

TRAINING COURSE ON SUSTAINABLE & INCLUSIVE CULTURAL EVENTS

# MODULE 5

## Managing Resistance and Driving Organisational Change

A structured training module for cultural event organisers, trainers, and project managers navigating sustainability and inclusion transitions.

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## 1. OPENING SCENARIO

# "This Is Too Much"

Anna presents her new sustainability and inclusion ideas to her team. The reactions she receives are immediate and varied:


**"We don't have time."**

**"This will complicate everything."**

**"Visitors don't care about this."**

**"We are volunteers, not climate experts."**

**"Accessibility is important, but we are too small."**

 No one is against sustainability. But everyone resists change.

This module focuses on:

# This Module Focuses On

01

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**Understanding resistance**

03

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**Embedding gradual change**

02

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**Reducing organisational friction**

04

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**Leading transformation without burnout**

## 2. WHY RESISTANCE HAPPENS

# Resistance Is Rarely Ideological

It usually comes from:

### Common Sources of Resistance

- Fear of increased workload
- Fear of financial instability
- Fear of failure
- Lack of clarity
- Change fatigue
- Habit

### Key Principle

**Change threatens stability.**

The European Commission emphasises stakeholder engagement in the transition to climate neutrality under the European Green Deal:

[https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

Transition requires participation — not imposition.

### 3. THE THREE TYPES OF RESISTANCE

# Understanding Resistance Helps Manage It



Each type requires a different management approach. The following slides examine each type in detail.

TYPE 1

# Practical Resistance

## Statements like:

- "We don't have budget."
- "We don't have staff."

This is often about **logistics, not values.**

## Solution

Break change into smaller steps.

TYPE 2

# Psychological Resistance

## Statements like:

- "We've always done it this way."
- "This isn't necessary."

This is about **identity and comfort**.

## Solution

Shift narrative from criticism to improvement.

TYPE 3

# Structural Resistance

## Statements like:

- "The venue doesn't allow it."
- "Suppliers won't change."
- "Municipality won't cooperate."

This requires **negotiation and leverage**.

## Solution

Change contracts and partnerships gradually.

#### 4. CHANGE PSYCHOLOGY IN SMALL ORGANISATIONS

# Small Cultural Events Often Depend On

Volunteers

Personal Relationships

Informal Decision-Making

Emotional Commitment

**This means: Change cannot be authoritarian. It must be participatory.**



5. THE 4-STEP PRACTICAL CHANGE FRAMEWORK

# A Structured Approach to Driving Change

1

## Start With Evidence, Not Accusation

Use data to reduce defensiveness.

2

## Define One Pilot Change

Do not redesign everything at once.

3

## Communicate the Why

Link actions to community benefit and EU alignment.

4

## Celebrate Small Wins

Recognition reduces future resistance.

STEP 1

# Start With Evidence, Not Accusation

Instead of:

~~"We are not sustainable."~~

Say:

"Our transport emissions represent our largest environmental impact."

**Why It Works**

Evidence reduces defensiveness.

Use data from **Module 2** and **Module 3**.

STEP 2

# Define One Pilot Change

Do not redesign everything. Select:

## One Environmental Improvement

Example: Introduce deposit cup system.

## One Inclusion Improvement

Example: Create one quiet area.

 **Visible success builds trust.**

STEP 3

# Communicate the Why

Link actions to:

**Community Benefit**

**Visitor Experience**

**Budget Efficiency**

**EU Policy Alignment**

For example: Erasmus+ emphasises environmental sustainability and inclusion as horizontal priorities:

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>

This shows alignment with European standards.

STEP 4

# Celebrate Small Wins

After implementation:



**Share results with team**



**Show financial comparison**



**Share positive feedback**



**Thank volunteers publicly**



**Recognition reduces future resistance.**

## 6. MINI APPLIED CASE STUDY

# Volunteer Resistance

## The Situation

Anna proposes inclusion training for volunteers.

**Response:** *"We already treat everyone equally."*

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## Instead of arguing, she:

- Organises a 90-minute practical session
- Simulates mobility barriers
- Uses role-play exercises
- Shares real feedback from families

## After Training

Volunteers feel more confident, not criticised.

Resistance decreases.

Training is reframed as **empowerment**.

## 7. AVOIDING BURNOUT

# Change Often Fails Due to Overload

## Warning Signs

- Too many new rules
- Excessive documentation
- Unrealistic deadlines
- Volunteer exhaustion

## Solution

Adopt **incremental transition**.

The EU Just Transition Mechanism highlights gradual transformation with social fairness:

[https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/finance-and-green-deal/just-transition-mechanism\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/finance-and-green-deal/just-transition-mechanism_en)

Even small events require "just transition" logic internally.

8. GUIDED PRACTICAL EXERCISE

# Applying the Framework to Your Context

1

## Step 1 – Identify Resistance

Write down one real resistance you expect from: Team, Volunteers, Suppliers, or Municipality.

2

## Step 2 – Categorise It

Is it **Practical**, **Psychological**, or **Structural**?

3

## Step 3 – Design One Micro-Response

Define one small step that reduces fear without increasing overload.

4

## Step 4 – Define a Pilot

Choose one realistic change to implement next year.

# When Sustainability Fails — and When It Succeeds

## Sustainability Fails When It Is:

**Imposed**

**Cosmetic**

**Driven by one person only**

## Sustainability Succeeds When It Becomes:

- Part of team identity
- Embedded in procedures
- Shared responsibility

📌 Organisational culture changes slowly. But it changes through **consistency**.

10. CLOSING REFLECTION

# The Real Organisational Challenge

Sustainability and inclusion are not technical challenges only. They are **organisational challenges**.

**The question is not:**

"Can we afford this?"

**But rather:**

"Can we evolve without losing our team?"

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In **Module 6**, we will transform diagnosis and redesign into a structured **Action Plan** with measurable goals.