

1. General – distance learning for adults with special needs

Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, all partner organizations were obliged to turn face-to-face learning to distance learning, which was especially challenging for vulnerable adults. Specifically, educators started using distance learning methods with people with special needs as they needed support and motivation in order to engage in daily life activities, strengthen their self-esteem, expand their social network, and develop their personal growth.

2. Characteristics and barriers of the target group

In the target group of adults with special needs, there are people with physical, behavioural, and/or developmental health problems. Specifically, their characteristics include: fear of incapacity, poor concentration / inability to focus on a task / can get easily distracted, low self-esteem, and social exclusion. In some cases, the participants may have difficulties in preparing assignments, keeping appointments, and in reading comprehension.

Barriers: Some of them have low level of digital skills, low knowledge of a foreign language, and limited access to ICT tools

3. Motivating the target group to participate in distance learning activities

In order to motivate and interest the target group in participating in distance learning activities, it was important to create an environment in which they felt safe and accepted. Various approaches were applied:

Participation in activities in groups with familiar people (acquaintances / friends) - sharing experiences since the pandemic started

Unlimited number of participants (group mixing)

Contact with a wider network of people (support from family members)

Using familiar to them platforms (e.g. telephone contact / Facebook messenger)

Teaching computer/digital skills and/or assisting them with new to them platforms (e.g. Zoom conferences).

All these helped them realize that “it’s not impossible to learn through distance”, which in turn motivated them.

4. Methods of distance learning for target groups

Name of the workshop	Flash card method for teaching English as a second language
Method	GAMIFICATION
Purpose/goals	This method gives participants the opportunity to engage in a conversation with short questions and answers and to strengthen their memory and concentration.
Short description	The trainer shows flash cards to the learners with a visual and verbal representation, in order for them to learn new vocabulary, and they have to memorize each word.
Online tools	Zoom platform
Didactic accessories	Flash Cards
Recommended number of participants	2 – 6
Duration	60 mins
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>STEP 1: The trainer shows a card to the learner with a visual and verbal representation on the card (e.g. when teaching the weather, present a flash card with a picture of the sun and below have the word “sunny” presented).</p> <p>STEP 2: Then the verbal representation is hidden and the learner has to say the word. The learners try to recall the solution written on a flashcard. (The association of the picture with the word is more easily learned by the students).</p> <p>STEP 3: If the students are at a more advanced level, the trainer can ask questions related to the images being taught (e.g. What is the weather like today? / What do we wear when it is sunny ...?)</p>
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	-Extra training on how to use Zoom platform may be required (not as commonly used as Facebook messenger).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.-Adults with special needs can get easily distracted – choose colorful flash cards, change the tone of your voice to keep their attention, and take short breaks whenever necessary. The flash cards should be prepared in advance.-At the end of the training the trainer could ask the participants what vocabulary they are interested in learning for next time.
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Name of the workshop	Web screen sharing – Find the differences
Method	GAMIFICATION
Purpose/goals	To strengthen memory and concentration
Short description	<p>The consultant uses the method of gamification via Zoom, where they share the screen of the website, and present two photos with minimal differences - the participant has to find and mark these differences by clicking on the screen (the website provides immediate feedback).</p> <p>Another online memory game is one in which participants are able to turn the e-card over by clicking and actively participate in the game (time limit for solving and thus trying to achieve the best possible result). Once the participants feel accepted and safe in individual forms of work, they can be grouped into smaller groups.</p>
Online tools	Zoom platform
Didactic accessories	-
Recommended number of participants	2 – 6
Duration	60 mins
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>STEP 1: Prepare for the game in advance by finding the 2 images with minimal differences from the website before the training – make sure the level of difficulty suits the abilities of the adults with special needs.</p> <p>STEP 2: Guide the participant if they have difficulty finding the differences by placing the mouse over one of the images (without clicking on it) so they know where to look.</p> <p>STEP 3: Although the website provides immediate feedback, you can also praise the participant for every correct answer.</p>

Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Extra training on how to use Zoom platform may be required (not as commonly used as Facebook messenger).-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.-Adults with special needs can get easily distracted, so choose colorful images, change the tone of your voice to keep their attention, and take short breaks whenever necessary.
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Name of the workshop	Role playing (interview)
Method	GAMIFICATION
Purpose/goals	Teaching persons with disabilities professional skills for their inclusion in the labour market.
Short description	<p>The trainer takes on the role of the interviewer while the student takes on the role of the job seeker, and they engage in a conversation of questions and answers.</p> <p>The online meeting is set to take place on a specific time and day, like in a real interview.</p> <p>Then, feedback is given to the student on their performance during the interview.</p>
Online tools	Zoom platform / Skype
Didactic accessories	Cards with interview questions (e.g. What are your strengths and weaknesses?)
Recommended number of participants	One on one
Duration	60 – 90 mins
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>STEP 1: The trainer decides on a job position suited for the participant and discusses they with the participant the roles that they will both take on in advance.</p> <p>STEP 2: The trainer gives the participant a day time of when the interview will take place (practice interview a few times before)</p> <p>STEP 3: Interview questions are prepared in advance.</p> <p>STEP 4: After the interview, the trainer provides feedback to the participant on what to pay attention to for next time / how to answer specific questions / standard phrases they could use.</p>
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.-Not all adults with special needs have clear speech. Make sure to tell them to speak slowly and clearly, especially on an online interview where there could be other noise distractions.
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Name of the workshop	Getting to know each other / Ice-breakers at introductory e-meetings
Method	STORYTELLING
Purpose/goals	It helps the participants to relax and get to know each other better at the same time.
Short description	Participants draw themselves on a piece of paper and write their positive trait on the initial of their name. They then guess the positive qualities of the other participants, and when they guess them, each participant has to give an example of why they described themselves with a certain adjective.
Online tools	Zoom / MS Teams / Messenger / Skype
Didactic accessories	Paper and pen/pencil
Recommended number of participants	2 – 8
Duration	30 mins
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>STEP 1: Present the task practically to the participant: Give an example by presenting the initial of your own name and a corresponding adjective.</p> <p>STEP 2: Give possible descriptive adjectives to the participants in advance so they have more ideas (you can share a board on the screen and type some examples).</p> <p>STEP 3: Give them a few minutes to draw and think about their task.</p> <p>STEP 4: Then call out the name of each participant when it's their turn to present. Remind them not to interrupt when others are speaking.</p>
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<p>-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).</p> <p>-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.</p> <p>-Make sure the participants have a paper and pen/pencil in front them before the activity begins.</p>
Name of the workshop	Story of my name

Method	STORYTELLING
Purpose/goals	It is often used as ice-breaker or introductory activity or to explore themes from literature.
Short description	The learners share the meaning or story behind their first, middle, last/surname or a nickname. This strategy requires active listening skills and verbal communication.
Online tools	zoom / ms teams / messenger / skype / viber
Didactic accessories	-
Recommended number of participants	2 – 8
Duration	20 – 30 mins
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>STEP 1: Begin the task by sharing the story of your name first.</p> <p>STEP 2: Give participants a few minutes to think about their task.</p> <p>STEP 3: Call out the name of each participant when it's their turn to present. Remind them not to interrupt when others are speaking. If they have difficulty coming up with something, ask them questions to get them started (e.g. do you like your name? / Were you named after your grandfather? / Why do you think people call you...?)</p>
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<p>-Extra training on how to use online platforms may be required.</p> <p>-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).</p> <p>-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.</p>

Name of the workshop	Written narrative with sequence cards
Method	STORYTELLING
Purpose/goals	Enhance vocabulary / communication, creativity / imagination, and group work.
Short description	The participants create their own story based on a sequence of images given by the trainer. The story they create must have a beginning, middle, and ending.
Online tools	Zoom / MS Teams
Didactic accessories	Sequence Cards / Images
Recommended number of participants	2 – 8
Duration	60 – 90 mins
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>STEP 1: The trainer displays a sequence of pictures (cards) on the screen.</p> <p>STEP 2: Participants are divided into small groups. All the groups get the same task: for this material, create a story (name the characters / describe what they are doing / describe their feelings from beginning to end).</p> <p>STEP 3: Each participant in the chat writes one or more sentences in a certain order. The trainer has access to all three groups and then announces all the final stories.</p> <p>STEP 4: The trainer asks if everyone agrees and what they want to add. In conclusion, they conduct a general discussion, share their thoughts and make suggestions.</p>
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<p>-Extra training on how to use online platforms may be required.</p> <p>-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.-Adults with special needs can get easily distracted – choose colorful flash cards, change the tone of your voice to keep their attention, and take short breaks whenever necessary. The flash cards should be prepared in advance.-Teaching narrative techniques in advance may also be useful here (e.g. the use of chronological order, past tenses, reported speech, etc).
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Name of the workshop	Brainstorming
Method	PERSON CENTERED APPROACH
Purpose/goals	The objective is to take into account the person's wishes, preferences and desired outcomes, to promote their wellbeing, and to identify, together with the person and their family, how to best use care and support them to achieve their desired outcomes.
Short description	Plan and brainstorm WITH the individual everything that is related with their education. Focus on the abilities and skills of the individual and create an educational plan, don't focus on the labels, statistics and diagnosis.
Online tools	This can be done through the website Mind Meister https://www.mindmeister.com/ , and the discussion via online platforms that offer screen sharing (e.g. Zoom).
Didactic accessories	-
Recommended number of participants	One on one
Duration	Up to 1,5 hours
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>Step 1: Prepare the Participant: Set up a comfortable meeting environment for the session.</p> <p>Step 2: Give the person plenty of quiet time at the start of the session to write down as many of their own ideas as they can. Then, ask them to share their ideas.</p> <p>Step 3: Guide the Discussion: As the facilitator, you should share ideas if you have them, but spend your time and energy supporting your student and guiding the discussion. Stick to one issue at a time, and refocus the student if they become sidetracked. Although you're guiding the discussion, remember to let them have fun while brainstorming. Welcome creativity, and encourage them to come up with as</p>

	<p>many ideas as possible, regardless of whether they're practical or impractical. If the brainstorming session is lengthy, take plenty of breaks so that people can continue to concentrate.</p> <p>Step 4: Take action and write down the educational plan.</p>
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<p>-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).</p> <p>-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.</p> <p>-If the “mind meister” website seems too complicated for your participant, you could share the screen and draw an example of how to brainstorm their ideas.</p>

Name of the workshop	Proctor Model
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Method	PEER TO PEER APPROACH
Purpose/goals	It promotes discussion between the learners. The direct interaction between students promotes active learning and active participation.
Short description	It involves senior students tutoring junior students. The senior student could be an older student from a higher grade or a more skilled student.
Online tools	Zoom, MS Teams, or Skype
Didactic accessories	Images (in our example, images that show different emotions)
Recommended number of participants	3 (senior student, junior student, coordinator)
Duration	Up to 1 hour (depending on number of tasks and peers' abilities)
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>1) The coordinator shows various images on the screen (e.g. for emotion recognition). The person with fewer skills can participate in a memory exercise of trying to find the same photo, or just of trying to recognise the emotion.</p> <p>2) The person with more skills acts as a supporter/mentor for the person with fewer skills, and helps him/her only when he/she has difficulty responding to the task. In this example, the person with fewer skills can imitate the emotion using facial expression so the other student can guess it more easily.</p> <p>3) The coordinator gives any necessary feedback to the participants.</p>
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<p>-Extra training on how to use the online platforms may be required.</p> <p>-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).</p> <p>-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.</p>

	<p>-Adults with special needs can get easily distracted – choose colorful images, change the tone of your voice to keep their attention, and take short breaks whenever necessary. The images should be prepared in advance.</p>
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Name of the workshop	Dance / Cooking workshop
Method	EXPLANATION, DEMONSTRATION, PRACTICAL WORK
Purpose/goals	Enhance communication, listening and observation skills. Participants learn to put into practice what they see and hear, while also improving their physical health.
Short description	This method could be divided into a series of online sessions. The first sessions involve preparation and then engaging in a conversation on various topics. The next sessions involve the observation and demonstration of the workshops (in this case dance and/or cooking), and in the final sessions the participants are able to engage in practical work.
Online tools	Zoom / MS Teams
Didactic accessories	-
Recommended number of participants	10 max.
Duration	1 hour (demonstration once a week)
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>STEP 1: EXPLANATION / CONVERSATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before the meeting, participants search for information from their families, web, books, etc. • Each participant prepares for the topic. • Search for current information from the web and simplify it. • Participants express their concerns (regarding covid-19) and discussion takes place on taboo, personal or private topics. <p>STEP 2: DEMONSTRATION / OBSERVATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dance creative workshops on distance • Prepare for the workshop in advance because it is harder to be “spontaneous”. Framework, an idea, or theme needed • Sometimes the group is very creative and the participants are able to drift to the dance flow.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create many dance assignments for the adults with special needs. <p>STEP 3: PRACTICAL WORK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity required: Show the exercises to the participants (e.g. Cooking skills) • Certain participants can have help by family and some of them with a visit of mentor and live demonstration of how to connect to the distance workshop.
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<p>-Extra training on how to use the online platforms may be required.</p> <p>-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).</p> <p>-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.</p> <p>-For each step, whether it concerns explaining, demonstrating or practical work, the trainer must be prepared in advance. Find songs / tasks that are easy for adults with special needs to follow.</p>

Name of the workshop	Creative art workshop
Method	CREATIVE WORK
Purpose/goals	Enhance creativity and feel better through art.
Short description	Workshop of creative art for persons (21+) with intellectual disabilities over their own or parent's Facebook profile. It regards art therapy – participants draw what bothers them. It is followed by discussion / feedback.
Online tools	Facebook Messenger
Didactic accessories	Paper and pen/pencil
Recommended number of participants	5 – 6
Duration	30 – 60 mins
Step-by-step instructions for the workshop	<p>STEP 1: Present the task practically to the participant: Give an example by presenting what bothers you, and draw the emotion out on the screen.</p> <p>STEP 2: Then give examples of feelings and ways to draw them out.</p> <p>STEP 3: Give the participants a few minutes to draw and think about their task.</p> <p>STEP 4: Then call out the name of each participant when it's their turn to present. Remind them not to interrupt when others are speaking.</p> <p>STEP 5: Discuss and give feedback.</p>
Adjustments to distance learning: what we need to pay attention to, possible obstacles...	<p>-Internet connection may be weak (we must encourage participants to sit near their wifi device to get better signal).</p> <p>-Make sure both you and the participants have their devices charged or plugged in to avoid shut downs during the training.</p> <p>-Make sure the participants have a paper and pen/pencil in front them before the activity begins.</p>