

TOPSIDE+

Training Opportunities for Peer Supporters
with Intellectual Disabilities in Europe: New horizons



Easy-to-read Curriculum



Inclusion Europe

www.peer-support.eu

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What is written in this publication is the opinion of the authors.

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INTRODUCTION

The word “**peer**” is not used very often.
Being included means that you are part of something.
When we talk about inclusion,
we are talking about taking part in society:
Being able to go to school, to be employed,
to have a training, political participation like everybody else.
An **inclusive** society is one that gives
the same opportunities to all citizens.


For a long time people with disabilities
were excluded from society.
This happens even today.
They did not have the opportunity to take part
and to contribute.
The TOPSIDE project is build up in a way
that all participants will be included.
They will feel valued.
They will be able to participate
and share their own life experiences.

This text helps people with an own experience
of having an intellectual disability
to work as Trainers in the TOPSIDE project.

You can find all our materials
on the website www.peer-support.eu.
Under “Languages” you can choose

- English or
- Easy-to-read.

Sometimes we use difficult words.
If they are in this text they will be in **bold**
the first time they appear.
But some are words that you may hear or read
on the TOPSIDE curriculum and website.
They are explained at the end of the text.

 English
 Easy-to-Read
 Deutsch
 Leicht lesbar
 Français
 Facile à lire
 Lithuanian
 Lengvai skaitymas
 Português
 Leitura fácil
 Español
 Română

UNDERSTANDING “PEERS”

The word “**peer**” is not used very often.

In our project it means a person who has some of the same life experiences as you.

Peers often understand you better because they share the same experiences. They often understand better how you feel. You often feel more comfortable to talk with them than with other people. A peer can become someone you trust. But they are not always close friends.

In our project, we use “peers” mainly for other people with intellectual or learning disabilities.

WHAT IS “PEER SUPPORT”?

Peer support is when you get support from someone like you. When persons with an own experience of having an intellectual disability support other persons with an intellectual disability, we call them “Peer Supporter”.

Everybody can be a Peer Supporter. But to give the support in the best way, they need some training.

THE TOPSIDE WAY OF TRAINING

In the project TOPSIDE we have a way of training to help people with disabilities to support their peers.

They learn how to use their own experiences to help other people.

They also learn to listen, to understand and to talk.

For this, we have many different exercises.

Some of the exercises are very simple and others are difficult.

We found out that it is very good if people with intellectual disabilities themselves give part of the training.

That is why we always have 2 trainers for the exercises:

- 1 trainer with an own experience of having an intellectual disability. We call them “Peer Trainers”.
- 1 trainer with no own experience of having a disability. We call them simply “trainers”.

They always work in a team together.

This text is for the “Peer Trainers”

to help them to understand their tasks.

There are always 4 to 8 participants in one training.

There should not be more participants so that everyone has a chance to talk.

After the participants have completed their training, they become Peer Supporters.

Then they are ready to help other peers.

Often they have a party to celebrate their success.

THE BASIS OF THE TOPSIDE WAY OF TRAINING

There are a few things you need to know before you start as a Peer Trainer. They are the basis of the TOPSIDE way of training.

THE TOPSIDE CURRICULUM

A **curriculum** is a list of everything that people need to learn to be able to do some things. The TOPSIDE Curriculum is what people need to learn to be a Peer Supporter. It's about the **skills** you need in order to support others.

THE TOPSIDE EXERCISES


TOPSIDE has collected many exercises that you can do during the trainings. There are more than 60 different exercises. They help the participants to learn different skills.


You can find the exercises at the website www.Peer-Support.eu

For example:

- Listening to people.
- Help people to take own decisions.
- Help people to express themselves better.

Listening skills Print PDF

 **Why should you do this exercise?**
Develop your listening skills.
Listen and pay attention to what others say.
Learn how to repeat what other people have said.

 **What can be the role of a Peer-Trainer with intellectual disability?**
This exercise is difficult.
Peer-Trainers should do this exercise at first for themselves with the Trainer.
Like this, they can cooperate well and give good examples.
Peer-Trainers can show together with the other Trainer how the exercise works.

You do not need to use all the exercises. But it would be good if you use exercises that develop the different skills.

To be a peer supporter you need to have some skills that you can develop for yourself with the TOPSIDE exercises.

THE TOPSIDE TRAININGS

There are 4 to 8 participants in each training. Participants will need a number of trainings to reach their aim of being a Peer Supporter.



The Trainer without a disability will run the trainings together with you.


You have to become a strong team to do that.


Together, the Trainer and the Peer Trainer select some of the exercises they want to use during a training.

Each exercise has a part in **easy-to-read** language. That part can help you to select the exercises you want to do.

Blindfold support

 [Print](#)  [PDF](#)

 **Why should you do this exercise?**
To learn how to provide and receive (accept) support.
It will help you to understand the role of a peer-supporter.

 **What can be the role of a Peer-Trainer with intellectual disability?**
The Peer-Trainer can prepare and distribute the obstacles for the obstacle course.
They can also be the leader in the first round to show the group how it works.
They can provide assistance if needed.

Then it is very important that you prepare the training well together with your trainer colleague.

SKILLS TO DEVELOP

The TOPSIDE Curriculum is a skill based curriculum. This means that you need to have specific skills to achieve the training goal – to be a peer supporter.

We have divided these skills into 3 groups. They are all really important if you want to give good support. The TOPSIDE exercises are made to develop these skills.

INCLUSIVE SKILLS

Inclusive skills are about the ability to understand that we are all different and that we all have a **role** in society. They are about being able to understand the importance of taking part in society and to be included in all areas of life.

Inclusive Skills

These skills are about the values of inclusion. They help people to think about the person as most important. They explain about which roles are valued in society and what it means to be a citizen in your community.

- [Importance of informed decisions](#)
- [Knowing my rights and duties](#)
- [Tools that help people to plan their future](#)
- [Understand and accept that people are different](#)
- [Understanding inclusion in different life situations](#)
- [Understanding people learn differently](#)
- [Understanding socially valid roles](#)
- [Understanding that each person has their own rhythm](#)
- [Understanding that some people may have more power than others](#)
- [Understanding the importance of taking part](#)

Peer Supporters can help their peers to understand that we all can take part in society. We can be workers, neighbours, parents, sons or daughters, trainers, friends, and much more. All these different things are called “roles”. One person can have many different roles.

We all have people in our lives whom we value and who value us. By exploring different life situations people will understand what it means to be included.

PEER TO PEER SKILLS

Peer to peer skills are the skills you need to communicate in a good way and to understand the feelings of others.

Peer to Peer Skills

These skills are about better communication with other people.

They are about how to react to people.

They are about showing that you can feel what others are feeling.

These skills work if you are alone with another person or in a group.

- [Communication](#)
- [Confidentiality](#)
- [Development of roles in society](#)
- [Finding out about another person's situation \(fear, help, need\)](#)
- [Find out about support needs](#)
- [Giving meaning to life stories](#)
- [Looking at stories in a positive way](#)
- [Public and private information](#)
- [Understanding my role as peer supporter](#)

A good peer supporter is able to give meaning to the life stories shared by others and to use them as a tool for **inclusion**. They are able to identify the emotions of others and to understand them. Peer Supporters will learn how to listen, gather important information, react to others, clarify the information and to respect **privacy**.

PRACTICAL SKILLS

Practical skills are the skills that you acquire by your own life experiences. This means that the peer supporters know how they can use their life experiences to help and support others.

Practical Skills

These skills are about real experiences from different areas of life. For example: home, rights, or work. They try to explain how the experiences relate to inclusion. Through this knowledge, peer supporters are able to support others.

- [Asking for help when making decisions](#)
- [Good and bad decisions](#)
- [How to get help](#)
- [How to use support](#)
- [Learning from decisions](#)
- [The power to choose and to make decisions](#)
- [Understanding different kinds of support](#)

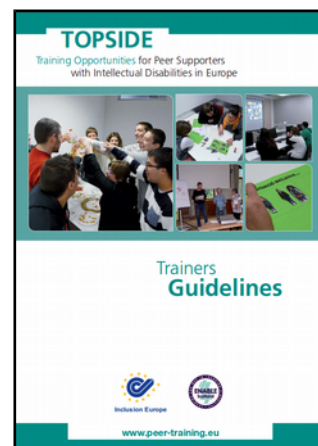
They can use their own experiences in different areas of life, like work, independent living, personal relations, political participation, rights and other things. By sharing their life experiences they will be able to show how to be included and respected.

For example, participants will learn how to take decisions, how they can learn from mistakes, or the importance of gathering information before taking a decision and where to find help if needed.

TRAINER AND PEER-TRAINER – WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY DO

The training sessions in TOPSIDE are always done by 2 trainers:

- One of the trainers has an own experience with having an intellectual disability
Because the trainees will be persons with a disability we call this trainer a **peer-trainer**.
- The other trainer has no own experience with having a disability.
Guidelines for Trainers are available at the TOPSIDE website www.peer-support.eu.



The trainer and the peer-trainer will have different roles during the training.

The peer-trainers decide what they feel comfortable to do during the training.

We have identified some of the roles they may want to do.

You can read about that below.

One thing that they should always do together is the planning of the training sessions.

They can have just one or several roles during the training.

They can have different roles in different exercises.

For example, if the exercise is using a situation that the Peer-Trainer knows very well, he or she can feel more comfortable to lead the training and have a more active role.

But they can also just welcome participants or help with the distribution of materials. The Peer-Trainer decides together with the Trainer about the different roles they will have during the training.

THE TASKS OF THE PEER-TRAINER

Trainers and Peer-Trainers have the same main task: to teach the participants about Peer Support.

But during a training they can do different things. Before the trainings, they should talk about who does what in each exercise.

It is important to understand that their tasks can change for different exercises. One exercise can be led by the Peer Trainer. In another exercise, he or she can contribute their experiences.

We have thought about some of the tasks the Peer-Trainer can have during a training.

For example:

- Welcome people and make sure they are comfortable.
- Explain about Peer-Support.
- Explain about the exercises.
- Support the discussion with own experiences, giving feed-back to the participants and valuing their own life experiences.
- Participate in **role plays**.
- Run a whole exercise independently.

These are just some of the roles a peer-trainer can have during the trainings.

For each of the exercises on the TOPSIDE website we have given some ideas about what the Peer-Trainer can do.

You may think about different ones.



What can be the role of a Peer-Trainer with intellectual disability?

When preparing the training session, the Peer Trainers should do this exercise themselves with the trainer. It may help if you have some support materials. The Peer Trainer and the Trainer can do a role play. The Peer Trainers can talk about a personal problem and present different solutions that they found. The Peer Trainer should make sure that the others can speak and may help the trainer to moderate.

HOW TO PLAN THE TRAINING SESSIONS

It is important that Trainer and Peer Trainer always plan a training together.

They should first look at the skills that the participants already have.

If the participants are new, they can benefit from all the TOPSIDE skills.

If the participants have done some trainings already, the situation is different.

Then the Trainers can choose a new skill or decide to do a trained skill again, to help participants to remember.

On the TOPSIDE website at www.peer-support.eu there is a list of all the skills that can be learned.

Peer to Peer Skills

- [Communication](#)
- [Confidentiality](#)
- [Development of roles in society](#)
- [Finding out about another person's situation \(fear, help, need\)](#)
- [Find out about support needs](#)
- [Giving meaning to life stories](#)
- [Looking at stories in a positive way](#)
- [Public and private information](#)
- [Understanding my role as peer supporter](#)

Inclusive Skills

- [Importance of informed decisions](#)
- [Knowing my rights and duties](#)
- [Tools that help people to plan their future](#)
- [Understand and accept that people are different](#)
- [Understanding inclusion in different life situations](#)
- [Understanding people learn differently](#)
- [Understanding socially valid roles](#)
- [Understanding that each person has their own rhythm](#)
- [Understanding that some people may have more power than others](#)
- [Understanding the importance of taking part](#)

Practical Skills

- [Asking for help when making decisions](#)
- [Good and bad decisions](#)
- [How to get help](#)
- [How to use support](#)
- [Learning from decisions](#)
- [The power to choose and to make decisions](#)
- [Understanding different kinds of support](#)

For each session of 1 hour,
you should do only 1 or 2 exercises.

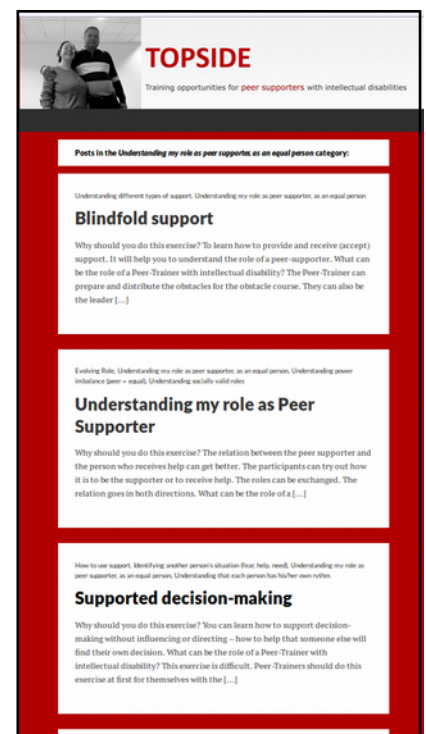
When you have selected the skill together,
you find on the TOPSIDE website some exercises
to train this skill.

Both Trainers should look at the exercises
and speak about which one they like most.
All exercises have an easy-to-read summary
to explain what it is about.

The exercise has also some ideas about
what you as Peer Trainer
can do in the exercise.

The Trainers should speak about this
and see if they have other ideas.

Then they should agree on who does what
during the training.



The image shows a screenshot of the TOPSIDE website. At the top, there is a header with the logo 'TOPSIDE' and the tagline 'Training opportunities for peer supporters with intellectual disabilities'. Below the header, there is a list of exercises. The first exercise is 'Blindfold support', which includes a summary of the exercise and a 'Why should you do this exercise?' section. The second exercise is 'Understanding my role as Peer Supporter', also with a summary and a 'Why should you do this exercise?' section. The third exercise is 'Supported decision-making', with a summary and a 'Why should you do this exercise?' section. The website has a red border and a white background.

Together you prepare then the training.
Make sure you have
all the materials you need.







And most important:

Don't be nervous!

EVALUATION OF THE TRAINING

If you run a training,
you will want to know if people liked it or not.
You also should think about
how you liked the training yourself.
This is called an **evaluation**.

At the end of the seminar
you should always ask the participants
how they liked it.
To help you with that, you can prepare
papers like this
or draw a table on the board.

	 Green	 Yellow	 Orange
 Welcome			
 Training Material			
 Exercise 1: _____			

You can come up with your own
questions,
or use the following:

- Welcome
- Organisation
- Training material
- Training location
- How were the Trainers
- How did you like the group
- One question about each exercise that you did

Participants can make crosses
or put stickers
to show their opinion.

You should then talk with the participants
about the results.







If your training is several days, you should do this
at the end of each day.

A different question is how you and the Trainer liked the training. This is important to learn from experience and to do even better next time. You prepared the session together, therefore you should evaluate the session together. You do that without the participants, just the 2 of you.

The following questions can help you to evaluate:

- How was your mood?
- How did you manage the time?
- Did the participants take part in the session as you thought they would do?
- Which parts did they find good, difficult or boring?
- Which parts did you find good or difficult?
- What about the cooperation within your team?
- Were you pleased with your role (or your tasks)?
- What did you learn from the session?
- What should you change or improve?

You can again use a little table like this to capture your thoughts.

				YOUR COMMENTS
 Your mood				
 Did we follow the programme?				
 Exercise 1: _____				

AFTER THE TRAINING: THE MENTOR

Sometimes the peer supporter may need help to support their peers.

This may happen with some special areas of life, like when the topic has some legal issues.

This may be the case with situations of violence and abuse.

This is when they can receive support from a **mentor**.

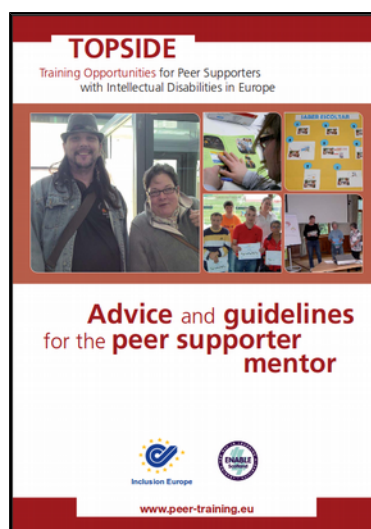
The mentor is someone who will help the peer supporter to see how his or hers life experiences can help others.

A mentor should not give personal opinions about the way the peer supporter should help.

A mentor should encourage the peer supporter to think about their own personal experiences and how they can help others.

The mentor should only help as long as the peer supporter feels that he or she needs this support.

We have Guidelines for Mentors available at the TOPSIDE website www.peer-support.eu.



ANNEX: EXPLANATIONS OF DIFFICULT WORDS

A

Ability to self-reflection

It means that you are able to think about who you are and why do you do what you do.

B

Be part of the community

It means that you belong to a group of people. This group of people have something in common with you. Community can mean your family, your school mates, or the people who live in the same area as you.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming means that you think about a topic and you speak out loudly what comes into your mind. Brainstorming means to share ideas with others. Some people might not like your ideas. All ideas are valuable, but some ideas may be better than others. It is important to listen to each other's ideas.

C

Citizenship

People are citizens of the country where they were born or where they are living in. Citizenship means you belong to a certain country. All people who have the nationality of a country are called citizens. Citizens have a passport to prove they belong to this country. All citizens of a country have rights and duties. Right is for example the right to vote at elections.

Duty is for example
that you have to be registered at your community.

Active Citizen

Active citizen is a member of a country who is interested in participating in the community.

Active citizen is someone who is interested in politics and cares about how to make things better for the community.

Communication

Communication is about exchanging information with each other.

Communication can happen between two people or more people.

We can communicate by speaking or writing.

There are other forms of communication as well.

People can communicate by looking at each other or pointing on things.

Competence

Competence means that you are able to do something.

Competence means

that you have good skills to do something right.

If you have competence in something

it means you are good at it.

Competence is called talent in other words.

Confidentiality

Sometimes you do not want other people to get information about you.

It is possible to share some things with only a few people.

These people should not tell

what you share with them to others.

Confidentiality means

that only people that you choose will know your story.

It means that the information you share stays with the people you told.
People should respect each other and only share things that they are supposed to.

Contribute to society

Contributing to society means that you do something to the community you belong to.
You contribute if you want your community to be better.

Curriculum

Curriculum is an educational programme that helps people to become peer supporters.
The curriculum includes exercises.
There are many exercises in the curriculum.
If you do these exercises you will learn new things.
The exercises help to improve your skills.
The exercises help people with intellectual disabilities to become peer supporters.
The curriculum is available on the Topside website:
<http://www.peer-support.eu/>

D

Database

Database means that a lot of information is collected together.
This information is called data.
The data can be stored in a computer, or in the internet.
You can access the database and read the information.

Decision making

All people can make their own choices.
This means that you can decide what you want.
You can decide for example about where to live.

You can also decide about what you want to eat for dinner.
There are easy and difficult decisions to make.
We need to make decisions every day.
You do not always make a good decision.
People sometimes make bad decisions.
Bad decision is something that you regret.
You can ask for other people's opinion when making your decisions.

Diversity

Diversity means that there are many different people or things together.
All people are very different from each other.
It is great to have different things together.
Differences are interesting.
We can learn a lot from others who are different from us.

E

Easy-to-read

People with intellectual disabilities can find it hard to understand things and to learn new things.
If people with intellectual disabilities do not get good information,
they will be left out.
This is why it is important for people with intellectual disabilities
to have information that is clear and easy to understand.
To do this well, you have to follow standards.

Empathy

Empathy means that you understand how someone else feels.
It means that you can feel what someone else feels.
It means that you can imagine
being in a similar situation than this person.

Evaluation

If you run a seminar,
you will want to know if people liked it or not.
You also should think about
how you liked the seminar yourself.
This is called an evaluation.
There are some tools to help you with an evaluation.

F

Formal support

Support means to get help from someone.
Formal support means that you get help
from a guardian or from another person whose job is
to support persons with intellectual disabilities.
You should have the possibility to get help
only with the things you cannot do alone.

Informal support

Support means to get help from someone.
Informal support means that you get support from someone
you trust.
Your supporter can be a friend, a family member, a
neighbour or anyone you want to get support from.
Informal support should be free.

G

Guidelines

Guidelines give you good ideas about how to do things.
Guidelines are not rules, but an advice to know how is the
best to do things.

I

Inclusion

Inclusion means you are part of something.
Inclusion means you can fully participate.
Inclusion means you are a completely accepted person.

Informal talk

Informal talk means that you talk to someone without planning what you will say.

Informal talk is with someone you know.

It can happen at any time and everywhere.

Informal talk is not stressful, you don't have to prepare for it.

Informed decisions

Informed decision means

that you have a lot of information about the subject.

You can remember and use this information when you make your decision.

It is easier to make a decision

if you have information about the topic.

L

Life experiences

Life experiences are things you experience during your life.

It can be everything you learnt,

or anything you saw.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning programmes are courses where adults can learn new things.

Lifelong learning of adult people

is also called adult education.

At the moment, lifelong learning programmes are often hard for people with intellectual disabilities to take part in.

M

Mentor

The mentor is a person who can support peer supporters if they have any questions.

The mentor is a person you can turn for advice or help when you support other people.

The mentor will help peer supporters to think about how to offer support to their peers.

The mentor does not tell you what to do.

The mentor helps to think about the choices.

Methodology

There is a way how you are doing things.

Methodology is about the rules that you follow when you do something.

It means you have an idea about how is the best to do things.

Motivation

Motivation means

that the person is interested in doing something.

You have a reason why you do something.

This reason is the motivation

why you participate in something.

O

Open attitude

Attitude is a way of thinking and feeling about something or somebody.

Attitude can be positive or negative.

Open attitude means that you do not make judgements before getting to know something or somebody.

P

Pantomime

Pantomime is when you express yourself with your face.

Pantomime means that you do not communicate with words, but show your feelings with your face.

You can express many feelings with your face.

You can look angry, happy, nervous, sad or show other feelings.

Peer

A peer is a person who shares similar situations with you.

A peer is a person like you.

A peer can understand how you feel.

A peer goes through similar situations as you.

A peer doesn't need to be your friend
or member of your family.

For persons with intellectual disabilities,
peers are other persons with intellectual disabilities.

Peer Support

Peer support is about

getting support from people you can trust,

getting support from people you can understand.

It is about support from people with intellectual disabilities
who share common experiences with you.

Peer support is about being included in your community.

It is about getting support from people like you.

Peer support is all about people helping each other.

Person-centred approach

Everything we do has to care about the needs of the person.

Planning tool

A tool is a device that you can use to create something.

A planning tool means a useful object or idea

that can help you to plan an activity or an event.

When you plan an activity or event you think about how it
should happen.

You plan the details with a planning tool.

Private

Private is something only for you and not for everyone else.

If some information is private,

you are the only one who should know.

If something is not private, it is public.
Public is for everyone, private is only for you.

Privacy

Privacy means that you can be yourself and not with others.
Other people do not pay attention to what you are doing.

R

Raise awareness about rights

It means to let people better know about human rights.
Rights are things you can do in society.
It is important that people know what are their rights.

Role

Role is what you should do in certain situations.
Role means what others expect from you
how you should behave and what you should do.

Key roles

These are the most important roles.
Key roles really help other people in certain situations.

Social role

We have different roles in a community or in society.
Social role can be anything that you do
at home, at work, or during your free time.
When we have a social role,
people expect us to act in a certain way.
If your job is a gardener, people expect you
to take care of plants.
If you are a sister, people expect you
to be nice with your brother.

Role play

Role play is an exercise.

In a role play you act like someone else.
You have to imagine you are someone else and
do what normally this person is doing.

S

Skill

Skill is the ability to do something well.

If you have a skill to do something,
you are really good at that thing.

There are many different skills.

If you have a skill to cook, you can make tasty dishes.

If you have a skill to paint, you can paint nice pictures.

Peer to peer skills

Peer to peer skills are about how you communicate to one or
more persons.

It is also about reacting to what someone said or did.

It is about learning how to work with other people.

Inclusive skills

Inclusive skills are about inclusion
and person-centered thinking.

Person-centered thinking means
that everything we do

has to care about the needs of the person.

Inclusive skills enable you

to be an important citizen in your community.

It is about learning **inclusive values**

that help to live a good quality life.

Practical skills

Practical skills mean that you can support others
by telling them your experiences.

The experiences can be from different areas of your life.
It is about relating to your own
and to other people's experiences
and how to use these
when you give support to somebody.



Inclusion Europe



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