

# MODULE 4: Designing Truly Inclusive Events

## Budgeting, Sensory Mapping & Risk Assessment

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# 1. Opening Scenario – "We Are Open to Everyone"

After improving environmental systems, Anna says: "**Our event is open to everyone.**" But when she looks closer:

## What Anna finds

- The venue has a step at the entrance
- The programme uses complex language
- No quiet area exists
- No sign language interpretation
- No reduced tickets
- Volunteers are not trained on disability awareness
- Emergency exits are not clearly marked for visually impaired attendees

No one intended exclusion. But **inclusion is not declared. It is designed.**

This module focuses on three operational pillars:

01

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## Accessibility budgeting

02

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## Sensory mapping

03

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## Inclusion risk assessment

## 2. Inclusion Is Infrastructure, Not Goodwill

Inclusion requires:

Financial allocation

Spatial planning

Communication design

Staff preparation

Risk anticipation

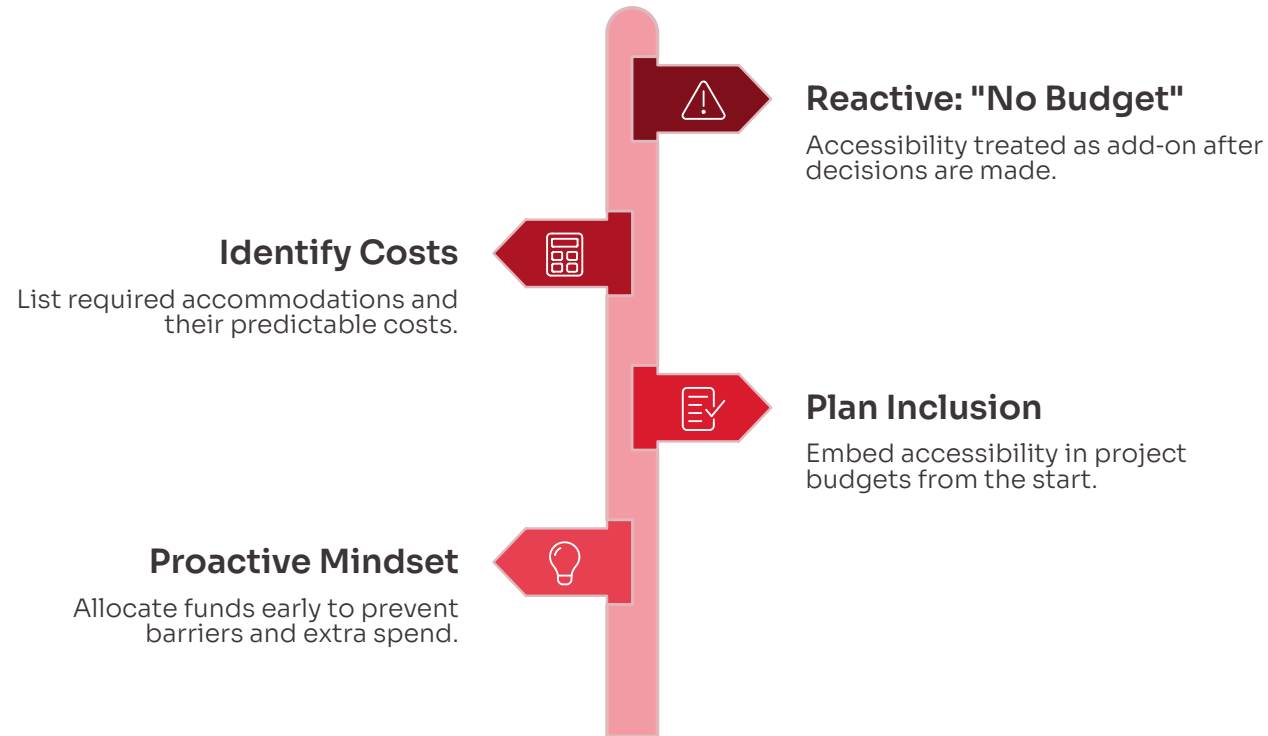
**Accessibility is not a favour. It is a structural right.**

The EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 promotes full participation in cultural life: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/disability-rights/strategy-rights-persons-disabilities-2021-2030\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/disability-rights/strategy-rights-persons-disabilities-2021-2030_en)

### € 3. Accessibility Budgeting – Making Inclusion Concrete

*"We would love to be more accessible, but we don't have the budget."*

Many organisers say this. **Let's break this down.**



The following steps show how to identify costs and reframe inclusion as a core design line rather than an afterthought.

# Step 1 – Identify Core Accessibility Costs

Examples of typical accessibility costs at events:

Accessibility Measure	Estimated Cost
Temporary ramp rental	€150–€400
Sign language interpreter (half day)	€250–€500
Captioning service	Variable
Quiet area setup (tent + signage)	€200–€600
Printed large-font programmes	Minimal increase
Volunteer training session	2–3 hours

## In context

In many small events, accessibility improvements represent **3–7% of total budget**.

In a **€28,000 event**, that could mean **€1,000–€1,800**.

The question becomes: **Is inclusion planned from the start, or added at the end?**

# Step 2 – Shift from Extra Cost to Design Line

## Instead of:

| *"Inclusion is an additional cost."*

## Reframe:

| **"Inclusion is a budget line."**

## Add in budget template:

**Accessibility & Inclusion Infrastructure = Fixed percentage (e.g., 5%)**

This reflects the principle of universal access promoted under the European Pillar of Social Rights.

European Pillar of Social Rights: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights_en)

## 4. Sensory Mapping – Designing for Invisible Needs

Not all accessibility is physical.

Many attendees experience:

Noise sensitivity

Light sensitivity

Social anxiety

Cognitive overload

A **sensory map** helps anticipate stress points.



# Step 1 – Map Your Space

Draw a simple map of your venue. Identify:



## High-noise zones

Areas near stages, speakers, or high-traffic corridors



## Bright light zones

Spotlights, direct sunlight, or flashing effects



## High-crowd density areas

Entrances, queues, and main stage areas



## Narrow passages

Bottlenecks that restrict movement or wheelchair access



## Emergency exits

Location and visibility for all attendees

## Step 2 – Identify Pressure Points

Ask the following questions when reviewing your sensory map:

→ Where might sound levels exceed comfort?

→ Where are queues forming?

→ Where is lighting intense or flashing?

→ Is there any quiet retreat space?

 Even a small "**low stimulation area**" can reduce exclusion significantly.

# Step 3 – Mitigation Measures

Examples of practical mitigation measures:

## **Designated quiet tent**

A clearly marked low-stimulation space away from main activity zones

## **Clear signage for sensory-friendly areas**

Visible, simple, and consistent wayfinding throughout the venue

## **Schedule breaks between performances**

Planned pauses to reduce continuous sensory load

## **Publish sensory information in advance**

Share what attendees can expect before they arrive

**Transparent communication reduces anxiety.**

# 5. Inclusion Risk Assessment

Just as environmental risks are assessed, **inclusion risks must be anticipated.**

Ask: **What could go wrong?**

## Physical access

Wheelchair access blocked by cable routing

## Communication

Interpreter not visible from seating area

## Emergency

Evacuation plan not inclusive

## Staff readiness

Volunteers unsure how to assist

## Digital access

Online ticket platform inaccessible

Even private cultural events should align with these principles.

The EU Web Accessibility Directive sets standards for digital access in public sector bodies: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/web-accessibility>

CASE STUDY

## 6. Mini Applied Case – The Quiet Area

### Anna receives feedback:

Two families left because children felt overwhelmed.

### She analyses:

- No shaded rest zone
- No noise buffer
- Continuous music programme

### She introduces:

- A 4x4m tent designated "Calm Space"
- Beanbags and soft lighting
- No amplified sound nearby
- Clear signage on map
- Volunteers informed

**Cost: €450**

### Result

- Families stay longer
- Positive feedback increases
- Volunteers feel more confident
- Inclusion increased without reducing artistic quality

# 7. Inclusion Impact Framework

To structure inclusion redesign, evaluate each area under three questions:

1

## Physical Access

Can people enter and move safely?

2

## Cognitive & Sensory Access

Can people process and tolerate the environment?

3

## Economic Access

Can people afford participation?

4

## Communication Access

Is information understandable and accessible?

5

## Safety & Emergency Inclusion

Can everyone evacuate or receive assistance?

☐ This multidimensional approach **prevents narrow definitions of accessibility.**

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

# 8. Guided Practical Exercise

1

## Step 1 – Budget Reflection

Identify one inclusion measure you could realistically fund next year.

2

## Step 2 – Sensory Mapping

Draw your venue and mark:

- Loud areas
- Crowded areas
- Escape/quiet potential zones

3

## Step 3 – Risk List

Write three potential inclusion failures that could realistically occur.

For each, write one preventive action.

# 9. From Reactive to Proactive Inclusion

## Reactive inclusion:

*"We will respond if someone asks."*

## Proactive inclusion:

**"We design anticipating needs."**

## Proactive design reduces:

- Conflict
- Stress
- Reputational risk
- Legal vulnerability

## It increases:

- Trust
- Community engagement
- Attendance diversity

CLOSING REFLECTION

# 10. Closing Reflection

Inclusion is not a moral statement.

Budget planning

Spatial design

Communication strategy

Risk management

Small design choices determine whether your event feels welcoming or overwhelming.

❑ In **Module 5**, we will address real-world constraints and resistance: budget pressure, team hesitation, and practical trade-offs.