



Kluchi

– An Open Way for Inclusion

SHAREMUSIC
& PERFORMING ARTS

“Before participating in the project, I used to think that creativity of people with disabilities was something very simple, not to be taken seriously. Now things are changing – slowly but surely.

For me personally, as a person with disabilities, the main result of the project is awareness of my own responsibility both in creativity and in life. Having felt my own importance and significance for this world, it's not possible for me to return to a former self-image where I didn't take myself seriously.

The point of no return has been reached.”

Ilya Gorshkov

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Introduction

HOW CAN WE achieve an inclusive society where people with disabilities can fully participate and their voices are heard? How can inclusive creative work contribute to the development of inclusion in general? How do we ensure that the process of change is sustainable? These issues are equally relevant both in Sweden and in Russia, and they became the starting point for the *Kluchi* projects implemented in 2016–2021. The work is urgent from a broader perspective, stemming from the 2030 Agenda and the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities.

Within the framework of the *Kluchi* projects, new ideas were born. Consequently, the scope of work and its results became wider than they were originally planned. *Kluchi* became not only a project activity limited in time, but also a process of change that will continue.

In this booklet, we want to summarise the results and show what has been achieved over several years of work. What was done? What success did we achieve, and what problems did we face along the way? We hope that the experience of the *Kluchi* projects will inspire even more people to work towards increased inclusion.

Over the years, many people have been involved in the work. I want to express my deep gratitude to everyone who participated in the events, contributed and generously shared their knowledge and experience. Special thanks to partners, donors and all of you who in different ways made the implementation of the *Kluchi* projects possible.



*Sophia Alexandersson
Chef Executive and Artistic Director,
ShareMusic & Performing Arts*

About ShareMusic & Performing Arts

ShareMusic & Performing Arts, Swedish knowledge centre for artistic development and inclusion, is a development platform and a resource, which collaborates with the arts and cultural sector as well as the social and education sector and the academic world. It is a local, regional, national and international platform that supports and provides tools for sustainable inclusive work within the arts. ShareMusic offers collaboration, training and competence development that is adapted to participant's needs and wishes. All work is rights-based and follows the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also clearly tied to Agenda 2030 and the global development goals of inclusion and sustainable development. The fundamental idea is to work towards a society where all human beings should have the opportunity to express themselves as artists in a world where difference is seen as valuable.

Kluchi - An Open Way for Inclusion

Kluchi (The Keys to Creativity), Kluchi 2.0 and Kluchi 3.0 projects were aimed at making creativity, culture and art accessible to everyone, regardless of the individual background of each participant. Kluchi grew and grew. Four Russian and one Swedish municipalities, as well as a number of institutions, were involved in the implementation of three Kluchi projects during a period of five years.

INCLUSION IS NOT about special projects and performances for people with disabilities. Inclusion means that everyone has access to culture not only as a spectator, but also as equal participants in the creative process. Therefore, we chose the keys to creativity as the main concept of the project. These keys are in our own creative power. Today we are talking about art enriched by different means of expression. The goal is to have a society where all culture is inclusive, and therefore the concept of "inclusion" is no longer needed. We have not achieved this yet, but in the municipalities participating in the project we have made some great progresses.

The starting point for the *Kluchi* project was a workshop on creative processes at the Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation Centre for Children in Arkhangelsk. A composer and a choreographer worked with the children of the Centre. This meeting was so successful that it led to the first project *Kluchi - Keys to Creativity*, which was implemented in 2016–2018.

From the very beginning, the Rehabilitation Centre became a kind of hub for the project, and it

was there that the first inclusive groups appeared. The project also engaged various cultural, social and educational institutions in the Arkhangelsk region. After some time, these newly created inclusive groups were invited by professional stages to perform at concerts and festivals.

In a number of towns in the Arkhangelsk region, inclusive cultural meetings, festivals, courses and projects, focused on the local conditions and resources, were arranged. People with disabilities were no longer sent to specially arranged events and performances.

During the first *Kluchi* project, seminars and master classes were held for specialists in the field of rehabilitation, arts and culture. Study visits, courses, trainings and events targeted at youth with disabilities provided invaluable experience. The aim of the *Kluchi 2.0* project (April 2018 – February 2019) was that more practitioners of various genres of art started to work inclusively. The project included the Russian municipalities of Velsk, Kargopol, Krasnoborsk and Leshukonskoe, and the Swedish municipality of Örnsköldsvik. The emphasis was on building capacity and deepening knowledge, and



For the most part, the course of the project was defined during the problematization workshops and round table conversations that identified the challenges faced by the participating organizations.

on showing as many arts practitioners as possible what inclusive work in the field of culture and the arts might look like. New inclusive theatre, dance, art and other groups emerged. Schools and arts and culture centres, theatres, museums and libraries began to involve new categories of participants and spectators into their activities.

The central and turning point in our joint adventure called *Kluchi* was the *The Stage of Equal Opportunities* Festival in Arkhangelsk in 2019. It was also the grande finale of the *Kluchi* 2.0 project and became a manifestation of the power of inclusive creative work. The festival was arranged in one of the largest culture centres in Arkhangelsk, and the poster for the final performance looked like any advertisement for a major cultural event. Those in charge of the project noted that the attitude of the society had changed.

In the *Kluchi* 3.0 project (September 2019–March 2021), the questions were moved to the next level. It became essential to involve politicians, management, civil servants, school leaders, the media, those responsible for planning – those who do not work directly with culture and art but influence long-term priorities and planning of public life. With the support of ShareMusic, each municipality defined its own future strategies, principles and action plans for inclusive creative work. It was important to engage as many social levels as possible—from municipal councils to public organizations and individual culture professionals.

For the most part, the course of the project was defined during the problematization workshops

and round table conversations that identified the challenges faced by the participating organizations. Insufficient resources and knowledge, as well as structural barriers, continued to be identified as challenges. Despite the strong will of a large number of professionals and their selfless work aimed at promoting changes in the field of

inclusion, the development is hampered by the fact that good undertakings take place separately, the initiators do not share knowledge and experience with each other.

Those who work with these issues urge all culture professionals to go beyond their institutions and to unite in a common project that crosses the boundaries of genres and forms of art. >>

Today as usual The gardener with love Bent over to the peony ...

Elena Puzanova

Elena Puzanova, member of the inclusive dance group Prostor, Arkhangelsk

"Having started dancing in the *Prostor* group, I realized that there are no boundaries for creativity. I can dance and tell a story through my movements as any person. I can create! I can also read my own haiku from the stage using the Go Talk device. No one reads for me, I do it myself. This is very important. Participation in the *Kluchi* project allowed me to look at my capabilities from a different angle. It turned out that I cannot only dance, but also create music. This discovery inspired me!"



The haiku on this page is written by Elena specifically for this folder.

>> Problematization workshops have become a successful form of work to look ahead and summarize what has already been achieved.

These changes mean a lot for the people who are still excluded from the society due to prejudice and fear. When young people, regardless of whether they have disabilities or not, meet at events in the youth centre. When children in the kindergarten can see a fairy tale performance staged by an inclusive theatre group. When a theatre provides special places for wheelchairs in the auditorium and a museum offers audio description of its excursions. This is happening in many municipalities. Although it happens more slowly than we would like, the conversations and meetings during the *Kluchi 3.0* project were full of hope.

An important task for all project participants is not to lose the network of contacts after the end of the project, and to maintain all the connections created. The plans include visits to neighbouring municipalities and rural areas outside the district centre and meetings with representatives of culture and arts institutions. The pandemic has stalled many plans, but there is an interest from other cities and colleagues that needs to be met as soon as it is possible.

Due to the risk of contagion and related restrictions, most of the scheduled meetings were held online in 2020 and 2021. A series of webinars was organized and the project ended with a roundtable meeting in March 2021 with a strong focus on clearly articulated plans for the future.



Municipalities Maps and Facts



Arkhangelsk
population 347,000



Leshukonskoe
population 4,760 people
Total population of
the district is 6,050 people.



Kargopol
population 9,950 people
Total population of
the district is 16,640 people.



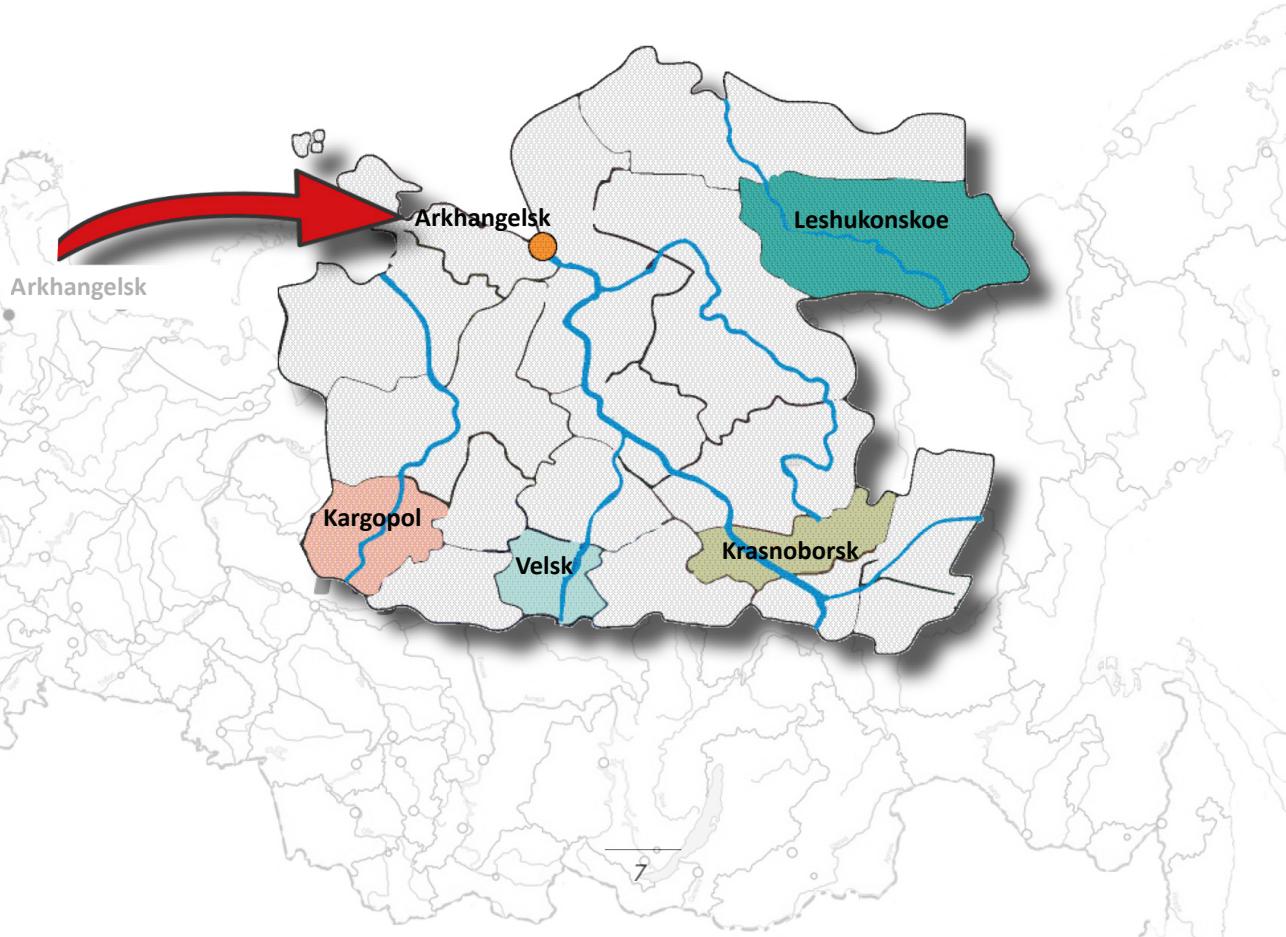
Krasnoborsk
population 4,840 people
Total population of
the district is 11,415 people.



Velsk
population 23,885 people
Total population of
the district is 48,390 people.



Örnsköldsvik
population 33,000
Total population of
the district is 55,800 people.



Comments about Kluch projects

Mikhail Kuzmenko, Deputy Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Development of the Arkhangelsk Region in 2017-2020

"Inclusion should be developed not only in the Arkhangelsk region, but throughout the country. The Russian Federation has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Inclusion is a very important area when working with the Convention. The most important thing is that people with disabilities do not stay at home, but go out into society, participate in various projects and public events. The experience shared by ShareMusic and the Swedish side is very important to us, because it allows us to gain knowledge of how things have already been done in the world, in Sweden in particular, and to implement this experience in our Arkhangelsk region.

We had a chance to see an amazing concert in 2019 at the *Stage of Equal Opportunities* Festival in Arkhangelsk. All participants were happy, they enjoyed the concert. When each of them went up on the stage, they discovered something new within themselves and found a new path in life.

I believe that cultural life and social services should become the core of these projects and enable all people to realize their ambitions."

Kristoffer Park, Chairman of the Board for Education of the Municipality of Örnsköldsvik

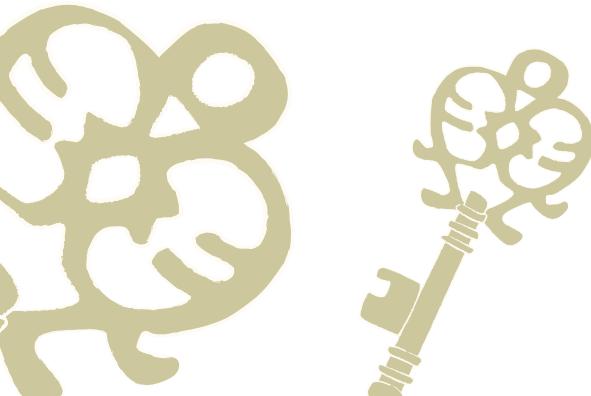
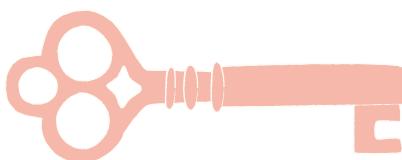
"A valuable lesson we have learned so far is that we all, whether in Sweden or in Russia, face the same problem – insufficient inclusion. The interest in developing inclusive creative work that encompasses people with disabilities is generally not very high, and we must change that. That is why this project has played and continues to play an important part in shaping our view on inclusion and culture. It should be self-evident that everyone is able to both create and to perceive the creativity of others.

Both the UN and WHO stress the importance of paying attention to the leisure time and involvement of people with disabilities in arts and culture. I hope and believe that this project has increased interest in inclusive creative work.

I hope that in Örnsköldsvik people with disabilities will be able to develop their creative skills not only for themselves, but also for the enrichment of our society. Everyone's equal right to participate in cultural life and create it should be self-evident."

Tatyana Ovchinnikova, Deputy Head for Social Policy of the Krasnoborsk Municipality

"Due to the coronavirus infection COVID-19 in 2020–2021, the project could not gain a wider spread in the district, as it had been originally planned, but thanks to the project a new inclusive creative team appeared in the village of Cherevkovskoye. Many teachers and culture professionals have completed advanced training courses on the topic of inclusion and are successfully applying the knowledge gained in their professional activities."



Viktor Sherygin, Member of the Arkhangelsk Regional Legislative Assembly, Head of the Velsk Municipality in 2013-2018

"As a result of the implementation of the *Kluchi* projects in our Velsk district, a team of like-minded people was formed. They managed to restructure the work of cultural institutions and direct it so that everyone can develop their creativity no matter ability or other preconditions. *The Rainbow of Life* Festival, held in the region for over 15 years, has become a festival of inclusive art. It has had this status for more than two years now. Teams and bands including both people with and without disabilities get on the stage on an equal footing.

Over the past five years, significant success has been achieved: festivals, workshops, classes on inclusive creativity with parents and children with disabilities are held, inclusive dance studios and musical groups are being created. The Centre for Traditional Folk Crafts conducts inclusive classes and workshops for everyone. One of the teachers has a disability and is a folk master (Russian honorary title for a skilled traditional craftsman).

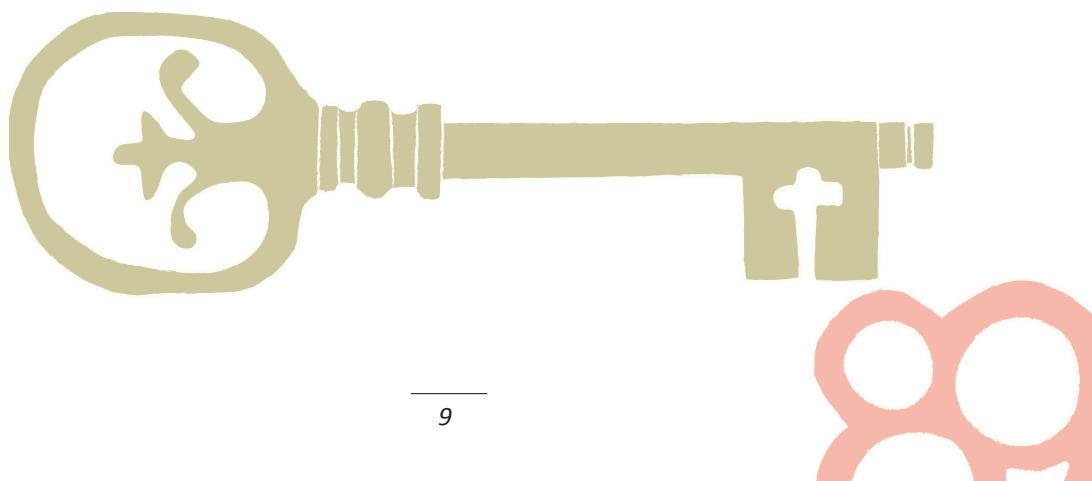
However, the main result of the project's activities on the territory of the Arkhangelsk region, including Velsk district, is a change in the public's attitude, a better understanding that we are all equal in our desire and opportunities to show our creativity skills and to learn new things."

Maria Loginova, Head of the Department for Culture, Youth, Sports and Tourism with the Administration of the Kargopol Municipality

"The *Kluchi* project is not quite usual for us. We regularly implement socio-cultural and sports projects, but we often forget about people with disabilities, or, conversely, put too much emphasis on them. Participation in this project showed that inclusion should be in everything – not only in special events, but in everyday life. Of course, we still have a lot of work to make the specialists in the cultural sphere rethink their methods of work. But the experience of Russian cities, as well as practices of other countries, inspire us for further development in this direction."

Valentina Ostroglazova, Head of the Department for Family and Youth Policy of the Administration of the Leshukonskoe Municipality, member of the project working group

"The participation of Leshukonskoe district in the project makes people with disabilities feel more self-confident. We get better connection when both culture professionals and other people improve their treatment of disabled persons. The coordinators of the project managed to involve specialists from various sectors (teachers, culture professionals, journalists, officials, social workers and NGO people) who are "not afraid" to work with people with disabilities."



Key people of the project

The project coordinators played a key role as local leaders. They initiated contacts, ensured that cooperation was fruitful, solved practical issues and brought ideas to life in their municipalities. They also served as a link between the various parts and levels of the project. Contacts between municipalities were important. Despite the huge distances between municipalities and the fact that coordinators work in different local organizations, they received inspiration and knowledge from each other and shared their experience. Many of them emphasise the strong network (between the participants) as one of the factors of success.



Olga Aksyonova

Head of the Early Intervention Department of the Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation Centre for Children, Arkhangelsk



Yulia Moreva,
psychologist at the Early Intervention Department of the Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation Centre for Children, Arkhangelsk



Irina Saukova
Head of the Education Department with the Administration of the Leshukonskoe Municipality



Oksana Nikonova,
Head of the Information and Methodology Department of the District Culture Centre, Krasnoborsk

Nadezhda Balandina

Deputy Principal of the secondary school, Velsk



Nataliya Lyubimova
teacher-organizer of the Social Rehabilitation Centre for Children and Youth, Kargopol

Sten-Ove Sundlöf,

Deputy Principal of the Municipal Music and Arts School, Örnsköldsvik



Ilya Gorshkov,
teacher-organizer of the Social Rehabilitation Centre for Children and Youth, Kargopol



A new attitude towards people

Project coordinator Nadezhda Balandina says that the biggest obstacle to inclusion is the internal resistance people can have. In a 2016 survey, many people responded that they would not like to sit next to people in wheelchairs at events. Local project representatives began the process of attitude change by changing themselves:

— We were the first to overcome this obstacle and to realize that people with disabilities are the same as us, with the same needs.

In the beginning, she felt that no one but her had any interest in inclusive work, but after some time, people began to accept the project ideas. And while there is still a lot to change, coordinators no longer have to promote inclusion in their municipalities alone. After several years of work, there is already a noticeable change in the attitude of society towards these issues. For example, accessibility is now much better

— there are ramps and lifts in schools and culture institutions, which is an important step in the right direction.

Yulia Moreva believes that people have begun to understand that the concept of inclusion is relevant, that here we are talking about the modern way of life, work, art and culture.

The attitude change is slow and begins with those who are most affected. As in Örnsköldsvik, where the project coordinator Sten-Ove Sundlöf notes that, first of all, the work of the project affected the closest circle of people with disabilities, i.e. their parents, teachers and personal assistants.

He claims that events such as the *Stage of Equal Opportunities* Festival in Arkhangelsk in 2019 and the ShareMusic workshop in January 2018 were eye-opening for many of the participants. What people experience with their own feelings becomes tangible and easier to perceive.

Nataliya Lyubimova and Ilya Gorshkov give an example from the performance *The Snow Queen* in Kargopol, which was highly appreciated by the audience. One of the spectators, having seen one of the actors before the start of the performance, could not believe that he could play on stage at all. After the performance, she approached the organ-

izers and said that she was amazed by his performance.

Oksana Nikonova emphasizes that in Krasnoborsk they have made only the first small steps on a long journey so far. The changes in the attitude of society are not very great, but they are already noticeable:

— Just a few years ago it was impossible to imagine that we would be the organizers of a regional inclusive festival. Today we are not only holding it, but we also see great interest from the audience. The attitude of society towards people with disabilities has changed for the better.

More culture professionals want to know more

There is a growing interest in inclusive work in the field of culture. But many culture professionals see a number of challenges and do not fully understand how to approach and communicate with participants with disabilities.

Another obstacle is that many cultural institutions operate on their own, they lack common platforms and cooperation.

Good experience and good ideas are not disseminated, although there is great interest in this.

Nevertheless, the desire to improve their level of knowledge and competence is growing among culture professionals. Sceptical distancing is being replaced by curiosity and interest. People sign up for seminars and courses much more actively than in 2016, Olga Aksyonova believes:

— The thirst for knowledge has increased. People have already realized that inclusion is an integral part of our life. Many people have heard of us as the creative leaders of the inclusive dance group Prostor, and they know that they can get knowledge from us.

Working in an inclusive manner in the arts and culture does not mean creating new associations and creative groups. Shifting the focus of an already existing activity can often be just as successful. In Krasnoborsk District, employees of municipal cultural institutions became interested in the topic of the project and admitted people with disabilities into existing teams. As a result, in March 2021, the municipality has 13 inclusive creative groups with 167 members.

Previously, city-level events were held separately for people with and without disabilities, but this is gradually changing.

In Velsk, it was difficult to convince the management of cultural institutions, says Nadezhda Balandina:

– They did not understand what was required of them or what they could benefit from participation in the project.

The turning point was a meeting with the heads of cultural institutions (libraries, culture centres, traditional craft centre, dance studios and a boarding school for children with neuropsychiatric diagnoses) in May 2018. They changed the way they work, and the annual *Rainbow of Life* Festival became inclusive.

Inclusion is not inviting people with disabilities to events specially organized for them.

– We are talking about the need to organize events in such a way that everyone can participate, not in separate groups, but together, says Nadezhda Balandina.

Or as Irina Saukova puts it:

– I want all events to become inclusive in the future. So that people with disabilities are not just spectators, but also active participants: performing on stage, participating in contests and quizzes on equal terms with everyone.

– Knowledge comes with practice, which means that culture professionals will try their best. I am sure that they will organize interesting events.



A new way of working

The project was also a turning point for the coordinators' workplaces. Olga Aksyonova and Yulia Moreva work at the Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation Centre for Children in Arkhangelsk. The attitude of the colleagues has changed dramatically, says Olga Aksyonova.

– Previously, we did not talk about inclusion at all, we worked only with children studying at the centre. Today our colleagues talk about co-creation with other music, dance and theatre groups in the city.

Sten-Ove Sundlöf from Örnsköldsvik can see a transformation in his workplace:

– The artists and arts practitioners working at the Municipal Music and Arts school have changed for the better in terms of methods and approaches.

The changes were due to interesting discussions and joint planning at the Municipal Music and Arts school. Due to growing understanding of inclusion, it has gained acceptance as a tool for creative work with people with disabilities.

– At the Municipal Music and Arts school, the number of teachers working with children and adolescents with disabilities has increased significantly, and they do it with joy, curiosity and a desire to discover something new.

The project also influenced the work of Nadezhda Balandina. Her position at the beginning of the project had a positive impact on its development:

– At that time I was working as Deputy Head for Social Affairs. It was an advantage for Velsk that I held a leading position and could organize work at the

“Organizing the Children’s Inclusive Festival of Creativity *Happiness in My Open Hands* in 2017, we learned what inclusion is thanks to the specialists from Kargopol Social Rehabilitation Centre. After we participated in the seminar on the problems of socialization of people with disabilities, the idea of creating the inclusive creative studio Applause came up, where children, adolescents and youth with and without disabilities are engaged.”

Margarita Zavarina, Chief Assistant to the Artistic Director of the Nyandoma Culture and Sports Centre



level of the entire municipality. My boss at that time understood the importance of this work as there are many people with disabilities in the district.

Inclusion is becoming more common

Achievement can be measured in different ways, but since one of the goals of the project is to make inclusion the norm, one can talk about victory when inclusive creative work is not something special for a separated small group. When inclusive performances are announced in the same way as any other, and the audience buys tickets to see them, and the organizers do not indicate anywhere that some of the actors have disabilities.

So far, these are still exceptions, but they already exist. And this is happening both within the project and outside it, which shows that the development is gaining speed. Inclusive work is carried out both in the Drama Theatre in Arkhangelsk and in Leshukonskoe, where previously separate events were held for people with and without disabilities. Now participation of people with disabilities in concerts, traditional for the cultural life of the municipality, is becoming more and more common.

Oksana Nikonova gives an example from Krasnoborsk:

– Last year, due to the pandemic, all cultural activities went online. The library organized a poetry contest in social networks, in which young people with disabilities also took part.

Everyone took part in the competition on the same terms, the audience voted without taking into ac-

count the disabilities of the participants, and young people went on to the next round of the contest.

Before the New Year holidays, within the framework of the project, an inclusive group created a series of audio fairy tales *New Year's Tales*, which was very warmly received by the audience.

In Kargopol, the invisible performance *The Snow Queen* was very popular. The performance is inclusive in many aspects. The audience feedback received by the organizers shows a deeper level of perception and understanding of inclusion among those who attended the show.

In Örnsköldsvik in the autumn of 2018, an inclusive concert dedicated to the World Children took place. It gave some concrete valuable experience, says Sten-Ove Sundlöf.

– This experience helped us in discussions with other organizations about the need to develop the accessibility of our stages for everyone.

In Velsk, the inclusive approach is used in several institutions of social and cultural spheres: in the Children's Art School, in the municipal cultural centre, in the main library and in the local lore museum. Active work is underway to apply the principle of inclusion, based on the needs of everyone. Such work is also carried out at the centre of folk art.

– Our teacher of traditional painting is a woman with disabilities. She conducts inclusive classes, and many people attend them, – says Nadezhda Balandina, who believes that the project was very successful:

– I myself did not realize how much we had done until I sat down and analysed it. We could not believe that all this could become reality.

It's time to hand over the reins

The development continues after the end of the project. Its final part focused on the transfer of methods, experience and contacts. Knowledge is consolidated in cultural life and in society as a whole. "Little by little we are handing over the reins of power" – as Olga Aksyonova described the process.

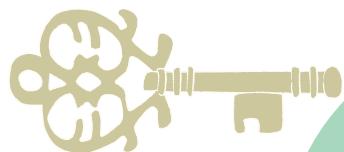
However, even where the will is strong and many strive for change, development slows down due to the fact that many cultural institutions work on their own and do not use each other's knowledge and experience.

The active participants in the project urge culture professionals to leave their familiar surroundings for a while and unite in a common project that goes beyond genres and types of art. And although it is not easy to bring together participants from different cultural institutions to meetings and seminars, the exchange of experience and inspiration is extremely important.

Yulia Moreva suggests:

– It would be interesting for a specialist from the museum to talk about his practice, a specialist from the library about his innovations, someone from the field of dance about their methods of work, and so on. Thus, we all will get better understanding of art.

Among the problems that need to be addressed are structural barriers such as poor physical accessibility in theatres and other venues, lack of transportation, etc. Part of the work is aimed at installing ramps and wheelchair lifts. Work is also underway to find ways to disseminate ideas. During the pandemic, many groups were unable to rehearse and perform. It was more difficult than usual to maintain contact at the administrative level and interaction between people in the conditions when physical meetings became impossible. But it was vitally important to do this one way or another, because it is contacts that create the basis for further development.



"For about five years now I have been a part of the inclusive dance group *Prostor*. Our classes are held every Friday, and I am always looking forward to this day, because they are interesting and varied. Each of our lessons begins with a warm-up, when we stretch and prepare our bodies for learning a new dance or for a rehearsal of a dance we already know."

It is a great joy when we are invited to perform at some important event. I can feel very nervous, but it's worth a lot. I would like to experience these emotions more often."

Roman Basov, member of the inclusive dance group *Prostor*, Arkhangelsk

Sten-Ove Sundlöf:

– The networks of contacts that we have created both at the regional and municipal levels must remain active and continue their work. We need to continue to support, encourage and train teachers, artists and other culture professionals in inclusive ways of working. It is also important to create a work plan based on principles and strategies already in place in municipalities and organizations.

The rate of dissemination of new approaches varies between urban and rural areas. This may be due to differences in infrastructure, such as bad roads and poor internet connection. Within the framework of the project, together with the dance group *Accent* in Kargopol, videos with recommendations and exercises for colleagues in culture and pedagogy are created, they are planned to be distributed on CDs, and not via the Internet.

“As an employee and then director, I followed the *Kluchi* project and its predecessors from the outside. *Kluchi* and *Kluchi 2.0* opened our eyes to the equal right of everyone to culture and to the culture as a tool of inclusion. *Kluchi 3.0* initiated collaborative processes that ensure the continued existence and development of these democratic principles. *Kluchi* started the process, and I am convinced that with our support it will continue after the completion of the project. **Rasmus Grip, Director of the Municipal Music and Arts school, Örnsköldsvik**

*The language barrier did not become an obstacle for us.
Creative means of expression allow us to communicate with each other on an equal footing.*

Sten-Ove Sundlöf

All project managers in municipalities have similar experience – the rural areas outside the district centre present a number of challenges. Contact with art practitioners, teachers and employees in culture centres, museums and schools in rural areas is extremely important. It includes trips and meetings, showing performances, conducting master classes in order to show by living example that inclusion works.



The network of contacts must expand

All coordinators believe that the future of inclusion in society depends on closer cooperation and more contacts. Sten-Ove Sundlöf summarizes the success factors:

– Build networks of contacts, invest in professional development and spread positive examples.

He emphasizes that it is important to involve representatives from all social levels: politicians, government officials, teachers, art practitioners, regional and local institutions and cultural organizations.

The dissemination of knowledge, the expansion and maintenance of contacts are central to the driving forces of the *Kluchi* project.

– The success factor is when specialists strive to learn more. Knowledge comes with practice, and I am sure that interesting inclusive events will be held in the future, says Irina Saukova.

Networking also has a geographic dimension in relation to rural areas and neighbouring municipalities.

Nataliya Lyubimova and Ilya Gorshkov tell about the project TAKIE (in English SUCH). In Russian it is an abbreviation, it stands for Creation, Activity, Creativity, Inclusion, Unity. The aim is the popularization of theatrical inclusive creativity, which will involve both people from Kargopol and Kargopol district and street theatre professionals from St. Petersburg.

– Our initiative was supported by the local administration.

In Leshukonskoe, the library organized an online event dedicated to World Read Aloud Day, in which people with disabilities participate on an equal basis with everyone else.

Oksana Nikanova from Krasnoborsk talks about the recruitment of participants to the inclusive theatre group for adults that will complement the already existing youth theatre group.

– The work has to continue after the end of the project. We have created a working group that includes representatives of the cultural, educational and social sectors and public organizations. One of the tasks of the group is to attract even more specialists in the field of culture to inclusive work not only in our municipality, but also in the neighbouring municipalities – Kotlas and Verkhnetoemsky. In the nearest future, a workshop will be held for culture specialists from the three districts.

In Velsk, Nadezhda Balandina began working on the creation of an audio theatre with high school students. Actors are students with and without disabilities.

– I will show by my example how to start, says Nadezhda Balandina, who, however, has in mind a young director from the local theatre. Experience shows that it is easier to attract culture professionals to an already existing project.

There are also plans for new forms of work at school and an inclusive exhibition in the local history museum. Four times a year representatives from all organizations involved meet at a roundtable discussion to follow up the development.

In Arkhangelsk a seminar is planned where the Minister of Culture will be invited.

Another example from Arkhangelsk is *Lessons of Kindness* in secondary schools, where creative people with disabilities talk about culture and about themselves.

The project contributed to the creation of an online inclusive dance course and video master classes in directing and acting. It also led to collaboration between the Library for the Blind and the College of Culture and Art. The Public Library organizes the *Summer Reading Room*, where it invites poets with disabilities.

“While comprehending something new we find the keys to ourselves and to new opportunities. Thanks to the project, a lot of useful knowledge and ideas have appeared. We were able to share the already accumulated practical experience in the field of inclusive creativity. We feel happy that we have had the opportunity to involve new participants in the process, both with and without disabilities.”

Elena Abramova, individual education teacher, project participant, Krasnoborsk



"The project gave the possibility to learn about inclusive events in particular, and about inclusion in general. Before participating in the project, I did not know how to conduct inclusive events, how to communicate with people with disabilities during the events. Now I don't feel anxiety, I have confidence. I gained a lot of experience after participating in inclusive creativity webinars. We are ready to work further in the project!"

Tatiana Babkina, specialist of the cultural centre, member of the working group, Leshukonskoe



The Snow Queen – an example of success

The invisible performance The Snow Queen was one of the many local projects within the Kluchi project. It was performed in Kargopol, and the premiere took place during the traditional Lent celebration, Maslenitsa, in 2020. The performance was shown several times before being forced to stop due to pandemic restrictions.

IT IS CALLED “invisible” since the audience “watches” it blindfolded and must use their senses of perception in a different way than at an ordinary theatrical performance.

Children and adults, both with some experience of working on stage and beginners, people with and without disabilities took part in the work on the performance. The play employs ten voice actors. Sounds, special effects and music are also used.

In September 2020, new children came to the studio, with practically no experience of working on the stage. Some of them were included in the performance and rehearsals were resumed. The full version of the performance was shown several times in October and November – before the deteriorating situation with the spread of the virus stopped the shows again.

Among the audience there were students from the College of Culture and Art, which means future directors and actors. For them, the play became an important example of how an inclusive theatrical production can be made without compromising artistic quality.

The production was highly appreciated by the audience, the media and culture colleagues. When the restrictions caused by the pandemic are lifted, there is an agreement on more performances both in Kargopol and in other cities of the region. The interest among those who could not attend the show is very high.

In the meantime, the performance can be listened to online. Other inclusive theatre groups produce audio performances – a good format for invisible performances. As the creative team of *The Snow Queen* says, “Creativity has no boundaries.”



Mikhail Zuev, an actor of the invisible performance *The Snow Queen*, Kargopol:

“I really like to play in the performance, I like my role, it is important to me. The work on the performance went very well, we had a very good team, and I made friends. I really liked this performance and I liked working with the guys. I think we need to make a sequel, because it will be interesting for the audience.”

Roman Abramovsky, lecturer at the College of Culture and Art, Arkhangelsk:

"The performance has both an entertaining and educational function, forcing the brain to work twice as hard, creating artistic images in the head. Today the viewer watches a lot and thinks little. In my opinion, performances of this kind should live in our world and develop! Many thanks to the director for an insight to new solutions in theatrical art!"

Feedback from the audience

"It was very interesting to listen to the fairy tale! Without looking, it was as if we were transported there. Such great impressions! Thank you, my children and I liked it. **Oksana, 46 years old**

"I immersed into the atmosphere of a fairy tale, where I felt the winter cold, the warmth of fire in the stove, the aroma of fresh bread and the bewitching voices of the actors, who depicted the characters and their feelings only with sounds. I would like to thank the directors of the fairy tale for the tremendous work done and the opportunity for the audience to develop their imagination!"

Galina, 40 years old

"It was great pleasure to attend the invisible performance *The Snow Queen*. I was surprised how children learned to transform themselves into the characters. How emotionally they got into the role, conveyed emotions to the audience. Music and special effects fully conveyed the content, mood, feelings of both cold and expectation (I had "goose bumps"). For me, a person who saw the cartoon *The Snow Queen*, the characters' images were just as vivid and real (wind, cold, reindeer running). I felt like a real participant in the performance. A lot of work has been done by the director of the performance!"

Olga, 56 years old



Travel for cultural exchange

Study visits to several participating municipalities were part of the project. In June 2018, the trip went to Arkhangelsk, Velsk and Kargopol, and in September of the same year the turn had come to the representatives from Russia to come to Sweden and visit Örnsköldsvik and Umeå.

Trip to the Arkhangelsk region

The trip in June was a journey through the Russian North. Representatives of the Municipal Music and Arts school from Örnsköldsvik and ShareMusic, together with the Russian coordinators, visited three Russian municipalities that were part of the *Kluchi* project. The journey began in Arkhangelsk, where the group watched a performance by a children's theatre and a rehearsal of the *Prostor* dance group at the Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation Centre for Children. After that, the group went by a van to Velsk, the path to which lay through vast forests, water reservoirs, abandoned villages – a landscape that personifies the disappearance of the old village culture.

Velsk is one of the oldest cities in Russia. Founded in 1137, it was a large trade centre. Here the group visited kindergarten for children with visual impairments, the library, the hip-hop studio, the art school, the Centre for Traditional Folk Crafts, and the dance studio of the boarding school.

In Kargopol, also an ancient town with a long history, the main place of visit was the Social Rehabilitation Centre for Children and Youth. There was a fruitful roundtable discussion with representatives of all six municipalities participating in the project. Achievements, problems and plans for the future were discussed.

Several inclusive creative groups from Kargopol put on an excellent performance with dances, songs and theatrical performances.





Russian visit to Sweden

In September 2018, representatives from five Russian municipalities visited Örnsköldsvik and Umeå to learn about inclusive creative work in the Swedish context. They visited the *Theatre of Joy*, a special school, the Sliperiet Cultural Centre (translated as “Grinding Workshop”), the Music and Arts school, the folk high school and Collective Art Workshops in Örnsköldsvik and the *Culture Workshop* in Umeå.

In the special school everyone took part in master classes in dance and music. The classes are taught here by teachers from the Municipal Music and Arts school.

Creators of Culture, a theatre group at the folk high school, showed a wonderful performance of *A Christmas Carol*. After the performance, there was a meeting with the leaders of the group and several actors. One of the evenings was spent at the Sliperiet Cultural Centre with young people with and without disabilities.

In Örnsköldsvik the participants also visited the *Theatre of Joy* and met its leaders and actors. The latter showed short excerpts from their performances and interesting exercises that they usually do with children in kindergartens. The theatre is located in the Sliperiet Cultural Centre and has its own stage and its own rehearsal room.

The Russian guests also visited the *Culture Workshop* in Umeå, where they tried to create music using geometric shapes instead of notation and showed their artistic talents by drawing monsters. They also had a chance to watch the rehearsal of the play *Who Are You?* at the *Moment Theatre*, followed by a conversation with its artistic director, director and actors of the performance.

Ann-Catrin Brandtlin, Director of the Municipal Music and Arts school 2012–2019, Örnsköldsvik

"Kluchi - Keys to Creativity is an unforgettable journey. We have met fantastic people who, with their enthusiasm and drive, create a creative atmosphere and meeting places where children and young people feel seen, significant, where their eyes light up like stars. We met people who radiate joy and warmth. There was exchange of experience, acquaintance with new thoughts and ideas. What a unique opportunity to experience and learn first-hand! Such warm hospitality will never be forgotten! People are proud of the unique cultural heritage that is carefully preserved, and which is met by our modern society with mutual respect. The vegetable garden at every house gave a feeling of a long-forgotten past, but at the same time showed the right path to sustainable development of society. All happy, talented, creative children and youth, filled with joy. Creativity is magical in many ways; it opens doors and gives people a sense of belonging. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to make this journey and experience this movement in art."

"The theatre groups we saw in Sweden simply turned our minds upside down! I could not even imagine that it was possible to work like this. I discovered a lot of things that can be applied in our place."

Nadezhda Lobanova, director of Velsk children's art school

"After my trip to Sweden I had many ideas, which I shared with culture and education specialists during the workshops. Thanks to the project coordinators I got a new look at solving existing problems, new thoughts, ideas and the desire to bring them into life!"

Tatyana Ovchinnikova, Deputy Head for Social Policy of the Krasnoborsk Municipal District

Daria Isaenkova, music teacher at a secondary school, event organizer, member of the working group, Leshukonskoe

"The practical activities in Sweden were very memorable. Örnsköldsvik and Umeå impressed not only by their beauty and infrastructure, but also by the development of various forms of inclusive art and education. I was especially inspired by theatrical activities; this experience of Swedish colleagues was so impressive that it continues to provide me with many different ideas for new projects in my area. I also liked the music lesson in the special school very much. In the classroom they use special musical instruments which can be played by everyone, without exception. No special skills are required for this. Anyone, even without musical education, can accompany him- or herself. These instruments are simple, but they are wonderful for developing musicality and a sense of rhythm."



Voices of participants

Lyudmila Zhgilyova, teacher at a secondary school, member of the inclusive theatre group, Krasnoborsk

"Children need to see, hear and feel other people. My students and I have been participants of the project since 2017. We were engaged in the inclusive creative association *Vozdukh*. These were three years of joint creative activity, which included weekly classes, workshops, performances, visits to museums, excursions, trips, birthday greetings. My students and I gained invaluable experience of mutual understanding, love, respect, sympathy and kindness.

Children have mastered various means of communication, depending on the abilities of other people. I can say with confidence that now our children will not laugh or be surprised when they meet a person with disabilities. They will accept him or her just the way they are.

I look forward to further collaboration!"



Anna Drovina, mother of Matvey, a member of the inclusive theatre group, Krasnoborsk

"*Kluchi* project came to our family several years ago. First, two persons from Arkhangelsk came here and told everyone in Krasnoborsk about it and interested our colleagues from the culture centre. This is how Oksana Nikonova and Elena Abramova joined in the project. They managed to interest us.

Our child needed communication – communication with children like him, communication with other children, communication on an equal footing. When we went to classes, it never felt like we were special, that we were not accepted. On the contrary, we learned to communicate, we learned to look at the world in a different way, and this helped us a lot in a way that we began to accept our child more. Now Matvey has already matured. During these two years he made new friends. We fondly remember the *Kluchi* project and hope that it will continue its life and will be implemented not only in Krasnoborsk, but also in other small villages of our district, and Arkhangelsk region. This is really necessary for our children so that they can communicate. This is vital for our children."



*...we learned to look at the world
in a different way,
and this helped us a lot
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our child more.*

Stage of Equal Opportunities Festival

The Stage of Equal Opportunities Festival has become one of the largest events of the project. Each municipality initially hosted its own festival, and over two intense days in February 2019, participants gathered in Arkhangelsk. The programme included master classes, performances, experience exchange events and a celebration.

The final concert was opened by the then Deputy Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Development of the Arkhangelsk Region Mikhail Kuzmenko and the Consul of the Consulate General of Sweden in St. Petersburg Mårten Frankby.

Each municipality held its own master class, in which participants could delve into topics of dance, music, play and movement, fairy tales and children's theatre. Everyone chose a master class for themselves according to their interest. It became a live exchange of knowledge and inspiration



The result of the general master class on the first day of the festival, which was led by an international team consisting of musician Jonas Jonasson, Sweden, director Roman Abramovsky, College of Culture and Art in Arkhangelsk, and choreographers Olga Aksyonova and Yulia Moreva, Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation Centre for Children in Arkhangelsk, was a unique stage performance.

At the College of Culture, the participants watched the performance *The Nose*, created in collaboration between students and teachers from the College and dancers from the inclusive group *Prostor*.



ShareMusic presented the project to the audience, after which each municipality showed one or two pieces, and the coordinators, in short interviews, spoke about the most important results achieved in their municipalities due to their participation in the project. The concert ended with a common performance created during the master class the day before.

"In order to create the final stage performance, the participants worked in groups with different types of art. Artists painted a vivid picture on a large sheet of paper, dancers invented a dance, depicting keys that are born, open doors and finally connect with other keys in a bunch. The musicians created a melody for the performance using unusual musical instruments. After the rehearsal of each individual piece, they combined all these elements into a whole, creating a performance."

Ivan Sleptsov, student of the Faculty of Journalism of the Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Arkhangelsk



*As a grand finale, the jointly created song *Kluchi k serctsu* (*Keys to the Heart*) was sung.*

"Most of all I liked the musical instruments. I was struck by the fact that they are intended for any person, regardless of his or her natural abilities. That is, almost everyone can play them, even with limited mobility. In general, I think that music can help anyone express themselves."

**Alyona Isaenkova, 15 years old, volunteer,
Leshukonskoe**



"It was joyful and inspiring to see how enthusiastically people in Russia work with culture and inclusion. The meetings in each country were very interesting, as we had the opportunity to take part in each other's events and show our achievements. We have moved forward, but there is still a lot of work ahead."

**Susanne Thorén, dance teacher
at the Municipal Music and Arts school,
Örnsköldsvik**



"I remember the festival. I met a lot of interesting people. Great performances, a sense of celebration. It was very interesting!"

Tatiana Tekunova, Leshukonskoe



Conclusion

WE FROM SHAREMUSIC are so happy for the relations with our Russian and Swedish partners in the *Kluchi* projects. It has been an enriching exchange of knowledge and experience during these five years that have been full of events. When we started collaborating, no one imagined that it would grow into several projects, include so many people both in Russia and in Sweden, and that we would achieve so much. We look back at the years, so rich in events and fruitful meetings. We remember all the motivated and passionate teachers, artists, officials, parents, leaders and all those who are needed in the process of change. The path to an inclusive society is a profound change. Meetings such as those in Arkhangelsk give us hope and inspire us to continue our work to create a society where inclusion is the norm. Both in Sweden and in the framework of international cooperation.

The *Kluchi* projects in the Arkhangelsk region and Örnsköldsvik have been completed - now the development continues.





Kluchi - The Keys to Creativity are three projects that followed each other over five years. The aim was to raise interest in inclusive forms of cultural work and create a social structure that allows people with disabilities to participate in cultural life on the same terms as everyone else.

Institutions of the city of Arkhangelsk and four municipalities of the Arkhangelsk region in northwest Russia, as well as the Swedish municipality of Örnsköldsvik took part in the projects. ShareMusic operated the project funded by the Swedish Institute and the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD). In this booklet we at ShareMusic, local project coordinators, participants, culture professionals, leaders and other contributors, summarize the development since 2016, when the first *Kluchi* project was launched.

Three steps to inclusion:

Kluchi - Keys to Creativity – October 2016 – April 2018

Kluchi 2.0 – April 2018 – February 2019

Kluchi 3.0 – September 2019 – March 2021

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