

# Towards a participatory museum

A How-to-Guide on inclusive activities

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This How-to-Guide was produced as a result of the efforts of four participatory research groups in four European cities: London, Madrid, Oviedo and Vienna. Each of these participatory research groups included between fifteen and thirty-five people with a broad range of access preferences often associated with sensory and/or cognitive impairments. Beyond their words, quoted throughout, their contribution to this publication has been its inspiration.

This publication is dedicated to the heritage change-makers, to those who want to create an inclusive, accessible and barrier-free environment and to those who want to enable everyone to have a voice and relationship with their heritage.

We hope that our experiences will give you the confidence and knowledge to embed participatory practices in your everyday programmes.

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# 1. An Introduction to ARCHES

## Opening Message

‘The visit to the museum should be a moment of learning, of discovery.’ (Eduardo, participant from Madrid)

The aim of this publication is to enable practitioners in museums to work towards a museum for all by providing them with an extensive description of participatory activities they can undertake. It challenges perceptions of inclusion and exclusion, moving beyond the notion of disability categories and working instead with people’s access preferences. The overlap in preferences guides our understanding of how to create a space for all, where everyone can enjoy ‘moments of discovery’.

‘These prejudices are silly because at the end you realize that it is a matter of ignorance...Disability is one more circumstance of the individual, it is not what prevails, it is just another issue.’ (Alberto, participant from Madrid)

As participatory research groups within the ARCHES project we regularly visited museums and explored ways to improve accessibility and develop new resources. Each group conducted its own research, taking into account the interests of the participants and the conditions of the museum itself. In addition, we all participated in the evaluation and design of ARCHES technological resources. The experience of all of them allowed us to develop materials and technological resources that facilitate access to our collections.

With this handbook we would like to share the three major lessons we drew:

- **Our methodology**
- **How to prepare yourself for the journey**
- **What activities worked and what didn't work**

ARCHES (Accessible Resources for Cultural Heritage EcoSystems) was a Horizon 2020 funded project which involved partners in Heritage and Technology across Europe. It was a three year project that started in October 2016. Its aim was to explore how to make museums accessible to all through a participatory research methodology and the development of accessible technology.

The consortium consisted of five technology companies; Treelogic (Spain), VRVis, ArteConTacto, and SignTime (Austria), and Coprix Media (Serbia), as well as six museums; The Victoria and Albert Museum and The Wallace Collection (UK), Kunsthistorisches Museum (Austria), Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, the Museo Lázaro Galdiano, and the Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias (Spain) and two universities; the Open University and Bath University (UK).



## 2. On Methodology

The project adopted a participatory research method that comes under the broad umbrella of emancipatory research. This focuses upon the need for research to be accountable and open throughout to a group run by disabled people, with the skills and knowledge of researchers being at the disposal of disabled people (Barnes, 2003). It aimed to produce accessible knowledge and place findings within their environmental and cultural context so as to highlight the disabling consequences of social attitudes (UKDPC, 2003).

This is reflected in three core principles of inclusive research undertaken with people with learning difficulties: “Research must address issues which really matter to people with learning difficulties, and which ultimately lead to improved lives for them”; “It must access and represent their views and experience”; and “People with learning difficulties need to be treated with respect by the research community” (Walmsley & Johnson, 2003).

This research also recognised the different resources which institutions can bring to bear on issues of inclusion. Where large national museums can more easily develop a range of access options, this is not usually possible for smaller cultural heritage institutions – which represent the vast majority of European museums. We aimed to make museums more inclusive and create innovative ecosystems beyond museums: at home, in schools and educational centres, etc., meaning that the resources – developed through a participatory methodology – will help to work against discrimination, enabling this innovative ecosystem to increase audience access to cultural heritage.

It is important to note that people with different access preferences have been represented throughout the project. This was very noticeable when project staff started recruiting for the pilot. There was a strong belief that:

1. No two people are the same and therefore our needs cannot be predicted reliably.
2. As people's needs overlap it is not fair to request them to label themselves or for other to label them.

Therefore, we started recruiting potential participants we did not focus upon impairment categories, but upon what people said they needed and preferred. This philosophy was picked up on and pushed further by the participants and the project as a whole.

This approach has been at the heart of building the participatory research groups in the participating museums. We have continually assessed the validity and effectiveness of the process by monitoring and supporting the activities of the groups and all its members. This has included training the professionals in charge of each of the research groups. As a result, each group developed in their unique approach to participatory research, depending on their different group dynamics and priorities.

So, for example, at different times one group had a stronger focus on working on the need for understanding each other's experience of impairment whereas another group focused more on how to make museums accessible for all.

A careful evaluation of the participatory research process was also undertaken based on a framework proposed by the International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research (2013) and argued to be applicable to non-health contexts (Seale, 2016).



This involved interviews with people from across the project to evaluate six validities:

1. Intersubjective validity: the extent to which research is viewed as being credible and meaningful by the stakeholders from a variety of perspectives.
2. Contextual validity: the extent to which the research relates to the local situation.
3. Participatory validity: the extent to which all stakeholders are able to take an active part in the research process to the full extent possible.
4. Catalytic validity: the extent to which the research is useful in terms of presenting new possibilities for social action.
5. Ethical validity: the extent to which the research outcomes and the research has increased empathy among participants.
6. Empathic validity: the extent to which the research has increased empathy among participants.

We suggest undertaking a reflective evaluation such as this not only to evaluate the participatory nature of your project, but also to support you with future projects.

**We strongly recommend that you work according to needs and preferences as you will soon notice that we all have similar needs and preferences that are not necessarily impairment specific.**

# 3. On Dis/Ability

This next section aims to give you a quick checklist on how to support people with various needs. Within ARCHES we used the Social Model and so referred to ‘disabled people’, since we recognised that people are disabled by society, whilst having to live with the reality of their impairments.

## **General advice:**

- Speak less about disability and more about ‘my ability’  
It’s important to awaken the talents of everybody.
- Disabled people can be autonomous and independent citizens if we remove the barriers that limit people’s experiences.
- The barriers to inclusion are not only physical but also attitudinal and institutional, often based on stereotypes and prejudices.
- Treat everyone with respect, common sense and good education. Use natural, friendly and appropriate treatment and avoid any offensive or discriminatory comments.
- Treat adults like adults. Do not infantilise disabled people.
- Don’t worry about making a mistake.
- Speak directly to the person you are communicating with, not to his or her supporter.
- Use simple language (it will work for everyone), speak clearly, without vocalisation or exaggerated gesticulation.
- Give everyone enough time to speak. Do not interrupt them or try to finish what they are saying (even if you do it with the intention of helping).
- Remember that impairments are not always visible.
- Don’t take for granted the needs of each person according to their impairment category, it is best to ask each person what their preferences are.

- Act naturally, if you think someone might need assistance and hasn't asked for it, ask them.
- Avoid leaving a person you are assisting unattended. If you have to leave, find a colleague and inform the visitor of the change and its duration.

### **Tips for supporting persons with physical support need**

- If possible, place yourself in front of the other person and at the same height.
- If you accompany a visitor, adjust to their pace if it is slower than yours. Give directions in the museum and explain where you're going, but don't overload with conversation.
- Avoid taking hold of someone's stick or walker, as this could destabilise this person.
- Offer assistance when going up and down staircases - even carrying light objects such as bags or brochures can be helpful.

### **Tips for supporting people with hearing loss**

- Some people with a hearing impairment use oral language and their receiving system is lip reading and/or hearing (if hearing aids are functional for them). Many people have lost their hearing after acquiring oral language and therefore understand the written language well.
- Signers sometimes have difficulty understanding spoken or written languages (they understand them as "foreign languages").
- Confirm the communication method a person will want to use: sign language, lip reading, interpreter, writing, etc.
- Even if someone is wearing hearing aids it doesn't mean they can hear you clearly. Ask if they need to lip-read.
- Face the person who is lip-reading so they can see your mouth.
- Don't cover your mouth or stand in the dark.
- Speak clearly, using plain language, normal lip movement and facial expressions.

- Keep your voice down, as it's uncomfortable for a person with a hearing aid if you shout; it may also appear aggressive.
- Check whether the person understands what you are saying and, if not, try saying it in a different way.
- If you are using communication support, always remember to talk directly to the person you are communicating with and not the interpreter.
- Before you start speaking make sure you have their attention. Either wave or tap them gently on their arm – although make sure not to shock the person, as they may not hear you approaching.
- It is particularly useful to learn fingerspelling or some basic sign language.



- Where there is a mix of deaf and hearing people ensure that you do not just focus on the hearing people who may be responding in ways with which you are more familiar.
- When audio/video is offered, there must always be an alternative text: subtitles, written text, sign language, etc.
- Avoid talking while walking between points in the museum. Do not explain things whilst you are in noisy rooms or in rooms with more groups; people using hearing aids may receive amplified noise or they may have to cope with hearing the other group's conversations.
- Give everyone time to express themselves, avoid completing the conversations of people with speech difficulties. Sometimes it is useful to repeat an idea by paraphrasing so you can confirm what has been understood. Remember to wait for confirmation.

### **Tips for working with an Interpreter**

- Allow more time for the meeting (depending on the communication method it can take up to 50-70% longer with deafblind participants).
- Interpreters need breaks so make sure you schedule them. An interpreter can only work for a limited period of time without a break. If the session is a long one, you might need to book two interpreters.
- If you book an interpreter for a formal event provide them with an outline of the set-up. Warn the interpreter prior to the event if you are going to demonstrate anything.
- Give him/her in advance some information regarding the subject, unusual names and specialist terms you will talk about.
- When talking in a gallery, agree with the interpreter where you both will be standing before looking at the artwork.
- When presenting, look directly at the audience as some might be lip-reading. When you have finished a few sentences, look at the interpreter to see if s/he needs time to catch up.

## **Tips for supporting people with a visual impairment and people with partial sight**

- When approaching blind people and people with a visual impairment, introduce yourself and communicate clearly when offering help. Listen to their response (they may clarify whether and what help they want).
- Ask how someone would like to be guided. Rather than taking or holding their arm, allow them to take your arm.
- Mention if you are approaching curbs and steps, say whether they need to go up or down, and describe any potential hazards that lie ahead and where they are.
- When guiding someone into a seat, place their hand on the back of the seat before they sit down, so they can orientate themselves.
- Make sure they know where they are and which way they are facing in relation to their environment.
- At the beginning of a meeting, outline the room and who is sitting around the table.
- Say when you have finished providing assistance and are leaving someone.
- Do not be afraid to use words or metaphors connected to the visual world, such as “Ah, I see!”, and do not change your way of speaking for the sake of political correctness, as it will sound artificial. People with a visual impairment use these expressions themselves and will not feel offended if you say something like “Let’s now look at the next example.”
- Audio description can be very useful in guided tours and other museum activities, for all kinds of audiences.

### **Tips for engaging people with learning difficulties**

- People with learning difficulties are frequently used to people talking about them rather than to them, and to having things presented in ways that are not accessible. You should try to avoid this.
- You need to ensure that the subject is of interest to the participants and in some way reflects their priorities.
- Participants need to see a clear structure to activities and communications, and to be given time to develop their understanding and to search for meaning.
- Using different mediums will help. For example, including senses such as touch, smell and sight can play an important role and reduce the need for verbal explanation. For some participants, the use of such senses will be their primary form of communication.
- Transitions between activities should not be fast and pressurised, as this can be disruptive for some people.
- Staff should allow the participants to direct activity rather than require them to follow.
- Repetition will help people to remember and create clarity for everyone.

### **Providing additional communication opportunities**

- Communication support could include: note takers, lip speakers, sign language interpreters, deafblind interpreters and/or speech to text reporters.
- Pictograms, symbols and story-board style pictures from everyday are deemed to be particularly useful and should be used whenever and wherever possible. Symbols and pictures should support any text.
- Visits are most effective when more senses are being used.
- Resources need to have strong contrast in colour and texture to be accessible to all.

# 4. Setting the Scene

The following section aims to give you a clear picture of things that you can and should do before a project starts within your museum.

## **Get to know and understand the objectives of all your partners**

- Identify the roles and responsibilities that each one has in the project. Be clear about people's tasks and workload.
- Make sure that all partners know and share the methodological framework and discuss concrete examples and ways of working.
- Identify your strengths and knowledge and share them with the rest of your partners.

## **Check material and personnel resources within your institution**

- Check access requirements to the building, workshop space and services offered in the museum.
- Which spaces are available/do you need to undertake the project? Are they accessible? Are there limited booking spaces?
- Is there a limit to how many people you can host in one room/space, including supporters, facilitators, interpreters and volunteers?
- Will you all be able to work in the same space? You want to create a comfortable and welcoming space. Take into account sound levels and any flashing lights. You might want to look for quiet spaces and break out rooms.
- Make sure the building's access features (like wheelchair lifts) are working prior to the sessions.
- Make sure you have all the resources needed to undertake the project (but be prepared to get some more). If you are



working with technology, do you have enough devices to start testing?

- Don't forget to test and explore access features like VoiceOver/TalkBack on mobile devices. Some companies like Apple offer free support so check them out <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/accessibility>
- When planning sessions, consider if there are enough people to support and help in running the activities. Make sure that each person will have the support they need to undertake activities in the museum. If your team is not big enough or lacks specific expertise, consider bringing in people from disability associations, volunteers, trainees...

### **Wellness, security and motivation**

In order to create a good working environment, there are some things that can help to improve wellness and motivation.

- Be aware of the dedication and time you are planning to spend on a single activity. Allow time for socialising:
  - Consider 'snack breaks' by offering drinks and food. (Be aware of allergies and intolerances before ordering).
  - Check contracts and possible arrangements between your institution and providers.
- Take into account barriers or limitations that participants may find that prevent them from attending the sessions and try to solve them.
  - Offer help to pay for transport, depending on your budget.
  - Discuss with participants issues related to responsibility and involvement in the project.
  - Bring friends or family into the group who might help participants feel more confident and who will also add another set of perspectives.
  - Offer all the information possible before a session, so that people can know what they are joining.

## **Check your museums procedures**

If you are working with artworks and images of artworks make sure that you have all the legal rights to use them.

Are they copyright protected? Is it going to cost you and if so how much? For how long are they valid?

Ensure you have agreements regarding the use of images and information gathered during a project:

- Make sure that all participants understand and express their consent before starting.
- Check that consent forms are according to current law requirements.
- Remember that consent is an ongoing process not just an one-off agreement.

## **Gathering, managing and developing knowledge**

- Do you have the knowledge to develop the accessible content which the participants require? Can you go to local disability organisations for support and training?
- Have you organised training for educators and supporters if needed? Once again, local and national organisations offer valuable support.
- What previous experience can your organisation bring to a project? Museums are places for learning and research development through practice. Education departments have their own knowledge about issues related to working with different publics in many ways. This does not mean that lessons cannot still be learned, of course!
- Are you going to collect data? If so, think about the ways you can do that (e.g. films, audio recorders and written texts).
- How are you going to analyse data emerging from sessions? Will you analyse as part of the sessions or separately? You can develop activities where participants are the ones evaluating emerging data and taking decisions accordingly.

- When preparing for evaluation there are a lot of free apps and programmes to support evaluations like <https://www.surveymonkey.com>; <https://answergarden.ch> as well as Google features. Make sure you check them out. There are many resources online that can help you to gather, organise and share data for later analysis like <https://www.mendeley.com> and <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/home>)

## **Networking and communication**

From the start of your project it is important to have a good relationship within your department and other departments but also outside of your museum.

### **At the beginning of the project:**

- Good communication across your department, including clarity and roles and responsibilities will set the project out on the right path. Ensure you align the project within the overall strategy of the museum.



- Good and timely dialogue with other departments is also crucial. For example, a visitor services department should assist your contacts with participants: do visitor services need additional training in advance of the project to better support you? Similarly a communication department might support you spreading the word and creating awareness of the project, and perhaps aid you in any necessary recruitment. Curatorial and exhibitions departments may benefit from feedback from your participants and may be able to broaden access to future talks or exhibitions: how might they wish to receive such feedback?
- Talking with colleagues from different museums will help you see what other sites are doing and how your project will fit in with that. Sharing best practices and challenges only enrich the sector as a whole.
- Talking to specific media organisations and accessibility organisations will help support any necessary project recruitment, and also any necessary training your team might need.

### **During the project:**

- Continue to share best practice in your own department and more widely across other departments in your museum. This is a great opportunity to raise awareness of accessibility as a priority with all your colleagues, with patrons and the director.
- Equally, continue talking to other museum departments. If the participants are keen on visiting other sites they may want to give your participants support and/or special access.
- By now you might have discussed social media with your group and have even your own social media accounts. Social Media can allow you to share and strengthen your mission to increase access. When talking about the project try to involve the participants directly.
- Participants can take over the account and share and spread the work beyond the museum's network, either by going to a conference with you or creating YouTube videos etc.

### **Towards the end of the project**

- Have a clear idea of how this project aims to make a lasting change to your organisation's or department's mission and also what further steps may be necessary beyond this project. Understand how you will measure success.
- Share results from the project within your museum. Perhaps you have regular assemblies of staff meeting in which to do this. Try to deliver workshops or papers at national conferences or local education forums.

### **Always keep in mind**

- Ensure all images you use on your web presence, blog, social media accounts etc. are clearly attributed. Produce a clear document listing best practice for reference across your department, and sharing with supporting departments such as communications and IT. This will help ensure all published content is appropriate, consistent and to the right standard.
- If your website does not comply with the most basic accessibility standards (e.g. the ones provided by W3C) let your IT Department know.

**'I recommend that all museums carry out such projects in order to improve accessibility to cultural heritage. And of course, to disseminate the results.'**

**(Juan, participant from Madrid)**

# 5. 'Be-Aware' Checklist

This may all sound daunting or difficult to define, so we wanted to give you some real examples of necessary tasks that have come out of the sessions we've run.

Here they are so that you might 'Be Prepared':

- To talk about money (although you might specify that it is a volunteer project, people may try to change your mind on this point). You may decide to pay people for their involvement. Because of the different rules about benefits in the three countries, we did not, but many projects do.
- To feel guilty about sticking to agreed rules of a project because participants have difficult requests you cannot meet.
- To get special requests like having individual iPads to take home.
- To get requests for individual taxi bookings.
- To get asked for special food menus (that are not a dietary requirement).
- To work with participants who become very emotionally attached to the project or people in it.
- To maintain a professional distance to participants, whilst maintaining strong human contact.
- To work with certain participants who are particularly vocal or may want to be the centre of attention.
- To upset a participant unintentionally through action or inaction. (Do one-to-one checks).
- To be accused of favouritism (hopefully this is not true, but you need to check).
- To be accused of discrimination if someone feels excluded, even if you have created activities that have multiple layers that appeal to multiple access preferences.

- To face difficult decisions about whether to share personal information about oneself, such as having an impairment, when you are asking participants to be open about themselves. People may accuse you of hypocrisy.
- To show the work you do outside of the sessions, so that people do not feel you are taking advantage of them or using them to do your work.
- To allow participants to experience some benefits of taking part in the project (such as going to exhibitions or private views, having a participation certificate or group pictures, or attending conferences or media events).

Be flexible and always observant of the dynamics going on within the group and you will be fine!  
Participatory practice is not about an activity type but the manner in which all activity is undertaken.



# 6. Helping Hands

One of the richest experiences has been collaborating with supporters, volunteers and interpreters. They are a huge help when communicating with other participants and supporting you! It is not uncommon for participants, particularly people with learning difficulties, to come with supporters themselves. This can be a vivid experience for them, and it is vital that you ask them their thoughts, for example when testing technology. Supporters are generally useful to projects and have the best intentions, but they can also present challenges that you might not have counted on. When considering the support you or others provide it is useful to consider whether you or others are being enabling or disabling. People may move between these positions but it is important to be aware of these characteristics:

## **Enabling characteristics**

- Actively encouraging participants to voice their opinion.
- Giving one-to-one support when needed, but not fearing to work with other participants or let those they normally support work by themselves or with others.

## **Disabling characteristics**

- Actively disengaging (for example sitting in the corner, reading the newspaper or looking at their phones).
- Seeing oneself as speaking on behalf of someone rather than creating space for that person to talk.

## **How do you work with people who continuously disable?**

This is a delicate balance as it very much depends on the nature of their relationship. Some parents may be particularly difficult to deal with because they are used to taking on so much responsibility for their child (who may well be an adult).



Observe their initial relationship in the first sessions and seek ways to make them feel trust in the situation.

For example: If a parent continues to speak on behalf of a child, create an activity where either you, another facilitator or another participant can work with them separately. We found Let's Van Gogh to be a simple, quick activity that was effective for this, since it puts people in pairs and requires them to give each other instructions on what to draw. The more activities you create where the participant can give you (the "person in charge") instructions the better. Often, someone who is used to having people speak on their behalf is not used to giving instructions and voicing themselves, so they may need to get used to it.

If you have a supporter that sits in the corner disengaged then you might try these two approaches:

1. (ideal scenario) Simply, ask the person to join in. Encourage them to see themselves as participants, even if it is to take part in a different group than the person they support.
2. (be more cautious) Discuss between the supporter and the participant whether there is a need for the supporter to be there inside the room. If the supporter is not there, it may aid in the participant's independence, but it might mean they become more reliant upon others in the group. Have the phone number of the supporter on hand in any case or they might pop back in from time to time.

As with many things in a long term project, relationships can change across time and these changes may happen quite quickly or slowly. These relationships are at the heart of participatory practice though. Before writing this section we decided to ask supporters some questions. We spoke with supporters that came with participants from the outset, and also supporters we had hired to support (such as language interpreters and note takers).

We asked them five specific questions:

1. What are your previous experiences of supporting someone on a project like this?
2. What is your relationship with the participant outside of this project? (or did you just meet at ARCHES?)
3. How do you position yourself with within the group?
4. Who do you support?
5. How has your relationship changed during the project with the person you support?

The supporters we interviewed admitted how they had to 'hold themselves back' in order to let others voice themselves but once it happens:

'I have noticed an increased commitment to our Group, as well as increased confidence outside ARCHES as well as during the sessions. It has been a great boost to the members to be involved in ARCHES that they feel valued and involved.'  
(Supporter from London)

'ARCHES has provided me with a wonderful opportunity not only to be involved with a fantastic project, but also to make friends and contacts within the working/social Deaf community.'  
(Interpreter from London)

'For me as an interpreter over the course of the project, it should be noted that this process has enhanced the quality of my work in connection with interpreting for Ms XXX. In addition, a relationship of trust has developed and I assume that a positive transfer is an advantage in any relationship. Also, I would like to point out that I find the group dynamics

in the course of the project extremely pleasant and enriching and that in my role as an interpreter I can observe how appreciation positively influences the social body of this group' (Interpreter from Vienna).

'At first [we came] as XXX's support staff, but gradually the involvement with the rest of the ARCHES group has gone further. Currently [we see our roles] as collaborators, participating in project activities, executing and putting into practice when the need has arisen.' (Supporters from Madrid)



# 7. Timing is everything

We realise that it is not a surprise to many that time flies by, but everyone still has a lot of work to do, so we thought it would be helpful to share our recruitment strategies, timings of sessions and our experience of how to manage the workload.

## **Recruitment**

What to have in place before starting with recruitment:

- Have you involved disabled people from the outset, in planning the purposes of the project and how it will be developed?
- Make sure you have sorted out what day and times fit your organisation. Try to book education spaces in advance so that sessions don't overlap. People will want to know the dates before committing to supporting your project. Try to identify a timetable that is suitable for both the museum and the participants. Consider aspects such as participants' schedules (work, study or other activities) or the difficulty of getting to the museum (rush hours).
- Have multiple consent and information forms available. For our project we had written both easy read and more detailed information and consent forms. We also created an information video with subtitles, sign language and audio description.

## **What to expect:**

- You need to engage early with the recruitment process (3 months at least before project kick-off).
- During Christmas no-one will be paying you attention, so try to Avoid end-December and July/August when gearing up your project for start - you will typically find it harder to get responses from participants and various partners during these periods.

- Each organisation has their own timetable and scheduling, to have those exploratory conversations with all external parties.
- The wider the recruitment scope of participants, the richer the knowledge you can bring into the project.
- Be prepared to spread out communication strategies (don't rely solely on the snowball effect). Organise press releases, social media adverts and get in touch with online disability newspapers and forums.
- Be prepared to go to support organisations directly. A personal visit shows commitment and may create a valuable relationship.
- Gatekeepers may be resistant in providing access and support, so be persistent.
- Gatekeepers may be supportive but won't guarantee participants.
- Expect conversations about remuneration and have reward schemes ready (like travel reimbursement, food, free tickets to exhibitions, certificates etc.) if you cannot pay individuals or decide it is inappropriate.
- Consider having an open-house event. This worked well in Madrid and Oviedo. You'll be able to answer concerns directly and hopefully speak with multiple participants/partners.

### **Workload management**

The best model has proved to be holding one session bi-weekly. After the pilot stage where we had one session each week for a year, it became clear that this was too intensive. Start by having one session a week for four weeks, and then spread it out to once every other week. If you feel that it is still too much ask the group.

The best duration of sessions have been 3 hours (keep in mind that people arrive later/leave earlier; breaks will take longer and moving around the museum takes time).

### **What did we do?**

- Spanish museums had their sessions in the late afternoon and early evenings (between 4-7pm). This was designed so that people who have to work can still attend the sessions as well as attend their morning activities.
- In Vienna the sessions were after lunch and before rush hour (2-5pm). This allowed people who have morning activities to still attend without worrying about the traffic and commute.
- In London we started mid-morning until the afternoon (11am-3pm). These timings were to avoid the rush hours and to fit in with support agencies who were bringing participants.
- In terms of how you need to divide your time, ideally dedicate at least three full days (per week) on this project.

**On the week with no session:** take one whole day to listen, evaluate and summarise what you have done in the previous session. There will be additional administrative tasks to manage such as reimbursing transport costs and paying for catering etc. Dedicate the second day of the week to the planning of the next session (send the prepared material to the participants in advance electronically). You might notice that for some activities you'll need less preparation time than others.

**On the week with the session:** Assume that it takes a full day to arrange setting up the room, dealing with catering, last minute tech issues etc. before the actual session. Another day will be taken up with administration, research and preparation for participants' projects.

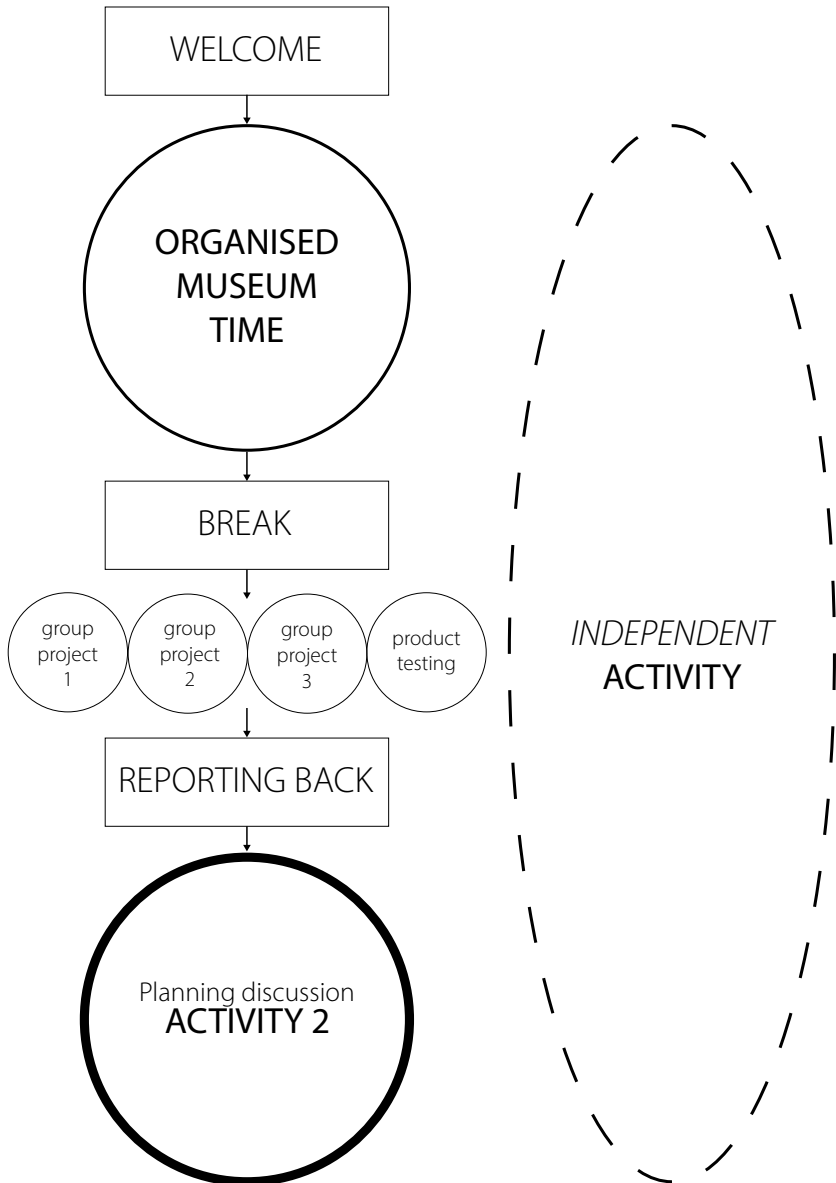
**Additional duties to calculate into your everyday work:** This may include meetings with colleagues and partners, communication with participants outside of the sessions.

## **Session Styles**

Below are three session styles that we have adopted throughout all sessions. It is important to note:

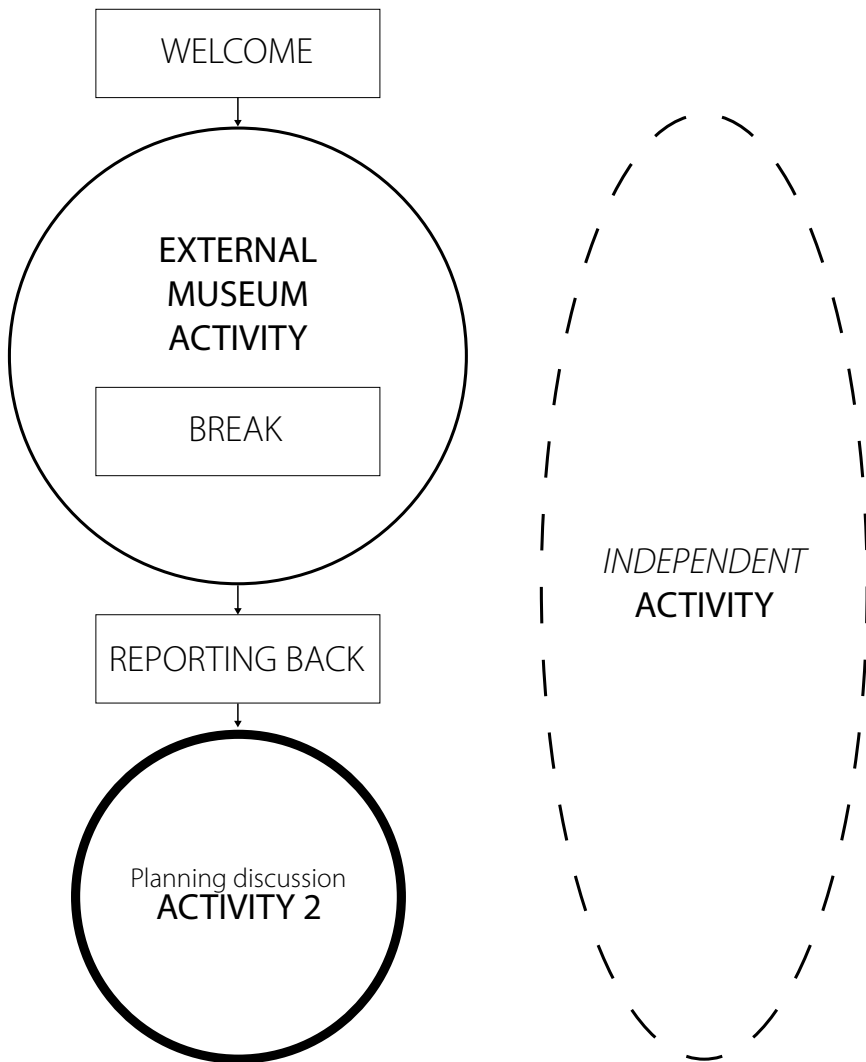
1. That flexibility has to be maintained for individuals who want to do independent activities.
2. Simultaneously, have structured activities for others who need it. You might want to split up into smaller groups for some activities.
3. The Welcome to the sessions is hugely important. Make sure people feel appreciated. Go around the table remembering who is there and where you are sitting to ensure everyone has a sense of what is going on and who is where. Introduce the day and remind people of past sessions if need be.
4. Make sure there is time to socialise; it is a very important component.
5. Also include a debrief session to share each other's results from activities.
6. Lastly, follow-up the debrief session with a quick preview or discussion of what can and needs to be done in the coming sessions which gives participants a sense of continuity,

# Session style A

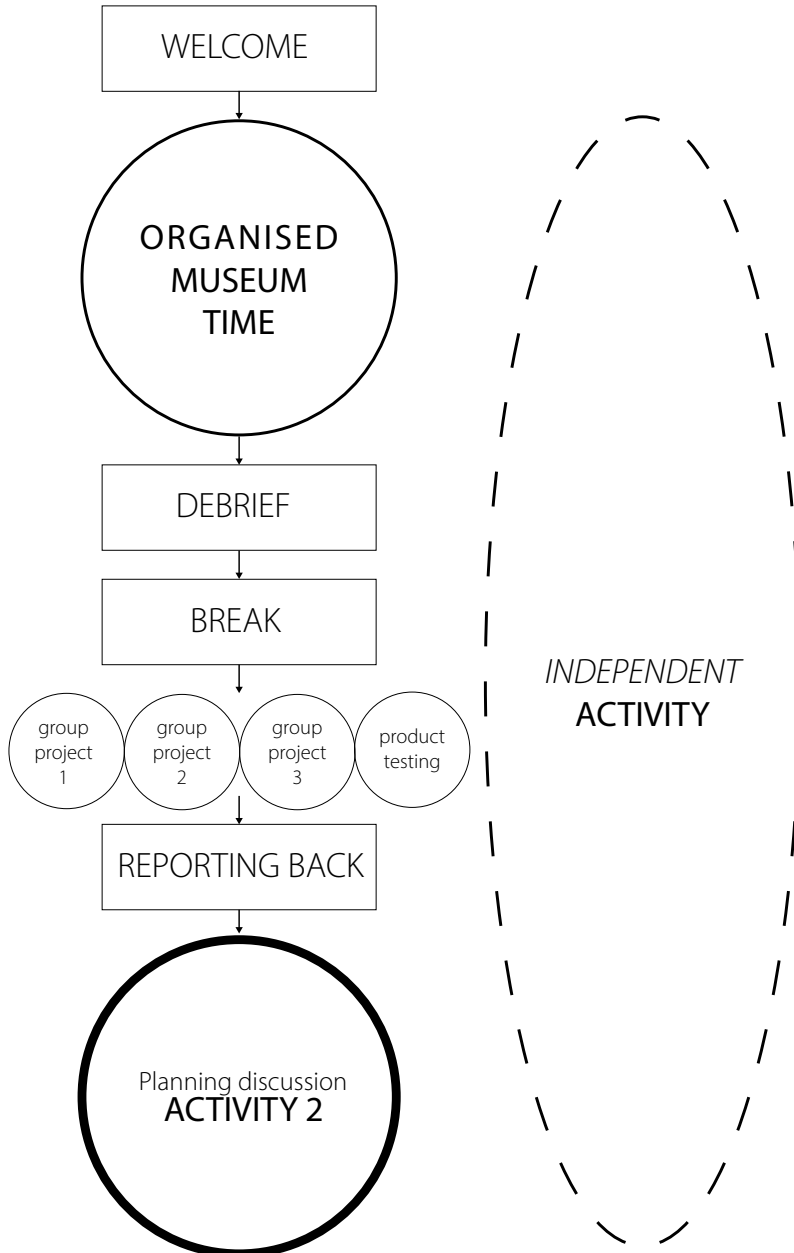




# Session style B



# Session style C





# 8. The way we Work & talk the Talk

When you put a large group together communication issues will always come up. It's natural that some people are more assertive and quicker to speak than others. There is an additional layer of complexity when you work with people who can't see who has their hands up to talk or someone that can't hear when someone is speaking, or when someone speaks in a language that they can't understand.

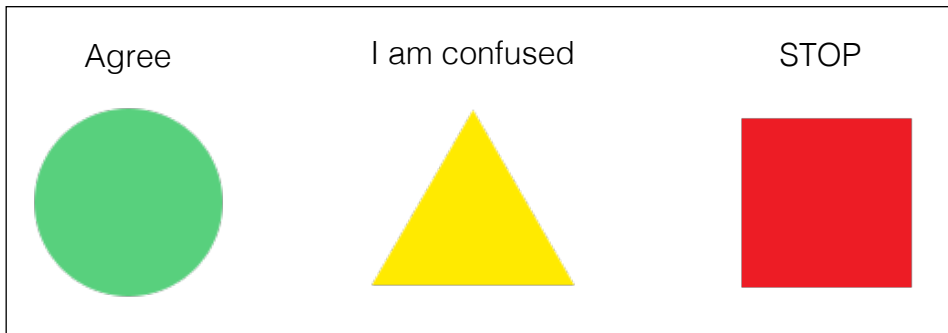
What did we do? During the pilot stage we, the participants, decided to introduce communication rules. In two sessions we created rules and ways of working documents that would guide us when working together.

## **Communication rules**

1. We speak one at a time
2. We put our hand up to speak
3. We do not cover our faces when we speak
4. We try to look at people we are speaking to
5. Speak clearly and slowly
6. In a group of more than 8, each time we speak we introduce ourselves
7. Think about the language we use so that is as simple as possible
8. When we enter a new space we give a visual description of the room and the numbers of people and layout

Additionally, you can introduce a traffic light system (see image below). These shapes were printed out and handed as packs to every participant. They do work when participants are reminded of using them BUT you'll be surprised how often you will still need to moderate conversations. In heated discussions people often ignore the cards.

### **Traffic light system:**



**Solution:** Apart from moderating a conversation, you can also use a microphone. This encourages participants to wait for their turn and allows them to hear better.

**Additional ideas:** If you notice that your group likes to have ground rules and common definitions, you can produce a Values and Ways of Working document and Presentation guidelines that clarify requirements for when people come to talk to a group (when the group is sharing things about themselves). Below is an example from one of our groups.

We recommend suggesting this to participants rather than forcing it as an activity. You will need to test the waters as to whether it is necessary at all. Only positive results can come up from these discussions. Awareness of how each person communicates and perceives communication helps with creating democracy within the group.

## **Outside of the sessions**

It is as important to talk about the communication you have with the participants outside of the sessions as it is to pay attention to communication within those sessions. You want to create a delicate balance of keeping in touch without bombarding participants. There are various approaches you can take.

All our groups sent out the material that would be looked at during the sessions at least 3-5 days in advance. This is key, as participants like to prepare themselves.

What to include in such a message:

- Directions to the museum (you'd be surprised how often participants forget; but remember participants will also travel with different supporters and if you use more than one venue it can be confusing).
- A PowerPoint presentation (both in PDF format and Microsoft PowerPoint. Be prepared to send it as a regular Microsoft Word document too; some screenreaders don't read PDFs and Microsoft PowerPoint documents).
- A flow chart that is easy to read. (It was requested by one person in one of our groups).

**Important:** Do not forget to send this information to the language interpreters too. Don't surprise them with technical terms.

After the sessions one coordinator sent out a protocol with a summary of what had happened and decisions that were made at that session. Another group wanted a weekly email, with a newsletter section written by the participants for the participants. Participants in this group didn't continue writing the newsletter, but it might work well with your group!

## **What you always need to include in sessions**

- ✓ Name badges: as small as it sounds, it is the one thing every single individual in every group looks for when they get into the room. Individuals will make sure they have their badges and you have yours. It is a surprising bonding mechanism. Note: It will also help with identifying who wants to be photographed and who doesn't. You can have a symbol on a name badge to identify those who wish not to be photographed.
- ✓ The individual with the clipboard will automatically feel responsible for taking notes and summarising ideas.
- ✓ Tape recorders and/or tablets: Remind participants to keep notes and recordings; these will be a huge source of information for you but will also remind people to stay focused on an activity. Powerpoint presentations can also be linked to tablets so that people have control over presentations; they can also be used to provide a text description of discussions typed by a note taker.

## **Before we move on...**

Remember that your activities can help participants to understand and be considerate of each other's needs and preferences. When planning activities encourage participants who don't have the same access preferences to do things together. This will encourage people to learn from each other. For example:

- Put participants into pairs and ask them to visit a gallery, choose an object, and describe their perception of it to their partner.
- Put participants into pairs and ask them to go into any part of the museum and explain to each other how they perceive the space/people/sound/light.
- Ask participants to write down their strengths and weaknesses and in small groups ask them to guess whose strengths/weaknesses they are.

There are also other activities you can do which we will describe in the next section.

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# Our values and ways of working

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1. We need to enjoy ourselves.



Image: Man dressed as The Laughing Cavalier.

2. We need to feel secure.



Image: Group is having lunch and laughing out loud.

3. We need to feel in control.



Image: Woman in wheelchair explaining something to supervisor.

4. We need to be informed.



Image: Woman and Man doing research at a computer.

5. We need to feel involved.

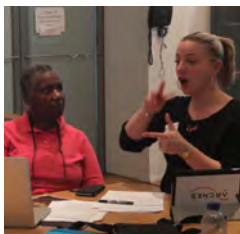


Image: Woman explaining in BSL and other woman listening.



6. We work at different speeds.



Image: Group working on different materials.

7. We need to share our ideas.



Image: Woman touching relief and sharing an idea.

8. We need to be as accessible as possible.



Image: Blind man led by other man.

9. We need to plan together.



Image: Group discussion at a table.

10. For each activity:- Can we feel it? Can we hear it? Can we see it? Is there a shared understanding?

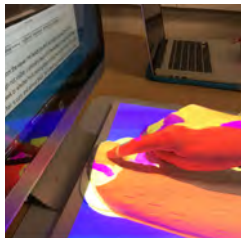


Image: Hand touches a relief bathed in light.

11. We can all play enabling roles for others.

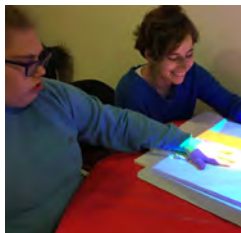


Image: Participant explaining a concept to the group.

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# ARCHES-Presentation Criteria

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1. We need to support each other, to be inclusive of each other.



Image: Two blind participants looking at a tactile map.

2. When we create content, background information and description needs to be written in plain English.

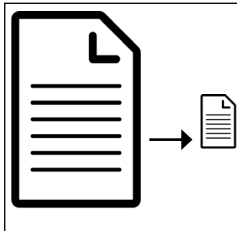


Image: Textdocument decreasing size.

3. Captioning should be very clear and the words should match the speed of speech and the BSL Signing.



Image: Man signing BSL language with subtitles.

4. If there is a video of someone talking, the BSL interpreter should be visible in the lower right corner.

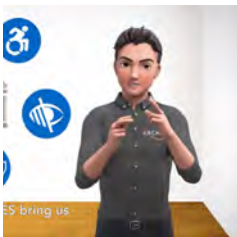


Image: Arches Avatar signing in BSL.

5. Presentations and videos have to be a maximum 15 mins. More complex subjects should have questions/ discussion at the end.

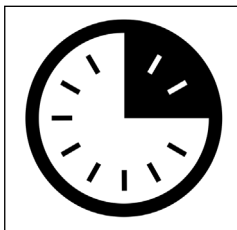


Image: Clock marking 15 minutes.

6. Visual presentations and videos need to be in an easy big font. People benefit from focusing on one thing at a time.

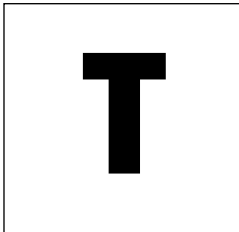


Image: Letter T typed in big.

7. Audio description should be added to videos during 'silent' moments. When there is constant audio a Word document should be added for download.

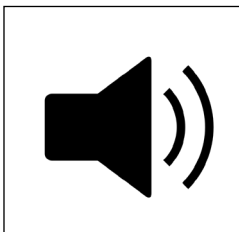


Image: Picto of a Speaker in black.

8. If people are quiet they should be invited to contribute if they wish to do so.

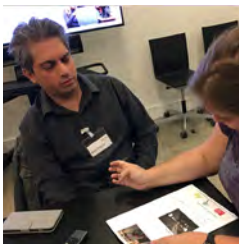


Image: Participant getting involved.

9. Presentation material should be circulated in advance in different formats (including script, image description, picture labels, activity flow charts, PDF, Microsoft Word).



Image: Group handing sheets to each other.

# 9. Museum Activities

In the following section, we collated six different activities that show a range of different approaches we have taken when it came to engaging with ourselves, our senses and the artworks around the museum.

Name of activity: **Theatrical visit**

**Aim of activity:** To explore different style of narratives to engage the participants

**Short description of activity:**

Participants are blindfolded or with their backs towards the art object. Whilst the educator acts out the dialogue s/he includes music/sounds and touch objects. The dialogue includes a visual description of the painting. Participants are not told what the painting is about or who it is from but share the image they visualised in their heads before comparing it to the real object.

**Materials:**

- ✓ Sensory objects (don't be afraid to use smell and taste!)
- ✓ Music/Sound/Vibration
- ✓ Scripts
- ✓ If necessary a second 'actor'

Preparation time: This depends on the artwork but with the editing, finding of resources and text calculate as 3 hours.

Duration of activity: 15-30 minutes

**Positive aspects:**

- Alternative to audio description in a more playful way.
- Allows for individual construction of painting whilst having a shared experience.
- Not only enjoyable for people with visual impairments.
- Surprise effect (who doesn't love it to be honest).

**Negative aspects:**

- There could be a lack of interpretation from the interpreter. Make sure the interpreter either dances or gives an interpretation of the sound/music.
- Can be too complex for people who benefit from simplified language and from visual description.

**Recommendations:**

- Choose an action painting and include the building up to that scene and what could have happened after the scene depicted.
- Make the text very simple and descriptive.
- Don't play two characters. One voice for two characters is confusing.
- Don't rush, let people touch/smell the objects.
- Take your time with the feedback and go one by one. It is nice to find similarities.
- We recommend doing it in groups of 5-10 people.

**Straight from the participants:**

'It's one of the most memorable activities. I got to explore a painting through drama whilst smelling and touching. The best thing is that it helped me create a more lively idea of the painting than I normally would in regular audio visual tours'.

(Valentin, participant from Oviedo)

Name of activity: **Let's Van Gogh**

**Aim of activity:** To understand and experience a painting by visual description but also present the challenge of giving a visual description.

**Short description of activity:**

In pairs: ask one person to give a visual description of an object/painting whilst the other person has to draw it without seeing it. After approx. 10 mins. swap roles with a new object/painting.

It is also possible to use tactile reliefs or artwork replicas.

**Materials:**

- ✓ Colour pen and paper
- ✓ Art objects/paintings
- ✓ Board, play dough

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Duration of activity: 30 minutes

**Positive aspects:**

- helps us to understand each other's needs.
- works well for different needs.
- can bring together people who have not worked together before.
- a good activity for meeting new people
- easy to replicate outside the museum
- helps to remember artworks and to create personal experiences with them.

**Negative aspects:**

- Participantss might be shy to work with/without their sign language interpreter but encourage people to use gestures if the interpreter isn't available. It works, but if nothing else is a good laugh.

### **Recommendations:**

- Participants should be encouraged to work with people they had never worked with before.
- Several people will be talking at the same time, assure that the room isn't too loud.
- Try to choose an artwork that is easy to describe, don't start with difficult ones as it could be frustrating for some participants.
- Some people may benefit from using play dough instead of paint/pencils. Be creative with the materials that are available.

### **Straight from the participants:**

'It's a good way of working with new people and really understanding as a sighted person, to understand the challenges there are when you try to give an audio description and receive one.' (Janine, participant from London)



Name of activity: **Quizzes and crosswords**

**Aim of activity:** To discover the art pieces through questions that make people focus on details and curious information. The aim is also to evaluate later the kind of information they remember and why they remembered one thing more than the other.

**Short description of activity:**

Visit the museum in small groups. Each group discovers the works of art through previously established questions and answers.

**There is a great variety of questions-answers you can create:**

- Open or closed questions.
- Different categories of information: artist info, visual analysis, previous knowledge, comparison with similar artworks, etc.
- Crossword puzzles.
- It's better to choose a few interesting questions, that link to people's interests, than to have lots of them.

**Materials:**

- ✓ Question cards
- ✓ Crossword puzzles

Preparation time: 1 day. It can take a surprising amount of preparation to decide questions and what kind of information to give.

Duration of activity: 1 hour

**Positive aspects:**

- Participants have a lot of fun.
- It helps to easily remember contents of the art pieces.
- It works well for different needs.
- It creates team spirit.



**Negative aspects:**

- Participants might see it as childish so you should layer the information for different people.
- If you decide to explain information to participants before don't make it too difficult.

**Recommendations:**

- It has to be accessible for all. Don't use complicated language. You might need to audio describe the artwork for people with a visual impairment.
- You do not need many questions, is better to concentrate on creating good ones and measure why they are important for visitors.
- Participants should be encouraged to work with people they had never worked with before. It's a good activity for meeting new people.
- Don't do it in big groups as not everyone will have a chance to talk and explore.

**Straight from the participants:**

'Yes I liked it. It was fun!' (Luise, participant from Vienna)

Name of activity: **Multi-sensory activity**

**Aim of activity:** To explore the content of art objects through the senses.

**Short description of activity:**

This activity is divided in two parts, the first part in the educational area, and the second in the museum. For a longer exploration of the senses, it is best to do both parts, one after the other, but if you prefer, you can unify them.

1. Multisensory explorations of objects in the educational area. Participants are blindfolded while the educator presents them with several textures/sounds or smells. First explore each object by asking participants to describe them. Ask them: How can we describe this smell/texture/sound? What emotions/memories does it evoke for us? Collect the ideas on Post-it notes. The intention is that through touch, smell and sound the participants will be able to explore different sensations and imagine and express what these chosen materials evoke for them. Through this initial exploration, we can all find the words and memories to describe the experience transmitted to us by certain materials.

2. Multisensory exploration at the museum (it can be done at the educational areas with reproductions of the artwork as well). In front of the artwork explore again the same textures/sounds or smells in relation to the related artworks. How different is it to experience the artwork through the senses? Exchange sensations with participants and ask what other materials they would have used.

**Materials:**

- ✓ Sensory objects
- ✓ Music/sounds
- ✓ Blindfolds

Preparation time: Up to a day (depending on materials)

Duration of activity: at least 45 minutes for each of the two parts.

### **Positive aspects**

- It works well for different needs.
- It's fun, we all love to discover art through senses.
- It helps to remember artworks and to create a personal experience for them.
- Is easy to replicate outside the museum.
- It helps us to understand each other's needs.

### **Negative aspects**

- Blindfolds can be disturbing for some people, specifically people with a hearing impairment. It's important to explain in advance what are you going to do while people can't see the interpreter.
- Do not use sounds if there are people with a hearing impairment in your group. You can also think about alternatives way of exploring sound (vibrations, for example).

### **Recommendations:**

- Groups should be small so that everyone has time to explore objects/smells/sounds.
- Think creatively. You can find textures or smells connected to artworks in many everyday objects.
- Try to choose an artwork with lots of sensory inputs.
- Don't rush. We all need more time to feel an object.
- Don't think only in the obvious "translation" of senses, an artwork can have lots of stimuli.



**‘It’s a way for people to create and share their idea of a painting before seeing it. It is really interesting once you do the comparison to see it.’  
(Amelia, participant from Oviedo)**

Name of activity: **#IDPWD (International Day for Persons with Disabilities)**

**Aim of activity:** To support participants to voice themselves and advocate via social media or an event.

**Short description of activity:**

Participants very much lead this activity so the key is to open up the discussions and give participants the space to have them. You must keep participants positive and goal-oriented. In one of our groups the conversation turned negative and into a series of complaints about experiences, leading to no results after 90 minutes.

**What we did:**

LONDON: One of our participants produced a video on her vision of the project and museums. This video was published on the group's social media account.

MADRID: The group decided to host an evening event in which they presented themselves and how they understood accessibility and see it within museums.

OVIEDO: The group decided to write a small manifesto that was later published on the project website. Separately the museum shared on their social media a picture of the group wishing the audience a Happy International Day for Persons with Disabilities.

VIENNA: Two participants wrote texts that were published on the project's website.

**Materials:**

- ✓ Information and enlarged photos on artworks related to disability and disabled artists
- ✓ Paper and pen
- ✓ Group pictures
- ✓ Filming equipment (iPads are fine)
- ✓ Editing program (iMovie is more than fine)

- ✓ Preparation time: Depending on what you'd like to do, it can be as simple as a few hours or as complicated as a couple of days.
- ✓ Duration of activity: Depends on what the participants choose to focus upon.

### **Positive aspects:**

- Participants get to share experiences and find solutions.
- Fortifies group identity.

### **Negative aspects:**

- If participants are 'shy' of social media try to find solutions, for example by hosting an event.
- Museum social media guidelines might restrict you to putting up 'controversial' material on the web.

### **Recommendations:**

- Examples of how other museums and organisations have celebrated the day would give participants a good idea of what to prepare.
- We recommend the discussion is broken up into smaller groups then followed by a wider conversation with all participants involved.

### **Straight from the participants:**

'I think it is important to share this with others.'

(Souad, participant from London)



Name of activity: **Participant-led activities**

**Aim of activity:** Let the participant feel involved in delivering and preparing a session. Give them confidence and autonomy.

**Short description of activity:**

We encouraged this activity within all our groups and it was picked up by three of them.

- Single activity (around 20 mins to a session)
- Various mini ice-breakers (at the start of a session 10 mins)
- All participants doing different activities in one session (the whole session around 3 hours)

The focus was different across the different groups.

In London participants did all three approaches, always dealing with the goal of getting to know each other and each other's needs better. So in two approaches participants focused on how it is to have a hearing impairment/visual impairment.



Whereas the other participant (2nd approach) undertook short activities, including People Bingo and asking people to interview each other.

In Madrid the participant chose the first activity. He created a form of treasure hunt with the goal of getting people to notice the struggles of navigation around the museum. The results helped the coordinators understand how to describe navigation around the museum. For the participants it was interesting to observe the different needs of navigation that everyone has.

In Vienna a group of participants chose the third approach and decided to guide each other around the museum and share their view of an object. This helped participants see the different perceptions within the group but it also helped the museum coordinator understand the interests that different participants have when looking at an object.

**Materials:**

- ✓ Information about the artworks, museum and floor plans
- ✓ Paper and pens

Preparation time: Depending on how elaborate the participants choose to make this but at least 3 hours.

Duration of activity: Also completely up to the participant and the approach you both choose.

**Positive aspects:**

- Encourages other participants to do the same
- Gives them confidence and strength
- New perspectives of how to work on a topic/issue



**Negative aspects:**

- If you choose to take the second approach with only one participant be aware that others might feel that you are favouring the individual who is running the activity.
- It might pressure participants to create similar activities.
- Others might think it is distracting from the project goal (this is especially true if you choose the second approach).
- Even though participants might be interested in doing it, they might need support from the institutions they belong to. Some of them might not have the time to do it. So it is important you discuss this with their organisation to allow it to happen.

**Recommendations:**

- Be careful not to influence the participant too much when it comes to the design of the activity, but you still need to give them some direction as to how it can fit within the overall goal of the project.
- Be prepared to give significant time to this and do keep offering it to participants as an option. They will need your support especially as this is a voluntary activity on their part.

**Straight from the participants:**

‘I think it went good. I was a bit nervous but I liked it.’  
(Stefan, participant from Vienna)

**‘It helped me gain confidence with myself and engage more with the group.’  
(Sarah, participant from London)**



# 10. Quick Activities

We also wanted to share a few quick activities, most of them centered around getting to know each other and your museum space. Don't panic if you have few or no resources. The group will take ownership and guide you how to do them best.

## 1. Getting to know each other activities

Name of activity: **Guess My Secret Talent**

**Instructions:** Ask everybody to write down a special talent or ability they possess that nobody in the room knows about. Participants then pass their papers to the Pilot, who reads them aloud. Everybody tries to guess which talent belongs to which participant.

**Materials:** Paper, pen

**Aim of activity:** Share each other's fun talents, and get to know each other.

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Name of activity: **Stand up! Move around!**

**Instructions:** Ask participants to stand up and get into a circle. Each participant has to introduce themselves with a gesture/movement that identifies them. The rest of the group imitates the gesture/movement afterwards.

**Aim of activity:** Learn each other's names.

Name of activity: **Interview**

**Instructions:** Divide the participants into pairs. Ask them to take 3 minutes to interview each other. Each interviewer has to find 3 interesting facts about their partner. Bring everyone back together and ask everyone to present the 3 facts about their partner to the rest of the group. Watch the time on this one, keep it moving along.

**Aim of activity:** To learn each other's names and fun facts. Good way of getting people into research mode.

---

Name of activity: **People Bingo**

**Instructions:** Make a 5 by 4 grid on a piece of card and duplicate for everyone in your group. Supply pens or pencils. Each box contains one of the sentences. Encourage the group to mix, talk to everyone to try and complete their card. If one of the items listed on the bingo card relates to the person they are talking with, have them sign their name in that box.

End the activity after 10 minutes and review some of the interesting facts the group has discovered about each other. You can add your own statements appropriate for your group.

**Materials:** Pens, pencils, bingo grid

**Aim of activity:** Remembering names and people.

## 2. Getting to know each other's access preferences activities

Name of activity: **No Words**

**Instructions:** Write on a piece of paper a simple sentence, for example, "The cat sat on a hot tin roof."

Show this sentence to one participant. The participant must let the rest of the group know the sentence without writing, speaking or using any letters of the alphabet.

### **Discuss:**

Was it difficult to communicate using this method? What would have helped? How can we communicate with someone who can't talk back? How can we help them communicate?

If you want to give more participants a chance to try this activity, here are some suggested sentences:

- I feel funny.
- I want a Coke.
- I lost my homework.
- My parents are getting a divorce.
- My foot hurts.
- I want a hamburger for lunch.
- I'm allergic to...

**Materials:** Paper, pen

**Aim of activity:** To understand the challenges of not being able to rely on the spoken word.

Name of activity: **No Sounds**

**Instructions:** Show participants how to put in the earplugs. Put on the “white noise”. If using a TV, put it on a station with no reception and turn up the volume — loud enough to be distracting. If using a radio, set it between stations so you only hear static. If using a fan, turn it up on high. Read a long newspaper article or book passage. Read rapidly, using a soft voice, mumbling monotone, running words together and pausing in odd places. Ask participants 5 questions about the content of what you just read. Continue talking quickly in a soft, mumbling voice. Remove ear plugs, turn on white noise and discuss (in a normal voice) how not being able to hear clearly felt.

**Materials:** a pair of foam ear plugs for each person  
a radio, TV, fan or anything else that can produce a white noise

**Aim of activity:** Understand the experience of not hearing.

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Name of activity: **Sign Language**

**Instructions:** Ask signers and interpreters to explain how sign language works. Some basic rules. Please remember that people with a visual impairment may need a more detailed description. Invite signers to share some signs with all to learn.

**Aim of activity:** To develop an understanding of an important language.

Name of activity: **Confusion**

Instructions: Write a number of different sentences backwards on a piece of paper. Giving them very little time, ask different participants to read them correctly. Keep interrupting the student by urging them to hurry or tell them “This should be easy for you.”

**Example:**

“ehT kcalb god eta lla eht seikooc” “The black dog ate all the cookies.”

**Discuss:**

What were the difficulties faced in deciphering the sentence? Did being told to hurry help or make it harder? What would have helped?

**Materials:** Piece of paper, pencils

**Aim of activity:** To understand the pressure people with learning difficulties often experience when trying to participate in things.

Name of activity: **No Sight**

**Instructions:** In pairs ask one of the people to put on the blindfold whilst the other person guides them around the space. After a few minutes as to switch roles.

**Discuss:**

Did the guide do a good job?

How would it feel to be the blind person being dragged or pushed?

What would be more helpful than saying “look out”?

How did the 2 volunteers feel?

**Materials:**

A good blindfold.

A room with several obstacles like chairs, bags, cables.

Leave the door halfway open (as an additional obstacle)

**Aim of activity:** For people to practice and experience being guided and guiding

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Name of activity: **Blurred Lines**

**Instructions:** Make sure the projector is out of focus so that the words can't be read clearly. Tell the group to copy the information. Then ask questions about the text.

Discuss how frustrating it is when you are trying to pay attention, but can't clearly see the words.

What are the ways the group could be helpful to someone who has a visual impairment? Be sure to point out that they should ask before helping. Some people would rather do things for themselves.

**Materials:** Projector with presentation/slides

**Aim of activity:** To experience a common visual impairment.



Name of activity: **Inclusion/Exclusion**

**Instructions:** Ask participants to work in pairs. Give each person three Post-it notes or pieces of card (if you are using a sticky sheet). Give participants these instructions:

- Talk to the other person in your pair and tell them of a personal experience in which you or a family member felt excluded. Explain why you were excluded and how it made you feel. Write down two or three words on Post-it notes or cards to describe how you felt during or after the experience.
- Each person should then describe a situation in which you felt particularly included and respected. Write down two or three words on Post-its or cards that describe how this made you feel.
- Tell them they have ten minutes to share their experiences.
- When everyone has had a chance to share their experience, invite one or two participants to share their experiences with the whole group – if they want to.
- Now ask people to share the words they have used to describe their feelings about exclusion and inclusion. Write or put the Post-its with the words up in two lists on a flip chart, or on a sticky wall.

**Materials:** Post-it notes, pens

**Aim of activity:** Sharing experiences of exclusion.

### **3. Getting to know the museum activities**

Name of activity: **From Wall to Wall**

**Instructions:** Ask pairs of participants with different access preferences to go to the galleries and talk about the space

**Aim of activity:** To learn how we perceive our surroundings.

Name of activity: **Do you see what I see?**

**Instructions:** Ask pairs of participants with different access preferences to go to a gallery pick an object and explain how they perceive it.

Give one word, sound or smell to a small group of participants and ask them to pick some associated art objects from the museum.

**Aim of activity:** To learn how each person sees artworks differently.

---

Name of activity: **What's it all about?**

**Instructions:** Ask participants to go around your museum and see what is missing/is available for them.

You can ask participants to check anything from the website to labels. It will be helpful for both parties. (Remember participants are likely to have visited other museums before and will make comparisons)

**Aim of activity:** To get to know the resources and to test the accessibility of the museum.

---

Name of activity: **What do I want to know about an artwork?**

**Instructions:** Review your museum's artwork information and discuss with participants whether the content is understandable and if it is interesting to them. What do they feel is missing?

**Aim of activity:** Review critically the content of the museum objects: accessibility of content, but also the interest and relevance of content.

# 11. Group Projects

## **The Group Projects**

Group projects are the whole core and soul of what we did in the ARCHES project. They provide solutions to problems identified by the group within your museum. They bond the group together and are unique and tailored to your institution. They require additional work from you outside of the session but will also improve the experience of participants and help solve your headaches. In each group we have had different project ideas and developments. The following chapter will highlight five core projects that were developed in the groups.

## **The QR Code project - London Exploration Group**

This project was developed in London over the course of one year (in total around five 3-hour sessions). It originated from the idea that information should be layered with different access features (such as easy read material, sign language etc.) but also allow for more creative ways of learning such as the inclusion of poems. The visitor could pick up a book of sheets at reception or at the entrance to the gallery and scan with their phone a QR code; this would link the user directly to easily updatable online resources with the requested information.

Requirements to do the QR Code project: An art object; Curatorial supervision; Video editing software (iMovie is great for Mac users as it is free and built in); Cameras (you also need excellent sound quality – we used iPad cameras);

Staff needed: Sign language interpreter, curator and video editor

Requirements for using the QR Code sheet: A smart phone with a QR code reader app; internet access; headphones and the QR code sheets.

### **How did we do it?**

1. Participants chose an object (We used 'The Bell of St. Mura' from the Wallace Collection).
2. Participants started thinking of all the different layers that would need to be written and what type of information was required to create the sheets.
3. Participants wrote a poem.
4. Participants met the curator and interviewed her to find out more information.
5. Participants started writing and revising the script.
6. Participants recorded the script.
7. Participants filmed the sign language interpreter.
8. Participants researched and chose images of the bell to be shown on the screen.
9. Film editor worked on the editing.
10. Participants reviewed and approved of the final product and design.

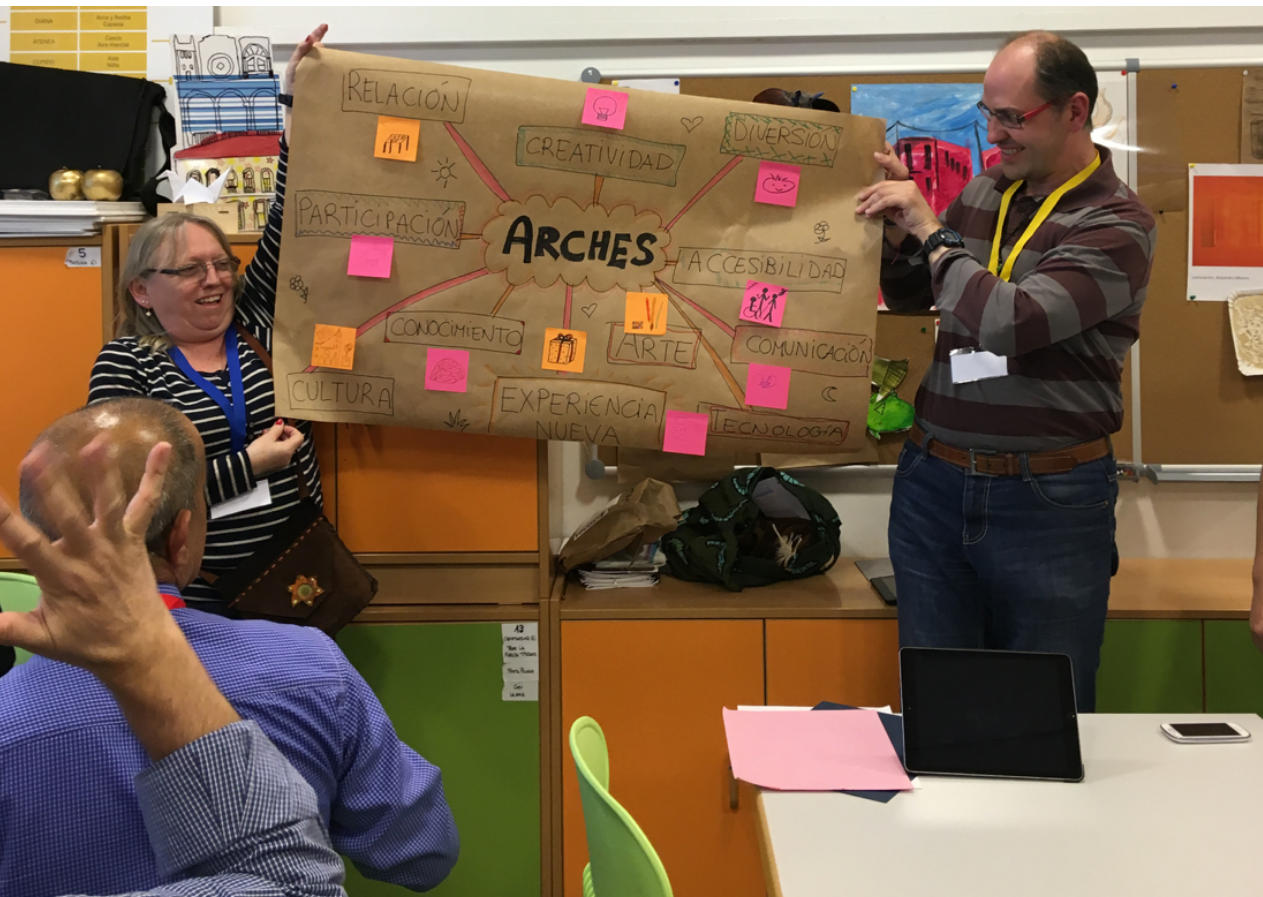
### **Recommendations by the museum educator:**

We call it the QR code project, but in fact the project has little to do with QR codes and turned into a project about making an accessible film. Looking back, it would have been better to get the whole group involved working with a filmmaker from the beginning so that they could have recorded, directed and produced the project together as a group. I think the finished videos look fantastic and it's lovely to have this kind of visitor interpretation about one of our objects, although I don't think the objective of the participants learning how to edit was achieved. They found editing itself complicated, confusing and somewhat overwhelming. They did however, really enjoy recording the audio and making decisions about the look and feel of the films.

### **Straight from the participants:**

'I felt making the QR code really great and a bit of a hard work too. It was really great too.' (Sarah, participant from London)

‘I think it is useful to get a quick overview.’  
(Andreas, participant from Vienna)



## **Feeling my way around the Kunshistorische Museum Wien - Vienna Exploration Group**

Early on in the beginning of the sessions, the Blind and Visually impaired community requested the development of a tactile map of the museum. This challenge was taken onboard and over the course of 5 sessions (up to two hours) the participants reviewed and re-designed the floor maps of the museum. The idea was that the user could identify their standpoint and feel their way around the gallery.

**Requirements to do the Tactile Map:** Already designed Floor plans; city map (if you wish to include surrounding train/bus stations); swell paper; swell paper printer

**Staff needed:** Designer; ideally a navigation specialist (ask at your local Blind and Visually impaired institute if the participants need guidance)

**Requirements for using the map:** Maps picked up from the reception.

### **How did we do it?**

1. We decided on what was relevant to show and to what detail
2. We decided on the dimensions of the map
3. We revised and redesigned the map mock-ups
4. We wrote and recorded the audio description
5. We tested and approved the audio description
6. We finalised the product

### **Recommendations by the museum educator:**

Currently, no recommendations. Expect various discussions with contradictory opinions as every participant has different needs. Though the work is intense there's a lot of satisfaction because participants had expected to be asked for their expertise.

## **Anywhere and in Any Form - Oviedo Exploration Group**

This interactive game was developed by the participants towards the end of the second year. The concept is that the visitor can pick up different cards related to different categories such as 'Action', 'Together' or 'Emotions'. These cards contain different questions and instructions for the visitor to undertake such as:

How would this painting be painted today?;

Go to the nearest visitor assistant and ask her/him what their favourite artwork in the museum is and go check it out!

The idea is that the visitor explores the museum and art objects by themselves in new and unusual ways.

**Requirements to design the game:** Binding rings, cards, hole puncher, printer, scissors

**Staff needed:** Just a crafty you

**Requirements for using the game:** The finalised cards placed at the entrance of the museum

### **How did we do it?**

1. Educators prepared a mock-up related to a museum route
2. Evaluation of the questions and discussion of opening it up
3. Editing of previous questions and writing up of new categories with questions
4. Testing the questions on each other
5. Agreeing on final design

### **Recommendations by the museum educator:**

I think the activity is very innovative and fun. People always will answer in different ways which makes it unique. I think it is important to make sure that the questions are very clear so that people know what to answer.

### **Straight from the participants:**

"Best way of getting to know each other's views and empathise with others" (Pablo, participant from Oviedo)

## **Welcome to our Museum - Madrid Exploration Group**

The participants came up with this project when they got into groups of interest. The 'Navigation around the Museum Group' discussed many different alternatives. They decided to produce a video that would inform the potential visitor about the different resources available to them, and how to navigate around the museum space to find basic amenities. The video is presented by the participants. This video is meant to be accessible on the webpage but also in other places such as the entrance of the museum or specific apps.

**Requirements to make the video:** List of access offers; map of museum; display opportunities by the entrance.

**Staff needed:** Camera team, Video editing staff, Narrator,

**Requirements to view the video:** Internet access

### **How did we do it?**

1. Participants decide what the video should be like: relevant information, structure, accessibility aspects, etc.
2. Educators collect the ideas and search for professionals to make the video.
3. Museums establish a professional collaboration with a company specialized in video production.
4. The company designs the script based on participants' ideas, with the information from the museum and the participants' advice.
5. Participants approve the final script.
6. Museums and company manage all the details: actors, recording permission, dates etc.

### **Recommendations by the museum educator:**

I think this project really motivated the participants as they felt that they could actively contribute to the improvement of the museum. They were aware that their voice was being heard and that the result would reach others.

During the process it is important to respect the decisions and ideas of the participants. In this case they have been the best accessibility advisors this video could have had.



### **Straight from the participants:**

‘From the start we had the intention to create an audio visual resource that would motivate more people with disabilities to visit the museums by letting them be informed in advance of all the accessibility resources, orientation instructions and major pieces that they would find when visiting the museums. From my personal point of view I enjoyed this project based on my professional background in marketing, accessibility and having worked with the needs of people with disability as well as being involved in project management. With all of this and the rest of the team’s skills and willingness I was sure it would come out with such a successful and overall useful audio visual resource.’  
(Alberto, participant from Madrid)

### **Dear diary - All groups**

This is something that grew organically and autonomously within all groups. Participants decided to write diaries of how sessions went and what was done within each of them. The diaries varied in that they have an element of self-reflection and come in different forms (tweets; photographs and physical books). It is therefore beautiful to share this. The diaries were shared online on Twitter accounts but also have been exhibited in pop-up exhibitions of the project.

**Requirements to do the diary:** Completely up to the participant; be prepared to provide pictograms and booklets.

**Staff needed:** An understanding and attentive you

**Requirements for using the diary:** Depends on the format in which the participant decides to express themselves, but from our experience: internet and social media accounts.

### **How did we do it?**

1. Once you are aware that a participant is doing a diary, collect it (they might send you emails for example).
2. Offer to exhibit it/print it/digitize it.

### **Examples from the groups:**

As this was something individuals took upon themselves to do, we were surprised with the different formats they used to present their journey in the groups. The classical format of writing everything down was adapted by Juan, Angel, Rodrigo, Jandro, Samuel and Sarah who all gave it their individual twists. For example: by adding pictograms, drawings or writing plays that recreated the sessions. Antonio published tweets with photos and short descriptions. Visibility on social media spread the word about us and became valuable data. Sabine as a passionate photographer captured the experience visually and has shared them in photo albums.



# 12. Closing Message

Finally, we would like to share the difference between exclusion and inclusion. So what do we mean by equity and inclusion? Some causes of exclusion can be changed.

For example, if you feel excluded because you cannot understand the language being used by others, you could learn the language. But some causes of exclusion are due to something you cannot change. For example, your race, sex or disability.

Inclusion is ensuring that all are able to participate fully. It is not just about improving access to services, but also supporting people to engage in wider processes to ensure that their rights and needs are recognised. You have to have inclusion in order to get equity.

Equity and inclusion involve recognising when people are excluded and ensuring that their treatment is based upon principles of fairness. Equity involves recognising that people are different and need different support and resources to ensure their rights are realised. To ensure fairness, measures must often be taken to compensate for specific discrimination and disadvantages.

We hope this book has given you the tools and provocation to encourage change in your institution to create an inclusive and a barrier-free future.

## **Acknowledgment**

We'd like to thank first and foremost the participants of the ARCHES project for they have given us strength, motivation and inspiration to go above and beyond of what we had imagined. We are very grateful to all the volunteers, interns, parents and interpreters who were a helping hand when most needed. Thank you to our colleagues who allowed us to run the sessions smoothly.

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## **Further Resources**

One of our most important lessons has been the great need to share amongst museum educators. There's a lot of information and experience out there that we have tried to get together here:

### **On Autism:**

Jack Welch, *Guide to an Autism Friendly Museum* - <https://bit.ly/1Oujy52>

The National Autistic Society, *Welcoming autistic people* - <https://bit.ly/2H4qRrm>

### **On Ethical Guidance: (please follow this example!)**

Ratan Vaswani, *Ethical guidelines 4 - Access* - <https://bit.ly/2VfY1fz>

### **On Equipment:**

DCN, *Equipment* - <https://bit.ly/2XBslip>

### **On Exhibition/Events/Presentation Guidance:**

María-josé Ania, *Exposicions accessibles* - <https://bit.ly/2vG1VA0>

MLA, *'Access for all' toolkit* - <https://bit.ly/2H2l3P3>

Interreg, *COME-IN!* - <https://bit.ly/2vG3nIW>

Alistair Duggin, *Accessibility in government* - <https://bit.ly/2YbzV3l>

Disability Rights Commission, *Fire Safety Risk Assessment* - <https://bit.ly/2V-jwlaE>

### **On Intellectual Access:**

*Información para todos* - <https://bit.ly/2J2CCRq>

*Cards for Inclusion – a new way to play access* - <https://bit.ly/2VT16mo>

### **On Learning through technologies**

Engage, *Bringing people and art together* - <https://bit.ly/2DPaHjS>

### **On Participation:**

DCN, *Accessibility and Inclusive Practice* - <https://bit.ly/2H59JC1>

The National Archives, *Activity on Social Inclusion* -

<https://bit.ly/2J2zsNK>

Engage, *Bringing people and art together* - <https://bit.ly/2DPaHjS>

**On Sensory Access:**

DCN, *Sensory Access* - <https://bit.ly/2Ji5kgx>

DCN, *Multi-sensory* - <https://bit.ly/2shbAhR>

VocalEyes, *Museum Access Information* - <https://bit.ly/2ggjlqA>

DCN, *Assistance Dogs: Guidance* - <https://bit.ly/2ZVXwH6>

Stagetext, *Making theatre and culture accessible to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people* - <https://bit.ly/2PNqK6s>

**On State of Museum Access 2018:**

VocalEyes, *State of Museum Access* - <https://bit.ly/2VfFBfK>

Interreg, *Report on the accessibility in central Europe* - <https://bit.ly/2PMUMqV>

**On Rethinking disability:**

University of Leicester, *research archive* - <https://bit.ly/2WtxmJL>

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