



Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato
della provincia di Vicenza

Innovazione Rete Territorio
La nostra idea per il terzo settore
Innovation Network Territory
Our idea for the third area



VOLUNTEERS, ENTERPRISES AND THE FUTURE OF INCLUSION

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

MIND INCLUSION 3.0: MULTIPLIER EVENT & WORKING GROUPS
A EUROPEAN EVENT TO BUILD MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES
VENICE, 7 JULY 2025



by Elisabetta Tonini
Autism Friendly Trainer

MY CONTRIBUTION

1 Volunteering

2 The world of enterprises and institutions

3 The future of inclusion

TRAINING PATH

MAY 2023

Training programme dedicated to the involvement of people with cognitive disabilities and autism spectrum conditions.

*Vicenza Volunteering Services Centre
VERA project (Volunteering, Equality, Rights, Accessibility)
CEV – European Volunteer Centre*

A UNIQUE RESPONSIBILITY

The world of volunteering has a unique responsibility.
It is a **space for encounters**, the exercise of citizenship,
mutual growth, and offers a real
opportunity for relationships, not just service.

THE KEY MESSAGE

People with disabilities are not just recipients of help, but
can be protagonists and active
resources if adequately welcomed, trained and supported.

They are partners for change:
from people in need to people who help
others.

TRAINING PATH OBJECTIVES

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- **Provide concrete operational tools** to involve volunteers with cognitive disabilities in their organisations.
- **Promote a shift in perspective:** from “a fragile person to support” to “a person capable of contributing and helping others in turn”.

FROM STATED TO GENUINE INCLUSION

*“It’s not enough to say ‘we want to include’.
You need to know how to do it.”*

Inclusion cannot be improvised.

It is not a symbolic gesture, but a path that **requires awareness, tools and responsibility.**

FROM STATED TO GENUINE INCLUSION

Helping a person with a disability become a volunteer means first and foremost to get to know them, understand their strengths, and create contexts where they can truly contribute.

Only in this way does inclusion become
real, authentic and transformative.

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- **Insert the topic into the training plans** of volunteers and into the strategic agendas of third sector entities.

VOLUNTEERING

THE DIGNITY OF BEING USEFUL

“Feeling useful is a universal need.”
quote

INCLUSION OF ALL AMONG ALL

“Volunteering is where we learn that we are all vulnerable and all needed.”

by Luigino Bruni

VOLUNTEERING

FROM INCLUSION IN VOLUNTEERING TO INCLUSION IN BUSINESS

To include, you need to train.

IN VICENZA AND AT REGIONAL LEVEL

We delivered training to:

- Commercial and tourism businesses (e.g., shops, hotels, restaurants)
- Public and private entities
- Professionals: architects, engineers, surveyors
- Municipal technical staff

Promoted by:

Veneto Region, CSV Vicenza, ULSS 8, Municipality of Vicenza, Coldiretti Vicenza...

WHY INVOLVE BUSINESSES

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But if people with disabilities do not go out, they are not encountered and are not visible.

If not encountered, they are not recognised.

If not recognised, they cannot be involved in work, cooperation or other collaborative projects.

WHY INVOLVE BUSINESSES

Involving the productive world means **opening new scenarios for the future of inclusion.**

Businesses can be not only suppliers of goods and services, but **places of relationships, experience and work.**

MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS FOSTER TRUE RECOGNITION AND INCLUSION

Only if a person with a disability **is visible as a customer**,
can he also become visible as

CITIZEN

VOLUNTARY

WORKER

FROM RELATIONSHIP TO EMPLOYMENT

In the future it will be easier to hire a person who you know today,
who works in your store, and frequents your spaces.

Relationships come before job inclusion.

THE WORLD OF ENTERPRISES AND INSTITUTIONS

INCLUSION AS A HUMAN SKILL

Inclusion requires **planning,**
training and ongoing support.

AN INCLUSIVE ENTERPRISE....

...is not simply one that “welcomes”, but **one that rethinks its processes, spaces, languages and relationships to make them accessible to all, including people with cognitive disabilities.**

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

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*It's no longer just about "doing something for others",
but to evolve with others, together.*

INCLUSION AS A CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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- Creating truly **accessible environments**
- Recognizing the **uniqueness of each person**
- Facilitating **active and sustained participation**

INCLUSION AS A CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In a time of great transitions – environmental, technological, demographic – the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility goes beyond philanthropy or the publication of sustainability and ESG reports:

it requires an active and structural commitment to building inclusive communities.

INNOVATION, STARTUPS AND INCLUSION: A POSSIBLE ALLIANCE

The **most innovative companies** today are not only those technologically advanced, but those capable of **generating positive social impact**.

EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE STARTUPS

- **Apps** developed to **facilitate augmentative communication** for non-verbal people

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- **Accessible and neuroinclusive coworking** spaces that rethink the design of the environment based on sensory needs

STARTUPS AND INCLUSION



Innovation is not just technological efficiency: it is the ability to provide new answers to profound and long-ignored needs.

CONCLUSION: INCLUSION IN THE AGE OF AI



Artificial intelligence today accelerates responses, optimizes processes and opens up new possibilities.

*But it is human intelligence that continues to **ask the right questions, imagine visions, design authentic relationships** and accompany change towards paths of meaning.*

cit. adapted from Sherry Turkle

THE FUTURE OF INCLUSION: CO-DESIGN AND NETWORKS

Inclusion *is not a service*

but a **pact between everyone:**
Institutions, businesses, volunteers, the third
sector in general and families.

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL SOURCES AND PROJECTS

- *Mind Inclusion 3.0 – Erasmus+ Project*
- *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*
- *European Pillar of Social Rights*
- *European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030*
- *Progetto V.E.R.A. – Volunteering, Equality, Rights, Accessibility*
- *TEAM IV Project – Erasmus+*
- *European Accessibility Act (2019/882)*
- *EU CSR Guidance – EC*
- *Agenda 2030 – UN; EU Skills Agenda & NextGenerationEU – EC*

THANK YOU!



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