



CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION

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In 2020, the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Governments, especially in Europe, took action to control the virus's spread. They closed borders, limited travel, stopped businesses, and encouraged people to stay apart. This situation affected everyone. It was difficult for governments, businesses, public services, non-profits and disability organisations. It had a big impact on the most vulnerable people in our communities. But through these challenges, we found strength and new opportunities to work together to empower each other during tough times.

Centres supporting people with disabilities faced unique challenges to keep everyone safe and healthy during the pandemic. They dealt with shortages of protective equipment and staff shortages. The residential and large population nature of some centres on the continent along with the specific needs of people with disabilities added to the complexity of providing support during a pandemic. This put the centres' regular activities at risk. They had to cancel workshops, education, work activities, therapies, and even cultural events, which are important ways for people with disabilities to be part of their communities. This pause in activities had negative effects on the mental, social, and physical well-being of people with disabilities, and it stopped their inclusion and participation in the community. However, by working together and focusing on empowerment, we overcame many challenges and created more inclusive and supportive environments for everyone despite the restrictions necessary to keep everyone safe.

The cultural sector was also hit hard by the pandemic. Museums, galleries, theatres, and cinemas had to close for a long time. Events like concerts and festivals were cancelled too. This caused a big drop in income for artists, creators, and other people working in the cultural sector.

This document is the outcome of teamwork among partners in the REVIVAL project. They documented the steps taken during the pandemic to get back to a "new normal." Eight organizations from Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Poland, Germany, Austria, and Greece, involved in disability services and theatre, worked together on this project. The REVIVAL Project, funded by the Erasmus+ Program, is a 24-month project that began on May 5, 2021 when many of the services were still in lockdown mode and running very different services and opportunities than before the pandemic.

This guide helps the theatre and adult education sectors work together to organize theatre activities, performances, dramas and plays. These guidelines are important for a few reasons. First, they support the revival of the theatre and cultural sector by allowing theatre activities to happen in adult education centres for people with disabilities. Second, they make sure people with disabilities can safely enjoy cultural events in these centres, which helps remove barriers related to physical and mobility challenges. Thirdly it shares some of the innovative practices that started during the pandemic but that have provided more choice and opportunities today.

These guidelines come with a practical checklist, aimed at services and anyone who wants to support the inclusion of people with disabilities to participate safely in theatrical activities.

As the health crisis improved over time, we decided to expand the original purpose of the document, which was focused only on COVID-19 to include new ways to provide theatre opportunities, resources and provisions through virtual engagement.

This document includes suggested standards and procedures that we as the partners on the project along with the individuals we support believe we need to ensure that cultural activities happen safely, but it's not just during the pandemic situations. It considers lessons learned during the COVID-19 health crisis and goes beyond by sharing knowledge and good practices between the disability and culture sectors. This helps to follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which started in 2008.

Article 30 of the Convention says that people with disabilities have the right to join in cultural, recreational, and sports activities just like everyone else. This means they should have access to places like museums, theatres, cinemas, and libraries, and be able to take part in cultural and recreational events. Also, Article 30 says that people with disabilities should be able to enjoy culture in the same way as others, which includes providing support including; video, sign language, captions, loop systems and many more to support the inclusion of everyone in literature, art, theatre and music.