

ERASMUS+ KA2: Cooperation for innovation and the
exchange of good practices

"AUDIO DESCRIPTION AND SUBTITLES AGAINST EXCLUSION"

PROJECT GUIDEBOOK

2022

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INTRODUCTION

The lack of effective solutions in access to culture and culture-forming activities by people with disabilities is undoubtedly a problem in contemporary Europe. There are countries where people with disabilities are still worse treated citizens, even "excluded". There is a lack of solutions that would enable people with disabilities to participate in social/cultural life actively.

The level of accessibility of culture and adaptation of the cultural offer to the needs of people excluded from it is at different levels in European countries. Western European countries (richer) are characterised by greater programme diversity addressed to people with disabilities. On the other hand, poorer nations like Eastern Europe do not apply the principle of accessibility at all or to a minimum. We have implemented the "Audio description and subtitles against exclusion" project to change this reality.

The task of the project was to counteract discrimination. This refers to equalising rights in access to culture, work, science, and decent life of all their recipients, regardless of disability, worldview, or social or financial status. Active participation in cultural activities is essential for the proper functioning of society. In our opinion, audio descriptions and subtitles for the deaf should be a standard in the functioning of all European cultural institutions.

Research conducted by the Centrum Kultury Wroclaw-Zachod shows that despite a clear increase in proposals addressed to people with disabilities, their number is insufficient. The reason for this is, among others, a lack of qualified staff who would adapt the current offer to the needs of people with visual and hearing impairments. It is known from the survey and environmental interview that the programme employees of Wroclaw cultural institutions and Lower Silesian centres working with people with disabilities understand what audio descriptions and subtitles are. At the same time, they lack the competencies and skills to implement these methods in the life of their institutions.

Our action was a response to the requests and needs of people with disabilities who want to participate actively in society on an equal basis. The project "Audio description and subtitles against exclusion" was conducted with institutions from Lithuania, Cyprus, Romania and Latvia. Institutions from countries where activities related to the adaptation of the cultural offer to the needs of people with visual and hearing impairments are practically non-existent.

1. METHODS ENABLING THE FULL USE OF CULTURE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1.1. AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Audio description is a verbal, audible description of the image and visual content contained in an audio-visual programme intended for people with disabilities due to visual impairment, placed in a broadcast or disseminated simultaneously with a broadcast [Polish Broadcasting Act of 25 March 2011].

Audio description – from Latin audio (concerning hearing, sound) and Latin description (related to drawing, describing) – is a verbal description of visual content for blind and visually impaired people, transmitted by ears (hearing). "Audio description is also called video description or descriptive narration."

It is a method and technical achievement for blind and visually impaired people. It describes such things as characters in films, reads all the subtitles in a film or theatre play, and describes facial expressions, place of action, and gestures. It is used in museums, cinemas, television, theatre, concerts and sports shows. Audio description is to ensure independence for a person with a visual disability. Therefore, it must provide information that will allow you to know the visual content of a film, performance, picture or sports performance.

1.1.1. Types of audio description

There are three types of audio descriptions:

1. narration presented by a reader or a presenter, available to all viewers, live audio description
2. the separate soundtrack, available for those interested, audio description recording
3. text description of visual material read by the computer

1.1.2. General rules for creating a script

What do we describe when creating an audio description? First, images: what happens on the screen, where the action takes place, when, who and how performs the described activities. But that's not all. In some cases, the audio description begins before the video even begins. It is then called an audio introduction.

- Before starting work, you should know the song/object you will describe very well.
- We describe what we see. Then, we try to answer the questions: who, what, how, where, and when.
- From the general to the specific - the principle that should be followed when describing.
- First, a general description containing everything that is most important in a given work/image/scene of the film, etc., then a description of details ranked accordingly to the importance of the information.
- We describe it to stimulate the imagination.
- We use the most accurate words with rich, broad meanings.
- We are looking for comparisons, suggestive epithets, and even metaphors.
- We use colour names and terms, but we avoid rare/industry terms, e.g., "amaranth", "pistachio", and "frog perspective".
- The objectivity of the description should be maintained, with no valuations, comments, interpretations or censorship.
- The audio description should not include our ratings and opinions.
- We do not directly call the characters' emotions if they result in an obvious way from facial expressions (e.g. a wide smile) or the tone and content of the statement.
- We avoid censoring drastic, violent, erotic and pornographic scenes. Instead, we describe them truthfully but without excessive detail and do not use vulgar vocabulary.
- 100% objectivity is not possible. Audio description is always subjective because it is a choice made by a specific audio descriptor endowed with individual sensitivity, experience and cultural competencies.
- The description addressed a specific group of recipients, such as children. Therefore, the audio description must consider their specific needs, expectations, and habits.
- As far as possible, the description should be in stylistic harmony with the film/performance/artwork.
- Skilful adaptation of the language and style of speech. The language should be precise, brief, descriptive and adapted to the needs of the film. The description should be fluent and natural, and the vocabulary as varied as possible.
- The text of the audio description should be edited and evaluated by another descriptor and consulted with blind and visually impaired people.
- We should take good care to ensure good quality of recording/reading of the audio description.

1.1.3. Technical principles to be used when creating audio descriptions for audio-visual works:

- The audio description should not howl down any crucial sounds in the film or performance. It should be in between the dialogues in the audio-visual work.
- We do not use every single break in the original narration of the film/performance for audio description.
- We do not duplicate information contained in dialogues and non-verbal sounds.
- The audio description must report on the action of the film/performance on an ongoing basis, in the present tense.
- We select the information in the image and carefully choose the objects of description. These are usually:
 - the appearance of the character, approximate age, outfit, facial expressions, gestures,
 - actions performed by the characters,
 - place and time of action (time of the year, time of the day),
 - objects that make up the scenography, creating local colour, the place's climate, and the moment's mood.
 - Suppose the description of the appearance of the character, the place of action, props are impossible due to the lack of time. In that case, we try to attach to the main audio description additions containing such descriptions.
- In the text of the audio description, we also include the following:
 - inscriptions and descriptions of graphic signs appearing on the screen - including the logos of authors and/or producers,
 - we quote the names of the filmmakers, appearing at the beginning and the end,
 - we make explanations of ambiguous and hardly recognisable sounds.
- We do not use character names before sighted people get to know them. Except for films and multi-cast performances, in which there are several characters with similar-sounding voices and calling the characters nicknames until the name is known would be too problematic because of the lack of time.
- We keep writing as simple as possible. We avoid complex syntactic constructions by using simple sentences.
- The script should have a clear graphic form and contain instructions for the reader.
- Audio description text recording:

- mark – in a different colour, larger font or bold – so that it clearly distinguishes itself from dialogues. Saving dialogues (or at least their fragments) in the script makes it easier for the reader to orient himself,
- in the case of recorded audio-visual materials, the moment the reader should start reading should be marked with a time code,
- suppose it is indicated to change the reading pace. In that case, such information should be included - in parentheses, in a smaller font or a different colour than the text of the audio description (e.g., fast, slow, according to the image, etc.).

1.1.4. Recipients of audio description

When creating an audio description, you need to remember about different groups of recipients. The division into blind and visually impaired does not exceed the significant differences. Very important, and perhaps even more significant, is the division into the blind from birth and the blind during their lifetime. These groups differ in their knowledge of the world of images, colours, spatial imagination, the ability to read the language of a film or theatre, and understanding of formal procedures inscribed in visual and audio-visual works of art. The diversity of needs and the different divisions of competencies of dysfunctional recipients should be considered and adapted in practice. However, only one version of the audio description is made, which compromises the needs of different viewers.

1.2. SUBTITLES FOR THE DEAF

Subtitles for the deaf and hearing impaired - this is to enable people with hearing impairments to be able to profit from audio-visual content as fully as possible, to provide these groups of viewers not only with an understanding of the content of films, theatre performances, television programmes, etc. but also with satisfaction from their reception.

Therefore, in addition to dialogues, subtitles should contain non-verbal statements of the characters (shouts and grunts expressing emotions), information about essential sounds, noises and background music, and information to facilitate the identification of characters.

The audience for subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing is diverse. They have different needs, conditioned by the type and degree of hearing dysfunction, and language competencies, including reading skills and knowledge of the world of non-verbal sounds.

- The first group - are people fluent in the phonic language (including most of the hearing impaired and people who lost their hearing in their lifetime).

- The second group - are people who have been deaf since birth, whose first language is sign language and who learn phonics as a second language.

A separate issue is to make subtitles available for people with simultaneous hearing and vision dysfunction – for example, by creating the possibility of making subtitles larger.

The ideal would be to prepare two versions of subtitles: one for people fluent in phonics and one for people who use sign language and learn phonics. We should prepare the script to include both groups.

1.2.1. Subtitling rules for people fluent in the phonic language, text division

- One line of subtitles contains up to 40 characters because this is the maximum you can read efficiently. In practice, the number of characters depends on technological capabilities.
- The inscription should have no more than two lines. Three-line subtitles are also acceptable, but they should not cover important elements on the screen.
- When dividing the inscription into verses, we consider the whole meaning: we do not break any word connections (we do not separate the name from the surname, the attribute from the object, the preposition from the noun, the particle from the pronoun, we do not leave connectors at the end of the line, etc.
- The inscription displayed on the screen should contain the entire sentence. You can convert a long, complex sentence into several single sentences for good reception.
- Suppose it is impossible to convert a complex sentence into single sentences, and it is necessary to divide it into two or even three lines of subtitles. In that case, each inscription should be a syntactic whole, preferably ending with a punctuation mark (comma, semicolon, etc.).

When recording the dialogue, you must:

- In one inscription, put together one-line issues constituting a logical whole – e.g., a question and an answer.
- At the beginning of the lines, we put hyphens ("-"), and the text is written after the space.

Font types and colours, special characters:

- Use a simple font and avoid using italics.
- Most of the text is usually written in white font.
- To facilitate identification - the statements of the main or difficult-to-identify character (e.g., usually speaking from a distant plan or from off - such as the narrator or telephone caller) should be marked with a different colour (e.g., yellow, green, blue) - from the beginning to the

end of the film. This way, two, three or a maximum of four heroes can be distinguished. A more significant number of colours could cause trouble for the recipient.

- When developing subtitles for a film with suspense (e.g., a criminal), special care should be taken when assigning colours so as not to prematurely suggest a solution to the action - for example, distinguishing with colour a seemingly insignificant hero, who will eventually have a fundamental impact in the film.
- When it is necessary to identify the speaker not distinguished by any colour, it is needed to precede his line: name, surname, function, brief description, containing an attribute of the character, etc. We write this information in white caps and end with a colon symbol (":").
- Whitecaps also record translations of foreign language subtitles appearing on the screen – press titles, texts on a computer monitor, information boards, place names, signposts, etc.
- Descriptions of sounds, noises and musical backgrounds should be clearly separated from the text of the dialogues. It is best to put them in parentheses, as they are rarely used in subtitles for movies (especially square ones).
- We use white font for this purpose. The exceptions are shouts and grunts issued by the characters distinguished by colour and information about their way of speaking - it is a good idea to write them in the same colour.
- The digital version of the subtitles should be combined with graphic signs, such as the source of sound (TV, radio, telephone), music, etc.

1.2.2. Rules for making text abbreviations

- Shortening the characters' statements is usually forced by the norms of the average reading speed (about norms - later in the text).

The following should be omitted:

- irrelevant to the plot statements of episodic characters, radio, television statements, etc.,
- repetitions (unless they are relevant to the meaning of the statement or the characterisation of the hero),
- verbal "supports" that do not contribute anything to the content,
- lyrics of songs and other separate works contained in the film or programme, if their content does not refer to the content of the most important message,

Must not be omitted:

- confirmations, denials,
- emotive shouts,
- names of heroes, etc. - if they are necessary for understanding the plot and identifying the characters,

- lyrics of songs and other separate works contained in the film or programme, if their content refers to the content of the critical message,
- if you can see the face of the speaker, you should write down all the words spoken so that lip-readers avoid cognitive dissonance,
- if abbreviations are necessary - subtitles should contain as many words spoken by the hero as possible,
- in literary texts, especially rhythmic ones, when making abbreviations, we do not omit individual words but formal holes. We try to keep the rhyme and rhythm of the original.

1.2.3. Style

- When reformulating the text due to the need for abbreviations, you should not replace words belonging to the high style with words from everyday language and vice versa, or neutral words - characterised and vice versa.
- In the subtitles, you should reflect the style of the character, which is an element of their characteristic - e.g., using extravagant phrases, frequent use of words (such as, however, in general, exactly, in a sense, just like that), making language mistakes.
- It is also necessary to present the style of the text (archaisms, dialects, slang - environmental), writing down selected archaic forms and regular dialect forms while ensuring that the message remains understandable (unless its incomprehensibility is intentional).
- If the accumulation of archaic or dialect forms is large - e.g., "Bele kaj nie byda robioł, yno na grubie abo na banie!" it is necessary to include a translation of the text into a modern general language, preceded by information about archaisation or dialect: [speaks the Silesian dialect]: "I will not work anywhere, but in a mine or on the railway!".

1.2.4. Linguistic correctness

- The creator of subtitles is obliged to comply with the criteria of linguistic correctness unless making linguistic mistakes is a feature of the hero of the film/programme.
- The correct spelling of rare names, neologisms, and fresh borrowings from other languages not yet included in dictionaries should be established. If we do not find the interpretation of linguists, we use the most likely spelling - by analogy with forms consistent with the norms.

1.2.5. Description of sounds and noises

- It is imperative to inform about all sounds important for understanding the action (even making abbreviations in dialogues).
- We do not describe obvious sounds unambiguously resulting from the image unless the sound is characteristic, almost inaudible or otherwise, and reflects the hero's intentions.

- Due to the ambiguity of shouts and emotive grunts (e.g. Ah! can express: joy, delight, bliss, amazement, fear, anger, and pain), it is sometimes necessary to precede them with information about the emotions of the characters (only if the emotions are not expressed in facial expressions and do not result from the context). E.g.: [with delight] Ah!
- It is necessary to describe the characteristic way of speaking of the film's characters (e.g. very fast or very slow pace, speech defect, elements of dialect or slang, imitation of someone's way of speaking, etc.).
- It is necessary to inform about the hero's intentions that contradict the statement's content (irony, sarcasm, etc.).
- The sounds and noises that co-create the local colour, the place's atmosphere, and the moment's mood also require a description.
- All other sounds and noises should also be described, even seemingly insignificant ones, if the film's heroes react to them.
- The nature of film music – co-creating the mood or "commenting" on the plot – should be described by showing its emotions (joyful, cheerful, sad, moving, disturbing music, etc.).
- The title, composer or performer is given only for very famous works or for other reasons important in the plot.

1.2.6. Subtitle display time, synchronisation with the image

- The display time of the inscription is conditioned by the average reading speed – 12-15 characters per second. A single subtitle should not be displayed for more than 7 seconds or less than a second.
- Neighbouring subtitles should not be displayed one by one but without interruption.
- It is best when the subtitle appears simultaneously with the beginning of the sound and disappears with it.
- We should synchronise the rhythm of subtitles with the editing of the film or other audio-visual material.
- Editing the image should not take place during the inscription display - the subtitles are to appear at the beginning of the shot and disappear at the end (of course, if the shot lasts a long time, you can display several subtitles).
- Avoiding editing cuts when displaying the inscription is especially important in the case of short (one or two-word) texts. The inscription should appear no later than a second before the change of the shot or disappear no earlier than a second after the change of the shot (otherwise, the "jumping image" causes discomfort and bad reception).

1.2.7. Subtitling rules for people learning the phonic language

Besides the principles mentioned above, we should also include the following:

- The time displaying subtitles for people learning the more difficult phonic language should be longer because a lower reading speed should be assumed: 10-12 characters per second.
- The construction of the statement should be simplified as much as possible - to replace complex sentences with single sentences in a simple order.
- To meet the above-mentioned requirements, you usually need to shorten the text to the minimum necessary to understand the plot.
- Avoid rare, archaic, dialect, and ambiguous words unless you see the speaker's face on the screen. This rule also does not apply to famous quotes – we keep them unchanged.
- When trying to preserve the style of the characters' statements or the stylisation of the text (archaisms, dialects, slang), we should limit it to only a few stylisation signals, preferably lexical, not inflectional and phonetic.
- Rhetorical questions should be transformed into declarative sentences expressing the same intention.
- Ironic, sarcastic and other statements with overtone are reformulated, directly representing the speaker's intentions.
- Recipients will be able to enrich the stock of words concerning the world of sounds if we include shouts and exclamation marks expressing various emotions and describe all sounds and noises, not necessarily crucial for understanding the action, mood or characteristics of heroes, even if they duplicate the sense of verbal information – e.g., Au! It hurts me!
- In the case of films and programmes for children, if you can see the source of a sound, we mainly use onomatopoeias and sound-imitative nouns – e.g., Boom! Bam! Hau, hau! Knock, knock!

2. PROJECT AND WORKSHOPS

2.1. OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

The project's main goal was to improve the qualifications and skills of the cultural staff in creating audio descriptions and subtitles for the deaf and to adapt the programme offered to the reception by people with visual and hearing impairments. Therefore, workshops were organised to create an audio descriptions for films, theatre performances, visual arts and creating subtitles for the deaf.

The target group consisted of employees of five partner institutions from Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Cyprus and Poland. International cooperation allowed not only for the exchange of experiences and good practices but also for a discussion on the availability of culture for people with disabilities in EU countries.

The project assumed the implementation of four 5-day workshops:

- Audio description in visual arts (Lithuania)
- Audio description in film (Latvia)
- Audio description in theatre performances (Romania)
- Subtitling for the deaf for cinema, theatre performances and TV programmes (Cyprus)

The workshop was attended by 25 participants, five people from each partner. They were employees of cultural institutions, artists, and cooperating institutions. Participation in training courses helped participants acquire new competencies and skills. It also allowed them to expand and change professional qualifications, thus expanding the cultural offer of the domestic institution. The knowledge gained during the workshops will enable their participants to carry out various artistic events comprehensively, providing recipients with visual and hearing disabilities with international standards. Expanding the current offer with proposals for the deaf and blind will positively impact audience development. Furthermore, it will minimise the effect of exclusion of people with disabilities.

During the implementation of the project (in addition to the main objective), many intermediate goals were also achieved:

- getting to know the environment and needs of deaf and blind people,
- acquiring the ability to create programmes integrating all groups of participants,
- deepening their professional and non-professional skills,
- exchange of experience and good practices.

2.2. PROJECT PARTNERS AND THEIR PROJECT ACTIVITIES

2.2.1. CENTRUM KULTURY WROCLAW-ZACHOD (Poland)

The mission of Centrum Kultury Wroclaw-Zachod is to focus on the life of a given community, to create a place for authors, to nurture cultural traditions and patterns, and support social integration through socio-cultural animation, cultural education and promotion of artistic phenomena. An equally important message of the Centre is the organisation of activities and work for accessibility to a culture of people with physical and intellectual disabilities.

Since 2002, since the beginning of its activity, the Cultural Centre has been organising cultural and culture-forming activities for "excluded" people. By implementing national and international projects, the Centre enables active participation in culture and artistic development for everyone, regardless of age, gender, or social or financial status.

National and international projects:

1. "Open doors - integration" – a project addressed to children and young people with disabilities and healthy ones, based on the joint work of all project participants on theatre performance.
2. "Ani mój" - film animation workshops also for blind children and youth, leading to creation of animated films using various methods.
3. "Excluded from culture" - several project editions based primarily on the implementation of artistic events with audio descriptions and subtitles for the deaf (film screenings, theatre performances, exhibitions, creative workshops, and workshops on creating audio descriptions).
4. "Iceland and Poland against exclusion from culture" - activities based on audio description, carried out in Poland and Iceland, related to promoting the cultural heritage of both countries.
5. "Castle" - an international project promoting audio description in business.
6. "Be able to meet" - a training project preparing participants to work with people with disabilities.
7. TON- International Review of Creativity of People with Disabilities (since 2017) - presentations of singers with disabilities, visual artists, and theatres from Polish and European countries. A promotion of broadly understood accessibility.

Centrum Kultury Wroclaw-Zachod also organises many artistic workshops for children, youth, adults, and seniors based on equality with people with disabilities. These include learning to play the guitar,

and piano, attending theatre, vocal and ceramic workshops, yoga, and pilates classes. In addition, the Centre has an extensive Film Animation Studio. Professionals and artists lead classes in various fields, including artists with disabilities.

The Centre also implements projects under Creative Europe and Erasmus+ Programmes. These are, among others:

1. "Festival of Love" - Creative Europe - an international project addressed to people with disabilities implemented jointly with the Replika Theatre from Romania and Idea Association from Spain – settlement by 31 December 2022.
2. "Audio description against exclusion" - Erasmus+, a project addressed to employees of cultural institutions implemented jointly with Replika Theatre from Romania, Viesoji Istaiga Kauno Ivarių Tautų Kultūrų Centras from Lithuania, Latvijas Kultūras Akadēmija from Latvia and the DOREA Educational Institute from Cyprus – settlement by 31 December 2022.
3. "Be able to meet" - Erasmus+, the project addressed to employees of cultural institutions, implemented jointly with the Replika Theatre from Romania and the Idea Association from Spain - settlement by 5 October 2022.
4. "Artist with disabilities online" - a series of international workshops addressed to artists with disabilities and their caregivers - carried out with the Luetec from Italy and Idea Association from Spain - implementation until May 2023, settlement by August 2023.
5. "Active Senior Academy" - project addressed to employees of cultural institutions and Seniors, implemented jointly with the "Senior" Association from the Czech Republic - implementation until November 2023, settlement by February 2024.

Creating a place for authors, nurturing traditions and cultural patterns, as well as supporting social and artistic integration, Centrum Kultury Wrocław-Zachod is focused on cooperation with other institutions, including those working for people with disabilities from Poland and abroad. Cooperation and exchange of experiences are conditions for improvement and creating better opportunities for people excluded from culture.

The Cultural Centre employs 26 full-time employees, annually about 20 specialists on the contract of mandate and contracts for specific work. In the centre, multiple spaces are necessary for certain activities: a performance hall for 270 people, two workshop spaces for 100 people, music and art rooms, a film animation space, and exhibition halls. In addition to the basic equipment, it has an induction loop, the necessary equipment for audio description, and technical filming facilities. Furthermore, it is fully architecturally adapted for people with disabilities.

2.2.2. ASOCIATIA CULTURALA REPLIKA (Romania)

Educational Theater Center REPLIKA, located in the 4th district of Bucharest, was conceived as an independent, interdisciplinary space, promoting cooperation between professional artists and members of vulnerable communities, bringing theatre closer to young audiences deeply involved in society.

Replika Cultural Association, since 2011, has been cooperating with people at risk. They are convinced that accessibility in the current time should be realised through education through art as a form of strengthening ignored social groups and expressing their needs and expectations. Therefore, it promotes free access to cultural education as a fundamental right, expanding free and equal cultural access for all audiences.

REPLIKA believes in an artist-activist, mirroring society and transgressing our realities, in educational utopias becoming a reality, in pedagogy as a shared process of raising community stories, and in a theatre based on cooperation and respect for everybody's story.

Replika Cultural Association has relevant experience in theatre activities with young people. It shows great interest in creating performances based on such topics as children's civil rights, democratic participation in decision-making, and civic participation of the young generation, documenting issues with a high impact on Romanian society.

In 2015 The Association created a unique space in Bucharest - Replika Educational Theatre Center - dedicated to the cooperation of artists and excluded communities, thus transferring voices to socially and politically ignored categories and creating a theatre for inclusion, self-presentation, democratic participation and solidarity.

2.2.3. VIESOJI ISTAIGA KAUNO IVAIRIU TAUTU KULTURU CENTRAS (Lithuania)

Kaunas Cultural Center of Different Nations (Kauno Ivaiviu Tautu Kulturu Centras - KITKC) is an informal non-profit organisation active in the fields of culture, education and youth work for almost 15 years.

Preserving cultural identity, learning about different cultures, encouraging the integration of individuals into society, targeting vulnerable groups and marginalised groups, initiating anti-discrimination acts, promoting European citizenship, tolerance and intercultural values, and creating a democratic and public society. These are among the main objectives of the organisation.

KITKC works in two main directions that are interconnected.

The first target group is urban society, which is affected by negative discriminatory processes. The Centre initiates and organises support for non-governmental organisations and national minorities and helps to organise anti-discrimination activities during various cultural activities. This is why nearly 100 cultural events are organised yearly: concerts, art exhibitions, social gatherings, poetry readings, culinary heritage tastings and book presentations.

The second target group are communities of national minorities. KITKC strives to preserve the cultural identity of national minorities and encourage their integration into the society of intercultural Lithuania. That is why KITKC organises trainings and seminars for leaders of the national minority communities, active members of the organisation and young people. The organisation devotes a lot of attention and prioritises young people coming from the community of national minorities and marginalised groups. Attempts are being made to encourage them to engage in cultural and social activities, motivate them to be active, volunteer, and strengthen their skills. Currently, KITKC has a 5-person team of employees and a second home for active members of more than 12 ethnic minority associations in Kaunas, each of which consists of more than 100 members. They gather and meet daily at KITKC facilities for various activities.

KITKC has launched international projects under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme (Grundtvig, Leonardo) and Youth in Action. Now, is active in Erasmus+ KA1 and KA2 projects (already completed and started partnerships in 25 international projects related to European citizenship, youth participation, intercultural values, ICT, non-formal education, volunteering, etc.).

The Centre's staff participate in international trainings and seminars on the development of qualifications. They participate in conferences, workshops, youth exchanges and other events under EU programmes.

2.2.4. LATVIJAS KULTURAS AKADEMIJA (Latvia)

The Latvian Academy of Culture is an interdisciplinary institution of higher education of culture and art and a centre for cultural research, artistic work and creative entrepreneurship.

It was founded in 1990 and has contributed greatly to the development of cultural and artistic research, performing arts (theatre and dance), film and audio-visual arts, and cultural and creative industries in Latvia and abroad.

Currently, about 500 emerging specialists in the field of culture take part in various sub-programmes offered by the Latvian Academy of Culture.

Since 2015, the Latvian Academy of Culture has been a member organisation of PLETA - Platform of European Theatre Academies. Bringing together eight theatre academies from 8 different countries, PLETA creates a strong "community of practice" that is aware of the latest developments in this sector and that theatre education is moving towards existing national practice. Furthermore, through co-productions, PLETA members want to discover new ways to give young professionals a broader European orientation.

Since 2018, the Latvian Academy of Culture has become a member of the NORTEAS platform organisation. NORTEAS is a Nordplus network of Nordic and Baltic performing art institutions in higher education with 17 member organisations. NORTEAS encourages students and teachers to seek innovation and new approaches to already established practices through exchanging knowledge, experiences and vision of contemporary performing arts and education. The platform aims to network, develop international cooperation, and teach theatre and dance in the Nordic-Baltic region.

2.2.5. DOREA EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE (Cyprus)

DOREA Educational Institute is a non-profit NGO founded in 2012 in Cyprus. The general scope of activity of DOREA Educational Institute is to offer high-quality non-formal education for youth and adults, covering the three main areas of non-formal education: socio-cultural education, education for personal development and vocational training.

Professionals working at DOREA, both as employees and as external trainers, specialise in providing excellent and practicable solutions for those who wish to continue their personal and professional development through lifelong educational programmes.

DOREA is an international provider of training courses operating in 12 countries throughout the EU (Cyprus, Greece, Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Ireland, United Kingdom, Portugal, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and France) and providing training for school staff, adult education centres, universities, vocational education and training organisations, etc.

DOREA has developed more than 35 different courses (including soft skills/HR courses, language courses, ICT courses, project management courses, etc.). All 35 courses are designed based on the development of knowledge, skills and transversal competencies, often referred to as basic or soft skills. They are the cornerstone of a person's personal development. Transversal knowledge, skills and competencies are the foundations for developing the hard skills and competencies required to succeed in the labour market.

Skills and competencies have a hierarchical structure with the following five points:

- Thinking (problem-solving and decision-making, etc.)
- Language (English, Spanish, French courses)
- Application of knowledge (ICT, STEM, cybersecurity)
- Social interactions (teamwork, intercultural communication, etc.)
- Attitudes and values (emotional intelligence, etc.)

The team comprises more than 40 trainers who are experts in the following fields: STE(A)M, psychology, NLP, sociology, ICT, project management, and cybersecurity.

2.3. WORKSHOPS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

2.3.1. Audio description in visual arts (Lithuania)

Workshop participants learned how to prepare a verbal description for a work of art. Audio description for visual arts is implemented in the form of sound files. They are included in the audio guides. Thanks to them, blind people can see works in the field of, for example, painting, photography, sculpture and installations. Descriptions are created from general into details in a continuous, linear way so that a blind person can easily connect subsequent elements of the image.

The workshop was conducted by experts on the subject:

- Kristina Meilūnaitė, audio-visual translation specialist at Vilnius University.
- PhD. Laura Niedzviegienė - researcher and practitioner of Vilnius University
- Lina Puodžiūnienė Culture and Art Project Manager, Lithuanian Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
- Rasa Chmieliauskaitė - architect
- Andrius Jakučionis - lecturer

2.3.2. Audio description in film (Latvia)

The workshop participants learned theoretical and practical principles for creating film audio descriptions. In addition, they got to know the needs of the recipients of audio descriptions considering the time and degree of vision loss by blind people.

Audio description in a film, or a TV show, takes the form of an additional soundtrack between dialogues. The description does not fill every available gap, does not present the motivations or intentions of the character presented in the film, and does not characterise the well-known sounds. In this way, it allows blind and visually impaired viewers to hear emotions in the voices of actors and listen to the sound background of the picture. Such visual elements of the composition of the film image as staging, set design, actors' play, costumes, colours and light, which blind people cannot see on their own, are described.

The workshop was led by experts on the subject:

- Marta Żaczkiewicz, audio descriptor, creator of subtitles for the deaf, author of subtitles in DESKRYPCJA.PL. President and founder of the Open Culture and Art Foundation
- Ugo Marsili, Lecturer, Head of British Sign Language unit, Head of Diversity and Inclusion unit, Disability Officer at the University of Reading

2.3.3. Audio description in theatre performances (Romania)

The workshop participants gained new skills and learned the principles of creating audio description scripts for theatre plays. They learned methods of building mood by differentiating the tempo and volume of the voice, adjusting the tempo to the action, and how to harmonise the voice with other sound effects. The workshop took place in Romania. An expert in a given field conducted the workshop.

Audio description in a theatre performance is read live. Scenes are described between the dialogues of the actors. As in the film, the audio description does not fill every available gap, does not represent the motivations or intentions of the characters, and does not describe familiar sounds. However, it allows blind and visually impaired viewers to hear emotions in the voices of actors and listen to music and sound effects.

Visual elements such as staging, set design, actors' play, costumes, colours and light are described, which blind people cannot see on their own.

The workshop was conducted by experts on the subject:

- Ana Maria Ursu from Teatrul Basca in Timișoara - actress on institutionalised and independent stages
- Mircea Bucur from Cartea Călătoare Foundation
- Anca Munteanu - playwright

2.3.4. Subtitling for the deaf for films, theatre performances and TV programmes (Cyprus)

Workshop participants learned how to prepare subtitles for films, theatre performances, and television programmes. They learned about the method that makes it easier for people with hearing impairments to understand audio-visual messages. In addition, they also gained practical experience in preparing subtitles, considering the full presentation of the soundtrack, including sounds outside the dialogue layer. Finally, they got to know the needs and world of deaf people, considering hearing impairments.

The workshop was designed and led by Ms Gabriela Telekfalvi. Ms Gabriela Telekfalvi is the founder of the “Labyrinth of Senses”, a disABILITY AWAREness facilitated workshop attended by more than 25.500 participants (Children, Youth, Organizations, and Businesses in 18 countries) with the involvement of 2000 trained volunteers. In 2017, Labyrinth of Senses won the Impact Hub Athens' Social Impact Award and today is a training project endorsed by the Ministry of Education.

3. THE HISTORY OF AUDIO DESCRIPTION AT EACH OF THE PROJECT PARTNERS

Each partner provided information on how audio descriptions and subtitles for the deaf in their country are developed.

3.1. AUDIO DESCRIPTION IN POLAND

For the first time appeared in 1999, but only in films that used freeze-frames. These were the so-called typhlofilms that have never been allowed to be shown in public in cinemas.

2006

In "Pokój" Cinema in Białystok, the first *cinema* screening of a full-length film with audio description entitled "Stażyści" took place.

2007

- First television series with audio description – *Ranczo* series;
- first football match – match played in Białystok;
- first theatre performance with audio description – Białystok Puppet Theatre, a performance entitled "*Jest królik na księżycu*".

2008

The first full-length film in Poland with audio descriptions for the blind and subtitles for the deaf on DVD – TiM Film Studio, is entitled "*Katyn*".

2009

- First exhibition of visual arts with audio description in Białystok, at the Arsenal Gallery, a retrospective exhibition by Marek Kijewski entitled "*Drzę więc cały, gdy mogę was ozłocic*";
- first audio description of the exhibits from the Forest Educational Garden;
- first audio guide with an audio description of the museum exhibition.

2010

- For the first time, the audio description was prepared for a monumental painting, "*Panorama Racławicka*" by Jan Styka and Wojciech Kossak;

- the first video art with audio description – vernissage of the exhibition "Art Show", video art by Jakub Jasiukiewicz, entitled "Pogoda ducha" in Slodownia gallery;
- first Polish Standards for Creating Audio Description for Audiovisual Productions were announced – Białystok, Audio Description Foundation;
- premiere of the film "Chopin. The desire for love" with audio description. It was prepared in two language versions – Polish and English. For the first time in history, the audio description was translated from another language into English;
- first audio description for the documentary film – the Information Centre of the State Forests with the Audio Description Foundation prepared audio descriptions for three documentary films about nature entitled "Na skraju lasu", "Moczary i urczyska" and "Rok w puszczy";
- thanks to the activities of Piotr Strzymiński, an audio description also started at Film Festival in Gdynia.

2011

- First fairy tale with audio description created and read by children, a film adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's story "Len";
 - first virtual gallery with audio description created by children as part of the project "Słowa zaklęte w obrazie, czyli o tym, jak tworzy się film" is created;
- Polish Television broadcast the first series with the audio description "Tajemnica twierdzy szyfrów" in July. It broadcasted the series "Londoners";
- the first broadcasts using audio description – Polish Radio Białystok, broadcasts carried out by the Audio Description Foundation in partnership with the Associations of Cultural Education "WIDOK". The broadcasts presented works in the field of visual arts from prehistory to the present day.

2019

Accessibility Act passed, according to which audio description becomes mandatory for public entities. From 23 September 2020, all websites (new ones and old ones) must have an audio description following the WCAG criteria – Audio description or alternative for media (recording).

Currently, Audio description is widely used in television and for films on DVD. More and more new films are coming out with audio descriptions, which can be seen in cinemas because some cinemas have special equipment to use or equipment to run a special application, AUDIO MOVI.

3.2. AUDIO DESCRIPTION IN LITHUANIA

The first documented test of live AD dates back to the year 2000. This was the case with "Land of Silence and Darkness" (a 1971 film by German director Werner Herzog). Live commentary was made by Lithuanian director Audrius Stonys on 3 April 2000.

The year 2012 was a turning point in the field of Lithuanian audio description. In 2012, the first Lithuanian film with an audio description was released in DVD format. It was "Anarchija Žirmūnuose" directed by Saulius Drunga. The following year, at the Vilnius University of Kaunas, the audio-visual translation studies programme introduced a new discipline – Audio description. Since 2012, seventeen plays with audio descriptions have been prepared, almost two plays per year. Until the beginning of 2018, the Audio Description Theatre was the most developed audio description area in Lithuania.

In January 2018, the first TV product in Lithuania with an audio description was released, the Lithuanian classic film "Gražuolė" ("Beautiful Girl" directed by Arūnas Žebriūnas in 1969).

In January 2019, for the first time in the history of Lithuanian television, a product with an audio description was broadcasted in real-time with a closed audio description. "Laisvės kaina. Disidentai" ("The Price of Freedom. Dissidents") by Alvydas Šlepikas.

In August 2019, the series "Bloga mergaitė" ("Bad Girl") with a total of 85 episodes with audio descriptions, were released, each of which lasted about 25 minutes.

Some of the annual Lithuanian film festivals also prepare at least one selected film with an audio description for the festival.

On 1 January 2020, changes came into force specifying how the number of TV products of the national broadcaster with audio descriptions will increase in Lithuania in the near future. In addition, television programmes adapted to the visually impaired public shall represent at least 10 % of the total monthly airtime. Thanks to these changes, Lithuania's number of films and series with audio descriptions is increasing.

Current situation:

- Film, Cinema

The Lithuanian film centre produces about five films from Lithuanian film classics with audio descriptions per year. These audio description videos are available in the Lithuanian Library for the Blind.

- Television

Twenty-five hours per year on national television. SDH is created once a week on private television. National television suggests ordinary subtitles, not SDH.

- Theatre

2-3 performances per year, initiated by the Lithuanian Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired).

- Museums/exhibitions

Only in larger cities.

3.3. AUDIO DESCRIPTION IN LATVIA

Regarding audio descriptions and subtitles dedicated to people with visual and hearing impairments, the current situation in Latvia has to be mentioned. When it comes to the cinema at the moment, the most commonly used practices are *subtitles and dubbing*. Subtitles are intended for people who do not understand the language(s) of the film - this format has been used for the last 30 years at cinema screenings in Latvia. Dubbing is mainly used for animated movies and younger audiences to minimise attention restriction and keep in mind that viewers aged 3-6 often cannot yet read.

At some screenings, and in particular festivals such as the Riga International Film Festival (RIGA IFF) and screenings such as Baltic Sea Docs, simultaneous *translation into Latvian takes place (headphones)*. Subtitles and simultaneous translation in headphones are practices that are most common in festivals, film retrospections and special screenings.

Meanwhile, *subtitles for the deaf and audio description (AD)* are still innovative practices for Latvian cinema and decision-makers in this field and culture. Although many streaming services (Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple TV, etc.) are available in Latvia, they offer audio-visual content with subtitles for the deaf and audio descriptions in English. The provider of public television in Latvia and its two TV channels offer subtitles for various content, both in television and archived. In addition, national television has expanded the use of sign language interpreting and provides this service for about 30% of the content for people with hearing impairments.

In 2022, RIGA IFF, which will take place from 13th to 23rd October, intends to become the first institutional and film event in Latvia to offer at least two Latvian film audio descriptions to a wider audience (partnership with Latvian television), as well as at least 20% of the screenings will be subtitled for the deaf. In addition, a public lecture will be organised on the accessibility of cinema, the introduction of ordinary language and work on the development of the audience.

3.4. AUDIO DESCRIPTION IN ROMANIA

Audio description used in Romanian theatre is limited to a few performances and was developed with the support and participation of the Cartea Călătoare Foundation. This foundation supports the social inclusion of visually impaired people by providing opportunities for education, information and employment to the community. The foundation cooperates primarily with the film industry but also develops theatre products. It is a successful experience that can evolve and have significant potential.

- The Romanian scene is gaining awareness, and artists are beginning to feel the need to share their creations with all kinds of audiences, moving away from strictly traditional forms. In this way, the Basca Theatre, founded in Timișoara, in cooperation with the Association Ceva de Spus, created an online performance with full accessibility for people with disabilities, broadcasted on the websites and Facebook pages of both organisations. The project is called "Teatr accesibil tuturor" ("Theatre accessible to all"), run by the Solidart Association and the Ceva de Spus Association, funded by "În stare de bine".
- "Fluturii sunt liberi", written by Leonard Gershe and directed by Ana Maria Ursu, features Simion Caragia, Jasmina Mitrici, Alina Ilea and Ioan Codrea. The accessibility of the performance was ensured by the narrative description, while the interpretation of the gestures was also presented for a live audience.
- Free online distribution aims to reach as many people as possible and make it, over time, a so-called "common practice" and not an isolated event for people with disabilities. Since then, this has served as an example for the theatre community and is currently in the process of development.

3.5. SUBTITLES IN CYPRUS

There are no programmes or studies in the field of audio description and subtitles for the deaf in private and public institutions. There are no coherent actions, but some good examples of what has been done in the past are worth mentioning.

Braille

On 4 January 2022, which was designated by a resolution of the General Assembly as Braille Day, the Pancyprian Organisation of the Blind announced that Cyprus is at the bottom of the list in terms of Braille education and recalls that the world community designated 4 January as Braille Day, providing a unique opportunity for experts and blind people themselves to inform society about the issues that

concern them and the great importance of producing works in Braille, ensuring equal opportunities for them to read and access knowledge.

Unfortunately, the promotion and dissemination of Braille among the blind and society, in general, is not among the priorities of the Cypriot State: Important documents that directly concern citizens with visual disabilities, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, are not available in Braille. In addition, as humanity struggles to protect its citizens from the global humanitarian crisis, our country has failed to make available to citizens with visual impairments important instructions and relevant information on the protection measures taken by the State. Blind people have also continued to be excluded from reading material in accessible formats in recent years.

As a result of the policies pursued by the relevant ministries and state agencies in these matters, the number of blind people trained in reading and writing braille over the last ten years can be counted on the fingers of one hand, while the number of braille users has fallen to a figure approaching 50%.

Cultural sites: Theatres and archaeological stations partially accessible to visually impaired people

Saint Barnabas School for the Blind, in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities, in 2103, launched a programme to make the archaeological sites of Cyprus accessible to people with visual disabilities.

It started with the "House of Dionysus" in the Paphos Archaeological Park, followed by the "House of Eustolium", with impressive mosaics, and the Ancient Theatre at Curium.

The implementation of the project included the following:

- examination of the site and existing markings,
- presentation of information for visitors,
- research and planning of necessary adaptations to make archaeological sites accessible,
- installation of bilingual signs in Braille,
- installation of relief drawings and maps, as well as 3D models of the site,
- construction of a model of a mosaic (a pattern from the floors of the house) with uneven colour surfaces so that the meaning and the specific representation of the mosaic can be understood by people with visual disabilities,
- printing information materials in Braille, large format,
- training of archaeological site staff to receive and accompany visitors with visual disabilities during their visit. In addition, guides have been trained to guide visitors with visual disabilities.

Since 2014, Saint Barnabas School for the Blind, in collaboration with the Cyprus Theatre Organisation, launched the "See us differently" programme, aiming to make theatre performances accessible to

trainees of the School for the Blind and people with visual disabilities in general. For each performance, the School for the Blind prepares a programme of the performance in Braille, enlarged or in electronic format, depending on the needs of each person, along with an additional analysis of the art and a description of the scenography. Participants can go through the set design and touch the objects and costumes in the show before participating in the performance. They also have the opportunity to talk to actors and directors about the plot and characters in the play. The number of students participating in the programme is increasing every year. Efforts are also being made to include an audio description in the programme, which was the original objective.

In 2018, a play directed by Athena Kasiou at THOC (Theatre Organisation of Cyprus) initiated Greek subtitles in the theatre, giving access to deaf theatre lovers. This is to provide access to deaf viewers who would like to attend Nina Raine's play, which explores the delicate issue of deafness and communication of the deaf in the community. The performance "Tribes", chosen by the artistic director of THOC Savvas Kyriakides, became a reason to stimulate and bring the theatre to a large group of deaf people living in Cyprus (about 2000). "Tribes" was staged with Greek subtitles, and after the performance, there was a discussion between the audience with the creators of the performance on the issues raised by the play and the creative process of its

In 2019, the deaf All in One theatre group prepared the performance "Silence in the Mirror". The performance has no words, no music, and only a few sounds. Deaf children presented the hearing audience with their own journey through time, in which they could experience their feelings, especially their silence. Silence, that they shared only with the mirror or window of their room. Invited spectators could open their eyes and hearts to read their hands and bodies. That alone is enough to send the message: "We are a minority in our communities, and we have no issues among ourselves."

4. SUMMARY

The twenty-first century has brought many technical solutions: audio description and subtitles for the deaf, allowing groups with dysfunctions to integrate into society fully, culture and art. People with disabilities should participate in the process of a permanent, stable project of their inclusion in cultural and social life.

However, there is still a lack of good tradition and legal solutions ensuring universal access to culture for people with disabilities. An obstacle to using cultural goods by the "excluded" in many countries is the poor organisation, poor technical and financial security of cultural institutions and, above all, poorly trained staff.

The project "Audio description and subtitles against exclusion" proposes solving the existing problem - permanent training courses for cultural employees. The above guide contains the principles that should be followed when creating audio descriptions and subtitles for the deaf.