



# **T-GUIDE Tourist Guides for People with Intellectual Disabilities and/or Learning Difficulties in Europe**

**527776-LLP-1-2012-1-IT-LEONARDO-LMP**

## **Pilot Training Manual for Tourist Guides**



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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of the “T-GUIDE” project is to support tourist guides to provide their services to people with intellectual disabilities and/ or learning difficulties. The target group of the project is the tourist guides, who are offered an opportunity for developing new work competences and job profiles. The final beneficiaries of the project, however, are people with intellectual disabilities and/ or learning difficulties, whose special needs have to be considered when delivering safe, comfortable and enjoyable tourism experiences.

The present pilot training manual was compiled after expert individuals and focus groups were interviewed and consulted in various European countries and is also based on the results report of the “T-GUIDE” online surveys conducted for the purpose of this project. The training manual provides practical guidelines on how to prepare for and how to deliver guided tours for clients with intellectual disabilities and/or learning difficulties. It contains guidelines for the necessary methodology, training methods and modules.

The target group are professional tourist guides who have a basic knowledge of guiding techniques and skills, ie. they know how to present and communicate, they have basic didactical and rhetorical skills, as well as verbal and non-verbal communication techniques. They know how to handle groups and are aware of group dynamics and conflict management.

The manual was compiled on the assumption that locally trained (area-specific) tourist guides are guiding clients from the same area, and that both the guide and the clients are speaking the same language.

Of course, groups of people with intellectual disabilities and/or learning difficulties can also travel abroad together with their trained escorts/ carers. In this case, a further dimension has to be added – how to communicate efficiently in a foreign language and how to handle the problems of intercultural communication. Generally speaking, professional qualified tourist guides, who are the target group of this manual, are well-equipped to deal with these difficulties.

## Unit 1

### Preparation: What to do before the guided tour

#### 1.1. Contact prospective clients and offer your services

In most European countries, tourist guides are “one person enterprises”. It is up to the individual to establish successful customer relations with potential clients. The following checklist can help you to establish and maintain contact with organisations or individuals who are interested in the specialised services of a tourist guide for people with intellectual disabilities and/ or learning difficulties.

► Conduct research (online, using platforms/ websites on Accessible Tourism, social media expert groups) and identify public or privately run organisations, institutions (kindergardens, schools, etc.) that care and/or train persons who will be the final beneficiaries of the project, both children or adults.

► Establish contact with these carers & organisations (preferably in writing), explaining your role, your qualifications and the purpose of establishing contact.

► If clients agree, build a working relationship, follow rules of professional conduct, reach a mutual agreement on each other’s terms and conditions.

#### 1.2. Preparing for Guiding the Intellectually Challenged

It is a core competence of tourist guides to always adapt to the individual needs of clients. When working for guests with intellectual disabilities/ learning difficulties it is of essential importance to conduct detailed research in preparation for the actual service.

### 1.2.1. Acquire theoretical knowledge of different types of intellectual disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

For anyone aspiring to work with intellectually challenged clients it is necessary to acquire a basic knowledge of the different kinds of disabilities:

- Intellectual disabilities/ learning disorders (eg, autistic people, people with trisomy 21)
- Psychiatric disabilities (eg. schizophrenic people)
- Combined intellectual/ physical disabilities (issue of accessibility)
- Older people who may have reduced intellectual and cognitive abilities, combined perhaps with physical impairments
- Psychiatric disabilities (e.g. people with schizophrenia)

Find below some suggestions how to acquire this basic knowledge. When conducting this research, it will also be relevant to learn about the different instruments of communication in relation to different types of disabilities, as well as to research learning techniques in relation to the target groups.

- ▶ Studying the basic information from relevant books or online
- ▶ Visiting institutions/organisations that care and/or train persons with intellectual disabilities and/or learning difficulties and silently observe their behaviour
- ▶ Talking to carers who are specially trained or they are relatives of the persons with intellectual disabilities and/or learning difficulties
- ▶ Attending expert lectures/seminars/courses on the subject
- ▶ Benefiting from the experience of other tourist guides, who have already been guiding special groups of clients, by accompanying their guided groups and observing them, as well as with feedback sessions after the tour
- ▶ Completing a brief internship/practice period at a social cooperative/organisation caring for people with intellectual disabilities

In fact, these organisations can be prospective clients and if they are interested in a long-term professional relationship, they are probably willing to invest some time in improve the expertise of the tourist guide in this essential field.

### 1.2.2. Complete a First Aid Course

This training module is included in the European Standard EN15565:2008 for the minimum training of tourist guides in Europe and is often included in the tourist guides training or life-long learning on a national basis.

A tourist guide should know the basics on first aid in order to be helpful to the carer of a group, in case of emergency.

### 1.2.3. Carry out logistical/ organisational preparations

Before each tour it is necessary to go through the following “checklist” and find out about the special needs of the clients.

In order to answer the following checklist questions, it will be necessary to establish and maintain close contact to the organisers and/ or the carers

who will accompany the group. Indeed, a successful tour is always the result of good team-work between the professional tourist guide and the carers who know the group members well and accompany them on the guided visit/walk/bus excursion.

- What kind of intellectual disabilities do people in the group have?
- Are there people with physical disabilities as well (eg wheelchair users, people with visual or hearing impairments)?
- How many people are in the group?
- What age/s are they?
- How many carers accompany the group?
- Duration of the tour?
- Are there any breaks planned during the tour?
- What prior experiences of guided tours/ museum visits does the group have? Are they used to these experiences or is it something new for them?
- Which communication techniques should be used (eg. using materials that can be touched, smelled)

- What level of language/ range of vocabulary can be used?
- What level of learning do they have (e.g. are they able to read)?
- What is the attention span?
- What expectations do they have from the guided visit to be done?
- Is there a certain “learning outcome” that the group expects?

In advance, contact the site that will be visited (e.g. museum, site, park):

- Find out about accessibility (parking, lifts, ramps, pedestrian ways, traffic situation), location of toilets, special rules that may apply (photography, eating/ drinking), opening days and times, special appointments for group visits
- Find out if a special permit can be obtained to touch certain objects (with or without extra gloves)
- Find out about the light and sound situation (rooms that are very dark or too small or where there is a high level of noise can be frightening for intellectually challenged people)

#### **1.2.4. Create suitable itineraries and prepare additional materials for the tour**

Taking into account the answers obtained from the “checklist” in section 1.2.3., adapt the itinerary to the needs of the group and make the necessary organisational arrangements to ensure a smooth and positive experience without unexpected interruptions.

Generally speaking, special tours for intellectually challenged guests should not take much longer than 1 hour.

The group should not be too large. A maximum number of 12 people is a generally accepted guideline, according to the experts interviewed during “T-GUIDE” project for WP4.

There have to be trained escorts/ carers with the group who will also accompany the group during the tour and assist the tourist guide and group at any time, if needed.

#### **1.2.5. Prepare for possible difficulties or disruptions during the tour**



Carers who know the group members will be able to tell you before the tour starts what can be expected to happen during the tour:

Some group members might want to stay very close to the guide, touching him/her; other group members perhaps seem to show no reactions at all, others make (loud) noises, get restless or run around. They might ask questions that the guide does not consider appropriate (e.g. too personal).

It is up to the carers to decide if any form of intervention is required and what form it should take (what may appear to the guide as “unusual” behaviour, may actually be completely normal to the guest guided).

The tourist guide has to be mentally prepared for disruptions and has to stay open-minded, calm, patient and friendly throughout the tour. Only by being self-confident the guide can inspire a feeling of trust and security in the group.

Continually “scanning” the group during the tour can help detect signs of stress, nervousness or boredom. The guide can then decide what to do-

Prepare different scenarios/ options of what can be done during the tour, then remain flexible, when delivering the tour and adapt to circumstances.

Ask for the carers’ assistance, when facing difficult reactions you cannot handle.



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## Unit 2

### Guiding: What to do during the guided tour

Having realised the importance of background knowledge and the relevance of preparing materials and different presentational modes in order to meet immediate needs of the target group, as emphasized in Unit 1 of this training manual, the tourist guide will meet the clients well prepared. However, there are still many important issues to be dealt with.

#### 2.1. When meeting the group:

Meet your clients with a smile, greeting all participants individually, calling them by name. As a reminder, use sticker tags with their names written on them. Shake hands (if carers encourage you to do so).

Friendliness, patience and tolerance create an atmosphere of well-being and comfort that will help the participants to relax and to trust you.

Remember, you never have a second chance to make a good first impression!

Be easy to talk to, approachable, and show empathy, throughout the tour

It may be helpful to outline briefly what you are going to do during the tour, and how long it is going to take. (In particular, this is helpful for autistic customers).

Give all practical information ahead (e.g. location, toilets, photography/video rules, touching objects, food/water, meeting point and time at the end of the tour, museum/site shop). You may need to repeat some during and by the end of the tour.

## 2.2. During the guided tour:

Select suitable techniques of communication for the group.

In close cooperation with the carers, try to find the best way of communicating with the clients and to keep the attention of the audience, having in mind the following guidelines:

- ▶ Talk slowly, loudly and with clear articulation, especially when guiding in a language other than your and/or the group's mother tongue.
- ▶ It is always advisable, when guiding any kind of group, to keep comments short and to use clear and easy language with simple words and short sentences. But be careful not to treat adults and adolescents like children.
- ▶ Use body language to signal self-confidence: face your group, using a well-balanced stance, with your weight resting on both legs and with your arms slightly bent, leaving them free for gestures, if necessary.
- ▶ Adopt an inter-active approach, asking questions and involving participants in conversations instead of long monologues. Make sure that guests understand what you are talking about. Guest should be encouraged to talk and express their opinions.
- ▶ Keep in mind that the visual impact will usually be the strongest impression, although this may vary with different kinds of disabilities.
- ▶ In most cases it will be beneficial to prepare additional tools/ materials that will help you communicate (e.g. objects that can be touched, smelled; enlarged pictures and representations; texts in larger print that can be read more easily than small-print labels)
- ▶ Use story-telling techniques and role-playing to make your presentation more lively.
- ▶ If possible, try to actively involve the group by giving them the possibility to try out things themselves.

- ▶ Relate the content to the experiences of the group by using examples, expressions, images that remind the group of familiar things, like films, comics, video games, objects, models, reconstructions, as much as possible connected to their everyday life. The tourist guide should not lecture on abstract ideas or themes.
  
- ▶ The tourist guide should try to communicate with each member of the target group separately, interact to keep them interested. Find out what people are mostly interested in and adapt the guided tour to their interests and pace. Make sure they receive the basic message/s.
  
- ▶ Always keep in mind that the general time frame is observed and that the group may easily get tired or may have overriding needs that have to be considered (time for toilet break or lunch break). Do not hurry, but do not take too long either. Time management is crucial for the guided tour.
  
- ▶ Be diplomatic and relaxed, when handling personal questions, physical touch, gestures or even impolite comments.
  
- ▶ Make sure to actively observe your group throughout the tour: establish eye contact with each individual participant, in order to establish rapport. This can also help you to detect signs of stress or restlessness and to interpret the – positive and negative - body language.
  
- ▶ Continuously analyse the situation during the tour and be flexible to react: If necessary, switch to different modes of presentation/ communication, change the topic, move on to the next part of the tour.
  
- ▶ Avoid visiting places with much noise, too small or dark rooms, too high above the ground or showing stress-creating photos/videos. When guiding in a walking tour, avoid to cross too many streets and to speak in heavy traffic conditions. All factors above will distract the attention of the group.

## Examples of good communication



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The following checklist is summing up the most important points to be observed during the tour:

- address individuals personally by using their name
- be clear and simple, do not use dates or complicated terminology
- avoid external distractions
- vary your voice/ tone
- be confident and calm
- build rapport
- show respect and empathy
- use visual aids and/ or other materials/ resources that appeal to all the senses
- repeat/ summarise most important information
- ask questions to check if your message has gone through
- encourage group to ask questions
- participate in the communication
- involve the group in games
- introduce some activities for the group
- use different methods of presentation, especially if you realise that you are losing the attention of the group, e.g. by telling a story or role-playing
- be prepared to omit information that is too complicated, keep it simple, but describe clearly
- use sense of humour, create an atmosphere where the group can enjoy the cultural discoveries
- use meaningful body language

### **Examples of bad communication**

- using too much abstract information
- guiding in a monotonous tone and stance of voice
- guiding in a boring monologue, acting as a prima donna
- talking in a not loud enough voice
- ignoring external distractions
- hurrying while guiding
- not allowing the group to participate/ to be active
- not listening to what other people are saying
- not noticing the group's body signals of stress, boredom, confusion

## Unit 3

### Evaluation: What to do after the guided tour

Tourist guides are usually not part of a company/ organisation that follows standardised procedures for quality management. Nevertheless, it is important to gather feedback after the tours and to implement the results, in order to improve the services.

The following points have to be considered:

- ▶ accept criticism from the customer openly, positively, politely and constructively
- ▶ provide the customer with information they need, respecting confidentiality
- ▶ regularly assess whether the customers' needs and expectations are being consistently met, if goals have been achieved
- ▶ consider if your goal, workload and programmed guided tour has been realistic or whether you, the group and the organisers have been stressed or bored
- ▶ use your influence and authority to ensure that customer needs and expectations are being met and, where possible, exceeded
- ▶ use your influence to negotiate and agree alternative solutions when customer needs and expectations cannot be met



- ▶ collect feedback from customers and staff to ensure that alternative solutions are being provided to the customers' satisfaction (standard format of a feedback form to be provided by T-GUIDE)
  
- ▶ seek and use opportunities to develop the working relationship with the customer
  
- ▶ give appropriate feedback to all relevant parties
  
- ▶ check if the work has been carried out efficiently, not just personally by you, but also when delegating work to other guides
  
- ▶ deal effectively with targets and goals set by potential, new or regular costumers to exceed their expectations
  
- ▶ consider what are your strong or weak points, what would you like to achieve within the next months and what training/studying do you need to develop more

## Unit 4

### “T-Guide” Training Methodology

#### 4.1. Communication techniques

Tourist Guide training is handled differently across Europe. As mentioned in the Introduction, professional tourist guides can be expected to have a good knowledge of enhanced communication skills and techniques, which are absolutely central to guiding people with special needs. Find below a catalogue of competences that constitute enhanced communication skills:



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#### 4.1.1. Rhetoric

- style, choice of words, fluency of speech
- voice, breathing technique, projection, microphone technique
- delivery, articulation, enunciation

#### 4.1.2. Body Language

- eye contact
- gestures
- posture
- behaviour
- personal appearance

#### 4.1.3. Communication Techniques:

##### Verbal

- How to keep the group's attention
- Successful communication will determine how the group behaves
- How to adapt to the needs of the group and the particular environment
- Identify good communication (see Unit 2 above)
- Identify bad verbal communication (see Unit 2 above)
- Establish rapport

##### Non-Verbal

- How to use non-verbal communication (body language, signs, gestures)
- Practice observation skills; actively observing the group can help the tourist guide
- Interpret positive and negative body language
- Messages that are – subconsciously - conveyed by body language (e.g. aggressive vs. defensive gestures)
- Cultural differences

#### 4.1.4. Didactic Tools

- stress/crisis management
- time management
- selection of suitable information, structuring information
- creation of a suitable tour itinerary, structure the tour, find a “red thread” that connects the different parts of the tour
- top visual priority (TVP)
- use of additional materials
- use of questions and examples

#### 4.1.5. Group Handling Skills

- positioning in front of the group
- „scanning” the group while talking to identify reactions/ emotions
- using correct behaviour
- not having any prejudices/ impartiality
- knowing about group psychology, group dynamics
- knowing about risk management and conflict management
- knowing problem-solving techniques

#### 4.2. Training Methods for “T-GUIDE” Training

The suggested training methods that will be most effective to improve the skills of tourist guides and to train them to become “T-GUIDEs” for guiding people with intellectual disabilities and/or learning difficulties are:

- Acquire theoretical knowledge on different types of disabilities (e.g. in a classroom or from a e-learning platform)



- Visit disability support organisations that care for Intellectually disabled people. Learn by active observation.
- Interview persons with physical and intellectual disabilities to get to know how to communicate effectively
- Watch demonstration films in which groups of intellectually disabled are guided in a museum/monument, note their and the guide's reactions and comment on them.
- Role play: Tourist Guide to act as the speaker and the rest of trainees to act as the "annoying" audience, someone to interrupt the speaker etc.
- Go on the spot as an observer of a guided tour by an experienced colleague, to see what one can expect from a guide, what are the behaviors, which methodology tools can be used
- Test the training program with guides/trainees as the target group and get feedback from them
- Use interaction in practical training
- Use "easy and simple" language to guide
- Experiment with methodology and use an imaginary "suitcase of tools" depending on the situation, interests and reactions of the group, no specific recipe can be found in any book for special groups
- An actor or mime artist could be useful in guides' training, using the body, language, gestures

### 4.3. Training modules for the "T-GUIDEs" (CPD)



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In addition to the tools for tourist guides given in par. 4.2 on training methods, in order to be able to efficiently guide people with intellectual disabilities and/or learning difficulties the following modules are suggested:

## **MODULES**

### **A. Theory**

- Start with theory in classroom or online training on definitions and different pathologies and tips on how to recognize different alert signs and possible reactions
- Learn about new communication and presentation techniques
- Learn about crisis management and dealing with unexpected behaviors
- Adapt a museum/site/nature/neighborhood visit for these special groups by creating and trying a “model” tour for each kind of visit
- Create different imaginary scenarios with case-studies and special conditions of visits with special groups on the spot and adapt to them
- Start guiding with children as an experience, as they do not have the rhythm and way of thinking of adults
- Come in contact with persons who are family or accompany or teach the intellectually disabled in order to receive their testimonials and learn from their experiences
- Co-operation and relation between the guide and escorts/attendants and the museum staff

- Visit a place where people with intellectual disabilities work (ESAT) or day hospital or institution as an observer
- Come in contact with a group of intellectually disabled at a late stage of training in order for the guide to avoid any panic and fear
- Practice “easy and simple” language to guide

## **B. Practical Exercises**

- Practice in guiding a mixed group of intellectually disabled and of non-disabled people together, to make them feel included like the rest of the world
- Organize a workshop to help the group acquire experiences for themselves, maybe taking back home a small souvenir, i.e. drawing, pottery
- Asking the group members in advance to prepare a presentation of their own for a specific exhibit they will chose themselves and let them talk to the others like “guides”
- Asking the group members to do an exercise: We describe an image to someone who cannot see it, so he is then asked to recognize it or draw it, or we tell something to someone who then - based on the story – is asked to build a place using cubes. This way we perceive immediately if we were accurate enough or if we allowed somebody to create an image without looking at it.
- Asking the group members to use their five senses to feel and understand the exhibit/item/building, even if they are not physically impaired
- Try ways to make the group have fun, experience pleasure, discover things and leave the place with good memories



- Check if the message/s has been transmitted and if the pleasure and knowledge targets have been achieved after each presentation by asking questions

## Unit 5

### Duration and Certification

#### 5.1. Duration of the “T-GuIDE” CPD suggested training program

The tourist guides, as suggested above, should dedicate personal time for e.g. self-observation, visits of relevant organizations, self-study, e-learning, experience sharing with colleagues, in order to improve their skills.

The actual suggested duration of a CPD training course for “T-GuIDE” to be spent together with other trainees is of a **minimum of two full days and a maximum five full days**, including classroom courses and practical training on-the-job (museum/site/monument).

#### 5.2. Certification for “T-Guide” CPD skills

It is recommended that the tourist guide who attends a CPD training course like the one created by this “T-GuIDE” manual will receive a form of certification given by the course organizer, after the assessment of the relevant competences and the successful completion of the “T-GuIDE” course.

### Promotion of the Certified Tourist Guide

Following the successful completion of the course, the Tourist Guide will be able to access additional resources that can help them to reach the target markets of



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visitors with intellectual or learning difficulties. Resources in the form of web links, contact databases and other materials will be made available on the project website at: [www.t-guide.eu](http://www.t-guide.eu)



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