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# AUTHENTIC INCLUSION DECLARATION

*A European Commitment to Genuine Diversity and the Elimination of Tokenism*

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## PREAMBLE

We, the undersigned organisations, gathered within the framework of the BETILI International Network (*Beyond Tokenism: Youth Leading Inclusion*) an Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership in Youth involving organisations from Croatia, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands, hereby adopt this Declaration as a binding expression of our shared values and commitments.

We recognise that **tokenism** (the practice of making only a symbolic or performative effort to include members of underrepresented groups) remains a pervasive and damaging phenomenon in European civil society, youth work, education and the broader public sphere. Tokenism reduces complex human identities to checkboxes; it creates the appearance of diversity while denying its substance; and it causes measurable harm to the individuals who are ostensibly included but genuinely marginalised.

We affirm that genuine inclusion demands structural commitment, shared power, authentic recognition of each person's dignity, and ongoing accountability. It is not a destination but a continuous practice, one that requires courage, critical self-reflection, and willingness to change.

Inspired by the values enshrined in *Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union*, *Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights*, the *European Youth Strategy 2019–2027*, and the *Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy*, and other applicable international human rights frameworks, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the Council of Europe's conventions on human rights and non-discrimination, we adopt this Declaration and call upon all organisations working with young people across Europe to join us in its principles.

## PART I - FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

1

### **Dignity and Equality Without Exception**

Every person, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, socioeconomic status or any other characteristic, possesses inherent dignity and is entitled to full and equal participation in public life, civil society and youth work. No category of person may be treated as a representative token of a group rather than as an individual in their own right.

2

### **From Symbolism to Structural Change**

Diversity without inclusion is decoration. We commit to moving beyond numerical representation toward genuine systemic change: reviewing our governance structures, decision-making processes, recruitment practices, and programme design to ensure that underrepresented voices hold real power and are not merely present as symbolic figures.

3

### **Informed and Continuous Self-Assessment**

Organisations cannot address what they do not measure or honestly examine. We commit to using evidence-based tools (including the BETILI Inclusion Index Calculator) to regularly assess our own inclusivity practices, acknowledge shortcomings with transparency, and report progress to our communities and stakeholders.

4

### **Participatory Design and Co-Creation**

Programmes, policies and resources that affect underrepresented groups must be designed with those groups, not merely for them. We commit to meaningful co-creation processes, ensuring that the people most affected by inclusion challenges are active architects of the solutions, not passive recipients of pre-designed initiatives.

5

### **Intersectionality and Complexity**

Individuals carry multiple, overlapping identities that shape their experiences in distinct ways. We commit to recognising and responding to intersecting forms of marginalisation, understanding that a one-size-fits-all approach to inclusion inevitably reproduces the very exclusions it purports to address.

6

### **Accountability, Transparency and Remedy**

Commitments without accountability are aspirations, not standards. We commit to establishing clear internal mechanisms to identify tokenistic practices, to receiving feedback from participants and beneficiaries without retaliation, and to taking corrective action when our practices fall short of the standards set out in this Declaration.

7

### **Young People as Leaders, Not Subjects**

Young people are not problems to be solved or audiences to be reached. They are the primary agents of social change. We commit to creating conditions in which young people (especially those from marginalised backgrounds) exercise genuine leadership in our organisations, shape our agendas, and are supported to build the skills and confidence to advocate for themselves and their communities.

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## PART II - CONCRETE COMMITMENTS

*By endorsing this Declaration, each signatory organisation individually commits to the following concrete actions within its own sphere of activity:*

**A**

Conduct an internal audit of our inclusion practices using the BETYLI Inclusion Index Calculator within six months of signing this Declaration, and share the results (including areas for improvement) with our board, staff and primary stakeholders.

**B**

Integrate a written anti-tokenism policy into our organisational governance documents (statutes, codes of conduct, programme guidelines or equivalent) within twelve months of signing, and make this policy publicly accessible.

**C**

Ensure that at least one member of our staff or governing body receives training on identifying and addressing tokenism (using the BETYLI Toolkit or equivalent resources) within twelve months of signing.

**D**

Design all new programmes, projects and activities affecting underrepresented groups through participatory processes that give those groups meaningful decision-making power at the outset, not merely consultative input at the end.

**E**

Actively disseminate this Declaration and the resources developed under the BETYLI project (including the Inclusion Index Calculator, the Inclusion Toolkit and the eLearning course) through our own networks, publications and communication channels, aiming to reach at least five additional organisations per year.

**F**

Participate actively in the BETYLI International Network for the duration of the project and, where possible, beyond its formal conclusion, sharing good practices, contributing to peer learning, and supporting the network's sustainability as a community of practice.

**G**

Report annually (through the Network's agreed reporting mechanism) on the steps taken to fulfil the commitments made in this Declaration, including honest acknowledgement of challenges encountered and lessons learned. (The reporting mechanism will be communicated to all signatories once the Network is formally established.)



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## PART III - CALL TO ACTION

We call upon all organisations working with young people in Europe (youth organisations, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions, public bodies, community associations, cultural bodies and the private sector) to endorse this Declaration, to join the BETYLI International Network, and to translate these principles into the daily reality of their work.

We call upon policymakers at local, national and European level to recognise tokenism as a structural obstacle to social cohesion, to incorporate anti-tokenism standards into funding criteria and institutional quality frameworks, and to support organisations committed to the principles of genuine inclusion.

We call upon young people themselves to hold us accountable: to challenge tokenistic practices wherever they encounter them, to demand genuine power-sharing, and to know that their full participation (not their symbolic presence) is both their right and the standard we set for ourselves.

*“Authentic inclusion is not a destination we reach. It is a standard of conduct we uphold, every day, in every decision, in every room where power is exercised.”*

BETYLI International Network, 2025

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## ENDORSEMENT & SIGNATURE

By signing below, the authorised representative of the organisation confirms full endorsement of this Declaration in its entirety. A single authorised signature is sufficient to formalise the organisation's endorsement.

**Full legal name of the organisation:**

Country: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

**Full name of authorised representative**

**Function / Title**

**Signature**

**Date and Place**

**Official stamp of the organisation (if applicable):**

**Please return the signed and stamped Declaration to: [montse@pilcrow.es](mailto:montse@pilcrow.es)**

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