing and follow-up on international projects with **young people with fewer opportunities**

**No Barriers No Borders** Salto Youth Inclusion: A practical booklet for setting up international mixed-ability youth projects **(including persons with and without a disability)**

**Over the rainbow.** Salto Youth Inclusion: A practical booklet about setting up international LesBiGay projects - **including young lesbians, gays, bisexuals and young people questioning their sexual orientation**

**Fit for Life,** Salto Youth Inclusion: Using **sports** as an educational tool for **inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities**

**Inclusion by Design,** Salto Youth Inclusion: A practical booklet to help NGO's approach **inclusion in a strategic way**

All the above booklets are free downloadable on [www.salto-youth.net/inclusion/](http://www.salto-youth.net/inclusion/)



<https://bb-games.eu>

Borderline Boardgames Legacy is a Key Action 2 Strategic Partnership project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme of the European Union under reference number 2019-1-BE05-KA205-002637. The content does not obligatory reflect the vision and opinion of the European Commission.