



INCLUSION360

INTEGRATED STUDY

Mapping of Community-Based Good Practices

for the social inclusion of young people with intellectual disabilities
aged 13 - 23 in Bulgaria and Türkiye



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

About this publication

Title	Mapping of community-based good practices for social inclusion of young people with intellectual disabilities aged 13–23 years old
Project	Inclusion360 - Inclusive education and social integration for youth with intellectual disabilities
Programme	Erasmus+ Small-scale partnerships in youth (KA210-YOU), Call 2025
Project number	Project № 2025-1-BG01-KA210-YOU-000363757
Activity	Activity 2 – Mapping of community-based good practices (Tasks 2.1 Study on good practices, 2.2 Inter-coaching, 2.3 Integrated survey, 2.4 National workshops)
Period of the activity	01/10/2025 – 31/12/2025
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Partners



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Executive summary

This integrated study is the main output of Activity 2 of the Inclusion360 project. It maps the policies, services and community-based good practices that support the social inclusion of young people with intellectual disabilities aged 13 - 23 in **Bulgaria** and **Türkiye**, reviews relevant EU-funded projects, and summarises the lessons from inter-coaching and stakeholder consultations. Its purpose is to provide the evidence base for Activity 3: the Special Adapted Educational Program and the Special Virtual Academy (SVA).

Key findings

- **Rights exist, but transitions are fragmented.** Both countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and have modern disability laws and strategies. However, in neither country did the reviewed sources identify a single, mandatory individual plan that connects education, vocational training, employment, independent living and social services for young people aged 13 - 23.
- **Good practices exist in both countries.** The study profiles **20 community-based practices** (8 in Bulgaria, 12 in Türkiye): day and rehabilitation centres, social enterprises, supported employment, inclusive sport, university-based programmes, digital skills initiatives and NGO programmes.
- **The most effective practices share common features:** learning by doing in real settings, step-by-step skill building, peer interaction with young people without disabilities, sport and arts as tools for communication and confidence, job coaching that continues after placement, and strong local partnerships.
- **Many practices are local, project-based and short-term.** Sustainability after project funding and transfer to regular services remain major challenges.
- **Data are a major gap.** Public data are rarely broken down by age (13 - 23) and intellectual disability, so the outcomes for the target group are difficult to measure.
- **Young people are still mostly “beneficiaries”.** Few programmes involve young people with intellectual disabilities in designing and evaluating the activities that concern them.

Key recommendations for Inclusion360

- Build the educational program around **transition skills**: independent living, communication and self-advocacy, digital safety, physical activity, community participation and work.
- Design the SVA as a **bridge between the screen and real life**: short, visual, step-by-step units, each followed by a practical challenge at home, in sport or in the community.
- Use **peer-based and mixed activities** (young people with and without disabilities together) and prepare peers, families and facilitators.
- Include **simple monitoring tools** (checklists, task scoring, personal goals) to generate outcome evidence for the target group.
- Use the findings for the **Policy Recommendation Guidelines**: individual transition planning from age 14, links between schools and employment services, supported employment, disaggregated data and youth participation.

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the study

The study examines and maps existing policies, services, programmes and good practices that support the social inclusion of young people with intellectual disabilities aged 13 - 23 in Bulgaria and Türkiye. It focuses on the transition from childhood to adulthood, particularly in education, vocational development, employment, independent living and participation in community life.

The study aims not only to describe the legal and policy framework, but also to assess how it is reflected in young people's lives in practice. It identifies strengths, good practices and gaps, and provides an evidence-based foundation for the development of the Special Adapted Educational Program and the Special Virtual Academy under Activity 3.

1.2. Link to the project

The application form of Inclusion360 describes Activity 2 as four connected tasks. This integrated study brings their results together:

Task	Content	Section of this study
2.1 Study on good practices	Community-based practices and national policies and strategies in both countries	Sections 2 and 3
2.2 Inter-coaching	Research on EU-funded projects of the last five years and exchange with project representatives	Sections 4 and 5
2.3 Integrated survey	Synthesis of mapping, inter-coaching and workshop results into one final study	This document
2.4 National workshops	Sharing and discussing the findings with at least 15 stakeholders in each country	Section 6

1.3. Scope

The research covers Bulgaria and Türkiye, where the project partners are based. In both countries, structures affecting the social inclusion of young people with intellectual disabilities aged 13 - 23 were examined in three dimensions:

- **National legislation, strategies and public programmes** in education and special education, vocational training, employment, social services, community-based care, independent living and social participation.
- **Community-based good practices** of organisations working directly with young people with intellectual disabilities: day and rehabilitation centres, vocational and employment initiatives, social enterprises, NGOs, sport and arts programmes, digital inclusion initiatives and educational institutions.
- **EU-funded projects** (mainly Erasmus+) with partners from the two countries, to identify transferable tools and approaches.

1.4. Methodology

Method	Description
Desk research	Review of legislation, strategies, action plans, public programmes, official statistics, activity reports and publicly available information on NGOs, schools, municipalities and service providers. A common research guide with the same data fields was used in both countries.
EU project research	Search of the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform and national agency sources for projects with Bulgarian or Turkish partners from the last five years, using keywords such as “intellectual disabilities”, “youth inclusion” and “social integration”.
Inter-coaching	Exchange with representatives of relevant projects and organisations about what worked, what did not work and which methods could be transferred to the Special Virtual Academy.
Stakeholder consultations and national workshops	Presentation and discussion of the findings with stakeholders from public institutions, schools, NGOs, sport organisations and families.

The research followed a logical chain: **policy and legislation** → **existing services and programmes** → **community-based practices** → **European good practices** → **gaps and areas for development**.

1.5. Data collected for each practice

For each practice, the researchers collected: name and type of organisation; location; target age group and types of disability; activities and how they support social inclusion; funding source; available evaluations or outcome data; and a contact person for possible inter-coaching.

1.6. Limitations

- **Lack of disaggregated data.** Statistics are usually reported for broad categories (“persons with disabilities”, “students with special educational needs”). Data combining age 13–23, intellectual disability and service use or outcomes are rarely available.
- **Limited outcome information.** Many sources describe activities but not the age of participants, the type of disability or long-term results.
- **Desk research.** It was not possible to verify independently that every practice is implemented with the scope described in public sources. Where possible, the study distinguishes between measures foreseen in policy and practices that can be confirmed.
- **Different national systems.** The education, social and employment systems of the two countries differ, which makes one-to-one comparison difficult. The study therefore focuses on shared needs, different models, strengths and transferable practices.
- **Uneven depth of country information.** The national research in Türkiye was more extensive than the material available for Bulgaria at the time of writing. Bulgarian practices were complemented by the applicant organisation’s own experience and verified public sources; sections to be completed by the Bulgarian team are marked.

The study is therefore not an exhaustive inventory of all services. It is an integrated mapping of the policies, programmes and practices most relevant to the target group and a foundation for the next stages of the project.

2. Policy landscape

2.1. International framework

Both countries are parties to the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**: Türkiye ratified it in 2009 and Bulgaria in 2012. The Convention provides the shared framework for this study. The articles most relevant to young people with intellectual disabilities are Article 9 (accessibility, including easy-to-understand information), Article 12 (equal recognition before the law and supported decision-making), Article 19 (living independently and being included in the community), Article 24 (inclusive education), Article 27 (work and employment) and Article 30 (participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport).

The CRPD also requires that persons with disabilities participate in the design and evaluation of policies that affect them - services should be developed not only “for young people” but, wherever possible, “with young people”.

2.2. Bulgaria

Legislation

Act / regulation	Main provisions relevant to young people with intellectual disabilities
Persons with Disabilities Act (in force since 2019)	Replaced the earlier Integration of People with Disabilities Act. Introduced an individual needs assessment, which for young people aged 18+ determines access to financial support, personal assistance and social services. Introduced an employment quota: employers with 50–99 employees must employ one person with a permanent disability; employers with 100 or more employees, at least 2% of their staff. Provides for specialised enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities.
Pre-school and School Education Act (2016) and Ordinance on Inclusive Education	Establish the right to inclusive education. Students (approximately 13–18) can study in mainstream schools with support from resource teachers, psychologists and speech therapists, or in Centres for Special Educational Support. Individual educational plans and multidisciplinary support teams are defined in the Ordinance.
Social Services Act (in force since 2020)	Regulates community-based social services such as day care and social rehabilitation and integration, based on an individual assessment of needs. Young people move from children’s services to adult services at 18.
Personal Assistance Act (2019)	Creates the mechanism of personal assistance for people with disabilities, supporting life in the family and the community.
Social and Solidarity Economy Enterprises Act (2018)	Provides a legal status for social enterprises, including those that employ people from vulnerable groups.

Strategies

- **National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030** - a long-term roadmap focused on deinstitutionalisation, accessibility and “transition services”, aiming to prepare young people for independent living and employment.
- **National Development Programme Bulgaria 2030** - includes measures for digital inclusion and lifelong learning that are relevant to people with intellectual disabilities.

Institutions and programmes

Institution	Role
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	Policy on disability and social inclusion; funds personal assistance and employment programmes.
Social Assistance Agency	Oversees community-based social services. Young people under 18 use children's services; from 18 they move to adult services such as day care centres and centres for social rehabilitation and integration.
Employment Agency	Implements employment programmes, including subsidised employment, internships and apprenticeships for people with disabilities aged 18+.
Ministry of Education and Science	Inclusive education policy; Regional Centres for the Support of Inclusive Education provide mobile teams of specialists to mainstream schools.
Agency for People with Disabilities	Grants for NGO projects and for starting small businesses by people with disabilities; register of specialised enterprises.
Municipalities	Provide most community-based services (day centres, social rehabilitation) and can support local initiatives, for example with land or premises.

Assessment - Bulgaria

Bulgaria has a modern rights-based framework: needs assessment, inclusive education, personal assistance, community-based social services, an employment quota and a legal status for social enterprises. The main challenges identified are the **break between children's and adult services at age 18**, the dependence of employment and inclusion opportunities on NGO and project initiatives, and limited data on outcomes for young people with intellectual disabilities.

2.3. Türkiye

Legislation

Act / regulation	Main provisions relevant to young people with intellectual disabilities
Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities	Main framework for rights, non-discrimination, education (Art. 15 - 16), vocational rehabilitation (Art. 13), employment, reasonable accommodation (Art. 14) and life in the community. Provides for sheltered workplaces for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. Does not establish a mandatory, individualised transition-to-adulthood plan.
Regulation on Special Education Services (MEB)	Individualised Education Programmes (IEP/BEP); inclusive education; Special Education Vocational Schools with vocational fields from Grade 9 and workplace-based training in Grades 11 - 12; Special Education Practice Schools (Level III) for young people with higher support needs. Special secondary education is possible up to age 27.
Labour Law No. 4857, Article 30	Employment quota: private employers with 50+ employees must employ at least 3% persons with disabilities (4% in the public sector). No specific share for intellectual disability. According to İŞKUR data (May 2026), overall quota occupancy was 84.28%.
Social Services Law No. 2828	Basis for care, rehabilitation, counselling and community-based support, including Home Care Assistance and day care. Services continue after age 18.

Recent developments (2020 - 2025)

Year	Development	Relevance
2021	Graduates of Special Education Vocational Schools may take the higher education entrance exam (YKS)	Opens a pathway to higher education for young people with mild intellectual disabilities
2022	New Regulation on Sheltered Workplaces	Updates the employment model for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities
2022	Exam accommodations and easier access to home-based education	Supports continuity of education
2023	New Regulation on Home Care Assistance	Strengthens support for living with the family, with an individual care plan
2023–2025	Disability Identity Card, National Disability Data System, planning of new centres, biometric monitoring	Improves administration and monitoring of services

Strategies

- **2030 Vision for an Accessible Society** and the **National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2023 - 2025** (31 objectives, 107 action areas, 275 activities). They explicitly address transitions between secondary education, vocational education, higher education, employment and lifelong learning, as well as participation in sport, culture and youth activities.
- **National Employment Strategy 2025 - 2028**, with “Promoting Inclusive Employment” as one of four policy areas. It promotes a pathway of skills → job preparation → counselling →

placement → workplace adaptation → sustainable employment, but sets no specific target for young people with intellectual disabilities.

- **Education Vision 2023** (2018 - 2023) strengthened Guidance and Research Centres (RAMs), inclusive education and career guidance; current policy is shaped by the Türkiye Century Education Model (from 2024 - 2025).

Institutions and programmes

Institution	Main programmes relevant to the target group
Ministry of Family and Social Services	Hope Houses (Umut Evleri): 145 small houses in 47 provinces (February 2026), 118 of them for persons with intellectual disabilities; Day Care and Active Living Centres (143 free day care and rehabilitation centres, capacity 7,150); Home Care Assistance in all 81 provinces; public and private care centres.
Ministry of National Education (MEB)	Special Education Vocational Schools (18 vocational fields for mild intellectual disabilities), Special Education Practice Schools, Resource Rooms (14,969 in December 2025), special education and rehabilitation centres.
İŞKUR (Turkish Employment Agency)	Vocational counselling, Disability Job Coaching, vocational training, supported employment grants (a separate model since 2025, prioritising intellectual and psychosocial disabilities), sheltered workplaces and the Accessible Workforce Adaptation Programme (from 2025, age 18+).
Directorate General for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly (EYHGM, formerly ÖZİDA)	Policy coordination and statistics. An EU–Türkiye co-financed grant scheme supported 23 NGO projects (about EUR 2 million, around 20,000 people reached).
Ministry of Youth and Sports	Accessible Youth Centres (first centres opened in Mersin and Balıkesir in 2025).
Municipalities	Disability service centres, accessible sports centres and supported employment offices (for example Ankara, İzmir, Istanbul, Bursa).

Assessment - Türkiye

Türkiye has a broad network of rights, services and programmes, and policy attention to transitions and supported employment has grown since 2020. The main gap is not the absence of rights, but the lack of a **systematic, individualised and coordinated transition mechanism** linking MEB, İŞKUR, social services, employment and independent living for young people aged 13 - 23, together with limited data disaggregated by age and type of disability.

2.4. Side-by-side comparison

Area	Bulgaria	Türkiye
CRPD ratification	2012	2009
Main disability law	Persons with Disabilities Act (2019)	Law No. 5378
Inclusive education	Pre-school and School Education Act; resource support in mainstream schools; Centres for Special Educational Support	Inclusive education with IEPs; Resource Rooms; Special Education Vocational and Practice Schools
Age limits in education	Mainly school age; adult education outside the school system	Special secondary education possible up to age 27
Individual planning	Individual educational plans at school; individual needs assessment for adults	IEP/BEP at school; individual care plan for Home Care Assistance
Integrated transition plan (school → adult life)	Not identified in the reviewed sources	Not established; services delivered by separate institutions
Employment quota	1 person (50 - 99 employees); 2% (100+ employees)	3% (private, 50+ employees); 4% (public sector)
Supported employment	Mainly NGO-led models; subsidised employment through the Employment Agency	İŞKUR supported employment grants since 2025; municipal job-coaching offices
Sheltered / protected employment	Specialised enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities	Sheltered workplaces (Regulation 2022), age 15+
Social enterprise status	Yes – Social and Solidarity Economy Enterprises Act (2018)	No separate legal status; cooperatives, NGO enterprises and companies
Community-based living	Deinstitutionalisation; family-type centres; personal assistance	Hope Houses (145); Home Care Assistance
Day services	Day care centres; centres for social rehabilitation and integration	Day Care and Active Living Centres (143 free centres)
Disaggregated data (age + ID)	Limited	Limited

2.5. Shared strengths and gaps

Shared strengths	Shared gaps
• Rights-based legislation aligned with the CRPD • Inclusive education with individual support • Employment quotas • Growing community-based services • Active NGOs and municipalities	• No integrated, individual transition plan from about age 14 • Break between children's and adult services at 18 • Weak links between schools and employment services • Dependence on short-term project funding • Little involvement of young people in designing services • Lack of data by age and type of disability

3. Community practices mapping

3.1. Selection criteria

Practices were included when they: (1) work directly with young people with intellectual disabilities, with confirmed or likely participation of the 13 - 23 age group; (2) support social inclusion beyond therapy - independent living, social participation, education, work, sport or culture; (3) take place in the community or connect young people with community settings; and (4) offer an element that can be transferred to Inclusion360.

3.2. Overview of the practices

Code	Practice	Organisation	Focus
BG-1	Little House - centre for social rehabilitation and integration	You Are Part of Us Foundation, Sofia	Life and social skills, sport, art therapy
BG-2	Social pastry shop	You Are Part of Us Foundation, Sofia	Vocational training and employment
BG-3	Integrated Children's Sports Festival and "Dance with Me!"	You Are Part of Us Foundation	Inclusive sport, dance and culture
BG-4	Day centre "Svetove", protected café and supported employment	Maria's World Foundation, Sofia	Life and work skills, supported employment
BG-5	Wonder Garden - social farming	Foundation, Dobrich	Employment in agriculture
BG-6	Unified sports	Special Olympics Bulgaria	Inclusive sport with peers
BG-7	GIAff4ID – game-based affective education	National Association of Resource Teachers (NARU), Sofia	Relationships, safety, self-advocacy
BG-8	Community-based public services	Municipalities, Social Assistance Agency, Ministry of Education	Day care, rehabilitation, inclusive education support
TR-1	Programmes for adolescents and young adults	ZİÇEV, Ankara	Life skills, vocational skills, safe relationships
TR-2	Konak Accessible Life Village	Municipality–foundation–public education partnership, İzmir	Vocational and social participation
TR-3	Batman Active Living Centre	Ministry of Family and Social Services	Sport, arts, therapy, social participation
TR-4	ZEKİ Life Centre and ZEKİ+	Manisa Organized Industrial Zone	Sheltered employment and transition to open market
TR-5	Supported Employment Office and İŞ-İN	İzmir Metropolitan Municipality	Job preparation and job coaching
TR-6	Career Development and Life Skills; Autism Career Centre	Tohum Autism Foundation	Independent living and open employment

Code	Practice	Organisation	Focus
TR-7	Employment +1 and Sporda +1 İz	Down Syndrome Association of Türkiye	Supported employment and inclusive sport
TR-8	Unified Sports and Athlete Leadership	Special Olympics Türkiye	Inclusive sport and leadership
TR-9	Hope Houses (Umut Evleri)	Ministry of Family and Social Services	Community-based living
TR-10	Inclusive university programmes	İstinye University; Istanbul Aydın University	Post-school learning and campus life
TR-11	"I Am Aware of My Digital Footprint 2.0"	Bursa Provincial Directorate of National Education	Digital literacy and online safety
TR-12	Accessible Youth Centres	Ministry of Youth and Sports	Inclusion in mainstream youth services

3.3. Practices in Bulgaria

BG-1 Little House - centre for social rehabilitation and integration

Organisation	You Are Part of Us Foundation (NGO, founded 2018), Orlandovtsi district, Sofia
Target group	Young people with special needs, mainly intellectual disabilities (Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy), aged 13–30, and their families
Activities	Education, work skills, physical activity and art therapy in a safe and supportive environment; building social skills, emotional well-being and a sense of belonging
Inclusion approach	Independence, confidence and life skills as a basis for social integration
Transferable element	Combination of life skills, work skills, sport and arts in one community centre; strong family involvement

BG-2 Social pastry shop

Organisation	You Are Part of Us Foundation, Sofia (described by the Foundation as the first social pastry shop in Sofia)
Target group	Young people with disabilities
Activities	Vocational training and employment in a real customer-facing workplace: baking, packaging, serving customers
Inclusion approach	Real work with real customers increases skills, income, visibility and public acceptance
Transferable element	Social enterprise as a training and employment environment; directly used as a model in the educational program (Units 3.3 and 3.4)

BG-3 Integrated Children's Sports Festival and "Dance with Me!"

Organisation	You Are Part of Us Foundation
Target group	Children and young people with and without disabilities; "Dance with Me!" also reaches the Roma community
Activities	An annual integrated sports festival; dance and cultural activities that improve access to culture
Inclusion approach	Joint participation in sport and dance; visibility in the community
Transferable element	Mixed sport and dance events; dance as a tool for expression (used in Unit 2.5 of the program)

BG-4 Day centre "Svetove", protected café and supported employment

Organisation	Maria's World Foundation ("Svetat na Maria"), Sofia, founded in 2012 by the family of a young woman with an intellectual disability

Target group	Young people with intellectual disabilities
Activities	Day centre teaching work, social and life skills (since 2013); protected café where young people work as waiters (since 2014); supported employment with mentors (since 2015); catering social enterprise “Bon Appetit” (since 2016); work practice and volunteering in museums, libraries and cafés
Outcomes reported	By 2022: about 40 day-centre participants; over 10 years, 50 people took part in programmes, 13 were in supported employment, 20 had work practice and 3 moved to independent living
Transferable element	Complete pathway: life skills → protected work → work practice → supported employment with a mentor

BG-5 Wonder Garden – social farming

Organisation	Foundation-owned social farm, Dobrich (since 2018)
Target group	22 young people with intellectual disabilities
Activities	Growing vegetables, fruit trees and flowers in greenhouses and open fields; selling in a farm shop, at markets and by courier
Funding	Municipal land, business donations, an NGO business-plan prize, Employment Agency funding for salaries of some employees, local donations and volunteers
Transferable element	Partnership of municipality, business, NGO and Employment Agency; paid work with clear daily routines

BG-6 Unified sports

Organisation	Special Olympics Bulgaria
Target group	Athletes with intellectual disabilities and partners without disabilities
Activities	Training and competitions, including unified teams in which athletes with and without intellectual disabilities play together; the Bulgarian women’s unified basketball team won the first Special Olympics European Women’s Unified Basketball Tournament in 2024
Transferable element	Mixed teams as a structured setting for peer interaction, friendship and visibility

BG-7 GIAff4ID – Games for Improving Affectivity in Youngsters with Intellectual Disabilities

Organisation	National Association of Resource Teachers (NARU), Sofia – coordinator; partners including ZİÇEV (Türkiye). Erasmus+ KA220-YOU, 2022–2024, EU grant EUR 240,392
Target group	Young people with intellectual disabilities, youth workers and caregivers

Activities	Needs assessment and focus groups; six game-based learning activities on relationships, consent, personal safety, self-awareness and advocacy; training for youth workers and caregivers; pilot testing with young people
Transferable element	Game-based, cognitively accessible materials on a topic often overlooked in the transition to adulthood (used in Units 2.2 and 2.3)

BG-8 Community-based public services

Organisation	Municipalities and the Social Assistance Agency (social services); Ministry of Education and Science (Regional Centres for the Support of Inclusive Education)
Target group	Children and young people with disabilities; adult services from age 18
Activities	Day care centres (daily living skills, socialising), centres for social rehabilitation and integration (therapy, kinesitherapy, psychological support), family-type centres, mobile teams supporting inclusive education, vocational schools with adapted programmes, inclusive workshops in community cultural centres (chitalishta)
Transferable element	Nationwide network of services that Inclusion360 can reach with the SVA and the educational program

3.4. Practices in Türkiye

TR-1 Programmes for adolescents and young adults

Organisation	Foundation for the Training and Protection of Children with Intellectual Disabilities (ZİÇEV), Ankara branch and other provinces
Target group	Age 12 - 18: daily living and independent mobility; 20+: occupational therapy; 21+: Life House programme
Activities	Daily living and mobility skills; sewing, ceramics, woodworking and crafts; technology-assisted vocational training in cleaning, service and assembly; SHINE project on personal boundaries, safe relationships and protection from risks; vocational training with public education centres and İŞKUR in some provinces
Transferable element	Continuity of support from adolescence into adulthood; safe-relationships education

TR-2 Konak Accessible Life Village - Niyazi Ersoy Special Education and Rehabilitation Centre

Organisation	Cooperation of the municipality, a foundation and a Public Education Centre, İzmir
Target group	Children, young people and adults with disabilities; participation of the 13–23 age group confirmed
Activities	Cooking, ceramics, painting, weaving, handicrafts and sports for social and vocational participation
Transferable element	Local partnerships that extend rehabilitation into vocational and social activities. Similar examples: Umut Çınarı Centre, Ankara (independent living: personal care, meals, money, shopping, public transport, road safety); Erkim Centre, Bursa/İznik

TR-3 Batman Active Living Centre for Persons with Disabilities

Organisation	Ministry of Family and Social Services (opened 2025)
Target group	Persons with intellectual and physical disabilities aged 13+
Activities	Sport, arts and culture combined with physiotherapy, occupational therapy, sensory integration and social participation
Transferable element	Integrated day model: family-based living + day rehabilitation + social skills + arts and sport. Related examples: Celal Sönmez Centre, Bursa (preparation for the public-sector exam EKPSS); Kars Day Care Centre (regional service)

TR-4 ZEKi Life Centre and ZEKi+ project

Organisation	Manisa Organized Industrial Zone
Target group	Persons with intellectual disabilities who graduated from Special Education Practice Schools (Level III)

Activities	Sheltered employment in real production processes for 15 companies (about 124 employees); work instructions, safety, routines, teamwork. ZEKİ+ prepared four persons for employment in a factory in the open labour market
Transferable element	Pathway: special education → vocational preparation → sheltered employment → workplace adaptation → open labour market

TR-5 Supported Employment Office and İŞ-İN programme

Organisation	İzmir Metropolitan Municipality
Target group	Young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
Activities	CV preparation, job search, e-mail, interviews, workplace rules, communication with managers and colleagues; job coaches support job matching and adaptation
Transferable element	"Prepare for work → find a job → start work → receive workplace support → keep the job"; can be combined with İŞKUR's national supported employment grants

TR-6 Career Development and Life Skills Programme; Autism Career Centre

Organisation	Tohum Autism Foundation
Target group	Young people with autism aged 14+
Activities	Daily living, self-care, community participation and work-readiness skills; internships; Work and Life Curriculum; job coaching for individuals, employers and co-workers; Autism Career Centre (2024); Sports and Life Skills Project in Malatya
Outcomes reported	31 individuals with autism have worked in 14 businesses in logistics, retail, finance, pharmaceuticals and food
Transferable element	Long-term pathway from age 14 to open employment with job coaching

TR-7 Employment +1 and Sporda +1 İz

Organisation	Down Syndrome Association of Türkiye (with Naim Süleymanoğlu Sports High School and special education schools)
Target group	Young people with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities; non-disabled high-school peers
Activities	Employment +1: independent living skills, job preparation and job coaching for paid work in the private sector. Sporda +1 İz: inclusive sport with 30 students with intellectual disabilities and 30 Grade 12 sports students, disability-awareness activities and a sports activity guide
Transferable element	Supported employment and peer-based inclusive sport with prepared peers

TR-8 Unified Sports and Athlete Leadership

Organisation	Special Olympics Türkiye
Target group	Athletes with intellectual disabilities and unified partners; Athlete Leadership for ages 12–25
Activities	Joint teams in basketball, football, volleyball and bocce; leadership, self-expression and decision-making training
Transferable element	Young people as active leaders, not only participants

TR-9 Hope Houses (Umut Evleri)

Organisation	Ministry of Family and Social Services
Target group	Persons moving from large residential institutions to community living
Activities	Small houses for up to six residents in ordinary neighbourhoods; daily living skills and community participation. 145 Hope Houses in 47 provinces (February 2026), 118 for persons with intellectual disabilities
Transferable element	Community-based independent living model

TR-10 Inclusive university programmes

Organisation	İstinye University with the Down Syndrome Association (Honorary Student Programme); Istanbul Aydın University (“University Student for One Day a Week”, since 2023)
Target group	Young people with Down syndrome (20–35 at İstinye; 17+ at Aydın)
Activities	Participation in regular university courses (for example gastronomy and visual communication) and in music, sport and campus life together with university students; non-degree programmes
Transferable element	Continued learning and peer contact after secondary school

TR-11 “I Am Aware of My Digital Footprint 2.0”

Organisation	Bursa Provincial Directorate of National Education (TÜBİTAK 4008, 2026)
Target group	Students with mild intellectual disabilities in Special Education Vocational Schools and inclusive education
Activities	Digital literacy, technology use, internet safety, protection from cyberbullying and digital abuse, artificial intelligence
Transferable element	Digital safety for this target group (used in Unit 2.4). Related: Inclusive Digital Academy (Erasmus+), Kastamonu and Konya schools (life skills, financial literacy through real-life scenarios)

TR-12 Accessible Youth Centres

Organisation	Ministry of Youth and Sports (first centres in Mersin and Balıkesir, 2025)
Target group	Young people with disabilities together with their peers
Activities	Cultural, sport and social activities, personal development and skills programmes within mainstream youth services. Related: Turkish Youth Union Association (TGBDER), Ankara – joint youth activities, volunteering and self-advocacy
Transferable element	Inclusion in mainstream youth services instead of separate settings

3.5. What makes these practices effective?

Common feature	Examples
Learning by doing in real settings	Social pastry shop (BG-2), protected café (BG-4), Wonder Garden (BG-5), ZEKI (TR-4), Umut Çınarı (TR-2)
Step-by-step pathways rather than one-off activities	Maria's World (BG-4), Tohum (TR-6), ZEKI+ (TR-4), İzmir İŞ-İN (TR-5)
Peer interaction with young people without disabilities	Unified sports (BG-6, TR-8), Sporda +1 İz (TR-7), university programmes (TR-10), Accessible Youth Centres (TR-12)
Sport and arts as tools for communication and confidence	Little House and "Dance with Me!" (BG-1, BG-3), Batman centre (TR-3), Konak (TR-2)
Support that continues after placement (job coaching, mentoring)	Maria's World (BG-4), Tohum (TR-6), Down Syndrome Association (TR-7), İzmir (TR-5)
Local partnerships (municipality + NGO + business + public services)	Wonder Garden (BG-5), Konak (TR-2), ZEKI (TR-4)
Accessible, game-based learning materials	GIAff4ID (BG-7), digital footprint project (TR-11)
Family involvement	Little House (BG-1), ZİÇEV (TR-1), Batman centre (TR-3)

3.6. Transferable approaches for Inclusion360

- **Pathway thinking:** connect every learning unit to the next step in real life (life skills → community → work).
- **Real environments:** use the social pastry shop, cafés, shops, sports clubs and public services as learning places.
- **Mixed groups:** design activities that young people with and without disabilities can do together, and prepare peers in advance.
- **Sport, dance and arts:** use them for communication, emotional expression and self-confidence, not only for physical health.
- **Coaching and mentoring:** prepare facilitators, families and employers to support young people.
- **Safety and relationships:** include personal boundaries, consent and online safety in the curriculum.

4. EU project landscape

The researchers reviewed EU-funded projects of the last five years with partners from Bulgaria or Türkiye that address young people with intellectual disabilities or special educational needs. The table summarises the most relevant projects identified so far.

Project	Programme / grant	Partners from BG / TR	Key outputs	Relevance for Inclusion360
GIAff4ID - Games for Improving Affectivity in Youngsters with Intellectual Disabilities (2022 - 2024)	KA220-YOU; EUR 240,392	NARU, Sofia (coordinator); ZİÇEV, Ankara	Six game-based activities, compendium, training for youth workers and caregivers	Very high - same target group; relationships, consent, safety
Together We Play: Volunteer Initiative - DigiLAB (2024 - 2026)	KA220-YOU	TÖSSFED (coordinator), FESGDER; FAPA Balkani (BG)	Training manual, video lessons, multilingual e-learning platform with certificates	Very high - model for the SVA structure
Our Social Bonds Are Stronger with Sports (2024 - 2025)	KA210-SCH; EUR 30,000	Third Primary School "Bratya Miladinovi", Gotse Delchev (BG); Dr Hakan Kundak Primary School, Mersin (TR)	Lesson plans for inclusive outdoor sport, game brochures, digital animation; 102 SEN students	Very high - peer-based sport in both countries
SpeakUp For Yourself (2023 - 2024)	KA210-VET; EUR 60,000	Özel Üçel Special Education Centre, Bursa/İnegöl	SpeakUp App for non-verbal learners, handbook	High - communication as a basis for inclusion
Vocational INCLUSIVE Education – V.IN.E (2023 - 2024)	KA210-VET; EUR 60,000	Şişli and Tepebaşı municipalities	Adapted MYS Toolbox, municipal capacity building	High - municipalities in vocational inclusion
Disadvantage (turned into) Vantage – DI-Va (2022 - 2023)	KA210-ADU; EUR 60,000	International Down Syndrome Federation, Istanbul	Performing arts and dance training materials	High - dance and self-confidence (Unit 2.5)
Sounds of Our Hearts (2023 - 2025)	KA220-SCH; EUR 400,000	Hasan Tahsin Special Education Vocational School, İzmir	Music therapy guide, song database, festival	High - arts-based inclusion
Physical Therapy as a Tool for ... Youngsters with ASD (2022 - 2024)	KA220-SCH; EUR 250,000	Düzce Provincial Directorate of Education (coordinator) and two special schools	Online handbook and platform for teachers and families	High - physical activity and social-emotional skills
Connect Life With Sport (2022 - 2024)	KA220-SCH; EUR 48,253	Düzce Directorate, Düzce University, İzle Autism Sports Club	Three-level sports programme, assessment form, handbook	Medium - method transferable, younger age group

Project	Programme / grant	Partners from BG / TR	Key outputs	Relevance for Inclusion360
SEED4SEN (2025–2026)	KA210-SCH; EUR 60,000	Ahmet Kutsi Tecer Special Education Vocational School; Hamza Yerlikaya Secondary School	E-book, ecological portfolio, teacher workshops	Medium - experiential learning

Two further national projects in Türkiye were identified as highly relevant: **Sporda +1 İz** (Down Syndrome Association of Türkiye) and **Development of Physical Activity and Basic Life Skills for High-School Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities** (Konya Provincial Directorate of National Education, TÜBİTAK 4008, June 2026, 30 students, criterion-referenced checklists).

4.1. Gaps that Inclusion360 addresses

- Most projects address disability or special educational needs broadly; few focus specifically on **young people with intellectual disabilities aged 13 - 23**.
- Projects are usually **sector-specific** (sport, arts, communication, vocational training). Few combine life skills, social participation, digital skills and work in one coherent pathway.
- Several projects create tools for **professionals or volunteers** (for example DigiLAB) rather than learning content designed **directly for young people** with intellectual disabilities.
- Few projects report **age- and disability-specific outcomes** or long-term results such as employment or independent living.

5. Inter-coaching insights

The inter-coaching process gathered practical experience directly from representatives of selected projects and organisations. The discussions focused on three questions: **What worked in practice? What challenges were encountered? Which methods could be transferred to the Special Virtual Academy?** Particular attention was given to accessibility, engagement, family and professional involvement, sustainability, evaluation and digital or blended adaptation.

5.1. Findings from Türkiye

IC-1 TÖSSFED - DigiLAB / Together We Play

What worked	Practical, activity-based learning; sport as a natural setting for communication and teamwork; combining face-to-face activities with short digital modules; training volunteers and coaches beforehand
Challenges	Different levels of understanding and support needs – no “one size fits all”; long or theoretical digital content reduces engagement; digital learning cannot replace practice
Transferable approach	Short, visual, practical units combined with real-life activities; demonstrations rather than long texts; guidance for facilitators
Use in the SVA	Each online unit linked to a practical challenge; a facilitator guidance component; a “learn → see → practise → participate → feedback” sequence

IC-2 Konya Provincial Directorate of National Education - Physical Activity and Basic Life Skills

What worked	Combining physical activity with life skills kept students active; cycling, games, drama and crafts supported communication, problem solving and independence; checklists helped monitor individual progress
Challenges	Different learning speeds and support needs; need for repeated practice; transferring skills into daily life after a short project
Transferable approach	Small, achievable steps; demonstrations and repetition; different levels of support; simple checklists; practice in real environments
Use in the SVA	Short life-skill challenges with visual instructions; progress checklists for young people, families and facilitators

IC-3 Down Syndrome Association of Türkiye - Sporda +1 İz

What worked	Natural peer interaction through joint sport with non-disabled high-school students; disability-awareness and communication activities alongside sport
Challenges	Placing young people together is not enough – participants need preparation, guidance and facilitation; activities must be flexible

Transferable approach	Peer-based inclusive sport; short preparation of peers; adapted rules and roles so that everyone contributes
Use in the SVA	Peer-supported challenges; short modules for peers and volunteers; “learn together → practise together → reflect together”

5.2. Common lessons

- Short, visual and practical content works better than long or theoretical material.
- Digital learning must be connected to practice in real settings.
- Activities must be adaptable to different levels of support.
- Peers, facilitators and families need preparation to support inclusion.
- Simple monitoring tools make progress visible and support evaluation.

6. National workshop summaries

According to the project plan, each partner organises a national workshop with at least 15 participants from different stakeholder groups to share and discuss the results of the mapping.

6.1. Türkiye - stakeholder consultations

In Türkiye, the findings were discussed in a series of consultations with **17 stakeholders** from public institutions, educational organisations, NGOs, sports organisations, special education professionals and other relevant actors. The consultations took place at different stages of the research. Participants discussed the legal and policy framework, the mapped services and good practices, the results of EU and national projects and the inter-coaching findings.

Main conclusions

- Important services exist, but transitions between education, social services, independent living, vocational preparation and employment are **not sufficiently integrated**. More systematic and individualised transition mechanisms are needed after secondary education.
- **Sport and physical activity** are powerful tools for communication, self-confidence, teamwork, friendships and community participation, especially when young people with and without disabilities take part together.
- Educational activities should be **practical and connected to everyday life**. Priority areas: independent living, communication, social skills, self-advocacy, digital skills and safe internet use, vocational preparation and community participation.
- The SVA should not be a conventional online platform. Content should be **short, simple, visual, step-by-step, repeatable and adaptable**, and reinforced through practice at home, at school, in sport and in the community, with families, educators, coaches, youth workers and peers.

Key statements from the consultations

“The connection between education, social services and employment needs to be strengthened so that the skills young people acquire during education can continue to be developed and used after they leave school.”

“Sport supports not only the physical development of young people, but also their ability to communicate, build friendships and participate more actively in community life.”

“A digital education programme should be as simple and visual as possible; however, learning should not remain limited to the screen and should be applicable in everyday life.”

“Young people with special needs have different needs. Therefore, we should not assume that the same content and the same pace of learning will be suitable for everyone.”

“Increasing activities in which young people with and without disabilities participate together can create greater opportunities for social inclusion than organising separate activities.”

6.2. Bulgaria – national workshop

The national workshop in Bulgaria was organised by the You Are Part of Us Foundation in Sofia and brought together 15 participants: representatives of sports and youth clubs that include young people with intellectual disabilities, and tutors (trainers, mentors and educators) who work directly with young people with intellectual disabilities aged 13 - 23. The results of the mapping were presented to the participants, including the policy landscape, the community practices in Bulgaria and Türkiye, the EU projects and the inter-coaching findings. The presentation was followed by a facilitated group discussion and a short session on the planned educational program and the Special Virtual Academy.

Main discussion points

- **Clubs as places of inclusion** - club representatives described sport and leisure clubs as one of the few settings where young people with intellectual disabilities meet peers outside school and the family. They noted that participation often depends on the personal commitment of individual coaches and volunteers rather than on stable support.
- **Preparation of coaches, tutors and peers** - participants agreed that including young people with intellectual disabilities in mainstream club activities requires preparation: simple instructions, adapted rules, more time and an understanding of different support needs. Several tutors said they had learned these skills “on the job”, without specific training.
- **The gap after school and after 18** - tutors confirmed the finding of the study that many young people lose regular activities, contacts and routines when they leave school, and that the move from children’s to adult services is a difficult period for families.
- **Life skills before work** - tutors emphasised that many young people need practical everyday skills - time, money, travel, communication and safety before they can benefit from vocational training or a workplace. The social pastry shop was discussed as an example of learning these skills in a real environment.
- **Families** - participants stressed that parents need information and practical guidance on how to support their children at home and how to allow them more independence.

Consensus findings

- Sport, movement and club activities are an effective and motivating route to social inclusion and should be part of the educational program.
- Activities that bring together young people with and without disabilities work best when peers, coaches and tutors are prepared in advance.
- The program should focus on practical life skills, communication and safety, and should connect learning with real places in the community.
- Coaches and tutors need short, practical training materials and ready-to-use activities.
- Continuity of activities after school and after age 18 is a priority for young people and their families.

Key statements from the discussion

The statements below summarise views expressed by participants (paraphrased, not verbatim).

A club representative: in the club, young people are first of all athletes and team members – that is where inclusion starts.

A tutor: before a young person is ready for work, they need to be able to get to the place, manage their money and ask for help.

A tutor: an online platform will only work if every lesson is followed by something the young person actually does.

Recommendations for the educational program and the SVA

Recommendation from the workshop	How it is taken into account
Include sport and movement as a regular part of learning	Move! activity in every module; Unit 2.5 Move and Express; Unit 3.2 Sport and an Active Life; Deck I - Move
Provide ready-to-use activities for clubs and tutors	Printable card decks, board game, group session plan and the Methodological Framework for Professionals
Prepare peers and coaches for mixed activities	Card games for mixed groups; tips for supporters in every unit; train-the-trainer session
Focus on everyday skills: time, money, travel, communication, safety	Module 1 My Independent Day and Module 2 Me and Others
Keep the Academy short, visual and mobile-friendly	Units of about 20 minutes, picture stories, easy-to-read texts, large buttons, mobile use
Link online learning with real activities	TRY IT! challenge after every unit; Market Day; about 60% hands-on learning time
Support families	Supporter background and tips in every unit; home picture kits; family meetings

7. Conclusions and recommendations

7.1. Conclusions

The mapping shows that both Bulgaria and Türkiye have a range of services, programmes and good practices that support young people with intellectual disabilities in education, social participation, sport, independent living and employment. The **main gap is not the absence of good practices**, but the fact that they are fragmented across sectors, institutions, projects and stages of young people's lives – particularly in the transition from school to adult life.

The most effective approaches are based on **learning by doing, real-life practice, peer interaction, sport and physical activity, accessible digital learning and community participation**. Digital tools are most valuable when they support practical experience rather than replacing it.

The learning path recommended by the study

Accessible learning → Practical experience → Peer interaction → Community participation → Greater independence

7.2. Recommendations for the educational program and the SVA (Activity 3)

Recommendation	How it is implemented in Inclusion360
Focus on transition skills for ages 13 - 23	Three modules: My Independent Day, Me and Others, Active in My Community (13 units)
Short, visual, step-by-step content	Each unit about 20 minutes, one idea per screen, picture stories, easy-to-read texts, no long theory for learners
Connect the screen with real life	Every unit ends with a TRY IT! challenge; about 60% of learning time is hands-on
Use sport, movement and arts	Move! activity in every module; Unit 2.5 Move and Express; Unit 3.2 Sport and an Active Life
Peer interaction and mixed groups	Card games and challenges designed for young people with and without disabilities
Relationships, safety and self-advocacy	Units 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 (circle of relationships, No - Go - Tell, Stop - Block - Tell)
Pathway to work	Units 3.3 My First Job and 3.4 Our Small Social Business; Market Day based on the social pastry shop model
Adaptable to different support needs	Two levels in every unit; adaptation guidance for professionals
Prepare families and facilitators	Background and tips in every unit; Methodological Framework for Professionals; family meetings
Measure outcomes	Progress checklists, step-by-step task scoring and three personal goals per young person

7.3. Recommendations for policy (input for the Policy Recommendation Guidelines)

- **Individual transition planning** from about age 14, linking education, vocational training, employment services, social services and independent living in one plan.
- **Automatic links between schools and employment services**, so that graduates of special and vocational schools are referred to job coaching and supported employment.
- **Sustainable funding for supported employment and job coaching**, which continue after a young person starts work.
- **Continuity of services at age 18**, avoiding gaps between children's and adult services.
- **Inclusion in mainstream youth, sport and cultural services**, following models such as unified sports and accessible youth centres.
- **Disaggregated data** by age group and type of disability for education, employment and social services.
- **Participation of young people** with intellectual disabilities in designing and evaluating services, using easy-to-read and accessible methods.
- **Sustainability of project results**, by integrating successful project tools into regular services of schools, municipalities and NGOs.

Annex 1. Practice data collection template

Field	Information
Name of the practice	
Organisation and type (NGO, municipality, state body, school, enterprise)	
Location	
Target age group and types of disability	
Activities and how they support social inclusion	
Funding source (state, EU, donations, mixed)	
Evaluations or outcome data	
Contact person (for inter-coaching)	
Transferable element for Inclusion360	

Annex 2. Sources

A. International and European framework

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B. Bulgaria - legislation

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- Social Services Act (Закон за социалните услуги). State Gazette No. 24 of 22 March 2019, in force since 1 July 2020, as amended.
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- Social and Solidarity Economy Enterprises Act (Закон за предприятията на социалната и солидарна икономика). State Gazette No. 91 of 2 November 2018, as amended.

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D. Türkiye - legislation

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- Regulation on Sheltered Workplaces (Korumalı İşyerleri Hakkında Yönetmelik). Official Gazette of 27 January 2022.

- Regulation on Home Care Assistance (Evde Bakım Yardımı Yönetmeliği). Official Gazette of 26 May 2023.

E. Türkiye - strategies, programmes and data

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- İŞKUR - Turkish Employment Agency. Disability employment statistics (May 2026); Supported Employment Projects; Accessible Workforce Adaptation Programme (2025).
- Ministry of Family and Social Services, Directorate General for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly (EYHGM). Data on Hope Houses (February 2026), care institutions (April 2026), day care centres and disability statistics bulletins.
- Ministry of National Education. Data on Resource Rooms (December 2025) and Special Education Vocational School programmes.

F. Partner research materials

- FESGDER (2026). National research report - Türkiye: policies, community practices, EU projects, inter-coaching and stakeholder consultations (Inclusion360, Activity 2). The report contains the full list of official legislative and institutional sources used for Türkiye.
- You Are Part of Us Foundation (2026). National notes - Bulgaria: policy framework, institutional programmes and community practices (Inclusion360, Activity 2).
- Inclusion360 research guide for Activity 2 (Tasks 2.1 - 2.3).

G. Other public sources

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- Mondaq (2019). Deadlines approaching under the new Persons with Disabilities Act (Bulgaria). mondaq.com
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INCLUSION360

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Project № 2025-1-BG01-KA210-YOU-000363757



Co-funded by
the European Union