



# Introduction





## IFM-SEI

*Tamsin Pearce*

### Who are we?

The International Falcon Movement – Socialist Educational International is an international educational movement working to empower children and young people to take an active role in society and fight for their rights. We are an umbrella organisation for child and youth-led movements all over the world, educating on the basis of our values of equality, democracy, peace, co-operation and friendship. Through our member organisations and our international ac-

tivities including seminars, training courses, international camps and conferences.

### By children and young people, for children and young people

Children and young people are involved in all levels of decision-making in our movement, from their local groups to the world congress. It is our firm belief that children are competent to make decisions and have strong opinions on global issues as well as matters directly affecting them. They need only the empowerment to feel that their voices will be heard in society.



### Child rights-based approach

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a key document in all our work. Through peer education, we aim to educate children and young people about their rights and support them to ensure they are respected.

activities, we aim to ensure that children and young people are well informed about their rights and are empowered to ensure they are respected. To reach this goal, we organise a variety

### International solidarity

IFM-SEI is a global movement bringing together children and young people from Latin America, Asia,



Africa, Europe and the Middle East. We are an umbrella organisation for 60 national organisations world-wide, promoting internationalism, solidarity and friendship, and advocating for children's rights all over the world.

### **Equality and social inclusion: All Together**

In IFM-SEI we strive to be inclusive of all children and young people. Towards this aim we have developed a long-term strategy, **All Together**, to increase the inclusion of children and young people with fewer opportunities in our activities and structures. Following a needs-analysis by the European Falcon Network it became clear that all European organisations face the same difficulty in including in

their activities and democratic structures young people with fewer opportunities. Although many children joined our groups through their own initiative, these tended to be predominantly white, middle-class and able-bodied children. Reaching other groups of young people was identified as a challenge, particularly those facing multiple-discrimination. It was decided to develop a pro-active long-term strategy to make our organisations more diverse.

### **All Together aim**

The aim of All Together is to develop clear strategies to ensure European Falcon organisations are inclusive towards young people with fewer opportunities. We aim to critically



evaluate our work, including identifying barriers to participation.

### Objectives

- To increase awareness of inclusion issues within our organisations.
- To research European Falcon organisations and critically evaluate how inclusive they are including identifying barriers to participation.
- To increase the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in our activities.
- To involve more leaders from different backgrounds in our work.
- To share best-practice approaches

towards better inclusion.

- To develop new approaches based on research and joint expertise.
- To produce a handbook and website for use by youth organisations including an analysis of the current situation, best-practice examples, advice and information for those wishing to set up inclusion projects and tested methodology.

### Achieving our aims

#### Steering Group

A steering group has been established to coordinate the strategy. The steering group is made up of inclusion experts and young people with fewer opportunities and meets three times a year to ensure the strategy is reaching its objectives. As the strategy develops the core group expands to include as many perspectives as possible.

#### First Pillar: Sharing experiences

In Falcon organisations, we found that there were plenty of pockets of good practice; local groups and national organisations were doing excellent and successful inclusion work, the challenge lay in sharing this practice effectively. The first pillar of the All Together strategy is therefore focused on spending time evaluating our practice and sharing experiences to inspire others.



### Second Pillar: Training

Reaching the local group leaders was vital if we wanted to have a real impact on the levels of inclusion in our organisations. We found that many group leaders were motivated to be more inclusive but had no idea where to start so the second pillar aimed to support leaders with training and the development of a network of inclusion workers.

We started by running training courses for local group leaders on setting up inclusion and intercultural dialogue projects. From these training courses, many new pieces of inclusion work have been developed and a commitment from member organi-

sations to be more inclusive has been established.

### Third Pillar: Resources

The third pillar of our work is the development of inclusion resources. This handbook aims to give group leaders advice, tips and inspiration for their inclusion work at local level. Accompanying the book is a user-led website full of ideas, experiences and tips for inclusion work. We hope that the website will expand with contributions from inclusion workers all over Europe, becoming a dynamic space for the inclusion network to work together.

[www.all-together.eu](http://www.all-together.eu)





## What is inclusion?

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We're open to anyone who wants to take part in our activities. Anyone can join and there are no restrictions on membership, so we're inclusive, right? It's very easy to assume that not being actively exclusive results automatically in inclusion. It's comfortable and makes us all feel politically correct to be 'doing the right thing', but is it really reaching out and promoting diversity?

In my opinion, no. Although for many years this has been the standard way of operating, more and more organisations are beginning to realise that the very ways in which we structure our work can exclude many young people and a pro-active approach is needed to address this issue effectively.

To really tackle the issue of inclusion we need to challenge ourselves and our ways of working. This is no easy task: we love our organisations, we like the way they work and feel comfortable with their familiar structures. Human beings are creatures of habit and altering patterns can be very unsettling but we need to ask ourselves a simple question: Do we want to stay cosy and comfortable or do we want to make a real impact in



our communities?

If the answer is the latter then we have some work to do, critically assessing all aspects of our organisations, identifying barriers to participation and systematically addressing them. The places we choose for meetings may seem irrelevant but being far from home for a weekend or sleeping in a mixed dormitory can immediately exclude some. Even the very act of joining an organisation and committing on a regular basis can be alien.

### **Inclusion in IFM-SEI**

Beginning the task of looking critically at ourselves and investigating what is already being done internally in the field of inclusion was a surprisingly energising experience. Although we have a long road ahead of us, there are pockets of excellent practice at local and national level and by sharing those methods we're one step closer to including more young





people in the movement. For an organisation with nearly 100 years of history, challenging the basic premise that non-formal education must be done in groups on a weekly basis was not easy but it was a hurdle we had to overcome to move forward. To be really inclusive we concluded that the emphasis should be on making adjustments to the organisation, not expecting young people to adapt in order to participate.

Reaching out has been interpreted quite literally in some regions: we have taken the organisation to the physical locations of the young people we wish to reach and run activities with them on their terms, giving them the opportunity to take part in our educational work without commitment. This project, spread over several coun-

tries, has seen good results but is only the tip of the iceberg; to have a real impact a comprehensive approach is needed. It's a long-term process and the problem can't be solved by sexy one-off projects or high level discussions limiting diversity to a theoretical concept. Instead, we need to go out there and meet people, extend the good work that's being done and not be afraid to embrace the challenges and changes ahead.



## Who is excluded? How do we exclude them?

Throughout the handbook we tend to use the term 'young people with fewer opportunities'. This is an intentionally broad term, covering all young people facing some form of disadvantage. Below is a non-exhaustive list:

- Young people from black or minority ethnic backgrounds
- Muslim young people
- Speakers of different languages
- Foreigners / migrants
- Roma / traveller communities
- Refugees and children of refugees
- National minorities (eg Hungarian children in Slovakia)
- Children in alternative care
- Overweight young people
- Young people with disabilities
- Young people with post-traumatic stress
- Young people with behavioural difficulties



- Young people with learning disabilities
- Economically disadvantaged young people
- Young people who need to work in their free-time
- Young people from low-income families
- Young carers (young people who care for disabled or ill family members or younger siblings)
- Young people facing social or educational disadvantage
- Young people with lower levels of education
- Young people with strict family backgrounds
- Teenage parents
- Young people with gay parents
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) young people
- Single parents
- Children of drug addicts
- Young people in prisons or rehabilitation
- Gang members
- Young people with fewer friends

- Rural youth
- Anyone who is 'different'

Across Europe, Falcons work in very different communities. Consequently, the target groups vary between organisations. The decision was made however, that while different groups of young people have different needs, sharing experience and ideas remains a useful and supportive method to increase inclusion in all European countries.

### **Do we really exclude people?**

Exclusion is usually unintentional and unconscious which makes it more difficult to tackle. Falcon groups are open to all young people interested in joining, and our aims and principles have equality and social inclusion at their core. However, our ways of working can be unintentionally exclusive. Falcon organisations have many traditions, some of which can seem very alien to potential members. To name just a few, weekly group meetings, camping in group tents, singing songs and discussing global issues can overwhelm new members. This is not to say that these activities are necessarily exclusive but we may need to be more sensitive to how others view them and adapt our approach to include more young people.





## Why do inclusion?

Volunteers in youth organisations can be reluctant to take on the challenge of inclusion. It is seen as something that puts already overloaded volunteers under unnecessary strain. Of course it is important not to underestimate the commitment it takes to do inclusion properly. Inclusion demands more from our volunteers in terms of time, energy and creativity, it demands us to be self-critical and to change our comfortable ways of working and it can feel as if it is disruptive to the existing group. However, these factors pale into insignificance when one begins to look at the positive outcomes of inclusion strategies.

### Aims and principles

As an organisation with equality firmly at the core of its aims and principles, IFM-SEI sees inclusion as an obvious means to fulfil its mission. Educational work in isolation can go only so far to raise the awareness of our young members in the fields of gender equality, anti-racism, disability awareness and social inclusion. To achieve real equality, our groups need to reflect the societies we live in, bringing together young people from different backgrounds to work together for social change.



### Enriching the experience of our members

Working with a diverse group of young people from different backgrounds provides an enriching experience for all our members. Learning from each other and with each other is a key principle of peer education and the added dimension of a heterogeneous group enhances learning immensely.

### Fun

It may sound clichéd but inclusion work is fun. As volunteers, we need to enjoy what we do to remain motivated in our work, and inclusion work certainly ticks that box.