

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

Accessibility budgeting

02

Sensory mapping

03

Inclusion risk assessment

2. Inclusion Is Infrastructure, Not Goodwill

Inclusion requires:

Financial allocation

Spatial planning

Communication design

Staff preparation

Risk anticipation

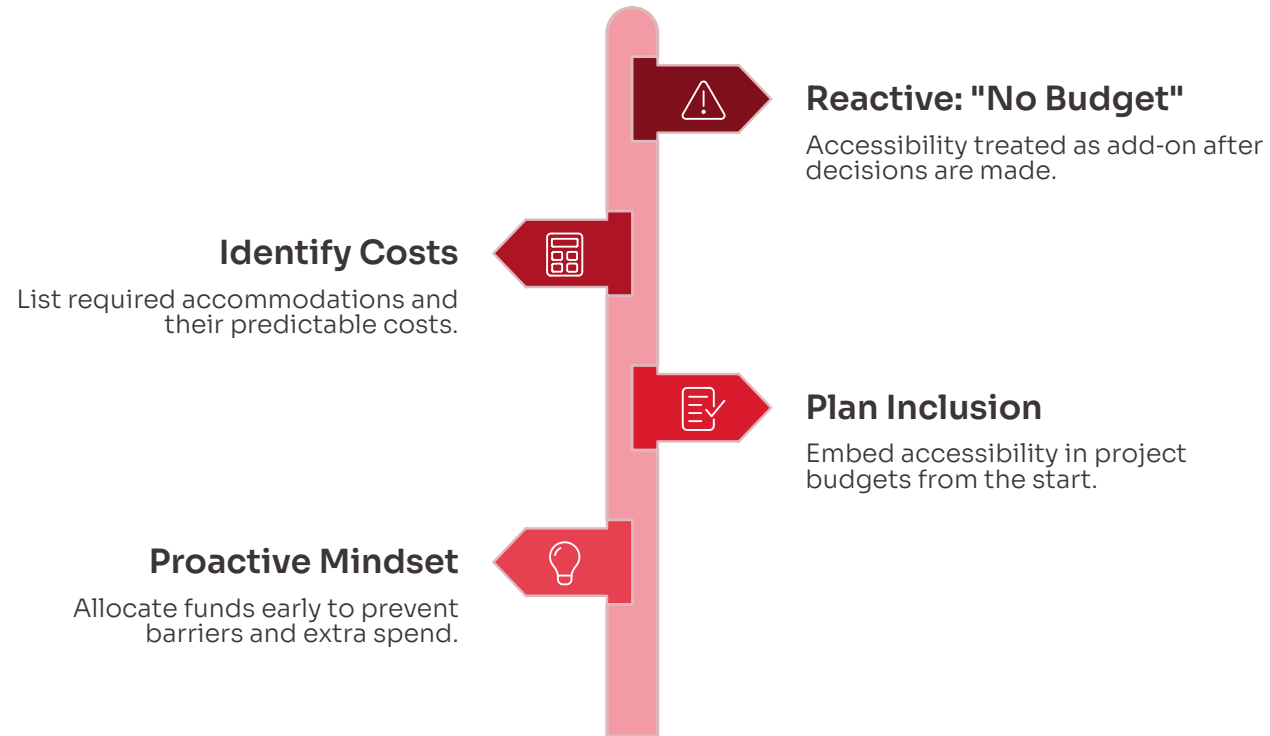
Accessibility is not a favour. It is a structural right.

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

€ 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

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.