



**STELLA**

# The STELLA Handbook



A guide about the improvement  
of disabled people's basic skills  
produced by the STELLA partners

Staff's European Lifelong Learning Academy

# STELLA handbook / Short version

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## **INTERLUDE**

***Dear reader,***

*it is very nice that you choose to read this particular book!*

If you think this book is written by Professor Calculus in Tintin or some other professor - you can put it down right now.

This book is mainly written by the real experts, to be more exact, ourselves, people with various types of disabilities.

Who would have more knowledge about ourselves and our own lives than us?

The book is a user's guide for you who work with people with various disabilities. You will get a lot of great tips about the do's and don'ts when it comes to be an excellent staff. We are 10 countries who have written this book together: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom.

The theme for this book is: How to be a better staff!

We have come to the conclusion that by developing skills and tools among persons with disabilities, also gives the staff a chance to develop.

In order to develop both professional skills, tools and self-esteem among persons with disabilities we have used a lot of participant methods. We have had discussions, workshops, played games and studied. Once You have learned to use a tool, the world will change for You and Your surroundings. Me, for example, now, when I have the skills to question my staff, I see this as a way of developing their attitudes and methods.

My hope is that you read this book non-stop, and maybe, just maybe, you will learn something new, something you didn't know before about persons with disabilities.

You will learn, among other things, that it's not ok with condescending behaviors, putting words in my mouth, saying things like "Little friend, I'm sorry but you don't understand this!". Please, let us take responsibilities! Why not let us take care of for example some meetings, study visits, social media?

I, the writer of this introduction, am Anders Wieslander.

I'm 46 years old and I have a minor intellectual disability.

I work at Medis 5 in Stockholm/Sweden, a daily cultural activity center.

I have worked there for 21 years and I hope I will be a part of Medis 5

when I turn 80. At Medis 5, I work as a presenter, moderator, poet and lecturer. I also get some assignments from external partners.

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**"THE STATES SHALL SHOW THAT PEOPLE WITH VARIOUS DISABILITIES CAN DO A LOT ON WORKING PLACES". \***

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Of course, we do have the same obligations to see that the work we do gets done right and on time.

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**"THE STATES SHALL ENSURE THAT THERE ARE TRAINING COURSES THAT PROVIDE ABOUT DISABILITY AND RIGHTS". \***

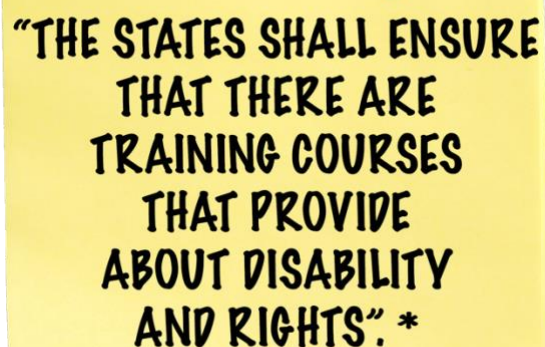
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Yes, yes, this all looks good in print. Now, let's get down to work!

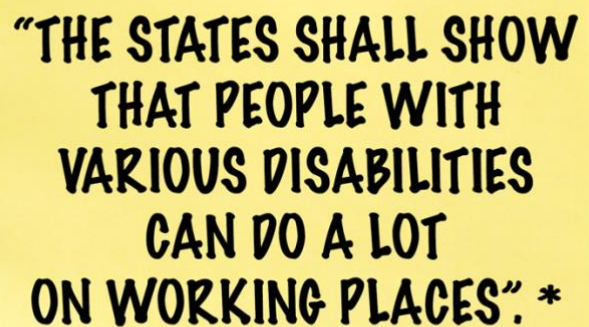
Best Regards,

Anders Wieslander

*Stockholm, 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2018*



**"THE STATES SHALL ENSURE THAT THERE ARE TRAINING COURSES THAT PROVIDE ABOUT DISABILITY AND RIGHTS". \***



**"THE STATES SHALL SHOW THAT PEOPLE WITH VARIOUS DISABILITIES CAN DO A LOT ON WORKING PLACES". \***

## WHAT IS STELLA?

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STELLA is the name of a European project. The project was carried out for two years. 10 partners from different countries worked together in the project. STELLA is short for Staff's European Lifelong Learning Activities.

STELLA shows how people with disabilities are actively involved as experts in project work. Together, the partners developed a book, called the STELLA handbook. The handbook was one of the goals of our project. The STELLA book offers ways to improve the basic skills of people with disabilities.

These skills are important for people with disabilities to be independent. The skills help people with disabilities to live more independently and to find a job. STELLA worked on six different types of skills.

They are:

- Organizational Skills
- Social Behaviour
- Team Ability
- Critical Thinking
- Communication Skills
- Technical Skills



We tested different methods of teaching these skills. Then we found out the best ways for learning these skills. The basic skills are helpful in many situations, activities and projects.

These best practice methods were brought together at international partner meetings and evaluated jointly by staff and people with disabilities who were actively involved in all project phases.

The results can be transferred and applied to a variety of situations, activities and projects. Of course, this manual is only a snapshot that can and should be differentiated and developed as a suggestion.

*Useful equipment developed for this purpose is attached to the respective chapters. Further material can be found at <http://www.ella-ella.eu/stella/>.*

## ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

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In this chapter we talk about organizational skills. People from Germany, Italy, Greece and France worked together to write this chapter. People with and without special needs worked together in teams to identify organizational skills and to figure out the best way of learning or teaching them.

Organizational skills are very important in private life as well as in the labour market.

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IF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LEARN HOW TO DO THINGS IN AN ORGANISED AND STRUCTURED WAY, THEY CAN LIVE AND WORK MORE INDEPENDENTLY.

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### WHAT ARE ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS?

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Even though organizational skills may include a broad variety of personal as well as professional competences, in STELLA, training on organizational skills mainly focused on the following practical aspects:

- the organization of a smaller scale event (birthday party)
- the organization of a larger scale event (conference)

The organization of a smaller scale event such as a birthday party was an important step in the process of acquiring essential organizational skills. Here, team members were encouraged to creatively participate in all aspects of the organization of a birthday party, to think critically on all important steps in terms of organization, and to evaluate the possible outcome.

The organization of a larger scale event such as a conference was the second and most challenging goal for team members. Here, all members

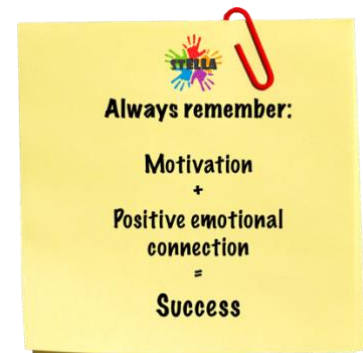
were required to remember everything they had learnt so far and put it in use.

### **STELLA Experts tips!**

This chapter focusses on enabling people with disabilities to plan, execute and evaluate emotionally positive projects. Actively participating in the real project teams of STELLA was an experience that raised a lot of positive, emotional attachment.

This was the reason that only projects selected by the people with disabilities (in the following also called PWD) themselves were realized. Examples of meaningful projects that were selected include:

- The birthday party
- The Christmas calendar
- The street party (booth at the street festival)
- The creative workshop
- The participation in the Erasmus Days
- The national STELLA conference



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## TEACHING ORGANIZING SKILLS BY ORGANIZING SOMETHING

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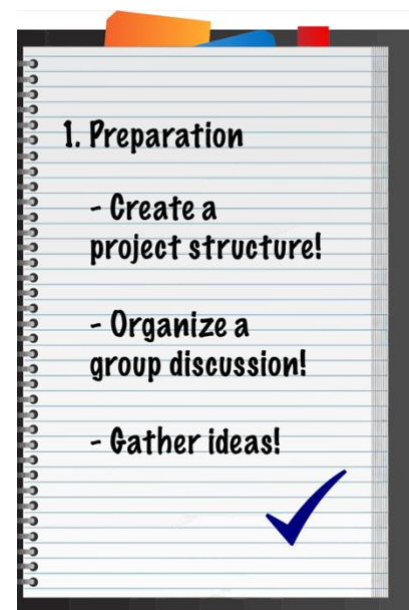
The idea was to derive organizational skills from classic project management tools. The acquisition of organizational skills should enable the PWD to understand a project and to learn and apply the basics of project management by "playful-acting". Below, we describe the steps that were used for the implementation of an activity – in this case: the organization of a birthday party.

### **Before / During / After (Checklists!)**

#### **Preparation**

The aim of the preparatory phase in project management is to establish a project structure. This meant for our project Birthday Party, using informal preliminary talks, to turn the idea of the birthday party into a project that can be delivered. The preparatory stage is very important for generating and discussing ideas.

#### **Planning phase**



The aim of the planning phase in project management is the accurate and precise planning of the project (from the project goal to the structure plan). For our project birthday party this meant:

- Planning meeting: *date, time, number of guests, location, financial budget*
- Design and deliver the invitation  
*Using a template or designing yourself*  
*Personally, in writing, by phone*  
*Do not forget directions*  
*Request an answer*
- Consider gifts and tell the guests
- Decoration  
*Flowers, balloons, lanterns, candles, napkins, tablecloths, sweets, gemstones*
- Think about and prepare food  
*Coffee and cake*  
*Barbecue*  
*Menu*  
*Nibbles*
- Beverages  
*Alcohol yes or no*  
*Non-alcoholic beer*  
  
*sparkling wine*
- Select dishes, plates, cups, glasses, cutlery, bowls (Always check the number of guests!)
- Purchase – Order  
*Food and beverages*  
*Compare prices*  
*Cook or bake yourself?*  
*Do guests bring something?*
- What would you like to do?  
Party entertainment: *music, songs, games, dance, show, cinema*
- Have camera / smartphone ready  
Ask someone to take pictures

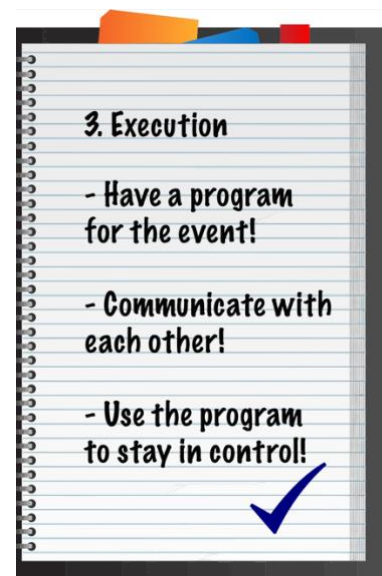


- Make yourself beautiful for the celebration  
*Choose clothes*  
*Hairstyle - go to the hairdresser?*  
*Make up?*
- Inform the neighbors

## Execution

The aim of the implementation phase in project management is a controlled and communicative execution of the project. For our project birthday party this meant:

- Decorate the party venue, set the table - if necessary, determine seating arrangements
- Provide food and drinks, make coffee, cut the cake
- Shower and dress for the party
- Welcome guests (possibly arrange pick-up-service for guests?) and shake hands
- Entertain guests, give them a tour and make them feel comfortable
- Receive and give thanks for gifts
- Sing songs, dance, play etc.
- Take pictures, a group photo
- Say goodbye to guests – arrange shuttle service for guests to get home

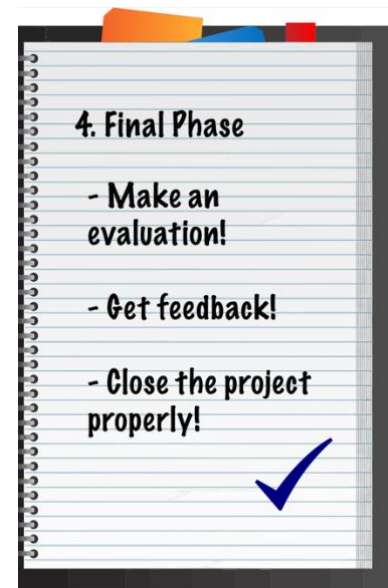


## Follow-up / final phase

The goal of the final phase in project management is a precise conclusion and a precise evaluation. For our project birthday party this meant:

- Clean up, ask for help
- Wash the dishes
- Put leftovers in the fridge

- Remove the decoration
- Return borrowed items
- View and evaluate photos  
Put together an album
- Enjoy the memories



## FEEDBACK

*Which skills have the participating people with disabilities acquired and identified for themselves? Answers provided by PWDs*

- Have a job and stay tuned!
- Be confident!
- Speaking in front of a group
- Observe and express your own sensitivities
- It is worthwhile to address problems and to solve them in an interview (team building, conflict resolution)
- Humour is important. Laugh together!
- Allow enough time for preparation  
Note time factors  
Set schedule
- Planning process: keep looking and updating
- Adapt planning to current conditions:  
you can add something  
you can leave something out  
(project revision)



- Help is given, if you ask.
- Being in constant contact!
- Exchange
- Be able to accept tasks!
- Apply and stay tuned!
- Develop a time grid!
- Time for explanations and reviews



This chapter deals with the important topic of social behaviour. It has a special emphasis on exploring what is appropriate social behaviour in the labour market and the work place environment. Having a job or being part of the labour market as an intern for instance, is a big step towards independence for people with disabilities and their desired independent living.

Companies or organizations that hire people with disabilities think that PWD's self-management skills at work are necessary. Employers prefer people to have skills such as

- coming to work on time,
- adhering to rules,
- taking over responsibilities and acting responsively,
- paying attention to their tasks and duties
- identifying and correcting deviations in the performance,
- using the required technologies and equipment, etc.

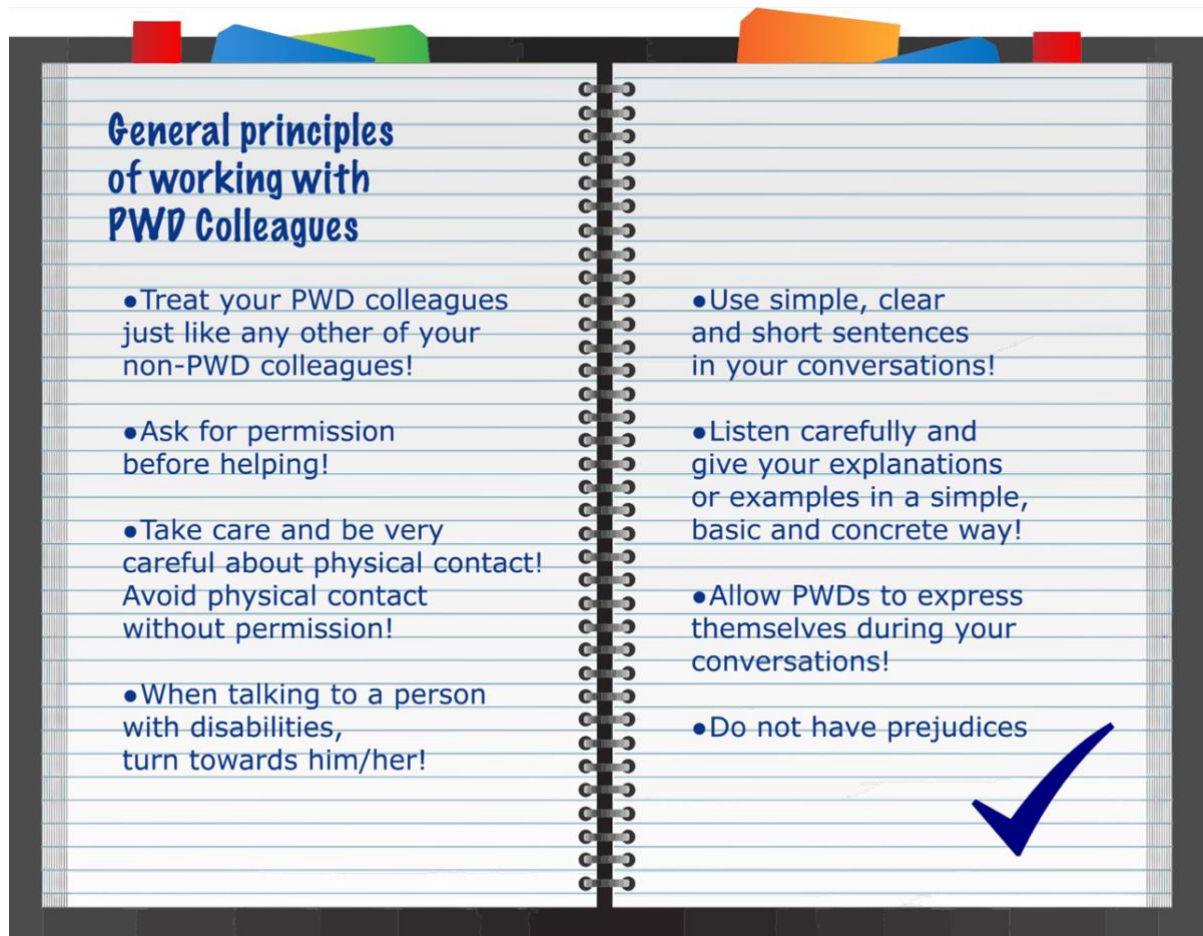
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### GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF WORKING WITH PWD COLLEAGUES

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- *Treat your PWD colleagues just like any other of your non-PWD colleagues!*
- *Ask for permission before helping!*
- *Take care and be very careful about physical contact! Avoid physical contact without permission!*

- *When talking to a person with disabilities, turn towards him/her!*
- *Use simple, clear and short sentences in your conversations!*
- *Listen carefully and give your explanations or examples in a simple, basic and concrete way!*
- *Allow PWDs to express themselves during your conversations!*
- *Do not have prejudices!*



Over the course of the project the STELLA teams identified a list of social skills which were addressed and worked on within the various workshops and work sessions.

1. Asking for help & Giving help
2. Building Relationships
3. Introducing yourself
4. Controlling your emotions

5. Handling problems
6. Understanding rules
7. Accepting feedback
8. Following the work plan
9. Being polite (personal conversations versus formal Conversations)
10. Working independently
11. Respecting Others

***Tips for starting and maintaining a relationship:***

- *Building relationships*
- *Introducing yourself*
- *Being Polite – (personal conversations versus formal Conversations)*
- *Respecting others*
- *Asking for help & Giving help*

***Tips for working on self-control:***

- *Asking for help & Giving help*
- *Controlling your emotions*
- *Handling problems*
- *Understanding rules*
- *Accepting feedback*
- *Following the work plan*
- *Being Polite – personal conversations versus formal Conversations)*
- *Working independently*
- *Respecting others*

***Tips for managing work within a group:***

- *Asking for help & Giving help*
- *Understanding rules*
- *Accepting Feedback*
- *Following the work plan*



**STELLA Experts' tip!**

*We strongly believe that before staff start to teach social skills, a relationship with the PWD must be established first. When there is an established relationship, staff can do their job in helping the PWDs to understand and practice these skills.*

The STELLA social behaviour handbook uses pictograms to guide and train PWDs in what kind of social behaviour skills are important to use in different types of social situations. Due to the fact that not all people with disabilities are able to read or to understand written sentences, the pictograms used in the STELLA social behaviour handbook are a very important and effective supporting tool for the PWDs, as well as supporting staff.

Examples of social situations are: ‘‘How do I act at the cinema?’’ or ‘‘How do I act in a public toilet room?’’. We use chapters in the handbook which refer to specific social situations. In each chapter we discuss social behaviour skills that are likely to appear in that specific social situation. Within the chapter we show the PWDs which behaviour is appropriate and which behaviour should better be avoided. A sentence has been added to each pictogram to create clarity about the social situation that is displayed on a picture. This handbook can contribute as a support tool to facilitate the daily life of people with intellectual disabilities.

THE STELLA SOCIAL BEHAVIOR HANDBOOK (EN) →

<http://pjdc.it/stella-social-behavior-handbook/>

### **The Manual of the STELLA social behaviour handbook**

The social behaviour guide is specifically designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Sometimes these PWDs face difficult situations in which they don't know how to behave or how to react because of their particular disability. We picked 15 common social situations that appear in everyone's life very frequently and assigned examples of proper and improper behaviour to each situation.

The STELLA social behaviour guide addresses the following situations:

- Social Behaviour in a bus
- Social Behaviour on the street
- Social Behaviour at work
- Social Behaviour during lunch or coffee breaks
- Social Behaviour in the cafeteria
- Social Behaviour in the dressing room
- Social Behaviour in the toilet
- Social Behaviour in the city

- Social Behaviour in a Shop
- Social Behaviour before going to visit a friend
- Social Behaviour while visiting a friend
- Social Behaviour at a birthday party
- Social Behaviour in the theatre
- Social Behaviour in the cinema
- Social Behaviour in a public swimming pool.

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## GAMES TO EMPOWER SOCIAL SKILLS

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- 1. Name** Do What I Do
- 2. Purpose** Understanding, monitoring and realizing rules
- 3. Material** No material required
- 4. What will we learn?** We will understand the rules by watching and following the leader and we will learn the rules by practicing them.

### How to play?

In the beginning, a manager takes on the role of leader, people are placed in a single row behind the leader and imitate the movements of the leader. (Jumping, talking in a different accent, dancing, etc.). After a while the leader moves to the rear and the first person in the first row begins to be the leader. Now the others follow and imitate him. This sequence continues until everyone has acted as the leader.



- 1. Name** Triangle Cheese Pieces
- 2. Purpose** Understanding rules, improving someone's attention
- 3. Material** Paper and pen
- 4. What will we learn?** We will improve our attention and we will follow the guidelines by understanding the rules.

### How to play?

First, a lot of dots are placed on the paper. Then the first person draws a line between the two dots. This line should merge two points, but not cross

on many points. After the line is drawn, it's the next player's move. This player draws a line between two other points. The aim of the game is to form triangles without drawing an actual triangle. Therefore, the drawn lines should be considered. Somehow, if one of the players has a triangle by combining two points, this player puts the first letter of his/her name into the triangle, so you know who the triangle belongs to.



**1. Name** Real Life

**2. Purpose** Learning how to ask for help and how to give help

**3. Material** No material required

**4. What will we learn?** We will learn how to ask for help, how to express our situations/problems, how to communicate with each other and how find a solution as a team.

### How to play?

This is an open problem-based learning method. People define a real problem in their workplace or neighbourhood and create solutions together. You can set parameters, time, material and physical limits.



**1. Name** What is happening in the photo?

**2. Purpose** To help others and also to learn about how to ask for help

**3. Material** Status Card

**4. What will we learn?** We will learn to think rationally about helping and asking for help, and to take the necessary action by looking at things from a wide

angle.

### How to play?

To strengthen the communication skills and self-expression of an individual with intellectual disability, the photo game is useful. Simply hold a photo card in your hand which shows a situation where one person is giving help to another person or is asking for help from another person. Ask the person with disabilities what she/he sees in this photo and encourage him/her to express their thoughts. Encourage him/her to identify people, to describe the situation/scenery and to name every detail she/he sees in this photo. Ask what might have happened just before the photo was taken and what they think will happen next. You can give small verbal clues to help the person with intellectual disabilities find the right action.



**1. Name:** Working Together

**2. Purpose:** Respecting other, especially colleagues in different subjects, situations and environments

**3. Material:** Desired material can be used

**4. What will we learn?** We will learn to demonstrate respectful behaviour when we communicate at the work place.

### How to play?

It is recommended to start this game by making a list of problems that can occur in the work place. The second step is to find examples of activities or actions to solve these problems. The presentation can be expressed by role-play.

For instance: Ordering in the cafeteria

A person is hungry, arrives at the cafeteria and goes directly to the beginning of line, without taking into consideration the people who are already waiting in line.

The problem-solving action can be:

The person who was already waiting in line for a while tells the late arrival that he/she needs to go back to the end of the line and waits until it is his/her turn to order.



**1. Name:** A Day in the work place

**2. Purpose:** Respecting other, especially colleagues in different subjects, situations and environments

**3. Material:** Desired material can be used

**4. What will we learn?** We will learn to demonstrate respectful behaviour when we communicate at the work place.

### How to play?

The game focusses on speaking/communication skills with colleagues in different positions in the work place. The game is completed when everyone in the group experiences at least once the following three scenarios:

Requesting something from the cleaning officer: A person acts as a cleaning person working in the workplace, the individual with intellectual disability asks the cleaning officer to clean his / her desk.

Requesting something from an officemate: Re-enact a scene where one worker (person with disabilities) asks his / her office mate to bring him / her something work-related such as printing paper or envelopes.

Requesting something from the manager/boss: This time the person is in an executive role at the workplace, the individual with intellectual disabilities wants to ask his / her boss for a leave day.



**Experts tip!**

*Finish the game with a feedback round so that all players can express their emotions and observations!*



- 1. Name:** Sharing My Secret
- 2. Purpose:** Accepting feedback
- 3. Material:** Paper, Bag and pencils
- 4. What will we learn?** We will learn to accept and evaluate feedback about a job or a situation.

**How to play?**

First, each group member receives a small piece of paper. Each member writes down a difficult situation or problem that he / she cannot solve. Then the papers are put into a bag. Each member of the group pulls out one of the papers from the bag. If he / she pulls out his / her own paper, he / she puts it back in the bag and picks another paper until each member of the group has a paper with a problem that is not his/hers. Then, each member suggests a solution for this situation. At the end of the game, if there is a member who wants to tell which problem was his or hers, then he/she can explain it and talk about how the feedback made her/him feel.



- 1. Name:** The Feedback Pool
- 2. Purpose:** Accepting feedback
- 3. Material:** Paper, bag and pencils
- 4. What will we learn?** We will learn to accept and evaluate feedback about a job or a situation.

**How to play?**

The first step of the game is to collect real feedback about the individual with intellectual disabilities from his/her actual manager at work. Then the feedback is written on small pieces of paper. In addition to the manager's feedback, create some pieces of paper with statements that are not constructive or helpful, such as: "You had to clean the room today, but you didn't". Then the person with intellectual disabilities will be asked to determine which

statement is an actual feedback statement and which one is not. Finish the game by asking the PWD how she/he feels about the feedback, and if she/he can relate to it!



This chapter deals with the topic of team ability. We take a closer look at what it means to work in a team and which skills are necessary to be a team player. First the STELLA teams defined the terms team and team ability, they described the importance of team ability and finally they focused on methods and learning games to improve the team ability of people with disabilities.

A team is a group of two or more people interacting with each other. The difference between a group and a team is that a team works towards a defined purpose or common goal.

### THE STELLA TEAM ABILITY COMPETENCES

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To make the term team ability more approachable, the STELLA teams identified various skills that are important to work in a team and to be a good team player. Some of them are skills, others are qualities and others are rules that are essential for a successful team work.

- *To have good relations with each other*
- *To work in a safe environment*
- *To listen and talk to each other*
- *To be present*
- *To be on time*

- *To share ideas, supplies, and tools*
- *To be confident*
- *To respect others*
- *To control your emotion*
- *To help or ask for help*

Once a person with disabilities learns and improves these skills, the impact of the newly competences can be seen on different levels:

***On a personal level:***

*To gain self-esteem*

*To gain self-confidence*

***On a social level:***

*To be part of a group*

*To feel useful*

***On a professional level:***

*To be more efficient*

*To adapt to your role*

*To improve your career*

**STELLA experts' tip**



*To identify individual skills is key!*

*Client X can talk easily to a group, so he will take the microphone in front of an assembly. Client Y will be in charge of the way to go to a venue because she knows how to use an app on a smartphone*

*Find out what a PWD is good at and help him to improve!*

*Encourage a PWD to learn new competences!*



**Group discussion** was mainly used to identify the skills for team ability. This method contributed to strengthening the team and was helpful in enabling it to be more efficient. Later, after more confidence, it was used to realize the weakness and the strength of the team members and what they can improve as a team. At several times, staff proposed to use post-it's with clients, often to put one word or one idea on a board. We can also imagine putting pictures for people with literacy problems.

Furthermore, group discussions were used to analyse situations and to make evaluations.



**Roleplay** was the first method used by one specific partner. The idea was to ask one essential question: "A team, Why?"

The STELLA partner established situations or challenges that could be handled alone, or only in a team. This was an effective way to explore the advantages of being in a team. All the situations were filmed and edited to allow the group to analyse their needs, to overcome their issues and to find solutions afterwards together. The film is also a sustainable product that can be disseminated and used by other groups / teams.

**Experts' tip!** Remember: Things which are serious are easier to learn with games.

We used different games which deal with the basic skills we identified. Each game was evaluated in order to check if the team ability skills were implemented effectively. After the games were played there were group discussions with the people with disabilities in which it was asked what type of relations between the games, the skills and the labour market exist.



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THE MINE FIELD GAME

This game requires a minimum of two persons, one acts as a guide and the other one is his / her blindfolded partner. The guide has to help the blindfolded partner to avoid stepping on or running into obstacles – the so-called mines. The guide has to use clear orders such as go straight, left, right or stop.

*This game is recommended to implement the following basic skills:*

- Listen to each other

- *Help or ask for help*
- *Be confident*
- *Share tips*
- *Develop empathy*

There are concrete situations at work to implement these skills for adapting tools according the difficulties of someone, to prevent risks in a safe and confident environment, or to create awareness about solidarity.

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#### THE "SPAGHETTIS AND MARSHMALLOWS" GAME

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This game is a funny teambuilding game with simple materials. Using marshmallows and spaghetti, small teams have the task to build the highest possible building in a given time. It is recommended to film the team playing the game. The video, which can be reviewed afterwards together, gives a good opportunity to talk and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the team.

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#### TEAM-UP GAME

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Team-Up is a participative game for four players. It is based on the contribution of each member of the team to the success of the game. The goal is to stack boxes on a pallet as compact as possible while respecting instructions about colour or shape shown on the instruction cards. The points the team gains depend on how many levels were built (5 points for each level). But there can be reductions of points, for instance if boxes are not used (-1 point for each) or if boxes couldn't be placed correctly as on the instruction card (-1 point for each).

This game is recommended to implement basic skills like:

- To communicate
- To share ideas
- To respect common rules
- To be successful as a team

As it is a commercial game, this game is interesting but not fully adapted for everyone. It can generate conflicts among the team that can be explored to work on intellectual differences. We recommend simplifying the rule by choosing either to follow shapes or colours. Also, the game can be played with real boxes and pallets.

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#### THE "PERFECT SQUARE" GAME

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Team: 1 leader and 4 partners  
Equipment: A rope (10 meters)

Goal: Shape a perfect square with the rope!

Difficulty: Except and follow the leader while the partners are blindfolded.

This game is recommended to implement basic skills like:

- Leadership
- Share different strategy from individual
- Have a specific role among a team
- Listen to each other
- Solve issues together

This game allows the team many variations and can be adapted to different levels of ability.

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## FEEDBACK

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- *I discovered my difficulty to manage days and hours. It's so important to be together on time to be a good part of a team.*
- *A film as a learning tool is a good way to memorize things. I learnt to play different roles.*
- *I learnt to better communicate with other people.*
- *Now, I can help someone who needs my help.*
- *I played the Core Quadrant Game with Esther. I learnt a lot about myself to face my difficulties at work and in my social life.*
- *Experimentations turned in real opportunities with enterprises in the labor market.*
- *We got to know ourselves better.*
- *Usually we work alone on one task, here we had the opportunity to work together. I liked that.*
- *We discovered the skills of our colleagues.*
- *To work in a team brought me more reflection. We had to clear our heads to think. I became more tolerant with others. I learnt to have trust in them.*
- *I learnt to be more patient. We shared our opinions and our ideas.*
- *At the beginning we were a group, then we became a team!*
- *We could handle things we are not able to do alone.*
- *I learnt to overcome my difficulties to talk in front of people.*
- *I learnt to take responsibility in a group.*
- *I learnt to anticipate before acting.*
- *We developed our skills, now we have more experience and knowledge.*
- *Together, we can make great things even without the staff.*





## **STELLA Experts' tips regarding team ability**

*PWDs feel free to express their thoughts and opinions.*

*PWDs are able to communicate openly, honestly and respectfully,*

*PWDs feel listened to by team members who are attempting to understand them.*

*PWDs are free to ask questions for clarity*

*PWDs have a strong sense of belonging to the group*

*PWDs experience a deep commitment to the group's decisions and actions.*

*PWDs spend also free time with the team*

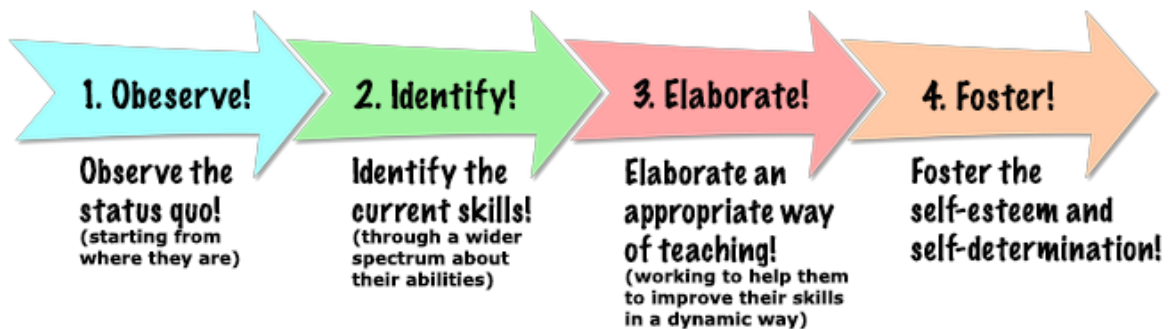
*PWDs understand the norms of the team*

*PWDs are equal parts of the team they belong to*

*PWDs develop relationship guidelines with other team members*

*PWDs feel comfortable taking responsibilities and risks*

*PWDs are able to support their teams*





In this chapter we will discuss the importance of constructive criticism and analytical thinking. The main topic is dealing with how to give and take criticism, and furthermore how to use constructive criticism for personal improvement.

Constructive criticism can be a tool to create a successful organization where everyone has the chance to contribute. The content of the chapter emerged from discussions and workshops with the participants with disabilities at various STELLA partners.

In this chapter you will find:

- Methods in teaching and learning critical thinking

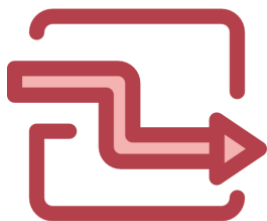
- Persons with disabilities writing about critical thinking and about tips to staff.

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WHEN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LEARN TO BE CRITICAL, TO TAKE THEIR PLACE AND TO EXPRESS THEIR OWN OPINION, THEY CAN CRITICIZE THEIR STAFF. IN THAT WAY, THE STAFF WILL BECOME A BETTER STAFF”.

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### **Starting Point → Destination**



*You will learn how to move from a starting point where you don't have much to say about things concerning your personal life, your job and your leisure time, to a point where you are the one, telling the staff how you want things to be done.*

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## METHODS

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### **Preparatory steps**

People with disabilities and their staff had discussions, in groups as well as individually, about constructive criticism, analytical thinking and leadership.

### **The discussed questions**

- *What is constructive criticism?*
- *Why do we use it?*
- *What are the do's and don'ts about giving criticism?*
- *Critical thinking - what is that?*
- *In what way is it good for persons with disabilities and for the staff members to be critical thinkers?*
- *What does it mean to be a good leader?*



Inspired by the discussions and conversation, the participants of the discussion expressed their thoughts and experiences. They wrote about:

- What to think about when you are critical about something or someone.
- How to do an evaluation in your team.
- How to be a good leader.

## **STELLA experts' tip!**

*Encourage and support PWDs:*

- *To be respectful*
- *To know what they are talking about*
- *To speak in front of an audience*
- *To have constructive ideas for a change.*



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### THE 6 BIG WS

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The teams used the daily news and the “W”- questions for working with articles in the news. The STELLA motto in this case was: “Before you criticize, know what you are talking about!”

**What? Who? Where? When? Why? and How?**



We noted that using this tool made the PWDs more interactive and communicative. It allowed the participants to share more opinions together. Knowing some background about a fact and being able to locate it in a context, enriches judgment and improves critical thinking.

The next step was to reverse the roles, so that people with disabilities were not receiving information but providing it, like journalists, using the same key questions. The goal was to reinforce objective thought while receiving or transmitting information.

At this time of the working process, a brainstorming was done to identify some necessary skills for critical thinking:

- Be curious and open
- Have a good memory, analyze and record
- Tell true from false with proof
- Dare to share your opinion and discuss other opinions
- Know how to explain and to argue

## **Practical execution**

**Topic:** *The floods in Paris*

*(What) The floods in Paris, (Who, Where) the inhabitants along the Seine, (When) in January, (Why, How) because of the weather, the river has overflowed.*

**Topic:** *The life of a homeless person*

*(What) We did the same with homeless people, (Who) people in poverty, (Where) living in the street (When) all the year (Why) because of unemployment, lack of hosting places), (How) they lost their job, had no money, no friends.*

### **Conclusion →**

*Now, with this information it's easier to understand and form your own opinion. The more people ask and get answers, the more they know. In consequence, the analytical and critical thinking is increasing.*

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#### DO YOU AGREE?

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The next step was to structure a discussion to encourage reflection and decisions.

We decided to apply a method, moving from a polarized way of thinking to a more complex view, by introducing a higher level of analytical thinking. We always started from an imaginary story that could happen at work or at home. This was quite often a dilemma. In this way a basic reflection of a situation was done.

The first "game" we played was basically to choose sides, either for or against a specific opinion. Then we introduced participants, who functioned as a jury. Their task was to come to a conclusion after listening to different reasonings. The participants experienced that it is easier to develop analytical or critical thinking after they had more information about a topic.

### **Practical execution**

*The situation: At the sheltered workshop, a worker refuses to do what his educator orders him to do (for instance: put three screws in a sachet all day!)*

*Divide the room in two spaces by playing a rope on the floor. One side of the rope is camp "worker", the other side of it is camp "educator".*

*Ask the participants: Do you agree with the worker or the educator?*

*Ask the participant to choose camps!*

*Provide new information about the protagonists (worker and educator) and reveal more circumstances about the situation!*

*Ask the participants if they want to change camps now after they received more information about the situation!*

*Introduce a jury consisting of three jurors!*

*Listen to each argument, discuss the reasonings together and find a fair solution for the problem!*

### **Conclusion**

Even if it was frustrating to start from a simple argument, the development of the game was interesting as it showed, step by step, the process of analytical thinking. At the beginning people were only able to use one argument. Then, after practicing the analytical process and using the skills identified for critical thinking, they could elaborate hypothesis and conclusions. Finally, the people with disabilities were able to embrace a complete process and deliver constructive criticism.



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### THE COURT

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As outlined above, participants were encouraged to pose questions, make a hypothesis and then make a decision. After successfully accomplishing these exercises, a role play called “The Court” came into action. The Court was ideal for the PWDs to express and share opinions.

In this process we practiced starting with a simple point of view and evolving to a more analytic way of thinking. Each participant had the opportunity to first reduce an argument and then progressively elaborate it. Using games and situations they could meet in their everyday life created motivation among the participants.

### **STELLA experts’ tip!**

- *Use real life scenarios within the role play methods! People with disabilities can relate to the situations which increases their motivation to learn and participate.*
- *Suggested topics:*
- *Unfriendly remarks from insensitive people,*
- *A bugging noise from the neighbours,*
- *Facing insults in the public transportation.*

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### FEEDBACK

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**R.e.s.p.e.c.t.** - *The most important ingredient in constructive criticism*  
*If criticism is used to work constructively and if it should lead to improvement, it must be conducted with respect. Be aware that you - the staff - have a position of power.*  
*By working with participant methods, participants can take more responsibilities, step by step.*

*Practice makes perfect! Put yourself in the place of the participant and go from there.*

***Tools to ease a developing climate at your work:***

*Staff offer participants a forum for the opportunity to practice constructive criticism.*

*The forum will occur on a regular basis. In the forum, common power structures are dissolved. Everyone is equal.*

*It is the task of staff to make the participants feels safe to say what they want.*

*It is the responsibility of staff to teach the basic forms of constructive criticism.*

*Staff and participants make a common agreement that the criticism is clearly related to the job.*

***To be able to present criticism it is important that you:***

*Feel safe at your workplace*

*Know your value (you are worthy!)*

*Know what you are working with*

*Know your rights*

*Know your obligations*

*Know how to state your opinion*

*Know how to say "no"*

***Method***

*Full democracy is recommended in the team.*

*This gives everyone the same possibilities to give each other constructive criticism.*

*This means of course that also the staff will get their dose of criticism.*

***Very important***

*To thoroughly go through the basic rules of how to give each other constructive criticism.*

*To create a comfortable and safe environment in the team.*

*To keep the meetings exclusively for the team.*

***Danger***

*Big meetings! There is a risk that bigger meetings might degenerate to personal attacks.*

*At certain occasions there is room for inviting external people and listening to their opinions.*

*This, of course, has to be prepared.*



One of the STELLA partners is the Swedish organization Medis5. This partner runs a theatre called Teater Surra where people with and without disabilities work, act and direct together as an ensemble for over ten years. Three of the actors, all people with intellectual disadvantages, had a conversation about critical and analytical thinking and about their experiences with (constructive) criticism.

*"We have worked with critical criticism for about 10 years", says Erik. "At first it did not work at all, people cried and left the room. Now we can say what we think is good and not so good."*

*"It's a good group. We trust each other. We dare to criticize each other in order to be better", says Ulrika.*

*"Sometimes friends don't dare to give each other criticism", says Rolf.*

*"Or, one dares to give criticism, but not the other. Its good if the criticism is formulated as little tips."*

*"Criticism does not have to be hard to get, it might even feel good if you know it makes you better", says Ulrika.*

*"It's important to listen to the criticism," Erik points out.*

*How do you inform new colleagues about how you work with criticism?*

*"We say it's good to get and give criticism", says Ulrika. "Then you learn to get better. But first you have to do it right and criticize in a good way."*

*"Those who have never been criticized cannot criticize themselves," says Erik. "Then they can say whatever that has nothing to do with anything. That's why it is important to go through the rules with new colleagues."*

*" The ensemble can take criticism from externals given that it is about a scene or a character*

*they have been working with for a while. But when the character is still fresh and a bit without shape and not yet grounded, it is important to wait and to show an audience the scenes until they are relatively rehearsed."*

*"Everyone is important for achieving our goal. Together we are strong. We must be honest with each other. All the mistakes we make will finally benefit us. The actors must not be afraid of making mistakes on stage and must not be afraid of telling when someone else makes mistakes. But always, say it with respect.", says Ado.*

### **Tips to think about when you criticize:**

Be honest!

Disregard the personal relationship you have with the person you criticize!

Even if you are friends or the person you criticize is your boss it is important to criticize the performance in an objective way!

Try to really SEE, with open senses, what might get better!

Be precise!

Please give alternative suggestions!

Be aware of the fact that it might be difficult to receive criticism!

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to be really, really kind.

Choose the right words!

Do not curse or insult!

### **Tips to think about when you are criticized:**

No excuses! No apologies!

Take your time to accept and process the criticism!

Have courage to embrace criticism!

Use the criticism to become better!

### **Tips to make an evaluation:**

Sit in a circle.

Choose a master of ceremony.

Make sure there is a laid back and pleasant atmosphere.

Only one person at a time should talk. The others must keep quiet.

(This might be extra hard for the person who gets criticized.)

If something goes out of hand the Master of Ceremony will get things back on track.

The evaluation starts with some short words from each and every one, followed by a mutual discussion.

The goal is a constructive discussion about what can be better and how to get there.

Example: Somebody speaks too quietly. Someone waves with her arms while speaking.

Together, you discuss ways to speak louder and waving less with the arms.

Practical tips help the person who is criticized.

Thanks to a collective creative work, the results of the group and the individuals improve.

### **Keywords**

Trust each other!

Stick to the rules!

Choose your words with care!



In this chapter we will discuss the importance of communication skills, especially in the workplace. The content of the chapter emerged from discussions and workshops with the participants who are persons with disabilities (PWDs). The goal is to present what communication skills are and how these skills can support PWDs in achieving their life goals.

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WHEN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LEARN HOW TO COMMUNICATE IN MORE EFFICIENT WAYS, THEY IMPROVE GREATLY THEIR CHANCES OF FINDING A JOB.

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### **The importance of communication**

Communication is the core of human life. We all have the need to be heard. We have the need to express ourselves. We want to be actively involved in everyday situations. Therefore, it is important that we know how to communicate.

There is a famous scientist called Doctor Merahbian. This scientist found out that communication is:

- **Words** - 7%
- **Body Language** - 55%
- **Tone of Voice** - 38%

Communication skills are an important part of social inclusion. Being able to speak out for yourself, but also to listen to others is important for the personal life and the work life. Companies like to hire people who can communicate well.

### ***Types of communication***

*Some of the different types of communication are:*

- *Verbal communication - How you speak!*

- *Sign language – How to express yourself with your hands!*
- *Braille – The language for people who are blind*
- *Body language – We communicate without talking. (gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, etc.)*
- *Gestures –hand or arm movements*
- *Eye contact - Maintaining good eye contact is important*
- *Position - The way that we stand, sit or hold our arms.*
- *Written communication - This method is used to send messages, keep records, or provide evidence.*

There are different ways to learn communication skills. The STELLA teams chose these three ways:

- Creating a communication guide for the workplace
- Performing Arts: Producing a song
- Journalism: Making video interviews



We used brainstorming, group discussions and role plays to learn communicating.

There were also workshops to learn certain skills.

## METHODS & WORKSHOPS

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### Communication Guide - **Exercise 1:**

Taking turns, each member had to present itself to the group. Before starting their presentation, they picked a paper informing them whether they should make a successful self-presentation or a crappy one. Depending on the instruction given, they had to keep in mind all the things we had previously identified and adopt the appropriate style of presenting themselves. In the end, the 'audience' (which was the other group members) had to comment on the presentation and decide which instruction the 'presenter' had been given in the first place.

### Communication Guide - **Exercise 2:**

For the creation of the photographic material for the guide, members were divided into two groups: directors and actors. The directors were responsible for creating the scene and giving instructions to the actors as to what to say and/or how to stand. The actors were responsible for following closely all directions so that the photo outcome would be a clear depiction of the corresponding scenario. Actors and directors were alternating in different scenarios, so that each member plays both roles.



### **STELLA experts' tip!**

*If a topic or task is very complex, break it down into smaller parts or consecutive steps. That way, all members of an inclusive work team can comprehend the single duties faster and easier. By understanding each small work package, everyone can comprehend the big picture and successfully contribute to it.*

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#### ONE WORD AT A TIME

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This improvisation exercise requires at least two or three people, but the more the better. The only rule of this exercise is that you have to tell a story with each person only contributing one word at a time.

For example: One – Day – Our – Cat – Ran – Away – And – Got – Stuck – Up – A – Tree.

What do we learn?

- creative thinking,
- group work and
- verbal communication.

Everyone plays a small role in the creative process, but no one can hog the entire story.

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#### PILLOW

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*This exercise is a simple game that requires at least two or three people. Two partners share one pillow. Experiment with different ways of giving and taking the pillow, without using words.*

- *Make the pillow something very valuable and precious.*
- *Make the pillow something distasteful.*
- *Make the pillow very heavy. Make it light. Make it prickly. Pretend that it's a ticking bomb, an injured cat, a hot plate, a new born baby, and so on.*

What do we learn?

- *Non-verbal communication*
- *Body language.*
- *Physical presentation skills.*

---

#### SLOW MOTION

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*This is a simple group game. Ask the group to replay a number of scenarios in slow motion; for example, celebrating the scoring of a goal, cooking an omelette, painting a portrait, attending a job interview.*

*What do we learn?*

- *Non-verbal communication*
- *Body language.*
- *Physical presentation skills.*

---

#### GET IT TOGETHER

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*Divide your group into pairs.*

*One person in each pair should be blindfolded. It is the job of the blindfolded person to take specific items from the centre of the circle. The other one gives cues to the blindfolded partner. This exercise seems simple enough when it starts, but it becomes more complicated as more blindfolded people enter the circle and begin trying to find items. At the end, discuss the methods people used to tune out others' noise and confusion and focus on working as a team.*

*What do we learn?*

- *verbal communication,*
- *listening*
- *voice-recognition*
- *developing trust.*

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#### PRODUCING A VIDEO

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*When producing a video – use this checklist!*

*Choose the person you want to interview!*

*Choose the questions you want to ask!*

*Create the setting for the interview!*

*Involve everyone in your team (one person asks questions, one person operates the camera, one person holds the spotlight, etc.)!*

*Present the video! – in a presentation, in a conference or online (i.e. on YouTube)!*

#### **Things to think about!**

- *Explain the reason for the interview!*
- *Ask for agreement to record the interview!*

- *Don't ask closed questions!*
- *Don't suggest the answers!*
- *Ask for one thing not for many things at the same time!*
- *Listen carefully!*
- *Don't interrupt your interview partner!*
- *Finishing the conversation by saying thank you!*

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## RADIO WORKSHOPS

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Of course, a radio station is an exciting place to work where lot of new impressions were gathered, and many new things can be experienced. The Workshop sessions in the radio station had different topics to learn one thing at a time.

- Basic introduction to radio (techniques, rooms, playlists, streaming, etc.)
- The microphone (different types, function, proper usage, etc.)
- The recording
- The test trial (making the first interview as a test drive with a topic and a partner the PWD feels comfortable with)
- Listen and learn (listening to good examples of audition created about relations of people with disabilities)
- Reflection and evaluation

### ***Preparation sessions for recording***

- *learning about the cameras and settings during the recordings*
- *learning about the technical context (sound, light and microphone)*
- *choosing the candidates for the interviews*
- *creating the questions for the concrete candidate*
- *making the scenario of the interview*
- *practicing the verbal communication by asking the questions and listening to the other person*
- *making an interview with the candidate (including every team member in different roles – journalist, camera man, light engineer)*
- *producing the video from the recording*
- *evaluating of the interviews (what was done well? What can be done better next time?)*



## FEEDBACK

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*"I liked the music sessions coming up with the lyrics and enjoyed singing the song in the recording studio."*

*"I liked recording the songs so that other people from other Countries will hear it."*

*"I liked singing and being involved in the recordings, when I heard the recording of me singing, I was very happy. "*

*"I enjoyed creating a guide that will help other people find a job!"*

*"I really liked I made my own CV for the first time, even if I found it difficult at first."*

*"This project gave me the opportunity to participate in something big."*



## TECHNICAL SKILLS

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This chapter is about technical skills that are important for everyone in the workplace.

The technical skills that we identified are:

- Manual Skills
- Time Management Skills
- Money Management Skills
- Technology Skills – Audio Visual Equipment
- Communication Skills
- Self-Presentation & Performance Skills
- Teamwork Skills



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TECHNICAL SKILLS CAN HELP EVERYONE WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY, BOOST YOUR CONFIDENCE AND MAKE YOU A MORE VALUABLE CANDIDATE FOR EMPLOYERS.

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### ***STELLA Experts' tip!***

*Take one step at a time!*

*Make small changes!*

*Apply newly learned skills in your everyday life!*

Many technical skills are easily attainable if you know where to start. Any discussion of PWDs skills should start by recognizing strengths – not just deficits.

### **Time Management Skills**

Being on time is important for employees in the world of work. Fulfilling a task in a given time is also important. Therefore, all STELLA teams working on technical skills featured timekeeping skills.

### ***Time Management – Practical approaches***

*The Italian Group advertised their event to start with an allotted date & time, therefore PWDs needed to ensure that all preparatory tasks had been completed in advance of the event opening. The UK group had a schedule of rehearsal, filming, recording and performance times. Likewise,*

*the Polish group required to be on time for interviews with politicians, where it was important to fit in with their busy schedules.*



### **STELLA experts' tips!**

*Use visual tools such as a drawn time line or notes on a big wall calendar in your meeting room to have the schedule present at all time!*

## **Money Management Skills**

These skills range from awareness & control of project budgets to money handling with customers. An awareness of money management also helps people with disabilities to manage their own personal finances.

## **Technology Skills – Audio Visual Equipment**

This is the ability to correctly operate machinery, electrical equipment or electronic devices. Those skills are important in many jobs.

The STELLA teams all featured technological skills. The Polish group used technical equipment (micro-phones, cameras etc.) and used IT equipment to edit and publish interviews.

## **Self-Presentation & Performance Skills**

First impressions count. A key work skill is the ability to make a good impression, either as job seekers, employees in customer facing roles or as members of a team. Personal hygiene, appropriate clothing and grooming are as important as motivation, attitude and good communication.

## **Teamwork Skills**

Teamwork is essential in the world of work. Employees achieve very little working in isolation from each other. Learning to work together with other people to collaboratively achieve tasks are skills that all employees need to have.

### **Example for executing team work skills!**

*The task of recording an interview involves a number of people who have to work together – the editorial team who prepares and agrees on the interview questions, the interviewer, the camera operator, the sound and lighting person. All team members need to work together in unison.*

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### LEARNING BY DOING

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In terms of Crafting Skills & Event Organisation, the Italian STELLA team was already able, and used to, making craft items. The people with disabilities were taught to reflect on the process behind making the craft items, and then teach someone else how to do make the craft item. The overall aim was to apply this process to all the products that PWDs make in their center.

In this case, learning was not only a matter of memorizing but also of understanding. Learning by doing means to internalize and to be conscious of an action. Of course, the simple “doing” is not enough so that activities were accompanied by group discussions and evaluations, so it becomes “**learning by doing and by thinking**”.

At the same time, the teams noted that that this act of doing and thinking must be supported by motivation to be fruitful. Motivation towards what a person is doing is fundamental to learning and understanding.

#### ***Parameters of the learning by doing concept!***

*Learn – Do – Think! Motivation in – products (crafts, videos, songs) out!*

In order to think about and reflect on their own work, the teams always used **supportive, active methodologies**:

- *role games,*
- *visualisation and*
- *games to reinforce team spirit*
- *games to highlight the PWDs’ skills*
- *recursions*

#### ***Practical approach***

*For example, learning the lyrics to a song involved communication skills of reading, listening and memorising. By working together to produce a tangible product (in our case: a finished song that was recorded and filmed), the group was able to “learn by doing”.*

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### THE ‘TOGETHER’ PATHWAY

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The Polish STELLA team created a pathway for PWDs to be trained as journalists, with all the aspects that are needed in this profession. The group started with self-presentation, then moving on to with working with

vocal techniques and finally working on producing a video. What is also important is that every team member was involved in every step of the process. So even when you only see one person asking the question in the video, all the other team members were involved in creating, in preparing and in executing the video interview. Therefore, this collaborative way of working was the best practice method for the STELLA journalism team.

### ***Team work makes the dream work!***

*Every team member has a specific task. When we put together all the tasks in the correct order, we will have a successful final result.*

---

#### FEEDBACK



*"I am more aware of the importance of my work now. I complete my tasks in a less mechanical and more conscious way."*

*"My confidence increased. I take pride in my work from beginning to end."*

*"I was able to watch their self-esteem growing. Our clients developed a great sense for the achievements they made."*

*"All participants thoroughly enjoyed the experience which was evident from the smiles on their faces when on stage showing how proud they are of all their hard work."*

*"I enjoyed this work as a journalist a lot and I want to continue working in this field."*

*"Now, I have a better understanding of the technical skills required by journalists who work in radio, TV & online."*

*"I learned how to work in a team and how to support each other as a team. That was special to me."*

## STELLA Legal notice

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**Internet:** <http://www.ella-ella.eu/stella/>

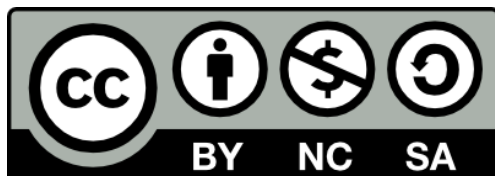
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Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



“This Project has been funded with support from the European Commission. The contents of this handbook reflect the views only of the author and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.”

**STELLA is a two-year project carried out by partners stemming from organisations across Europe, as well as ERASMUS+ funds, seeking to form a strategic partnership and cooperation for innovation in the fields of social inclusion, diversity and staff education.**

**The main objective of the project was the production of this handbook meant to provide anyone whom operates in an inclusive work environment, the information and methodology to improve basic work skills for people with disabilities.**

**Towards this goal, the STELLA project was run by a diverse and inclusive team, an exchange between persons with disability and those without, working on raising awareness about inclusivity in the workplace as well as strengthening autonomous and independent work forces throughout Europe.**

**STELLA: Agreement Number: 2017-1-DE02-KA204-004167**

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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

