



Double rainbow -a guide booklet for promoting accessibility for individuals on the Autism Spectrum within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces.

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The purpose of this development-based thesis was to produce a guide-booklet that can be implemented within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. The aim of the guide-booklet entailed promoting inclusivity and accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum through its presented guidelines package. This thesis`s working life partners are Autismiliitto and ArcoKerava.

The theoretical framework of this thesis was gathered from diverse sources using source criticism and includes information about the following: LGBTQIA+ safer spaces, inclusion, accessibility, autism spectrum disorder, characteristics of autism, outdated terms affiliated with autism spectrum, the double-rainbow concept, existing guidelines in LGBTQIA+ safer spaces and methods that promote inclusivity for individuals on the autism spectrum. The thesis`s booklet is constructed through the utilization of the examined theoretical framework within the thesis report.

The guide booklet was evaluated using a semi-structured feedback questionnaire that was consisted of open-ended questions. Feedback was planned to be gathered from the target group of the booklet, but due to the absence of response on behalf of the potential project that could have potentially arrange conducting interviews with autistic people, I was not able to execute this. The feedback was collected exclusively from the thesis`s working life representatives instead. The feedback was analyzed using content analysis. Determined from feedback, the guide booklet was deemed successful and achieved its goals well. The booklet has been implemented within the operative model of ArcoKerava and it is to be introduced in further operative models as well. The development suggestions underlined the development of a supplementary leaflet version of an accessibility guidelines package that is included in the extensive booklet, in aim of providing a material that can be promptly examined by the participants of the operative environment. Additionally, translating the guide booklet into Finnish and Swedish, was considered as relevant.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum, LGBTQIA+, Accessibility, Safer space, Guidelines.

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1 Introduction

The phenomenon that is going to be examined in this development-based thesis, is the implementation of specific guidelines within the operative model of LGBTQIA+ spaces, that can help ensure inclusivity and accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum (ASD).

This thesis focuses primarily on examining the needs of individuals on the Autism spectrum, in correlation of developing a concrete booklet that incorporates a guidelines package that answers to those needs. Additionally, this thesis analyzes the definition of the key concepts that are relevant to both the thesis's objectives and the developmental process of the guidelines package directed for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The introduction and examination of further relating concepts, incorporates a cardinal procedure within the thesis's developmental process. Constructing guidelines for an existing operative model (LGBTQIA+ safer-spaces) for a specific target group (individuals on the Autism Spectrum), requires the acquaintance of the themes that are affiliated with the operative model and the target group themselves, as well as acquaintance with the concepts related to the objectives of the developmental process of the thesis.

Autism Spectrum Disorder affects different people in different ways, in different degrees, and is therefore a spectrum. There is no one way to encapsulate one single Autistic profile. That means, that there is no one-size-fits-all approach that can guarantee an absolute paradigm for ensuring inclusivity for all individuals that are on the Autism spectrum. As the thesis objective entails generating inclusivity for all individuals on the Autism spectrum, it incorporates diverse guidelines, in order to ensure that differentiating Autistic profiles are taken into consideration.

1.1 Objectives / Purpose of this Thesis

Establishing objectives entails a cardinal procedure in pursuance of a successful thesis's development process. A concrete set of objectives functions as a guide as to constructing a development plan, what specific steps to follow within a development process as well as what factors to take into consideration throughout it.

As this thesis is a development-based thesis, the purpose of this thesis is to provide a developmental product or activity. The product developed in this thesis, incorporates a concrete set of guidelines that can be implemented within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces, for ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum (ASD) within their operations. The thesis accumulates a comprehensive theoretical framework that provides

qualified information in regards of what facets have to be considered when it comes to guaranteeing inclusivity for individuals within the Autism spectrum. The set of guidelines is constructed through the utilization of the theoretical framework. The thesis consists of a simplified guide-booklet that can be enforced within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces as a set of principles for ensuring inclusivity and accessibility towards individuals on the Autism spectrum and a report. The guide-booklet manifests as a tool to manifest the desired outcome of transforming LGBTQIA+ safe-spaces` operation model and environment appropriately to ensure utmost inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. Simultaneously, I aim to increase knowledge about the vast prevalence of autistic people within the LGBTQIA+ community and the significance of taking their needs in consideration within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces.

1.2 The Significance of the development of this specific topic

The significance of developing the existing operating model within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces to one that takes into consideration autistic peoples` needs, is pivotal. Whilst LGBTQIA+ safer spaces may already cater an inclusive environment based on their existing principles, guidelines that are specifically constructed to respond to Autistic individuals `needs are often not included. Considering that a LGBTQIA+ safer space`s target group is vulnerable as it is; it may persist as the only place for some, where they can feel free to express themselves, as well as experience the sense of belonging, administering an inclusive environment for Autistic attendees is substantial.

The persistent phenomenon of individuals being part of two marginalized identities, or otherwise known as living “under a double rainbow”, entails another factor as to why LGBTQIA+ spaces and events shall be designed up to a standard that is considerate of the needs of individuals on the Autism spectrum. As defined by Morgan, “Living under the Double Rainbow (...) is an expression that has emerged in recent years to describe individuals with Autism who also identify as LGBTQ+ which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and the plus sign which stands for “other non-heterosexual orientations. (...) Although the reasons are not fully clear as to why, people with autism identify as LGBTQ+ at a higher rate than our neurotypical peers.” (Morgan 2019). Taken this into consideration, the spaces and events directed for LGBTQIA+ community shall be expected to answer to its target group`s needs, which in this case, necessitates to acknowledge the portion of its demographic of which are on the Autism spectrum. This in correlation with the actuality that a lot of LGBTQIA+ spaces and events do not provide an accessible and inclusive environment for individuals that are on the Autism spectrum. For instance, many LGBTQIA+ spaces and events may be too over stimulant, loud or bright for individuals on the Autism spectrum.

Existing at the intersection of two stigmatized identities (such being part of the LGBTQIA+ community and Autistic) is a challenge in and of itself. There will unavoidably occur discrimination inside your communities in addition to the distinct discrimination you will encounter from outside of them. It is quite challenging to feel comfortable in an environment when one aspect of you is acknowledged whereas another is not. People with Autism who identify as queer also identify as queer autistic. A space must welcome a queer Autistic person as a full person in order for them to feel really comfortable and included. (Hopkinson 2022)

2 Developmental thesis

In this section of the report, the type of the thesis is defined, in correlation with the product and phenomenon that is being developed.

As declared, this thesis is a development-based thesis (functional thesis). “A development-based thesis includes developing something already used in practice or creating something new. The object developed can be a service, product, orientation guide, handbook, operating model, treatment model, process, etc.” (Laurea`s student intranet n.d.). This thesis analyzes the development process of a booklet that entails a concrete guidelines package directed for ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for people on the autism spectrum, of which can be implemented in existing LGBTQIA+ safe-spaces `operation model. As the development work within a development based thesis is always based on prior research, this thesis examines and utilizes the constructed theoretical framework, based on existing research publications of the subject in question. This thesis also accommodates a booklet type guidebook, that presents the developed methods.

The structure of a developmental-based thesis includes presenting the methods that were used to construct the theoretical framework, as well as outlining how the thesis project was implemented. The methods and stages of constructing the theoretical framework, as well as the justifications and techniques for the choices made are accommodated within the report.

The aim of the thesis`s guide booklet includes providing a functional guidelines package that can be implemented within the operative model of LGBTQIA+ safe-spaces. The guide booklet is intended to function as a framework for transforming the operative model of LGBTQIA+ safer spaces, towards a dynamic that is more supportive of the integration and inclusivity of individuals on the autism spectrum. The guide booklet comprises diverse methods of which offer transformative measures apropos of an LGBTQIA+ safe-space`s physical environment

along with further operational approaches that are all in correlation with the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum.

2.1 Working life partners

Within this section of the report, the introduction of the thesis's working life representative's organization/project, is included. The role that they serve as working life partners, as well as the procedures of their collaboration with the thesis's developmental process is covered.

The working life representative's role within the implementation process of the thesis includes providing feedback and knowledge in regards of the thesis's implementation process, theoretical framework and developmental product. The working life representative is designated to share ideas and insight in relation to the thesis's theme. The aim of the collaboration is to balance the interests of the working life representative(s) and the thesis's author.

Integrating working life partners within the development process of the thesis, included an integral method for reaching the thesis's objectives. Allocating working life representatives from organizations that affiliate with the thesis topic, was a pragmatic way to gain professional insight in regards of the development process, implement fresh perspectives, enrich my knowledge base and refine the theoretical framework of the thesis. Additionally, the working life representatives have provided me with valuable feedback before, throughout and after the implementation process of the thesis's development methods. The feedback has functioned as a constructive way of assimilating the thesis's target group's perspective and cultivate certain areas, as for instance, implementing specific methods within the assembled guidelines package of the booklet. It has also granted me reassurance as well as validity apropos of the competence and success of the thesis's implementation process, theoretical framework and the thesis's accommodated booklet.

The collaboration with the working life representatives has consisted of several essential updates of the thesis process during its developing process, prior to delivering the final product of the report and developmental guidelines. This incorporating, sending the feedback template and the official collaboration forms to be signed at an earlier stage. Further, sending the thesis plan along with the thesis plan presentation and the constructed theoretical framework. All necessary updates during the developing stages of the final thesis have been delivered to the working life representatives as well. This procedure is cardinal as it allocates various opportunities for the working life representatives to review the thesis's content and progress as well as opportunities for them to provide feedback, insight and ideas which are all fruitful within the development process of the thesis.

I have allocated two working life representatives of which I have collaborated with throughout the implementation process of this thesis. As the thesis studies and develops a product for a specific environment (LGBTQIA+ safe-spaces), for a specific target group (individuals on the autism spectrum), I granted that it would be most profitable to conform one working life partner that represents the environment of which the thesis`'s product is conducted for and one working life partner that represents the target group the developmental product is designed for. By doing so, I was able to gain validity, insight and fresh ideas from the perspective of both a person who acquires experience working within LGBTQIA+ safe-spaces and a person who acquires expertise on the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum.

2.1.1 Working life partner ArcoKerava

The thesis`'s working life partner that represents the LGBTQIA+ safe-space environment, is ArcoKerava. ArcoKerava is a collaboration project with Kerava`'s youth services that provides a safe environment directed for LGBTQIA+ youth. Individuals within the age spectrum of 10-29 years are welcome in the project`'s activities.



Figure 1: Logo of ArcoKerava (retrieved by ArcoKerava`'s coordinator`'s personal work email).

ArcoKerava`'s space is open twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays for three hours each day. The space offers its attendees opportunities to participate in diverse activities (e.g. board-games, console-games, arts & crafts), whilst catering an inclusive environment that promotes engagement and a sense of community. "Arco is a safe and inclusive space that has been created to support the well-being of rainbow youth. Here you can have fun with friends playing board games, using the library tablets, participating in the monthly book club and

discussing and learning about gender, sexuality and various interesting topics”. (Keravannuorisopapalvelut.fi 2020) (Translated from original text in Finnish).

ArcoKerava`s aims as a project are declared in Kerava`s youth services website as “creating a dedicated space for rainbow youth in Kerava and organize regular guided activities there. In guided activities, in an activity-oriented and safe space, young people can e.g. share their own experiences, get confirmation of them and acquire solutions for dealing with various difficult experiences. The group also offers space to be yourself because diversity is the group's basic assumption.” (Keravannuorisopapalvelut.fi 2020). (Translated from original text in Finnish). Furthermore, increasing the regional and national cooperation of rainbow youth is another objective of the project, of which is manifested through ArcoKerava`s participation in diverse events, workshops and collaborations with other LGBTQIA+ organizations such as SETA.

I have gotten introduced to ArcoKerava`s project through my second internship (as a social service`s student) at Onnila, which is a collaborative organization with ArcoKerava. I have been assigned as an official volunteer ever since and I am regularly participating in the project`s activities. During my time as a volunteer of the project, I have been working closely with ArcoKerava`s team and I have therefore, already contributed in the development of certain areas of its operative model. Additionally, I have amassed experience within ArcoKerava`s environment and with LGBTQIA+ attendees. I consider that my personal experience on these matters, functions as another pragmatic tool apropos of developing this thesis`s booklet, as I am acquainted with both the developmental product`s target group and target environment.

ArcoKerava`s definite role as this thesis`s working life representative, included administering feedback during and after the implementation process of the booklet of this thesis, from the perspective of a LGBTQIA+ safe-space needs and operative model. The feedback and insight administered by ArcoKerava has been utilized within the implementation process of the booklet; any ideas and suggestions provided by them, have been taken into consideration. ArcoKerava`s existing principles have functioned as a method for illustrating the lacking guidelines that are specifically constructed for ensuring the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum. ArcoKerava`s introduction to its operative model assisted me apropos of shaping the guidelines in a manner that is applicable, appropriate and competent for its utilization in LGBTQIA+ safe-spaces. Furthermore, ArcoKerava`s feedback in regards of the final product of the booklet and its guidelines package, served as an indicator that the developed product of this thesis has successfully reached its goals and thus, is competent apropos of transforming a LGBTQIA+ safe-space`s operative model and environment towards a standard that is more considerate of the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum. ArcoKerava also abides as the first project that implemented the thesis`s developed guidelines package within its operative

model, as well as displaying the thesis`s produced guideline booklet within its space. This served as an exemplary vision of a LGBTQIA+ safe-space that answers to the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum as well as another validation of the competence of the thesis`s produced guidelines booklet.

The working life collaboration for this thesis in between ArcoKerava and me, has manifested through a combination of communication through emails and contact meetings. As I am also a volunteer within the project and I persist to attend the project`s spaces on a weekly basis, contact meetings were efficiently managed.

2.1.2 Working life partner Autismiliitto

The thesis`s working life partner that represents the target group (individuals on the autism spectrum) of which the developmental guidelines package of the thesis`s booklet is directed for, is Autismiliitto. Autismiliitto is a national expert and non-governmental organization representing the autism spectrum community.



Picture 2: Logo of Autismiliitto. (Autismiliitto 2022)

The organization`s aims are integrated in its operational tasks which are declared in their official website as the following: we spread autism information, we influence decision-making, we support our member associations, we organize peer expert and experience expert activities, we give advice and guidance, we train and consult, we implement projects related to autism. (Autismiliitto.fi 2022) (translated from original text in Finnish).

Autismiliitto`s organizational values are reflected within all of their operational activities.

These incorporate promoting equality and community spirit within their practices.

Additionally, the organization persists as an expert organization apropos of all autism related subjects. The aforementioned values are presented within Autismiliitto`s website as: Equality:

We promote accessibility and accessibility and the fulfillment of human rights. Community

spirit: We develop community spirit with our member associations, stakeholders and

international partners. We strengthen equality and dialogue. Expertise: We are a reliable,

independent and up-to-date expert organization. The association's activities are based on

researched information and experience. (Autismiliitto.fi 2022). (translated from original text in Finnish).

I have gotten introduced to Autismiliitto`s organization through a thorough web-search of organizations that represent the Autism Spectrum community in Finland. I proceeded to write the keywords “Autism”, “Organization” and “Finland” in the search bar in Google. After examining a few websites of organizations that represent the Autism spectrum community, I have determined to contact Autismiliitto through email, amongst one more affiliated organization. The reason as to why I granted Autismiliitto as an eligible working life representative for this thesis, is that the organization`s values and operative activities conform justly to this thesis`s subject and objectives. Furthermore, Autismiliitto could ideally provide me with valuable insight and expert information in regards of the accommodated produced developmental guidelines directed for ensuring inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. This has been confirmed within our collaboration throughout the implementation process of this thesis.

Autismiliitto`s definite role as this thesis`s working life representative, included administering feedback during and after the implementation process of the developmental guidelines booklet of the thesis, apropos of the autism spectrum associated subjects that have been examined, as well as the competence of the developed guidelines directed for individuals on the autism spectrum.

Autismiliitto`s organization representative has provided me with practical vision in regards of the development of the thesis`s booklet and its accessibility guidelines package, as for instance, what additional inclusivity factors I shall consider and has introduced me to further constructive theories through web-sources that were shared by them to me. Moreover, they have recommended specific credible sources in regards of assembling the theoretical framework around Autism spectrum. Within my collaboration with Autismiliitto, I have acquired external validation on behalf of their organization`s representative, apropos of the value of incorporating certain concepts within the theoretical framework of the thesis report, as well as validation in regards of implementing certain guidelines within the developmental product of the thesis. This has functioned as a guide for me, in regards of compartmentalizing broader concepts in smaller compact areas. Autismiliitto`s perspective in connection with the final produced developmental guidelines of this thesis, serves as a method for ratifying the success and competence of it. Additionally, it allocates an opportunity for acquiring constructive feedback apropos of the areas that entail room for improvement.

The collaboration of Autismiliitto as a working life representative for this thesis, has manifested through an online meeting (through Teams video-call), as well as communication through emails. I have determined that this is the most efficient form of communication with

Autismiliitto, as all the necessary information is being exchanged online, allocating utmost flexibility for the collaboration in between me and Autismiliitto`s representative.

2.2 Methods in collecting feedback

This section of the report, demonstrates the methods in collecting feedback that I will utilize within the thesis`s developmental process along with the reasons as to why those methods were chosen and how does the feedback benefit the developmental process. The indicators that function as affirmations of the developmental process`s and final product`s success are also elaborated in this section.

As this thesis`s purpose is to provide a guide booklet for ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for individuals on the autism spectrum within LGBTQIA+ safe-spaces, the guide booklet is constructed through a combination of qualified sources, including the examined theoretical framework and external feedback from the thesis`s work life representatives.

Gathering feedback from the work life representatives is a vital step within a developmental process of a thesis. It enriches one`s knowledge base, outlines the chief points that are fruitful for the developmental process, provides expert advice as well as offers fresh ideas.

The feedback from the thesis`s work life representatives will be derived before, during and after the implementation process of the guide booklet. The feedback achieved throughout the process, will function as a tool to constellate insight that will optimize the development of the guidelines. The working life representatives` input will assist me apropos of refining some areas of my guide booklet, as well as integrating content to the theoretical framework around it.

During the planning stage of the thesis`s implementation process, the feedback retrieved from the working life representative Autismiliitto, will be assimilated through a video meeting on Teams. The method of which the feedback will be retrieved through this interview is not structured and there will be no questionnaire utilized. The feedback will be mainly gathered in regards of the content of this thesis plan`s preliminary theoretical framework`s key points that will be declared within the thesis plan presentation of which will be shared with the working life representative, that will function as the guide booklet`s framework. The feedback will be directed to define the adequacy and competence of the theoretical framework`s key concepts that I have gathered at that stage.

Autismiliitto`s representative will study and deliver feedback in regards of the key concepts that cover autism spectrum related themes. Autismiliitto will provide advice apropos of what sources/concepts are advantageous to study and implement within the developmental stage of the booklet. The feedback gathered from the thesis`s second life representative

ArcoKerava, will also be gathered at an early stage of the implementation process of the thesis. The feedback will be collected orally through a live meeting. ArcoKerava`s representative will study and deliver feedback in regards of the key concepts that cover LGBTQIA+ safer space themes. ArcoKerava`s representative will provide feedback apropos of the value and functionality of the developmental product of the thesis in light of its utilization within their operative model. This will function as an indicator as to if the phenomenon that is studied and developed within the thesis, is something that could potentially benefit LGBTQIA+ safer spaces.

The methods for gathering feedback throughout the development process of the guide booklet of this thesis, will include an upgrade of the essential developmental phases of the thesis`s with both of the thesis`s working life representatives ArcoKerava and Autismiliitto. The thesis`s developmental phases will be shared to the personal work emails of the working life representatives. The feedback from the working life representatives will be accumulated by email as well. Positive feedback will function as external validation towards the adequacy of the thesis`s development progress. Constructive feedback will be utilized accordingly; either by modifying certain areas or adding further content within the theoretical framework of the thesis in order to achieve utmost comprehensiveness within the thesis report and the produced developmental guidelines.

The feedback for the final product of the guide booklet from both of the thesis`s work life representatives, will be gathered through a constructed questionnaire consisted of six open-ended questions to which the respondents will be free to formulate their answers to. The questionnaire will function as the conclusive insight from the work life representatives in regards of the functionality and success of the guide booklet of this thesis. The questionnaire and further details of the feedback process will be asserted further in this thesis.

The beacons for acknowledging whether the objectives of the thesis have been reached apropos of the feedback gathered by the working life representatives, encompass the external validation from both Autismiliitto and ArcoKerava, in regards of the competence of the developed thesis`s booklet. In light of Autismiliitto`s representative`s perspective, a beacon of success is remarked whether the thesis`s booklet offers a well-rounded base for answering to the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum. Another token of success incorporates whether the structure, visual appearance and layout of the booklet is transparent and user-friendly. In regards of the aforesaid, the success of the visual appearance and layout of the booklet, will be substantially defined on the basis of written content`s accessibility towards autistic individuals. Additionally, an indicator of success includes whether the extensiveness of the areas within the thesis report of which study Autism spectrum related concepts, is adequate and lucid.

In light of ArcoKerava`s representative`s perspective, a beacon of success is remarked whether the project considers the produced booklet of the thesis is applicable and beneficial within their operative model. Remarking the achievement of further objectives established for this thesis, entails the overall transparency of the implementation process of the thesis, as well as whether the concepts that are being examined throughout the thesis report are being introduced in a comprehensive way to the reader. The verification of having these objectives reached, will be acquired from external feedback as well, gathered on behalf of: the working life representatives of this thesis, the thesis supervisors of Laurea University of Applied Sciences, as well as the thesis opponent allocated by the thesis supervisors themselves.

3 Theoretical framework

In this section of the report, the concepts that are affiliated with the developmental process of this thesis, are defined through the examination of the amassed theory that has been gathered from external creditable sources. The theoretical framework is divided in sections; each section studies a specific topic. Certain topics are divided into sub-topics, in aim of clarifying essential areas that are linked with the concept that is being studied within that specific segment. The segments of the theoretical framework are assorted in an order based on the broadness of each topic that is going to be studied; starting from broader concepts and carrying on towards concepts that are more specific.

3.1 Safer spaces

The first concept that is going to be studied in this segment, is the concept of a safer space in general, followed by a second subsection of which declares the concept of a LGBTQIA+ safer space. In order to attain a clear understanding in regards of LGBTQIA+ safer space as a more narrowed concept, the definition of safer spaces as a broader concept, is elaborated first.

According to Colonna (2019, 1), a safer space is a welcoming, unthreatening setting where all people can freely express themselves and share their stories without worrying about prejudice or retaliation. The word safer is used to reflect that safety varies depending on the situation and is a subjective state of being: “not everyone feels safe under the same conditions. (Colonna 2019, 1)

Colonna (2019, 1) declares, that it is essential that a safer space promotes certain guidelines, in aim of guaranteeing the sense of safety for all of its attendees. Even though it would be optimal that all spaces would be safer spaces, and that everyone acknowledging others, and supporting each other`s sense of safety should be the standard, that is not always the case. Regardless of one`s intentions, oftentimes people may be oblivious of certain matters, or

inconsiderate moments may occur. That is why, constructing a concrete set of guidelines within a space, advocates mindfulness in regards of these prospects. Guidelines function as a tool to keep everyone harmonious. (Colonna 2019, 1)

In recent years, the concept of a “safe space”, has been utilized in higher education, as for instance, “safe-space-policies” have been implemented within many universities in aim of preventing discriminatory behaviors, harassment, prejudice and perils, Flensner and Von der Lippe, claim. (2019, 3) The historical backgrounds of the term however, entails a concept that protects marginalized groups from mistreatments and prejudice of any form, and thus, provide them with a safe space. (Flensner & Von der Lippe 2019, 3)

Throughout the thesis report, as well as the thesis`s booklet I opted to refer to safe spaces with the term safer space, as I considered it serves its definition more accurately and inclusively. This is because even so a safer space may operate under guidelines that promote the sense of safety and comfort to its participants, the sense of safety is something subjective. Every person has their own definition and standards as to what feels safe based on their own experiences and perception.

3.2 LGBTQIA+ safer spaces

As LGBTQIA+ safer spaces, entail the target environment of the developmental guidelines booklet of this thesis, the definition and study of its operative model`s role and influence, is essential.

The term "safe space" is traced back to women's and LGBT movements of the 1970s and was initially used to refer to physical gathering spaces where like-minded individuals could come together and discuss their experiences in a secure setting, Flensner and Von der Lippe (2019, 3) affirm.

Hartal (2018, 5), cites to Nash (2011), that the LGBT space, in contrast to heterosexual space, is considered to be a place where LGBT people may feel comfortable and free from sexism, LGBT-phobia, and violence. Overt activity, according to Doan (2007, 57), establishes a safe space for persons who identify as queer. The LGBT community is presented as one in which acceptance and tolerance prevail and where diversity is "celebrated." (Hartal 2018, 5)

A safe space is envisioned to be a protected environment that promotes feelings of security and recreates inclusive and diverse discourses. It serves as a metaphor for having the courage to speak the truth, take chances, express one's thoughts, or reveal one`s sexual identity. (Hartal et al. 2014, 5) In this context, safety includes not just physical safety but also psychological, social, and emotional safety. (Hartal 2018, 5)

The concept of a "safe place" describes the setting it should be, and it occasionally acts as a requirement for developing queer spaces. (Hartal 2018, 5) Hartal (2018, 5), proceeds to quote Quinan (2016,362), who claims that this 'often goes unexplained and sometimes unquestioned'. The phrase refers to a variety of contexts, including places where (often marginalized) persons may be themselves, where they can express themselves (creatively and audibly) and where they can feel at home. These environments come in a variety of formats and might include community centers, clubs, leisure spaces, pride parades, homes, recreational areas, and more. (Hartal 2018, 5)

Hartal emphasizes the significance of LGBTQIA+ safe spaces, by elaborating that individuals that identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, may face discriminatory behaviors within their daily lives. Many LGBT people hide their identity out of fear of homophobia and violence, whilst their "actual" home, private circle, and family do not offer a place of safety or acceptance and comfort. (Hartal 2018, 11)

In order to combat fear of violence, stigma, and shame and to create a sense of belonging, the frame of inclusion is founded on the creation of mutually agreed-upon communication standards and guidelines. Its justification is based on liberal notions of human rights, including the right to privacy, dignity, and respect [...] (Hartal 2018, 14)



Figure 3: LGBTQIA+ safer space ArcoKerava informing their upcoming activities through an Instagram post. (ArcoKerava 2022)

3.3 Inclusion

Within this segment of the theoretical framework, the definition of inclusion is introduced. The introduction of inclusion as a concept is essential, as the concept correlates with the objectives of the thesis's developmental guidelines, considering that the guidelines aim entails ensuring inclusivity for individuals on the autism spectrum.

An inclusive environment is one that caters for the needs, desires and preferences of all participants, as well as subsides their anxiety, as stated by Gatfield, Hall, Isaacs and Mahony (2018, 6). Moreover, constructing an inclusive environment, refers to creating a setting that fosters and encourages the highest levels of engagement, comfort, and participation both physically and psychologically towards its attendees. (Gatfield et al. 2018, 6)

Embracing and appreciating everyone, despite of differences, is encouraged by the ideology of inclusion in schools, communities, and neighborhoods. Everyone belongs, variety is appreciated, and learning from one another are all fundamental tenants of the inclusiveness ideology. (Renzaglia, Karvonen, Drasgow & Stoxen 2005, 1)

As opposed to being a passive observer and the object of other people's decisions, inclusion is a way of living in which a person actively participates in his or her existence. [...] To accommodate the range of possible participants, inclusive schools, communities, and community settings must be developed. This is because inclusion is a concept rather than a location, curriculum, or activity. Individual productivity is enhanced when workplaces are created with the idea that everyone belongs and can contribute. A setting must be designed with the idea that a diverse group of individuals will access it in order to promote accessibility. (Renzaglia et al. 2005, 2)

However, Renzaglia et al. (2005, 3), assert that any activity should start out by embracing the inclusion principle. As a result, persons responsible for creating surroundings or designing activities should be very mindful. Instead of making individuals fit into the current surroundings or activities, the results of their efforts should develop activities or environments that accept differences and accommodate a range of abilities.

Each participant must be treated individually due to the diversity of abilities, talents, requirements, interests, and necessities of the range of people in any community. Everyone's definition of lifelong inclusion will be different. Depending on the person and his or her goals and desires, participation in family, community, job, social, and leisure activities will differ. Consequently, the specifics of a program created to encourage lifelong inclusion will vary depending on the person. (Renzaglia et al. 2005, 3)

3.3.1 Accessibility

Autismiliitto (2022), defines accessibility of the immaterial environment significant for all persons, which refers to accessibility, from the perspective of social, psychological, and cognitive accessibility. In order to be accessible, one must take into account the demands of all types of individuals in their communication, daily activities, attitudes, and the creation of websites and services. (Autismiliitto 2022) From the viewpoint of those on the Autism spectrum, accessibility entails taking into account things like the barriers brought on by communication, interaction, the environment, and sensory stimulation. (Autismiliitto 2022)

3.4 LGBTQIA+

LGBTQIA+ is an umbrella term that includes people of all genders and sexualities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, asexual and pansexual. While each letter in LGBTQIA+ stands for a specific group of people, the term encompasses the entire spectrum of gender fluidity and sexual identities.

A lesbian is a woman who feels sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women. Some people that identify as non-binary also define themselves as lesbians. (SETA n.d.) A gay or homosexual person feels a sexual and/or emotional attraction towards people of the same gender. The word gay is also used more narrowly to mean a man who experiences sexual and/or emotional attraction towards men. (SETA n.d.) A bisexual person, experiences sexual and/or emotional attraction towards both the same and other genders. For some, the gender of the object of attraction is irrelevant. The terms bisexuality and pansexuality partially overlap. (SETA n.d.)

A pansexual person feels sexual and/or emotional attraction towards people of all genders. The gender of the object of interest does not matter to him. Many pansexuals feel that the term frees them from classifying objects of attraction by gender. The terms pansexuality and bisexuality partly overlap, but the term pansexuality was introduced later. (SETA n.d.)

Asexual people usually experience very little or no sexual attraction towards other people. Asexuals may experience other types of attraction, for example romantic, emotional and aesthetic attraction. An asexual person can also identify themselves as gay, straight or bi- or pan-person depending on the gender of the objects of attraction they experience. (SETA n.d.)

Queer is a political and often academic perspective and way of thinking that questions society's norms related to gender and sexual orientation. Queer can also be an identity that means a person does not want to define their own sexual orientation or gender. The concept

is not neutral, but can also be perceived as offensive. (SETA n.d) Queer is often also used as an umbrella term for all of those who identify as LGBTQIA+ in any way.

Gender is one category and legal term for classifying people. It is a continuum consisting of various genetic, developmental, hormonal, physiological, psychological, social and cultural characteristics. It is also an important identity for many. (SETA n.d.) A person's sense of their own gender, which may or may not match the sex given to them at birth, is known as gender identity. We refer to those whose gender matches the sex given to them at birth as "cisgender" in accordance with currently advised practice. Gender identities come in a variety of forms, such as transgender, non-binary, genderfluid, agender, genderqueer, two-spirit, bigender, or others. (Warrier, Greenberg, Weir, Buckingham, Smith, Lai, Allison, Baron-Cohen 2020, 2)

Gender dysphoria refers to a distressing feeling or a strong feeling of mismatch caused by a gender discrepancy, which is often divided into body dysphoria and social dysphoria. Body dysphoria refers to feelings of alienation, anxiety and disgust directed at the gendered features of the body. Social dysphoria describes anxiety and bad feeling in social situations, which is related to misgendering, i.e. not being seen as oneself in situations. (SETA n.d.)

Agender or genderless refers to people that do not have a gender identity. For some, agender can be a gender identity. Those who perceive themselves as genderless can also define themselves with the term agender. Agendery is often described as the absence of gender identity and genderlessness. (SETA n.d.) Trans is used to describe a person whose gender or gender expression does not unequivocally match the gender assigned to them at birth and the expectations usually associated with it, and who self-identify as trans. (SETA n.d.)

A person that is gender-fluid can be both a man and a woman, something between a man and woman, or completely outside this division. Transgender can serve as an umbrella concept for other non-binary gender identities, for example gender-fluid, gender-queer and genderless. Transgender also refers to people who identify as transgender. Not everyone outside the gender binary perceives the term transgender as their gender identity. (SETA n.d.)

Intersex refers to a set of different body variations, in which gendered features, such as chromosomes, genitals or hormonal activity, are not unequivocally female or male. Intersex is a natural bodily variation and makes visible the fact that people cannot even biologically be classified into two mutually exclusive genders. For some, intersex can also be a gender identity. (SETA n.d.)

3.5 Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Within this segment of the theoretical framework, the definition of Autism Spectrum Disorder, along with further Autism Spectrum affiliated concepts are going to be presented. The introduction of Autism Spectrum Disorder's definition and key concepts related to it is vital, as individuals on the Autism spectrum entail the target group of the developmental guidelines booklet that is accommodated in this thesis.

“Autism is a spectrum condition and affects people in different ways. Like all people, autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses.” (National Autistic Society n.d.) Weir, Allison and Baron-Cohen (2021, 1), declare that according to American Psychiatry Association (2013), Autism spectrum disorders (hence referred to as autism) are a group of neurodevelopmental conditions that last a lifetime and are characterized by distinctions in social interaction and communication, narrow interests, and repetitive behaviors. Importantly, the autistic community is diverse and may exist along the complete spectrum of intellectual capacity. Autistic people may also differ in their cognitive profile, including abnormal sensory perception, information processing, and motor abilities.

Autismiliitto's official webpage (2022), reveals that there are people who fall inside the autism spectrum, all over the world. Approximately 1-1.2% of people are on the autism spectrum, according to various studies. This translates to 55,000-65,000 individuals in Finland. It is unclear what the underlying causes of autism are. There are undoubtedly a number of genetic and environmental variables at play. The cause and symptoms of autism are also influenced by environmental and hereditary factors. (Autismiliitto 2022)

Over the years, diagnostic criteria relating to Autism has changed. In the early 2000s, the majority of diagnoses were still given to persons with Autism who looked to need strong support and whose autism was frequently accompanied by a significant language development impairment and/or intellectual disability. As diagnosis progressed, so did the understanding of Autism. According to current estimates, more than 60% of those who are on the Autism spectrum do not have an intellectual disability or atypical language development. The estimated percentage of persons on the Autism spectrum in the population has also increased as a result of this development. (Autismiliitto 2022)

Autismiliitto (2022), affirms that another significant change has been related to the diagnosis of girls and women on the Autism spectrum. The diagnosis of girls and women who are on the autistic spectrum has resulted in another significant change. The prevalence of autism in women and girls was discovered as the autism spectrum's range grew. The prevalence ratio between men and women is now reported to be 3:1. (Autismiliitto 2022)

There are several theories as to why more boys and men are diagnosed with Autism opposed to girls and women, the National Autistic Society (no date) states. One of the theories include the "female autism phenotype," which refers to the traits of autistic girls that don't match the profile. Another exemplary theory entails the fact that women and girls are frequently more capable at masking or camouflaging their challenges and that the frequency of Autism may be greater in men and boys due to a variety of biological and environmental variables. (National autistic Society, no date)

Suomen Autismikirjon Yhistys/Autistic Spectrum Finland (ASY) (2022), presents within their official webpage, that the autism spectrum is officially defined using diagnostic criteria. The diagnosis and, with it, the quality and expert interpretation of the criteria are especially important for people who need reasonable adaptations, supports, services, rehabilitation or therapy. These are usually only obtained on the basis of a diagnosis made by a doctor and assessments of functional capacity made by other professionals. (ASY 2022)

3.5.1 Characteristics of Autism spectrum disorder

In the website of National Autistic Society (no date), some of the characteristics that Autistic individuals may encompass, are listed as the following: "Social communication and interaction challenges", "Repetitive and restrictive behavior", "Over- or under-sensitivity to light, sound, taste or touch", "Highly focused interests and hobbies", "Extreme anxiety" and "Meltdowns and shutdowns".

When it comes to social communication and interaction challenges, the website of National Autistic Society (no date), discloses that people on the autism spectrum may have trouble understanding both verbal and non-verbal cues, such as gestures or voice inflection. Some autistic persons have minimal or no speech, while others have excellent language abilities but may have trouble understanding sarcasm or tone of voice. People with autism frequently struggle to "read" other people, or to identify or comprehend their intents and feelings, as well as to convey their own emotions. This can make navigating the social sphere quite challenging; Autistic individuals may for instance, find it more challenging to form friendships, "may appear socially inappropriate" and "seek out time alone when overloaded by other people". (National Autistic Society n.d.)

The National Autistic Society`s website (no date) defines Autistic individuals` "repetitive and restrictive behavior" in the following way: "With its unwritten rules, the world can seem a very unpredictable and confusing place to autistic people. This is why they often prefer to have routines so that they know what is going to happen." Aside from repetitive gestures like hand flapping and rocking, autistic persons may also utilize objects repeatedly, such as

spinning pens or opening and closing doors. When they are nervous or anxious, autistic persons frequently participate in these behaviors to help them relax, but many autistic people also do it because they love it. Changes in routine can sometimes cause great discomfort and anxiety in autistic persons. (National Autistic Society n.d.)

People with Autism may have excessive or inadequate sensitivity to pain, noises, touch, tastes, scents, light, colors, or temperatures. For instance, individuals could find certain background noise, like the music in a restaurant, tolerably loud or bothersome while other people ignore or filter it out. This may result in anxiety or even physical pain. Due to discomfort, many Autistic persons choose not to hug, which might be mistaken for being distant and frigid. Because of their sensitivity problems, many Autistic individuals steer clear of commonplace settings. Schools, offices, and shopping malls may be especially stressful and overstimulating. Developing places more Autism-friendly can be achieved with a lot of simple adaptations.

The website of National Autistic Society (no date), states that many Autistic persons, frequently from a quite young age, have strong and highly concentrated interests. These are either ever-changing or permanent. People with Autism can become experts in their niche hobbies and frequently enjoy sharing their knowledge.

Many autistic individuals struggle with anxiety, especially in social circumstances or while dealing with change. The quality of life for persons with Autism and their family may be impacted, in addition to psychological and physical effects. It's crucial for Autistic persons to discover coping skills and learn to identify their triggers in order to lessen their anxiety. However, a lot of Autistic persons have trouble identifying and controlling their emotions. Too many Autistic individuals are being neglected by mental health care, and more than one-third of autistic persons have major mental health problems. (National Autistic Society n.d.)

An Autistic person may have a meltdown or shutdown if everything grows to be overwhelming. These experiences are incredibly exhausting and intense. When someone is totally overcome by their current circumstance and momentarily loses behavioral control, a meltdown occurs. Loss of control can manifest itself verbally (e.g., shouting, screaming, or crying) or physically (e.g., biting, lashing out, or both). Children's meltdowns are sometimes misinterpreted for temper tantrums by less understanding members of the public, who frequently make unpleasant remarks and cast judgmental looks at parents and their Autistic children. A shutdown may be just as crippling even when it seems less severe to those around you. Shutdowns are a similar reaction to feeling overwhelmed, although they might seem more passive, like in the case of an Autistic person who becomes silent or "switches off." (National Autistic Society n.d.)

Belcher (2022), defines the phenomenon of “masking”, from the perspective of an individual on the Autism spectrum; Masking or camouflaging refers to the act of concealing or disguising elements of oneself in order to better blend in with people around you and it is a subconscious technique that all people learn to use as they mature in order to connect with others around them. The author proceeds to state that “However, for us autistic folk the strategy is often much more ingrained and harmful to our wellbeing and health. Because our social norms are different to others around us, we often experience greater pressure to hide our true selves and to fit into that non-autistic culture.” (Belcher 2022)

Belcher (2022), elaborates that masking may entail suppressing behaviors, such as stimming or strong interests, that individuals on the Autism spectrum find calming but that other people find "strange." Additionally, it may entail replicating the nonverbal cues of people around and creating elaborate social scripts in order to navigate social settings. Belcher (2022) concludes, that there is a strong desire to fit in and avoid being perceived negatively for being "different."

“Over time we may become more aware of our own masking, but it often begins as an unconscious response to social trauma before we even grasp our differences.” (Belcher 2022) The author quotes Bradley (2021) and Hull (2019), by stating that studies are just now starting to show how damaging masking may be to the mental health of Autistic people. (Belcher 2022), determines that one of the potential reasons that result to this, is that masking is “exhausting” for people on the Autism spectrum, as fighting Autistic "burnout" and episodes of mental instability, brought on by the stress of attempting to fit in with a society that isn't designed for the way of thinking of an Autistic person.

3.5.2 Outdated terms affiliated with Autism spectrum disorder

Autismiliitto`s official webpage (no date), declares that Asperger syndrome as a diagnosis was introduced in Finland in the 1990s. The diagnosis of Asperger syndrome was created to describe a person who met the diagnostic features associated with autism without a significant delay in language or cognitive development as often seen in autism. The diagnosis is named after the Austrian pediatrician Hans Asperger (1906 - 1980).

The new ICD-11 disease categorization system will remove the diagnosis of Asperger syndrome, Autismiliitto claims (no date). Although Asperger's syndrome won't be recognized as a distinct diagnosis in the future, but people who have previously been given this diagnosis will retain it. It may also be employed in informal language and is a component of the identities of people with Asperger's. In the future, those who would have received an Asperger's diagnosis in the past will receive an autistic spectrum disorder diagnosis. Asperger's

syndrome continues to play a significant role in the identities of many persons with this diagnosis. (Autismiliitto n.d.)

“‘High functioning autism’ is a term often used for individuals with autism spectrum disorder without an intellectual disability. Over time, this term has become synonymous with expectations of greater functional skills and better long-term outcomes, despite contradictory clinical observations.” (Alvares, Bebbington, Cleary, Evans, Glasson, Maybery, Pillar, Uljarević, Varcin, Wray, & Whitehouse 2020)

The authors Alvares et al. (2020), quote the authors Ameli et al. (1988), DeLong and Dwyer (1988), Lincoln et.al (1988), by stating that the phrase (High Functioning Autism) was initially used to describe those without moderate to severe intellectual disabilities (ID) or with IQs under 70 in the 1980s. “High functioning” has over time come to be associated with expectations of relative strengths in language, higher IQs, milder symptom profiles, and better long-term outcomes, despite a large body of evidence refuting these assumptions. (Alvares et al. 2020) Conclusively, the authors disclose that “There is therefore an increasing imperative to understand the term’s validity in delineating ‘functioning’ based on IQ.” (Alvares et al. 2020)

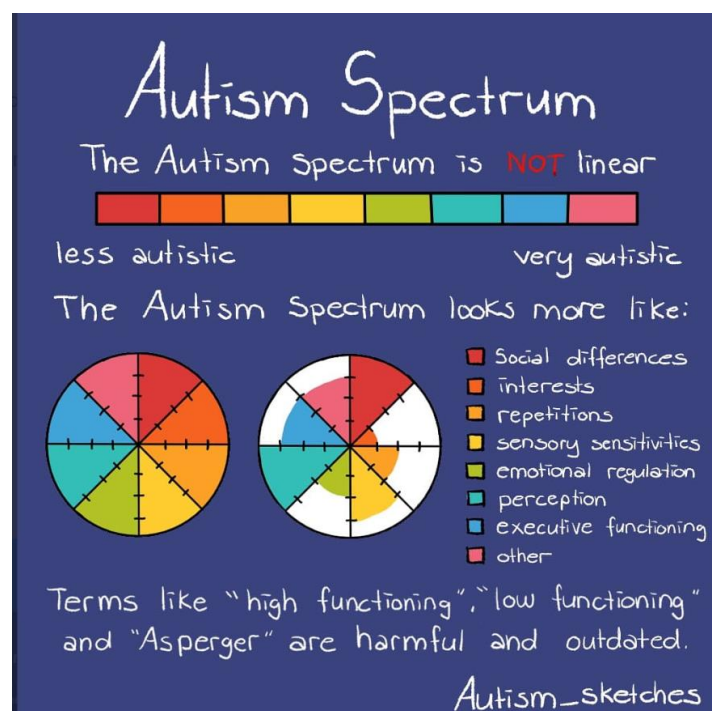


Figure 4: The figure (Autism Sketches n.d.), illustrates that the autism spectrum is not linear, and therefore autism cannot be classified into the categories of “High functioning” or “Low functioning”.

Milestones Autism Resources (2019), proclaim in their webpage that there has been some discussion over the term "high-functioning autism" within the Autism community for some time. The phrase "high-functioning autism" has recently come under scrutiny due to a research, which has renewed debate about its limitations as a diagnostic word. “” The term (high-functioning autism) completely disregards the difficulties these individuals have on a day-to-day basis,” says lead investigator Andrew Whitehouse, professor of autism research at the Telethon Kids Institute and the University of Western Australia in Perth, Australia.” (Milestones Autism Resources 2019) “As an educational agency, Milestones agrees that this label does not serve as an accurate label given the wide variety of challenges high-functioning individuals face.” (Milestones Autism Resources 2019)

There persists a misconception that the Autism spectrum is linear. In actuality, Autistic individuals can exhibit a variety of traits in their abilities, communications, social interactions, leisure, and play, which might resemble a constellation. (no author, Autism Spectrum Australia n.d.)

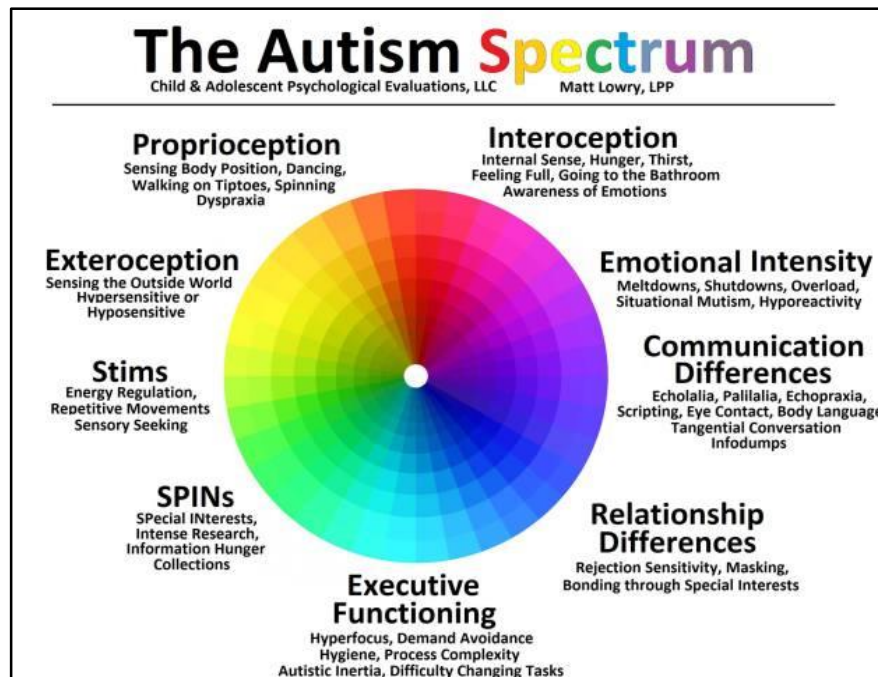


Figure 5: The picture above presents more meticulously the wheel chart of which is used to illustrate that the Autism spectrum is not linear but rather a constellation of characteristics that ranges in between individuals on the Autism spectrum. (Angoff n.d.)

3.6 The double-rainbow term

Morgan (2019), describes the term “Living under the Double Rainbow” as “[...] an expression that has emerged in recent years to describe individuals with autism who also identify as LGBTQ+ which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and the plus sign which

stands for “other non-heterosexual orientations.” People with autism identify as LGBTQ+ at a higher proportion than neurotypical people, although the causes for this are not fully established. It is notably difficult to obtain precise information regarding the number of LGBTQ+ neurotypical people due to variables including stigma and prejudice. (Morgan 2019)

Morgan (2019), proceeds to elaborate that a popular theory for the upsurge of LGBTQIA+ identifying persons within the Autistic community, is that those with autism are less responsive to societal pressures to “remain in the closet” or, more simply put, feel less driven to conceal their identity. As a result, there may be little to no “increase” at all. (unless you disregard the greater proportion of people who identify as asexual)

According to some early statistics, 1 in 5 autistic people identify as LGBTQ+, Morgan (2019) claims. 10% of those with Autism who identify as asexual are among the estimated 20% of autistic persons. Thus, 10% of people claim to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or possess another non-asexual or non-heterosexual identity. (Morgan 2019)

The statistics for neurotypicals are rather different. Gallup estimated that 4.5% of the population were LGBTQ+ in 2018. However, this percentage increased to 8.2% when they only included younger people (those born after 1980). There may be variances across age groups and over time because people feel more comfortable sharing their identities, which makes it simpler for researchers to get precise data. (Morgan 2019)

George and Stokes (2021, 2), report that compared to non-Autistic people, people on the Autism spectrum are less likely to claim sexual activity or heterosexuality, but more likely to self-report asexuality or “other” sexuality.

As opposed to non-Autistic men, Autistic men are specifically more likely to be bisexual, whereas Autistic women are specifically more likely to be gay (compared to non-Autistic females). As a result, compared to peers in the general population, Autistic males and girls may display a greater range of sexual orientations in various sex-specific patterns. Females with Autism are more likely than men to have a variety of sexual orientations (apart from homosexuality) and engage in sexual activity. (George & Stokes 2021, 2)

Morgan (2019) declares the term of Gender dysphoria as the distress or discomfort that individuals may experience when their assigned sex differs from the gender they identify with (GD). According to some data, gender dysphoria and Autism are related, and Autistic persons may be more prone than normal people to experience it. “ However there is little evidence about the reason(s) why, and some recent research suggests the link between autism and gender dysphoria is not so clear. ” (Morgan 2019) Additionally, more study is required in order to create and refine evaluation tools, provide support, and provide therapy for Autistic persons who are suffering gender dysphoria. (Morgan 2019)

The relationship between Autism and traits associated with Autism and gender diversity has been looked into in a few studies, most of which were clinic-based, usually with small sample sizes, and in people with gender dysphoria. According to these research, Autistic children, adolescents, and adults have higher rates of gender variety than the general population. (Warrier et al. 2020, 2)

In the majority of these studies in children and adolescents, one item from the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), a caregiver-report measure for behavioral problems, was used to quantify gender variance. These studies found that, in comparison to non-Autistic children, 0.7% of children with Autism, between 4% and 5.4% of children with Autism may potentially be transgender or gender-diverse. The greatest of these studies, involving approximately 300,000 children, found that the likelihood of a gender dysphoria clinical diagnosis was four times higher in Autistic children than in non-Autistic kids (i.e., 0.07% of autistic kids and 0.01% of non-autistic kids). Although the studies employing CBCL and clinical gender dysphoria information have different percentages of transgender and gender-diverse identities, the proportional rates are often similar (between 5.7 and 7.7)

Another series of research looked into the prevalence of Autism in gender dysphoria in kids, teens, and adults. According to this research, 4.8% to 26% of people who visit gender dysphoria clinics have been diagnosed with Autism using a variety of criteria. Based on a review of clinical and medical data, the biggest of these studies (N = 532 and N = 540) determined that 6.0% and 4.8%, respectively, of these people are Autistic. Using a baseline population estimate of 1-2% shows that Autism diagnoses are much higher in those presenting to gender dysphoria clinics, even though none of these studies have examined the relative rates of Autism diagnoses using a matched control sample. In comparison to cisgender people, a third set of research has found higher autism-related features in people with gender variety. (Warrier et al. 2020, 2)

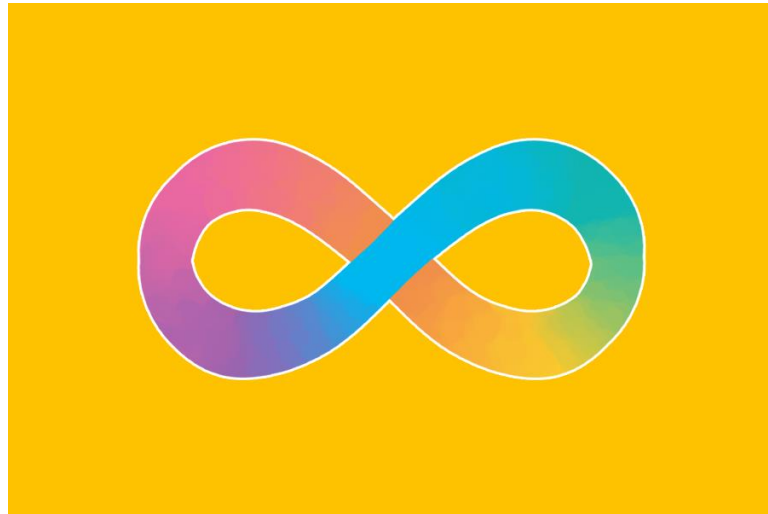


Figure 6: An autistic pride flag. The rainbow symbolizes the pride movement, and the infinity symbol stands for neurodiversity. (Autistic empire n.d.)

3.7 Introduction to existing guidelines in LGBTQIA+ spaces

The implementation process of the developed booklet of this thesis, includes presenting existing guidelines within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. This is done in aim of illustrating the lack of existent guidelines within these spaces, that are specifically directed to ensure inclusivity towards individuals on the Autism spectrum. This emphasizes the need of the developed guidelines-package of this thesis, that is directed for individuals on the Autism spectrum of which can be implemented within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces.

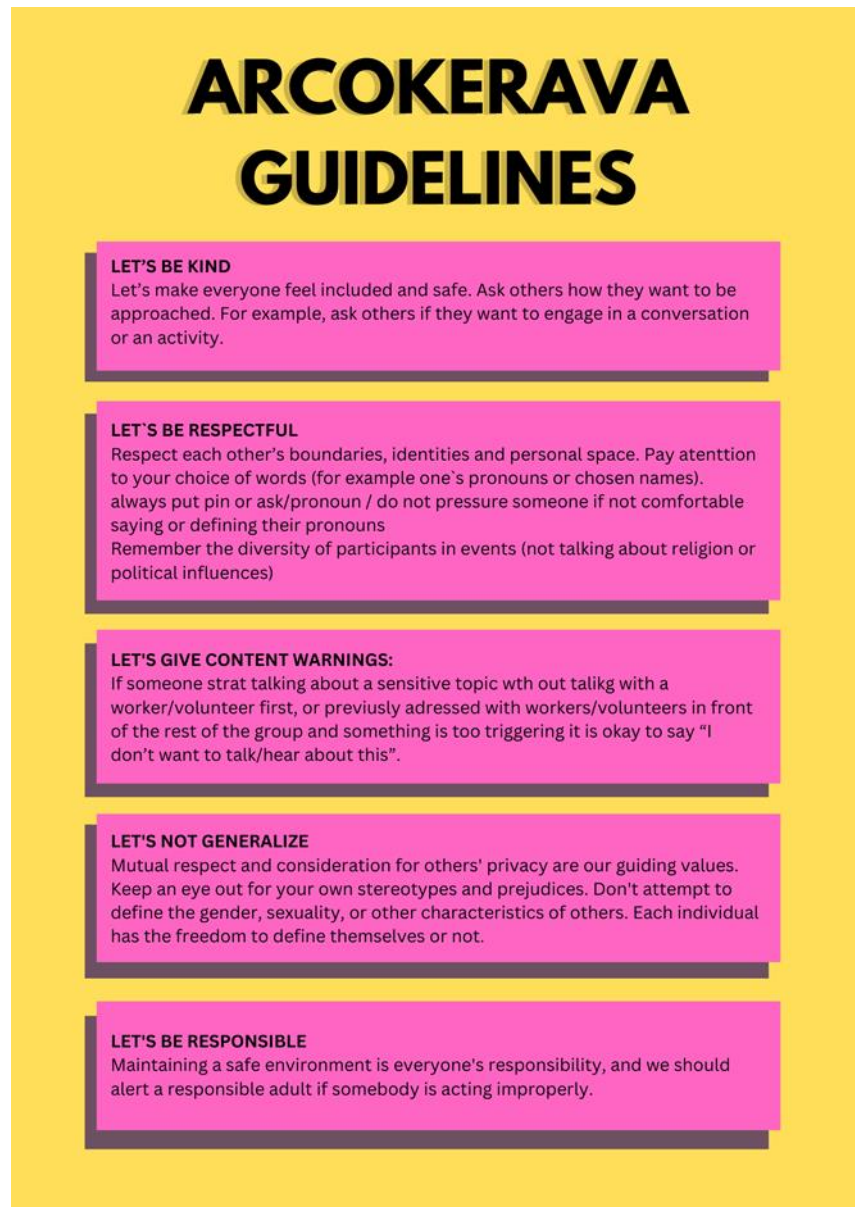


Figure 7: In the picture above, the safer space guidelines of ArcoKerava LGBTQIA+ youth space are presented. The guidelines are implemented within the operative model of ArcoKerava. The guidelines' purpose is to ensure that all participants feel comfortable and safe to participate in the activities of ArcoKerava.

HELSINKI **Pride**
YHTEISO

HELSINKI PRIDE COMMUNITY

SAFER SPACE principles

In all the activities of the Helsinki Pride Community, the safer space principles are complied with.

1. Our principles are mutual appreciation and respect for other people's privacy. Be aware of your own assumptions and generalizations. Do not define other people's gender identity, sexual orientation, or other background. Everyone has the right to define - or not define oneself.
2. When being addressed, the person addressed can decide which name and pronoun is to be used for him or her.
3. Let us be constructive, understanding, and fair so that everybody has the courage to speak naturally and openly. All the terms are not familiar or they mean different things. For clarification, ask about them. If you make a mistake, apologise, and just pursue your matter further.
4. Let the other person finish talking, and then express your opinion. Everybody can participate in his or her own way. You also have the permission not to say anything.
5. Respect everybody's right to take a pause, to leave, or not to participate in certain activities, and do not question any reasons for it.
6. Remember the duty of confidentiality: matters disclosed in a group will remain only as the knowledge of those having attended. Let us not expose each other without a permission outside the auspices of the Helsinki Pride Community ("Hi, we met at the Helsinki Pride Community").
7. Respect your own and other people's mental and physical boundaries, allow room for everybody, and do not touch another person without a permission.
8. Do not take pictures or publish pictures without the permission of all the persons in the picture.
9. The activities taking place at the Helsinki Pride Community's facilities are drugfree.
10. With these principles, together, we create an atmosphere where everybody feels comfortable and safe to participate.

If you experience or witness discrimination, harassment, bullying, or threat, contact the personnel of the Helsinki Pride Community:

aleksanteri@pride.fi/
+358451210024
or yasmin@pride.fi/
+358451337077

Figure 8: In the picture above, the safe-space guidelines of Helsinki Pride Ry`'s operative model is presented in ten concrete guidelines. The guidelines are implemented in Helsinki Pride Ry`'s activity nights of which are directed for diverse groups that are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. The guidelines`' purpose is to ensure that all participants feel comfortable and safe to participate in the activities of Helsinki Pride ry. (Helsinki Pride n.d.)

3.8 Methods that promote inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum

In this section of the thesis, theory around methods that promote inclusivity for individuals on the Autism Spectrum is presented. This is cardinal, as this thesis's objective entails constructing a concrete guidelines-package directed for ensuring inclusivity for individuals on the Autism Spectrum within LGBTQIA+ spaces. The familiarization and examination of aspects that shall be taken into consideration apropos of ensuring utmost inclusivity and accessibility for Autistic attendees within LGBTQIA+ spaces, is vital in the process of constructing the aforementioned guidelines. The examined inclusivity methods of this segment, will be utilized within the thesis's developed inclusivity guidelines.

There has already been considerable migration in the LGBT community away from pubs and clubs, aside from the inclusion of Autistic people. It's been debated for a long time how to incorporate kids, seniors, and sober individuals by expanding LGBT spaces. Even said, there are still not enough queer-focused establishments for leisurely pursuits like coffee shops, board game cafés, bookshops, etc. Instead, it appears that the community is heading in the direction of local social groups. Queer sports leagues, poetry readings, D&D clubs, support groups, speed dating, and a wide range of other activities are becoming increasingly commonplace. Nevertheless, these activities provide unique difficulties for those with Autism, whether because of the activity itself or because of stigma and a lack of acceptance from other participants. (Hopkinson 2022)

Hopkinson (2022), expresses that "Beyond even the need for physical and mental accessibility, the key factors of an accessible space for autistic people are social and emotional accessibility. [...] the whole point of queer spaces is the relief of being your authentic self. If that relief is only available to queer people who present themselves in a certain way, then it is not a safe space." (Hopkinson 2022)

Although each person on the Autism spectrum will have unique environmental requirements, there are some broad questions we may ask to establish a physical setting that will lessen rather than heighten anxiety. Visual, auditory, olfactory, taste, touch, vestibular, and proprioceptive senses are only a few of the seven that demand our attention. The usage of space is something else that needs our attention. (Matusiak n.d.)

Autismiliitto (2022), presents a concrete guidelines list within their webpage, of which is directed to ensure accessibility towards individuals on the Autism spectrum in diverse circumstances. Autismiliitto (2022), defines accessibility of the immaterial environment significant for all persons, which refers to accessibility, from the perspective of social, psychological, and cognitive accessibility. In order to be accessible, one must take into account the demands of all types of individuals in their communication, daily activities, attitudes, and the creation of websites and services. From the viewpoint of those with Autism

spectrum disorders, increasing accessibility and accessibility entails taking into account things like the barriers brought on by communication, interaction, the environment, and sensory stimulation. The challenges of daily living are common for many Autistic persons. (Autismiliitto 2022)

Autismiliitto (2022), translates accessibility into the following fundamentals:

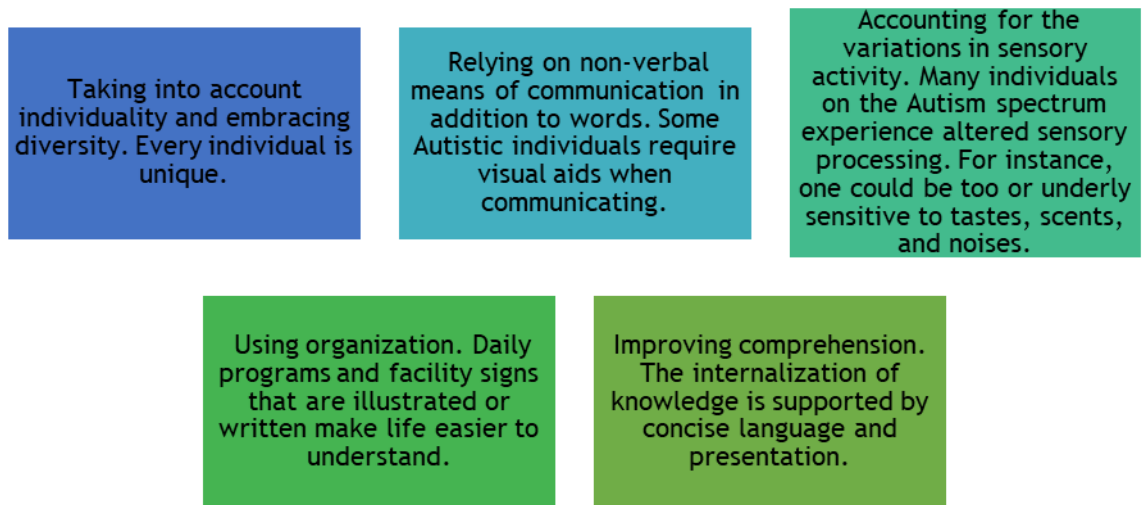


Figure 9: The graph above is used to present the Autism spectrum accessibility fundamentals as determined in Autismiliitto`s webpage (2022).

The guidelines constructed by Autismiliitto (2022), are segregated in four different segments of which provide guidelines in aim of attaining utmost accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The four segments are determined as the following: Physical accessibility, Social accessibility, Mental accessibility and Cognitive accessibility. (Autismiliitto 2022)

Physical accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum can be promoted through:

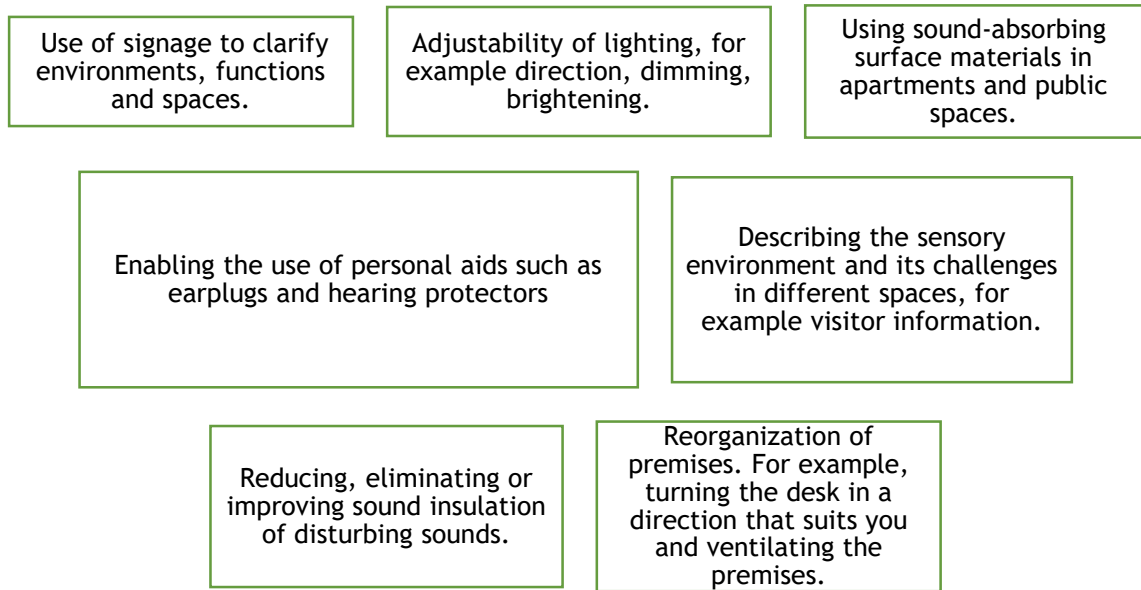


Figure 10: The graph above presents methods in regards of how to promote physical accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are gathered from Autismiliitto`s website (2022).

Social accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum can be promoted through:

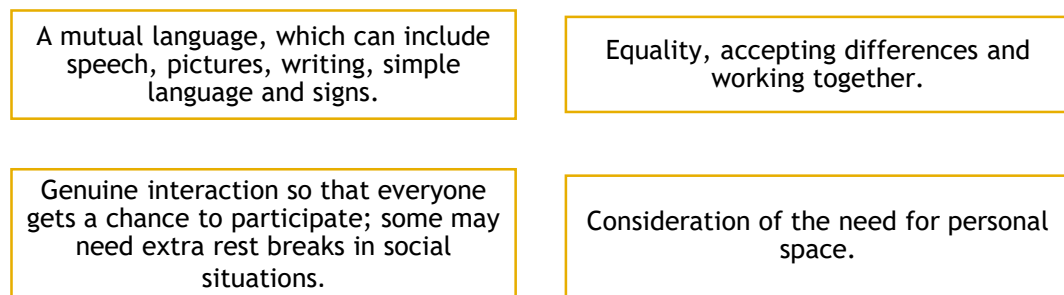


Figure 11: The graph above presents methods in regards of how to promote social accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are gathered from Autismiliitto`s website (2022).

Mental accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum can be promoted by finding individual solutions that support independent survival, for example adaptations in the organization of work. Moreover, attitude change and sharing Autism information can also contribute to promoting mental accessibility. (Autismiliitto 2022) Accessibility can be achieved with small changes; taking physical, social and cognitive barriers seriously and wanting to remove them is imperative. (Autismiliitto 2022)

Cognitive accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum can be promoted through the following:

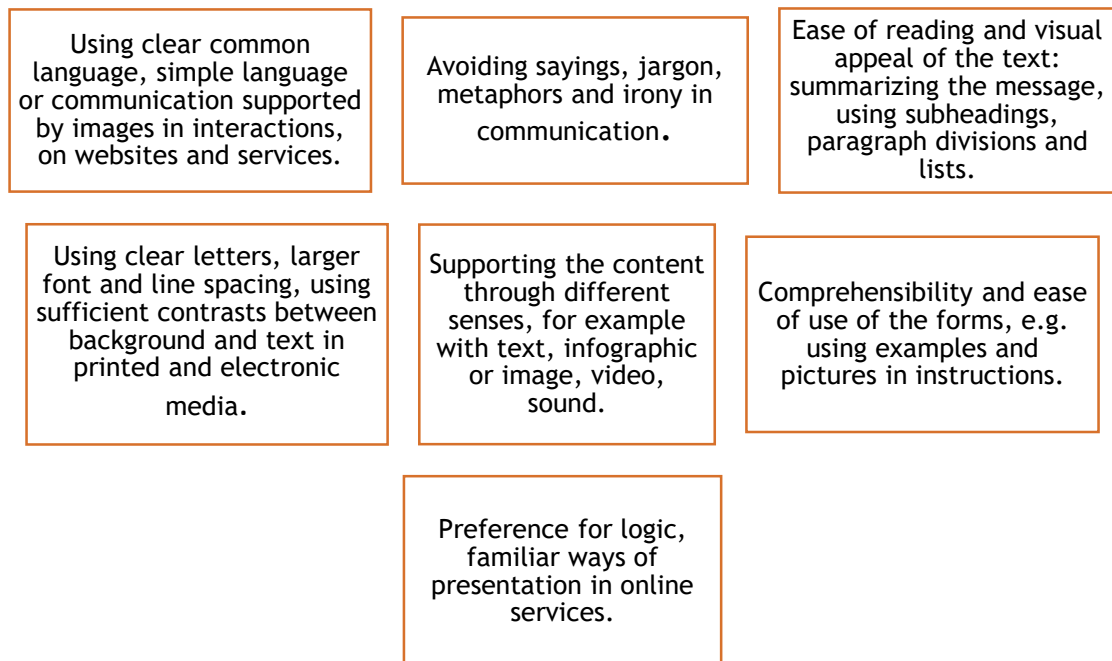


Figure 12: The graph above presents methods in regards of how to promote cognitive accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are gathered from Autismiliitto`s website (2022).

Autismiliitto (2022), concludes that everyone should be able to act and engage equally with others, regardless of their characteristics, in order to be considered accessible. Because each person on the Autism spectrum is unique, accessibility does not mean the same things to them all. The most crucial step is to establish an atmosphere where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. (Autismiliitto 2022)

Hopkinson (2022), declares some concrete methods of which can be adopted as a method that supports Autistic peoples' inclusivity. Some of these include the following:

<p>Refrain from initially pressuring Autistic persons to engage. Although being open-minded and adaptable is good, each person is aware of their own capabilities and interests. Although receiving "no" as an answer is certainly a crucial component of acceptance, giving time to consider the question and the procedure is often welcomed.</p>	<p>If someone has to leave early, don't take it personally; recognizing one's limit is a good approach for people to manage their sensory requirement.</p>	<p>Ask your attendees and Autistic friends how they're doing. It could be more comfortable for them if you ask them what they need rather than them just bringing it up.</p>	<p>Don't call attention to or criticize behaviors you may find odd. Autistic persons may express themselves or cope under stress by fidgeting, speaking too loudly or too softly, asking several questions, or zoning out. Even if it may not be a behavior you are accustomed to, calling attention to it might alienate the individual and make them feel self-conscious.</p>
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Figure 13: The graph above presents methods in regards of how to promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Hopkinson (2022).

Gatfield et al. (2018, 7), declare approaches that it is essential to ask members of your specific participant group to describe their needs, desires, and preferences in as much detail as is practicable. Participants' requirements may vary greatly because Autism can appear in such a variety of ways among different people and one shall not base their opinion of an Autistic person on preconceptions or labels.

The following four components might be highlighted to assist develop inclusive settings apropos of the physical environment. "the physical environment, the materials that are provided, the processes and practices that take place before, during and after the event, the communication, presentation and workshop protocols." (Gatfield et al. 2018, 9).

Gatfield et al. (2018), divide the inclusive adaptations of the physical environment in several sections. A few of these include the following:

Decór	
Avoid having brightly colored or intricately patterned furniture, rugs, curtains, blinds, walls, ceilings, or artwork.	Avoid operating ceiling fans; These may be loud as well as aesthetically disturbing.

Figure 14: The table above presents physical adaptations within an environment that promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Gatfield et al. (2018, 9).

Lighting				
Maximizing the use of natural light; lowering curtains to lessen glare and other visual distractions.	Individually adjustable blinds that allow for more flexibility to accommodate participants' differing demands.	Checking that no lights or bulbs are flickering.	Supplying lamps if there are just fluorescent lights available.	If there is fluorescent lighting, let attendees know in advance as there may not always be an alternative. You might advise them to carry a cap, sunglasses, or tinted eyewear.

Figure 15: The table above presents physical adaptations within an environment that promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Gatfield et al. (2018, 10).

Odours		
Do not use perfumes or deodorants with strong scents. Before the event, make sure to let everyone know about this.	Examine the cleaning schedule and the intended cleaning supplies because the scent of cleaning chemicals can be overpowering and this procedure may need to be taken into consideration and prepared for.	Check to be sure there won't be any new furnishings, paint, carpet, or curtains within a month of the event because the scents from these materials might be quite distressing.

Figure 16: The table above presents physical adaptations within an environment that promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Gatfield et al. (2018, 10,11).

Sound				
Older fluorescent bulbs may hum. Avoid them and instead utilize natural light or other types of illumination.	Make sure there is no background noise coming from outside the room, such as traffic, music, or construction, or coming from inside the room, such a ticking clock or air conditioner.	Activities in small groups may be very loud. Break-out rooms are ideal. If this is not a possibility, make sure the groups are as far apart as you can.	Be mindful that opening windows and doors for air throughout the session may bring outside noise.	In bathrooms, provide paper towels and a trash can, disconnect the hand drier, or post a "out of order" notice on it.

Figure 17: The table above presents physical adaptations within an environment that promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Gatfield et al. (2018, 14, 15).

As different people have different perceptions of what is pleasant, if at all feasible, ask them if they would like the temperature of the room cooler or warmer. Encourage attendees to pack layers of clothing ahead of time so they can be comfortable as room temperature is not always adjustable. (Gatfield et al. 2018,15)

Gatfield et al. (2018,11) state that a space shall be divided in multiple segments in aim of ensuring utmost accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum. "Ideally, there will be a

number of different rooms including: a Main Room, one or more Break-Out Rooms and a Chill-Out Room [...]” (Gatfield et al. 2018,11) For those who want a peaceful break from their surroundings, a chill-out room would be provided. Some of the cardinal elements that should be implemented within the chill-out room include low-lighting and sensory tools. (Gatfield et al. 2018,11) Sensory tools should be accessible in all rooms. (Gatfield et al. 2018,17)

Gatfield et al. (2018), declare several protocols that can be adopted within an operative model before the event in aim of ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum.

Before the Event:			
Provide participants with a designated support person or individuals who are accessible to them in person, over the phone, or via text message to assist with tasks like locating the location of the event/space.	Encourage participants to prepare their support network in advance of any potentially triggering event/s/topics.	Ensure that authorized support personnel with psychological first aid training are contactable by participants and that their contact information is available in case of emergency both in person and by other means (such as text or email).	Ensure that staff members receive instructions on how to manage unexpected demands or behaviors in a compassionate and professional manner.

Figure 18: The table above presents protocols of which can be implemented within an operative model, that promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Gatfield et al. (2018, 18).

Gatfield et al. (2018), declare several protocols that can be implemented within an operative model, apropos of preparing the attendees of the event/activity themselves, in aim of ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. Some of these

include the following:

What to ask attendees:		
Dietary restrictions including those for dairy, wheat, and gluten free foods. Many autistic people find particular foods with certain textures or strong flavors to be uncomfortable. As a result, you have to inquire about people's food preferences.	Sensory sensitivities to things like loud noises and bright lights.	Contact preferences, such as the preferred methods of information transmission and receipt. Due to difficulties with auditory processing and the lack of a full picture of the other person to provide context for conversational signals, some Autistic persons dislike chatting on the phone, while others prefer in-person interactions or via email.

Figure 19: The table above presents protocols of which can be implemented within an operative model, that promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Gatfield et al. (2018, 18,19).

What to provide to attendees:						
Event space information. Pictures of the rooms, the entryway, and, if applicable, the front desk should be included. *(1)	Maps of the location and its surroundings . Directions to the meeting room and the parking lot entry should be included, and pictures are helpful.	Engagement guidelines.	Information on proactive supporting strategies *(2)	Information about the support people/staff and any attendees (if possible). *(3)	Contact numbers. There should be a phone number or numbers for the organizers or support staff in case something goes wrong, such having trouble finding the place or needing counseling.	Timetable of events. There should be expectations for involvement as well as timings, timetables, and transitions between activities.

Figure 20: The table above presents protocols of which can be implemented within an operative model, that promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Gatfield et al. (2018,19, 20). Some of the

protocols presented within the table incorporate numbered asterisks (*), of which provide additional information about the protocols in question below.

* (1) This will help individuals prepare by letting them know what to expect. For instance, individuals could decide to bring a cap if they are aware in advance that there would be fluorescent lights. (Gatfield et al. 2018,19).

* (2) Some Autistic persons may downplay their discomfort while in a group situation. By explaining the supporting practices, you may let your participants know what to expect, which promotes more open communication about needs and the identification of previously overlooked factors. (Gatfield et al.2018,19).

* (3) Prosopagnosia, sometimes known as "facial blindness," affects autistic persons significantly more frequently than the general population, making it possible for them to have trouble recalling people's appearances from one instant to the next.

Name badges worn consistently and current images of the presenting team in the information pack can both be helpful. (Gatfield et al. 2018,19, 20).

Gatfield et al. (2018), declare several protocols that can be implemented during an activity/event, in aim of ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. Some of these include the following:

During the event:					
"Rules of engagement. "These have to include guidelines for the use of fragrances, physical touch, eye contact, and other supportive techniques.	Permission to touch. Many people are uncomfortable with being touched and/or hugged therefore permission to touch should be sought.	"The red dot system."Participants can use this technique to graphically display their preferred methods of communication. Usually, nametags are dotted with these stickers. It should be made clear that these can be adjusted as necessary and that they should be followed before approaching someone.	Eye contact. Eye contact is not always essential for involvement for those with autism, and it may even interfere with focus.	Demonstrate flexibility. Make sure participants are aware that it is okay for them to leave the room, utilize sensory instruments, relax in the chill out area, etc.	Encourage individuals to make contributions in various ways. Not everyone feels confident speaking up and asking questions.

Figure 21: The table above presents protocols of which can be implemented within an

operative model, that promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Gatfield et al. (2018,21, 22, 23).

Even while not all occasions may be made totally sensory-friendly for people with Autism, it is frequently possible to improve their experience. Offering Autistic persons a "sensory map" in advance can help them be ready for any bright, noisy, or smelly stimuli and carry any necessary aids. (Hopkinson 2022)

Gatfield et al. (2018), declare several communication protocols (whether in print or verbally) that can be implemented, in aim of ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. Some of these include the following:

Communication:		
Ask individuals how they want to be referred to, such as "on the autism spectrum" or "autistic person," if at all feasible. There is no one phrase that is favoured by all members of the Autistic and Autism community when referring to Autism.	Verify the accessibility of the information being provided. The best language for everyone is plain English, which uses everyday terminology (non-academic language).	Avoid using metaphors. For a number of reasons, they might be perplexing for some autistic individuals.

Figure 22: The table above presents communication protocols of which can be implemented within an operative model, that promote accessibility and inclusivity for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The methods are constructed by Gatfield et al. (2018, 25).

Zamzow (2021) promotes a perception of the “Double Empathy” problem, of which may function as a tool apropos of ensuring an inclusive environment for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The "double empathy problem" theory contends that communication problems between Autistic and non-autistic persons are a result of both sides having trouble understanding one another. This "double problem" casts doubt on prevailing theories of Autism that attribute failed encounters to the social difficulties of Autistic persons. In assuming that Autistic persons just have a different style of communicating rather than a less effective one, it also mirrors the concepts of neurodiversity. (Zamzow 2021)

The theory's premise is that a communication breakdown might result from a mismatch between two persons. Disconnects can happen on many different levels, ranging from conversational patterns to worldviews. The more distance there is between the two persons, the harder it will be for them to communicate. In the case of autism, a communication gap may exist between those with and without the condition since both Autistic persons and those without the condition have difficulty comprehending one another. According to the concept,

there is a mutual issue. Conversations between autistic and non-autistic persons may be hindered, for instance, by the inability to understand the other person's facial expressions. (Zamzow 2021)

Zamzow (2021), declares that new studies investigate how non-autistic people behave while engaging with Autistic people, as opposed to concentrating on how persons with Autism behave in social contexts. The findings suggest that the communication gap is amplified by the blind spots of non-autistic persons. Additionally, non-autistic persons are prone to making quick judgments about autistic people that obstruct, limit, or sour interactions between the two. For instance, those who aren't Autistic may be more likely to have unfavorable opinions about Autistic individuals without being aware of their diagnosis, believing them to be less approachable and awkward than neurotypical people or thinking they are deceptive. (Zamzow 2021)

Zamzow (2021), concludes that the theory of “double empathy” emphasizes the significance of seeing both sides of social interactions as opposed to concentrating primarily on the ways autistic persons deviate from the norm. Similar to this, the double empathy problem emphasizes the significance of educational programs that teach non-autistic persons how to engage appropriately with Autistic people. (Zamzow 2021)

4 Implementation process

In this section of the thesis, the implementation process of the of the thesis`s produced guidelines booklet is presented.

Constructing a concrete plan for the implementation process of the developed product, includes an essential step in regards of reaching the assembled objectives of the thesis. It involves a procedure, that forms structure and guidance within the development process. In the final stage, it helps illustrate the methods of which have been utilized to reach the assembled objectives of the thesis.

The implementation methods of this thesis, included a thorough process of collecting and analyzing information regarding the thesis topic. I have enacted the thesis process, by firstly composing a list of all the related areas I intended to examine and integrate within the theoretical framework of my thesis and booklet. Followed by this, I have compiled a list of sources I opted to wield throughout my thesis and the booklet. After constructing a competent base of theoretical framework on all the topics examined throughout my thesis, I have proceeded to introduce the areas of which provided qualified information in relation to my thesis topic and objectives, throughout my thesis report. A competent base of theoretical framework, reinforces the efficiency apropos of developing the phenomenon that is being

studied within the thesis, as it provides acquaintance to the key concepts of it. Additionally, it familiarizes the reader to the key concepts of the thesis.

Moreover, I have justified the reason as to why does the specific inclusivity guideline package constructed for individuals on the autism spectrum within LGBTQIA+ spaces, is essential. Throughout my implementation process I have analyzed the main definitions that are correlated with the developmental target of this thesis, as for instance researching LGBTQIA+ safer spaces, studying the concept of accessibility itself, as well as being on the autism spectrum and other affiliated themes. Followed by the introduction of both the thesis` s objectives and developmental methods, I have demonstrated what specific target group is possibly going to benefit from the produced booklet and its accommodated guidelines package.

The implementation method of my thesis, included yielding a theoretical framework that provides adequate information in regards of all the topics and sub-topics that relate to my thesis` s objectives. The theoretical framework is constructed through a combination of a diverse set of qualified sources, including prior publications on relevant topics, along with interviews with the working life representatives of this thesis that acquire professional insight in regards of the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum and the operative model of LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. A diverse base of theoretical framework that is consisted of creditable sources, is imperative, as it abides the thesis` s validity and comprehensiveness.

As aforementioned, the thesis process accommodates introducing further sub-topics that are relevant to the subject matter and objectives of the thesis. One of the chief sub-topics that are introduced in the thesis, includes the phenomenon of common prevalence on individuals that are on the autism spectrum that identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, also known as “double rainbow people.” The thesis opens up briefly about the correlation in between the two marginalized identities (autistic people that are part of the LGBTQIA+ community). The analyzation of the phenomenon in question, is based in external prior research on the matter. The introduction of the phenomenon of “double rainbow people” is vital, since it examines the very client group that the developmental product of the thesis is directed for.

Throughout the implementation process, I have demonstrated a comparison in between existing safe-space guidelines within LGBTQIA+ spaces, apropos of illustrating the lacking guidelines that are specifically directed for individuals on the autism spectrum. This has assisted me, in regards of developing new guidelines that are applicable within these spaces, in order to ensure inclusivity for attendees that are on the autism spectrum. Furthermore, I linked my developmental inclusivity guideline package for individuals that are on the autism spectrum, with the introduced analyzed theoretical framework of the thesis report. Followed by this, I have developed a briefer and clear guideline package, in a booklet form of which

presents the guidelines for ensuring inclusivity for individuals on the autism spectrum that can be presented and inserted within LGBTQIA+ spaces.

Finally, the booklet was then delivered to be implemented in the thesis's working life representative's operative environment ArcoKerava, which is a safer space for LGBTQIA+ youth. The demand for the implementation of the booklet within ArcoKerava's operative environment served as an exemplary indicator of the developed product's success. Further indicators of success include the feedback I derived from the thesis's working life representatives. I have procured feedback from the behalf of both working life representatives that has attested the essentiality of employing the thesis's booklet within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. Moreover, the booklet has deemed to fulfil its principal objectives and serves its purpose in an efficient way.

As presented below in the two pictures, the diagrams illustrate the implementation process of this thesis. As observed, the implementation process has been divided into concrete steps, that have functioned as a guide throughout the development process of this thesis.

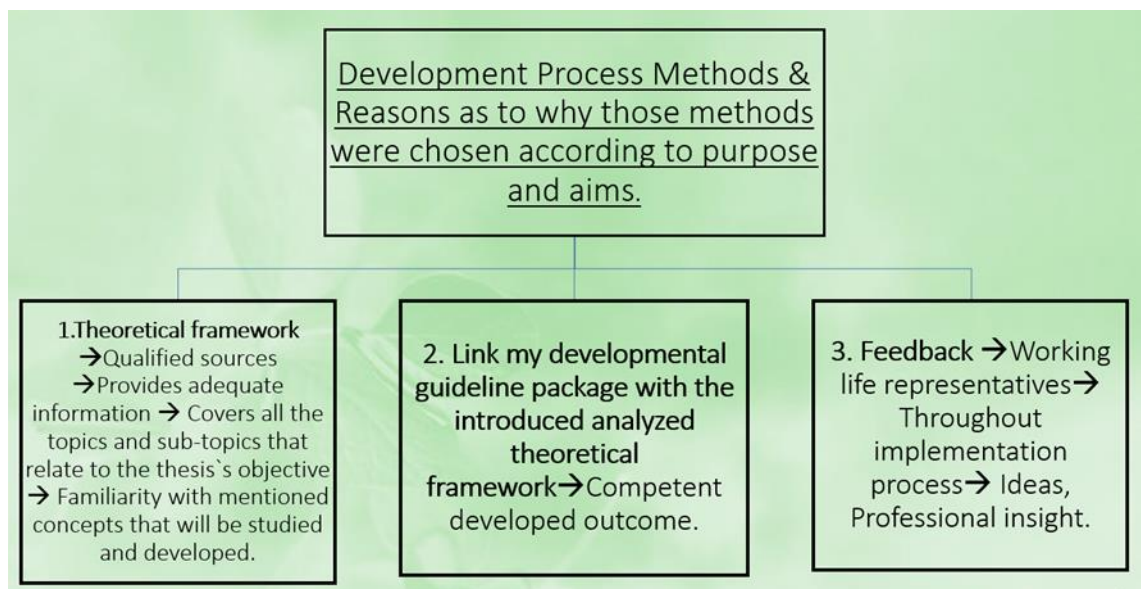


Figure 23: The diagram above presents the development process methods of this thesis and reasons as to why those methods were chosen according to thesis's purpose, illustrated in three divided steps.

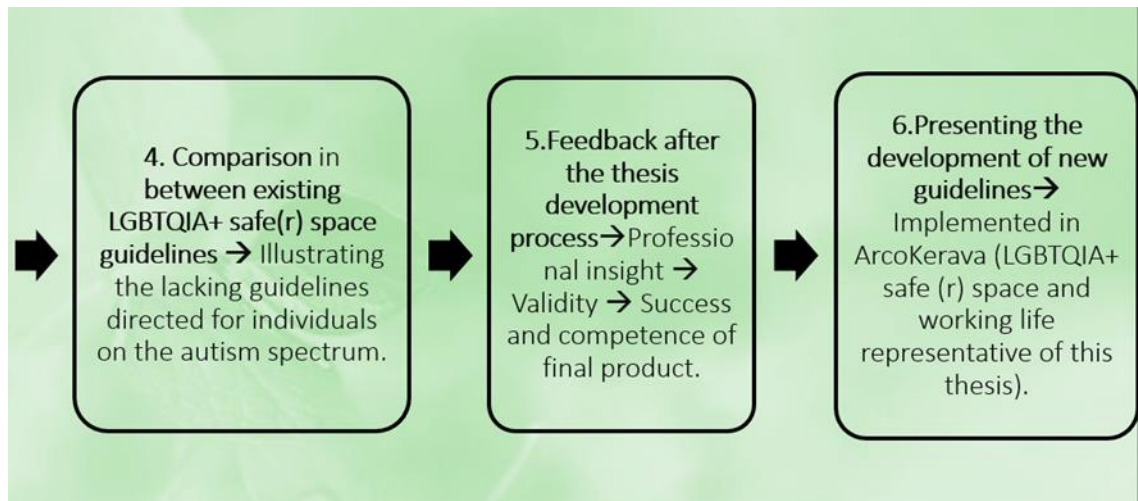


Figure 24: The diagram above presents the continuation of development process methods of this thesis (followed by the steps from the diagram above) and the reasons as to why those methods were chosen according to thesis` s purpose, illustrated in three divided steps..

5 Autism spectrum accessibility guidelines package booklet

As this thesis is developmental-based, it accommodates a developed product that connects with the phenomenon and topics that have been examined within this thesis report. The developed product of this thesis is a guidelines booklet. The booklet functions as a framework of guidelines that endorse inclusivity and accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The guidelines booklet`s target environment is LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. The objective of the booklet entails transforming the operative model and physical environment of LGBTQIA+ safer into one that is more accessible and inclusive towards individuals on the Autism spectrum through its declared guidelines. The booklet`s title is “A Concrete Guidelines Package for Promoting Accessibility towards Individuals on the Autism Spectrum”.

5.1 Planning of the guidelines booklet

In this section, I will focus on describing the process of designing and implementing the developmental guidelines booklet of this thesis. Furthermore, I will declare whether the booklet is successful according to its objectives and purpose, as well as what factors I have taken into account to indicate its success.

The guidelines booklet has been created in the platform Canva. Canva is a free online graphic design tool where you can “create social media posts, presentations, posters, videos, logos and more.” (Canva n.d.) I considered Canva as an efficient platform for creating the thesis’s booklet, as it offers an abundance template options, fonts, designs and so on, which serves well in the development process of the booklet. Additionally, Canva is already familiar to me and thusly, easy to use. The thesis’s booklet content and developed guidelines has been assembled through the utilization of the introduced theoretical framework of this thesis’s report. In addition to this, insight, ideas and feedback from the thesis’s working life representatives have been utilized apropos of the development of the written content of the thesis’s booklet.

The feedback and insight from the working life representatives in regards of the thesis’s booklet, has been gathered in at least 2 (two) separate stages. Firstly, I sent a draft of the developed booklet to the personal work emails of the thesis’s working life representatives, once its content has been assembled. After I have acquired insight and feedback, I utilized the feedback accordingly and enacted possible alterations to the booklet. Followed by this, I sent the new updated version of the booklet to the working life representatives, and thus, gathered the final feedback of the developed booklet. I have used different questions to each working life representative according of the working life representative’s role and I have also allocated a question that any other feedback is willingly accepted.

The thesis’s working life representative Autismiliitto, functioned as a representative of the booklet’s focus group which is people on the Autism spectrum. Therefore, Autismiliitto has provided valuable disclosure and feedback apropos of the booklet’s comprehensiveness, competence and accessibility in light of its written content, visual image and constructed guidelines. The thesis’s working life representative ArcoKerava (a LGBTQIA+ safer space), functioned as a representative of the thesis’s booklet’s target environment, which is LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. ArcoKerava provided fruitful disclosure and feedback apropos of the booklet’s competence, benefit and functionality in a LGBTQIA+ safer space. ArcoKerava also has partaken a vital role in regards of the development of this thesis’s booklet, as it endures as the first space and operative model where the developed booklet will be implemented and tested. ArcoKerava will act as an exemplary vision of how can this thesis’s developed guidelines booklet possibly benefit a LGBTQIA+ safer space’s operative model’s accessibility and inclusivity fundamentals.

As accessibility and inclusivity comprise central themes within this thesis, I granted that it is notably essential to develop the guidelines booklet in a manner that is accessible to readers both visually and in written form. Considering that accessibility is a broad concept, and can involve differentiating accessibility factors depending on diverse peoples’ needs, I intended to focus distinctively on this thesis’s developmental product’s target group’s needs, which

are individuals on the Autism spectrum. Thusly, the accessibility factors I steered to take into account throughout the development process of the guidelines booklet, encompassed visual and written-form aspects that contribute to composing written material in an accessible manner towards individuals on the Autism spectrum. In order to achieve this, I deemed that it is vital for me to get acquainted with methods that help in the developing of posters/informative booklets of which are considerate of Autistic peoples` needs in regards of retrieving information from written material.

The implementation process of the development of this thesis`s booklet has been enacted through the actualization of a concrete implementation plan. The implementation plan of the development of this thesis`s booklet culminates by collecting the key concepts, terms and content related to ensuring inclusivity/accessibility for Autistic individuals (guidelines that can be implemented within an operative model/physical environment) of which have been utilized within the written content of the thesis`s booklet in a new separate draft Word document. Specifically, the chapter of this thesis “3.6 Methods that Promote Inclusivity for Individuals on the Autism Spectrum”, functioned as the foundation for the development of the inclusivity guidelines of the booklet.

I then proceeded to execute an extensive study of retrieved material from published articles and documents, that present guidelines for developing accessible and inclusive written content for Autistic people. I demonstrate the examination of these guidelines in a separate sub-section within the following segment of the thesis “5.2.1 Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Design of the Guidelines booklet”. The assembled material has been utilized within a later development stage of the thesis`s booklet, as the booklet has been constructed according to those accessibility and inclusivity factors of which I have examined. The studied accessibility and inclusivity factors defined the booklet`s written content`s format, layout, use of language as well as the booklet`s visual image.

Followed by this, I proceeded to write down on a second separate draft Word document (in brief bullet points), all the accessibility/inclusivity factors that I have examined within the segment “Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Design of the Guidelines booklet” of this thesis. This is a functional procedure, as I intended to consider all the examined factors that endorse producing accessible and inclusive written content, within the written content and visual appearance of the thesis`s booklet. The reason as to why I listed all the written content accessibility/inclusivity factors in a second draft, is that when I enacted producing the written content of the thesis`s booklet, it was easier to refine the collected key points of the first draft Word document in accordance with those accessibility/inclusivity guidelines, as those guidelines could be seen parallel throughout that process in a concentrated manner. Thusly, the listed accessibility/inclusivity factors in a separate Word document, functioned as a checklist throughout and after the writing process.

After I have assembled the accessibility/inclusivity checklist I intended to utilize in the written content of the thesis's booklet, I refined the initial key points/concepts I have collected in the first draft document during stage one (1) (methods that support inclusivity and accessibility for Autistic individuals and can be implemented within an operative model and physical environment), in a cohesive and comprehensive transcript layout so that they could be transferred to the Canva template at a later stage.

After I have constructed the written content of the thesis's booklet, I proceeded to the development of the visual appearance of the booklet. I enacted assessing the diverse templates, designs and fonts on Canva. Throughout this stage, persisted taking into account the constructed checklist of accessibility factors that relate to constructing a document's visual appearance, as the visual appearance of a document affects the comprehension of written content for some people. Followed by this, I enacted to choose a template with accessible colors, and proceeded to divide it into the necessary segments, customized its layout, design and font, accordingly to the studied accessibility factors.

When the booklet's template on Canva was ready, I proceeded to transfer the written content of the booklet, (which I have already established in the Word document), to that developed template I have created on Canva. After this, I read-proofed the assembled booklet and conducted any necessary adjustments.

Lastly, I sent the developed booklet to the personal work emails of the thesis's working life representatives Autismilitto and ArcoKerava, as well as to the thesis's instructors in exchange of their insight and feedback. I stated to both of the thesis's working life representatives, that if they have any possible further ideas that may entail as compelling additions to the booklet are considered. Furthermore, I declared that any constructive feedback as well as further suggestions, on behalf of them, apropos of the booklet's content, layout and visual image, is welcomed by me, and henceforth, have been utilized accordingly.

I then proceeded to make any essential adjustments to the booklet, according to the possible constructive feedback and suggestions I have retrieved from the thesis's working life representatives or the thesis's instructors during that stage. After this stage, any new adjustments to the booklet I have executed, were sent as a new updated version to the thesis's working life representatives, for a review where I gathered their final feedback in regards of those adjustments as well as the booklet's overall concluding look. When the working life representatives and the thesis's instructors did not affirm any new suggestions, I finally declared that the thesis's booklet development process is finalized.

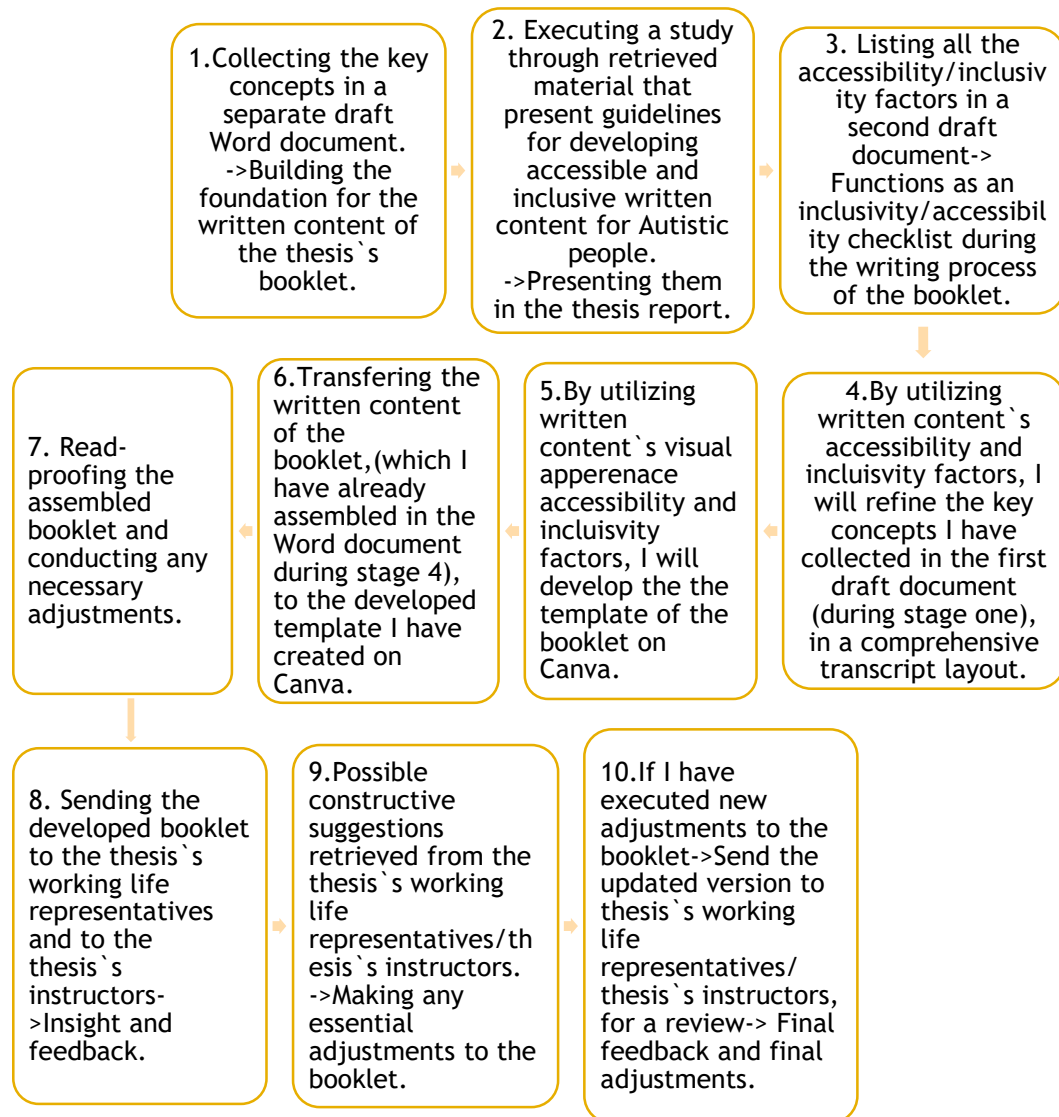


Figure 25: The graph above presents the stages of the implementation plan that was followed within the development process of this thesis's guidelines booklet. The implementation stages that are presented in the graph above, are assembled in the precise order that they have been executed by me, throughout the development process of the thesis's booklet.

5.2 Content of the guidelines booklet

Within this segment of the thesis, I will present more analytically the content and layout of the thesis's accommodated developmental booklet i.e., how the guidebook's vision matured into a finished product. I will present the segments of the booklet as well as the reasons as to why I chose to divide the booklet in that manner.

The booklet incorporates three separate segments. The first segment introduces the content, structure and purpose of the booklet. The second segment introduces the principal concepts and terms affiliated with the booklet's subject matter, i.e. Autism spectrum, inclusivity, accessibility and ableism. Finally, in the third segment of the booklet, the concrete guidelines package is presented.

The first section of the booklet includes the "Introduction to the booklet". The section "Introduction to the booklet", includes the sub-segments "Structure of the Booklet" and "About the Booklet". The first section's role is to outline the content and structure of the booklet, as well as clarify the booklet's overall purpose and benefits that it yields to the reader. The sub-section "Structure of the booklet" presents the content of the booklet and the manner in which it is divided in sections, sub-sections and categories. The sub-section "About the booklet" introduces the basic aspects of the booklet. The first section of the booklet incorporates the following information:

Table of Contents	
For the reader.....	1
Section 1:	
• Introduction to the booklet.....	
- Structure of the booklet.....	
- About the booklet.....	
→ For whom is the booklet directed for.....	
→ Where can the booklet be implemented in.....	
→ Who should read this booklet.....	
→ Accessibility in the development of the booklet.....	
→ Working partners of the booklet.....	
→ Objectives of the booklet.....	

Figure 26: The content of the first section of this thesis's guidelines booklet (A Concrete Guidelines Package for Promoting Accessibility towards Individuals on the Autism Spectrum).

The second segment of the booklet entails the "Introduction to basic terms". This section summarizes the concepts of accessibility, inclusion, the autism spectrum, and ableism. The terms and concepts that are introduced in this segment of the booklet, are predominantly the same terms and concepts that have been introduced within the theoretical framework of this thesis report but in a synoptic manner. The booklet's second section's role is to familiarize the reader with the principal concepts related to promoting accessibility to autistic people, in aim of increasing knowledge around the subject matter. The booklet's second section's covers the following areas:

<p>Section 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to basic terms..... - Accessibility definition..... - Accessibility from the viewpoint of autistic people..... - Inclusion..... - Ableism..... - Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)..... - Characteristics of Autism.....

Figure 27: The content of the second section of this thesis`s guidelines booklet.

The booklet`s third and final section “Accessibility and inclusivity guidelines”, embodies the concrete guidelines package that helps promote accessibility towards people on the autism spectrum within an operative environment, which is the ultimate purpose of the booklet itself. Additionally, the third section incorporates valuable sources and contact information along with my final regards and the references list. The third section is divided in the following segments:

<p>Section 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility and Inclusivity Guidelines..... -Introduction of the Guidelines Package..... -Physical accessibility..... -Social accessibility..... -Cognitive accessibility..... -Mental accessibility..... • Valuable sources and contacts..... - Regards..... • References.....
--

Figure 28: The content of the third section of this thesis`s guidelines booklet.

The accessibility guidelines themselves, were grouped in four separate categories: Physical accessibility, social accessibility, cognitive accessibility and mental accessibility. Each category was also grouped in further sub-categories. As for instance, the category of physical accessibility was divided in sub-categories specified by different types of sensory sensitivities (e.g. a separate category related to guidelines related to light, a separate category related to guidelines related to sound and so on).

Additionally, in the end of every category (physical, social, cognitive and mental accessibility) in the guidelines package segment of the booklet, I constructed a protocol checklist. The protocol checklist benefits the reader as it summarizes each category`s guidelines in a concrete checklist that divided into the segments “What to ask/provide to participants before the event/activity” and “What to ask/provide to participants during the activity”. This also

adds concreteness to the guidelines, as I present which measures shall be taken and when. Lastly, in aim of illuminating the different segments and sub-segments to the readers, I proceeded to color code each segment and sub-segment of the booklet.

5.2.1 Accessibility and inclusivity in the design of the guidelines booklet

In this section of the thesis report, I demonstrate more analytically how I endorsed accessibility and inclusivity through the examined accessibility/inclusivity methods and guidelines, of which have been regarded throughout the development of the written content as well as the visual appearance of this thesis's booklet.

Accessibility is the inclusive process of designing goods, services, or settings such that anybody should be able to use them, regardless of ability or disability. (Yaneva 2017, 25) Due to Autistic individuals' difficulties with reading comprehension, they need to have access to adapted text and web content. The written content's accessibility, needs to be rigorously evaluated to ensure that its quality meets user requirements; and finally, in order to improve text and web accessibility for this segment of the population, we need to be aware of the obstacles that people with autism face when reading and using the internet. (Yaneva 2017, 25)

Schürmann (2009, 9), asserts that when developing written text for and/or about a certain group of people, one should always learn as much as they can about the users of the information, including their needs. Taking this ideal into consideration, I have determined that an imperative part of the implementation process of the developmental booklet of this thesis, incorporates a thorough and well-rounded research apropos of the booklet's target group. As the target group of this thesis's developmental booklet is individuals on the Autism spectrum, I have enacted a comprehensive research in regards of Autistic peoples' characteristics, needs and further sub-topics related to them. This including, Autistic peoples' needs when it comes to the structure and visual of written text as well.

The extensive study of the referred subjects in relation to individuals on the Autism spectrum, has been demonstrated throughout this thesis. The studied guidelines related to Autistic individuals 'needs in regards to written text's structure and visual image, have been taken into consideration within the implementation process of the thesis's developmental booklet and will be demonstrated more analytically within this section of the report.

In aim of assembling a competent base of knowledge in regards of constructing an accessible-towards Autistic people- booklet, I proceeded to familiarize myself with writing methods as well as visual methods, that contribute to developing an accessible poster or booklet, through

current sources, such as websites and other publications that demonstrate accessible poster guidelines. The keywords that I used during my familiarization process with the accessibility methods, included the keywords: “how to” “accessible” “posters” “Autism” and “accessible” “writing” “Autism” on the Google platform and “why” “accessible” “writing” “important” “autism” on Google scholar. By doing so, I detected several appropriate bases of information, as for instance guidelines for creating accessible posters and dissertations written about the topic.

According to Schürmann (2009, 9), whenever one creates information, they shall include people with intellectual disability within the process (either by making suggestions during the process and/or read-proofing the final product). I perceive this is an imperative procedure, especially when taking into account that the produced booklet of this thesis is specifically targeted towards individuals on the Autism spectrum which may have special needs apropos of reading comprehension.

During the planning process of this thesis`s booklet`s development, I aspired to accommodate individuals that are on the Autism spectrum in order to acquire opinions and insight in regards of the booklet`s accessibility and comprehensiveness. I intended to amass their insight and opinion, possibly after the first draft of the thesis`s booklet and thereby proceed to make any possible alterations according to their suggestions. As I acknowledged how fundamental it is to involve autistic individuals in the design of this thesis' booklet, I reached out to a project which would have collaborated with me by offering me the opportunity to gather feedback from autistic people. However, I did not receive a reply on behalf of this project and thus, did not have the opportunity to gather feedback from autistic people.

I grant that as I did not have the opportunity to attain insight from the very group of people that the subject is written/studied about, effectuating insight from professionals who have experience and prior extensive knowledge on the subject in question, is another alternative and therefore, the second best option granting these given circumstances. This is where the working life representative of this thesis Autismiliitto played a significant role. As Autismiliitto is a national expert and non-governmental organization representing the Autism spectrum, I established the insight and opinion on behalf of them in regards of the produced booklet of this thesis.

Autismiliitto provided me with feedback apropos of the comprehensiveness of the thesis`s booklet`s written content as well as its accessibility towards Autistic people in regards of its layout and visual appearance. This manifested in the same manner as the rest of the amassed feedback on behalf of the thesis`s working life representatives; after I have sent the first draft of the developed booklet to the personal work email to the working life representatives,

I acquired the feedback from them. Followed by this, I utilized the given feedback accordingly.

Additionally, I opted to integrate a third collaborator within the development process of the booklet, Luna Goc. Luna Goc is an expert on youth services that acquires professional experience with people on the autism spectrum. Luna Goc has worked closely with me during the implementation process of the guidelines booklet, however they are not a working life partner of this thesis, but solely a collaborator of the thesis's booklet. Luna Goc has yielded me with bountiful insight in regards of what further aspects and guidelines I shall enclose within the booklet.

5.2.2 Visual appearance and layout

As the developing process of this thesis's produced booklet was executed in correlation with written text guidelines that promote accessibility, I examined specifically Autistic individuals' needs in regards of their reading comprehension. By utilizing the examined accessibility factors of written material, I implemented methods of writing and visual structure within the thesis's produced booklet that support the reading comprehension needs of individuals on the Autism spectrum.

The easy-to-read concept pertains not only to language and content, but includes also illustrations, design and layout, Josche (2010, 13) declares. In aim of ensuring that the guidelines booklet of this thesis is accessible to individuals on the Autism spectrum, I took into account that all of the segments, from the illustration and design up to the layout of the guidelines booklet, correlates with the studied accessibility guidelines of developing written material.

The "Home Office" web-page (no date), presents several accessibility guidelines for constructing posters for diverse groups of people, one of which includes Autistic people's written form accessibility guidelines. "Home Office" (no date) claims that some individuals may be sensitive to sensory stimuli, such as colors, which might be uncomfortable or create anxiety. That being said, the color palette that I have designated for the developed booklet of this thesis, is consisted of simple colors. The colors were chosen accordingly to this standard; colors that were utilized are not too vibrant, do not create bright or excessive contrast in between them, nor generate any clutter, but rather compliment the overall visual of the booklet. Afar from this, I favored a combination of colors that are adequately distinguishable from each other, as I opted to utilize color code the chapters of the thesis.



Figure 29: The color palette of this thesis`s booklet is illustrated.

Josche (2010, 16), states that illustrations frequently take on a more significant role in the setting of easy-to-read texts than they do in other kinds of publications. Understanding is improved and the information is made clearer with the use of a picture that accurately represents what is discussed in the text. Josche (2010, 16) This factor of accessible writing has been taken into account within the development of the guidelines booklet of this thesis; the visual look of the booklet supports the written text in a logical manner, illustrations have been employed accurately and solely in aim of supporting the text`s point to get across more efficiently to the reader.

As Yaneva (2017,29), clarifies: “Currently, there are only very limited guidelines for the choice of images in easy-to-read documents. Even though people with autism often have difficulties inferring meaning from symbols and drawings as opposed to photographs (Sampath 2010), currently both types of images are widely used in easy-to-read documents (Chapter 6). Furthermore, no information exists on autistic adults` preferences regarding images in texts.” Keeping this in mind, the choices of complementary illustrations for the guidelines booklet of this thesis, were not that limited; easy-to-read guidelines and reported Autistic adults` preferences favors the usage of both drawings as well as photographs.

Building a simple and logical layout for the thesis`s booklet, encompassed another objective of mine apropos of the implementation process of the developmental product of this thesis. As Home office (no date) declares, some readers may find it difficult to process complex and

overloaded layouts; making a layout transparent and robust, prevents this challenge. In order to attain a transparent and robust layout for this thesis`s developed booklet, I abstained from including long blocks of writing within it and only used illustrations that were not too complex and reciprocal to the text`s point.

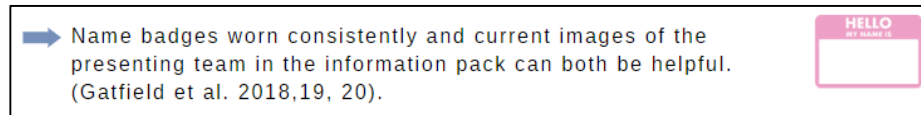


Figure 30: The utilization of supportive icons in the booklet is presented.

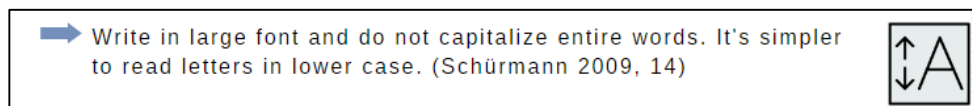


Figure 31: The utilization of supportive icons in the booklet is presented.

Additionally, Home Office (no date), affirms that it can be challenging to focus when reading a lot of continuous text; one`s content will be easier to grasp if it is written in short, basic phrases and uses bullet points for key topics. This method has been utilized within the developing of the booklet of this thesis, as the key concepts of the booklet have been sectioned in bullet points or shorter sentences.

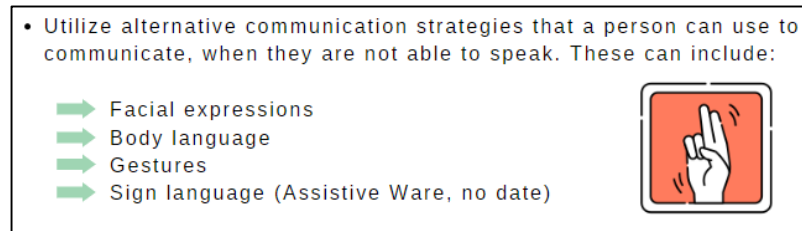


Figure 32: The utilization of bullet points within the thesis`s booklet is illustrated.

According to Schürmann (2009, 11), another procedure in light of developing accessible written content, includes arranging written content in a logical, understandable manner as well as collecting all information of the same topic together. This has been implemented throughout the development of this thesis`s booklet as well. In order to ensure this, I proceeded to divide the booklet in segments, categories and sub-categories. I did so, in order to break down broader concepts into smaller areas in order to simplify the reader`s comprehension to the subject. Furthermore, as the subject matter of ensuring accessibility towards autistic people incorporates differentiating aspects to take into consideration, I granted that the division to diverse categories would benefit the reader as these aspects are organized in groups defined by category.

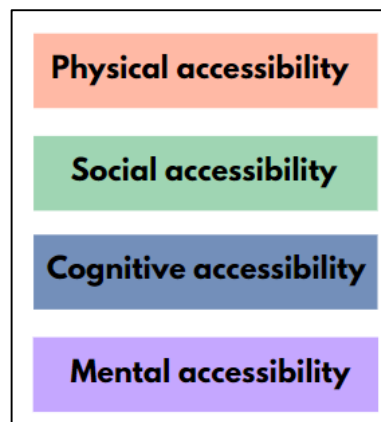


Figure 33: The picture presents the booklet`s division to categories.

Schürmann (2009) suggests several further guidelines in relation to developing accessible written content, of which have been utilized as a concrete guide throughout the development of this thesis`s booklet. Some of these guidelines are presented in the following graph:

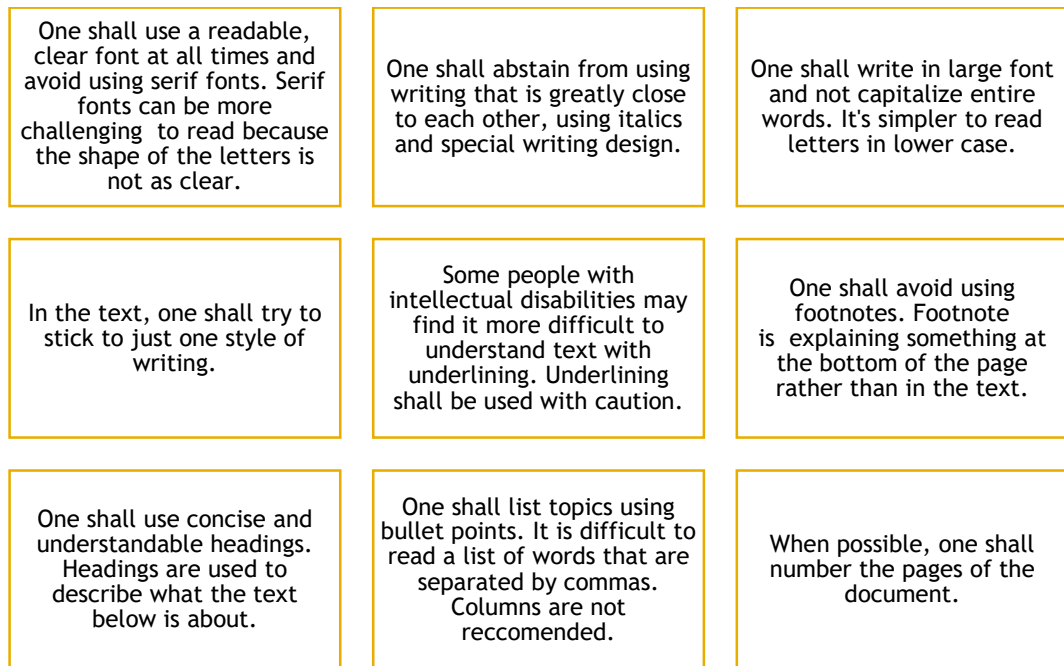


Figure 34: The graph above presents guidelines in relation to developing accessible written content. The guidelines are constructed by Schürmann (2009, 13,14,15,16,17,18).

5.2.3 Language

The thesis's developed booklet is written in English. As the thesis's report is written in English as well, the theoretical framework that has been utilized in the introduction of concepts and terms within the booklet, as well as in the introduction of the inclusivity/accessibility guidelines in the booklet, are easier to be utilized accurately and comprehensively when they are in the same language. Moreover, I consider that English is spoken and/or understood by a relatively large demographic in Finland. More specifically, according to my own personal observations, English is a prevalent communication language in the target environment of the thesis's booklet, which are the LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. As English is the international communication language, it is a language that promotes accessibility to individuals that are non-Finnish speakers. However, as this thesis is published in Finland, some people may not comprehend English (or may not find it comfortable/convenient to read in English), therefore, I consider the translation of the thesis's guidelines booklet to Finnish, would be functional. Henceforth, I intend to produce a second version of the thesis's booklet in Finnish within the near future.

Taking into consideration accessibility and inclusivity as a fundamental, I aspire that in the future, the thesis's booklet would be produced in additional versions, as for instance, to a

version that is written in Swedish as it is the second official language of Finland. An easy-to-read produced version of the thesis booklet could also be a functional option, as it promotes accessibility and inclusivity towards individuals with reading and/or other disabilities that interfere with the way that one comprehends written content.

The easy-read guidelines have been taken into great consideration within the development of this thesis's guidelines-booklet. The guidelines of which demonstrate the framework of an accessible and inclusive operative model toward individuals on the Autism spectrum, are constructed in simple English. Terminologies that may not be familiar to readers are explained in all the appropriate details. The guidelines booklet does not incorporate any metaphors or symbolic language but are rather based on logic. The structure of the guidelines booklet is logical and the key concepts are concentrated into bullet points.

The language of the written text in the booklet is simple, yet, incorporates all the necessary details in regards of the concepts that are being introduced within it, in aim of avoiding ambiguity.

Josche (2010, 10), proceeds to state that there are various groups of people of which can benefit from an accessible or easy-to-read approach in written materials, one of which includes individuals on the Autism spectrum. Numerous factors can contribute to reading problems, and a variety of people might gain from reading materials that are simple to understand as for instance, due to a disability. (Josche 2010, 8) Yaneva (2017, 61), asserts that: "The main disability related to reading comprehension in autism is pragmatic disability. Reading difficulties experienced by people on the autism spectrum are mainly related to resolving ambiguity in meaning (Happé & Frith 2006, Happe 1997, Frith & Snowling 1983, O'Connor & Klein 2004, Martos et al. 2013), identifying pronoun referents (O'Connor & Klein 2004), figurative-language comprehension (MacKay & Shaw 2004), making pragmatic inferences (Norbury 2014), as well as lexical (Speirs et al. 2011) and syntactic (Whyte et al. 2014, Martos et al. 2013) processing."

Josche (2010, 14) presents several guidelines of which function as a framework for easy-to-read text. A few of these include:

Easy-read guidelines				
Write in specific detail. Don't use abstract terminology.	Apply logic. There should be a single, logical thread running through the entire text.	Use metaphors and symbolic language in moderation. Some readers might not understand such terminology.	Be concise. Avoid using multiple verbs in a single statement. If feasible, group words into a phrase and place it on a single line.	Avoid using difficult words, but speak in an adult and respectful manner.

Figure 35: The table above presents communication guidelines of which can be implemented within the development of written text, that promote accessibility for individuals on the Autism spectrum (and possibly individuals with other reading disabilities). The methods are constructed by Josche (2010, 14).

People with Autism may interpret idioms and figures of speech literally and have a different understanding of language. More people will understand one's material if it is written in simple, unambiguous language. (Home Office n.d.) Keeping this in mind during the implementation stage of the booklet of this thesis, I abstained from utilizing any idioms or figures of speech within the text.

Another method of which functions as a tool to create more accessible written content, includes using examples to clarify concepts; especially using instances that people will be familiar with from their daily life. (Schürmann 2009, 10) Setting concrete examples in correlation with the introduced concepts of the developed booklet of this thesis, entails a procedure that I implemented throughout its development. For instance, when introducing the inclusivity guidelines within the thesis's booklet, I oftentimes utilized possible instances of which scenarios the guideline could refer to. This functioned as a method to not just clarify the presented guidelines and concepts, but to demonstrate tangible examples of which the guidelines could be applied to.

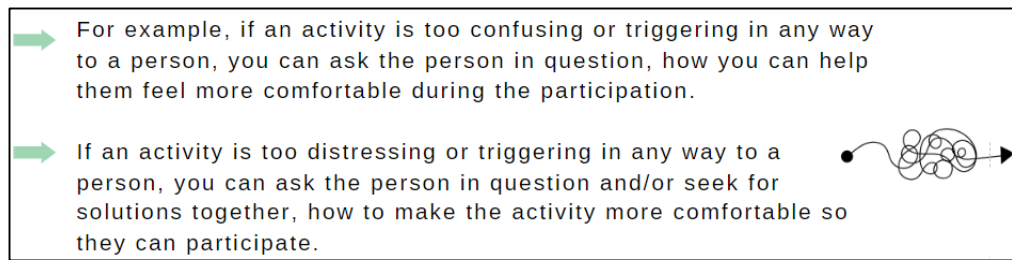


Figure 36: The thesis`s booklet`s utilization of tangible examples in aim of elucidating when and how each presented guideline can be implemented is presented.

As inclusivity is another fundamental that I pursued within the planning and implementation of this thesis`s booklet, I proceeded to study guidelines that support inclusive language when developing written content. The university of Idaho`s website (no date), provides a writing guide, of which presents approaches that pertains to how to refer to certain groups of people in an inclusive manner. Using inclusive language is one way we can help everyone feel welcome and safe. More than just being politically right, inclusive language demonstrates respect for human differences, cultures, and experiences. (University of Idaho n.d.)

As the thesis`s booklet is presenting concepts and guidelines of which are directed towards individuals on the Autism spectrum, I proceeded to focus studying inclusive language protocols in correlation with referring to people with disabilities. As the university of Idaho`s website (no date) declares, persons with disabilities shall be referred to “a person with disability”, opposed to “disabled person” or “handicapped person”. Negative connotations shall be avoided as well, some of which include “stricken” or “victim” (university of Idaho n.d.) Having said that, throughout the developing stage of the written text of the thesis`s booklet, I did not use any similar phrases that carry negative connotations. For instance, when referring to Autistic individuals, I proceeded to present their traits as characteristics rather than “symptoms”. Symptoms can be associated with something negative and/or a disease, which does not paint an inclusive or truthful picture about Autism spectrum.

Another inclusive language guideline incorporates abstaining from using the word “normal” to describe people without disabilities. (university of Idaho n.d.) Taking this into consideration and the thesis`s focus group being individuals on the Autism spectrum, I proceeded to use “neurotypical” when referring to individuals that are not on the Autism spectrum, or “neurotypical behavior(s)/perspective(s)”, when referring to actions/perspectives that may not be that prevalent for individuals that are not on the Autism spectrum.

In the same manner, I examined inclusive language protocols in regards of referring to individuals specifically on the Autism spectrum. NHS England`s website (no date), presents that when referring to people on the Autism spectrum, one shall use the terms “Autistic

adult/people” or “People on the Autism spectrum”, rather than “Adult/person with Autism”. As many autistic persons perceive Autism as an integral part of who they are rather than as something separate, this is a delicate topic among the Autism community and according to research, there isn't a single approach that is widely acknowledged. (NHS England n.d.) However, the majority of Autistic adults and their families preferred the terms "autistic" and "on the Autism spectrum, NHS England (no date) states. In reference to this guideline, within the development of the written content of this thesis`s booklet, I proceeded to use “People on the Autism spectrum” or “Autistic people”.

Autism shall be referred to as a condition or a disability and “suffering from”, “mild”, “severe”, “disorder”, “disease” shall be avoided when talking about Autism. (NHS England n.d.) Considering this, I did not refer to Autism in the aforementioned phrases within the thesis`s booklet, afar from clarifying the definitive abbreviation of ASD as Autism spectrum disorder. Moreover, keeping in mind that every Autistic person is different, each and every one of them may have differentiating views and preferences apropos of which term to use when referring to Autism; some of them may prefer “Autistic person” whilst others may prefer “People on the Autism spectrum” or perhaps even another term. I conclude, that the most inclusive approach towards referencing to specific people is to ask them personally, if given the opportunity. However, in light of developing this thesis`s booklet, as I aspired to use inclusive language when referring to people on the Autism spectrum, or Autism itself, I could only utilize a more generalized inclusivity guidelines framework through the examined material.

On the same note, it is essential to not generalize in any context when referring to people on the Autism spectrum, as every Autistic individual has differentiating needs and characteristics. This is something I ensured to clarify on the thesis`s booklet as well, in aim of promoting utmost inclusivity.

Afar from accessibility guidelines specifically towards Autistic individuals ‘needs in regards of written content, I have paid in mind that the text of the thesis`s booklet is accessible in relation to other factors as well; as for instance, towards people that may not acquire that much knowledge in regards of the concepts that are being introduced within the booklet.

As Schürmann (2009, 9) states, keeping in mind that not everyone who uses your material will be an expert on the topic and ensuring to fully describe the topic and any challenging terms associated with it, includes a guideline for accessible written content. Taking this into consideration, as aforementioned, the written content of the thesis`s accommodated booklet, is constructed in an unambiguous manner and all the necessary details affiliated with the introduced terms are elucidated within it.

6 Feedback evaluation

The feedback apropos of the thesis`s booklet`s functionality was initially planned to be gathered from the target group of the booklet. However, due to the absence of response on behalf of the potential project that could have potentially arrange conducting interviews with autistic people, I was not able to execute this. The feedback was collected exclusively from the thesis`s working life representatives instead.

I conducted content analysis for the evaluation of the feedback provided by the thesis`s working life representatives. Content analysis can be implemented as a practical method of analysis in qualitative research. Open-ended questions may be analyzed using content analysis. It may be used to methodically and comprehensively analyze both written and oral feedback data. Content analysis aims to acquire a thorough and precise account of the phenomenon being studied. A crucial procedure in the data analysis process includes reading the transcribed information carefully, dividing it up into smaller areas, transpiring into codes as well as into categories and in some cases, themes. The content should be given a name that is descriptive. (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz 2017)

The guide booklet`s final evaluation was enforced using a semi-structured feedback questionnaire that was consisted of six open-ended questions. The questionnaire was sent to the thesis`s working life representatives personal work emails. After I have retrieved the working life representative`s answers to the questionnaires, I enacted the categorization of the questionnaire by segmenting the feedback into codes correspondingly. Larger structures were formed by grouping the codes into categories. Two principal categories were created as a result: content and layout. Functionality of the guide booklet in practice was the final central thread between the two, which served as the theme.

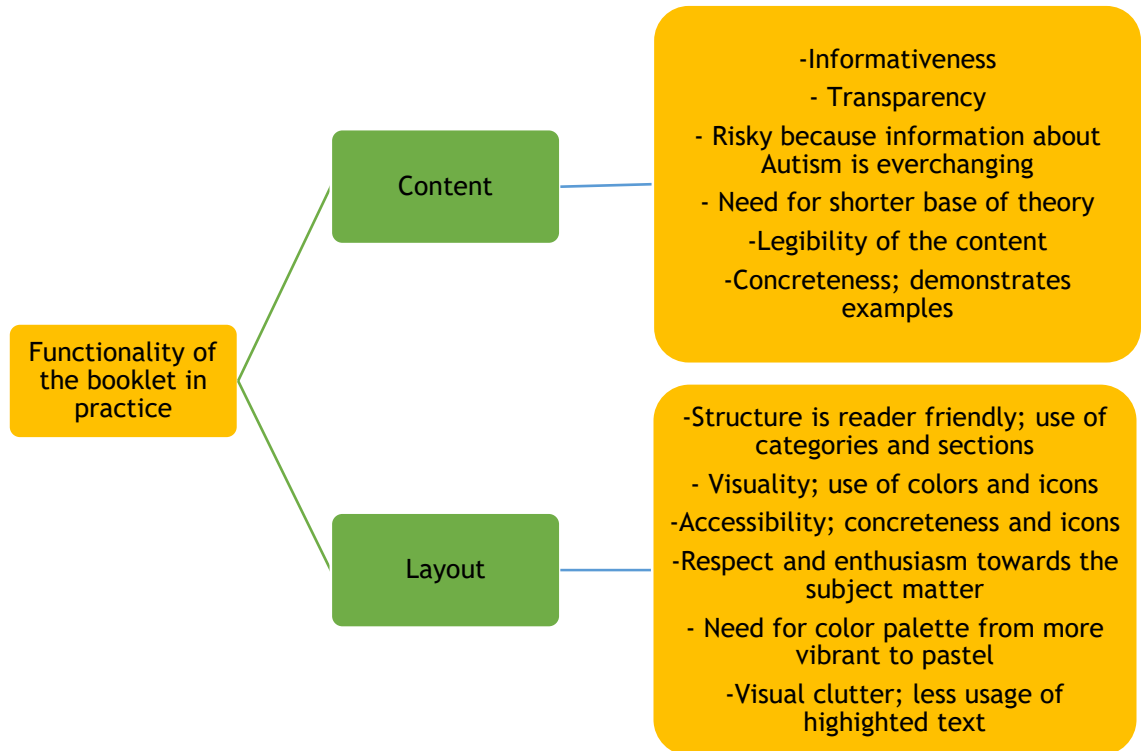


Figure 37: Feedback evaluation by using topic analysis.

During the first conducted meeting with the representative of Autismiliitto, the representative expressed the scarcity of more autistic-friendly LGBTQIA+ events and spaces. This feedback has functioned as signification in regards of the requirement of the thesis`s guidelines booklet that promotes accessibility towards autistic people. The representative from Autismiliitto proceeded to expound excitement apropos of the booklet`s subject matter and objective of increasing knowledge autism and methods that support the needs of autistic people.

The final feedback retrieved from Autismiliitto`s representative, remarked that the booklet`s theory section (second section of booklet: introduction to basic terms), comprises abundant valuable information, yet may be exceedingly lengthy in light of the booklet`s purpose to function as a guidelines framework. Moreover, the organization`s representative elaborated

that the aforesaid fact may result to draw focus from the booklet's principal section, which is the concrete guidelines package itself. Another factor that alludes to the booklet's theory section's reevaluation, includes the actuality that information about Autism is always risky to be presented as accurate, as the knowledge around it persists to evolve quite quickly nowadays, Autismiitto's representative states. Afar from the booklet's theory section, Autismiitto's representative declares that the structure of the booklet is overall functional to the reader.

The layout of the booklet was regarded to result to excess visual clutter; specifically, the use of colors in connection to highlighting writing was used immoderately, Autismiitto's representative affirms. The representative suggested me to clarify the visual appearance of the booklet. In addition, the representative recommended that the booklet's theory base shall be synopsized as some introduced topics while interesting, may not be functional in regards of the booklet's purpose as a guidelines package. Finally, Autismiitto's representative determined that I have transmitted genuine interest apropos of the booklet's subject matter. Autismiitto's feedback has been taken into consideration and therefore, the suggested adjustments have been executed to the booklet accordingly.

ArcoKerava has proclaimed that as a LGBTQIA+ safer space, it would greatly benefit from the booklet. Arcokerava declared that the focus group of the environment would benefit significantly from the produced booklet and would result to generating a safer and inclusive environment. Additionally, ArcoKerava stated that the staff of the operative environment would apprehend the thesis's booklet as informative and helpful in light of their working protocols and ways in which they react to various situations. The information, whilst abundant, was presented in a transparent and comprehensive manner, ArcoKerava's representative regards. Moreover, the booklet's layout and division in segments, sub-segments and categories were especially appreciated by the project's representative as it supported reader-friendliness and assisted the digestion of broad concepts. The protocol checklist accommodated in each segment were perceived as functional by ArcoKerava's representative; these were granted to generate concreteness and illustrate tangible work-life scenarios whereas the booklet's guidelines can be implemented into.

The booklet's visual appearance was seen as engaging and appropriate for the target audience, according to ArcoKerava's feedback. The simple color palette and layout of the booklet corresponds to accessibility standards in relation to autistic people's needs, ArcoKerava's representative presumes. In relation to the aforesaid, the project's representative declares that the supportive icons of the booklet were regarded as contributing towards the comprehension of the text and did not result to excess clutter. ArcoKerava expressed that my passion and respect towards the subject were reflected within the produced booklet as it encompassed an extensive and qualified base of information

around the subject matter of which was presented in a manner that is considerate of the focus group`s needs.

Altogether, the guidebook was deemed beneficial and appropriate for the target audience on ArcoKerava`s representative`s behalf. The development suggestions of ArcoKerava`s representative underlined the development of a supplementary summarized leaflet version of an accessibility guidelines package that is included in the extensive booklet, in aim of providing a material that can be promptly examined by the participants of the operative environment.

All in all, determined from the acquired feedback, the guide booklet was deemed successful and achieved its goals well. The booklet has been implemented within the operative model of ArcoKerava and it is to be introduced in further operative models as well. After obtaining insightful criticism, I was able to make the necessary improvements to the guide booklet's written sections and, in the end, deliver the finished product to the working life partner's representatives.

7 Reliability and ethics of the thesis

Ethics and reliability of the written work must be implemented throughout the whole process of the thesis, starting from the planning and constructing the theoretical framework, up until the development of the methods and booklet. Ethics and reliability guidelines have been implemented throughout all the conducted interviews with this thesis `work life representatives.

Reflecting upon the assembled readability and ethical questions apropos of this thesis, I have proceeded to get acquainted myself with the ethical guidelines assigned for the thesis process delivered by Laurea University of Applied Sciences and generated by Arene.fi. I have therefore ensured that the development process of this thesis, is according to them.

As for the written part of this thesis, I have utilized a varied range of literature for the theoretical background. I have critically reviewed the validity of the sources as well as the relevance in regard to the chosen topics, as for instance, relevant journals, articles, published guidelines and scientific materials. It should be declared, that as the Autistic safe-

space guidelines framework is not yet a vastly researched concept, available information concerning it is currently limited.

Arene.fi declared that it is necessary to ascertain any possible conflicts of interest apropos of the thesis topic. “A conflict of interest means that a person has a relationship with the matter being processed, [...] which might jeopardize the person's neutrality”. (Arene.fi N.D). I have ensured that I do not have a relationship with the matter being processed within this thesis nor there are any persons accommodated within the development process of this thesis that may jeopardize the neutrality of them in regards of the examination of this thesis ‘topic.

I persisted to protect all possible personal information emerged throughout the working life representatives` interviews. Additionally, I have ascertained that this thesis did not require a research permit, as I have not conducted any personal interviews and/or data from individuals. I have ensured that I have signed the required agreements together with my supervisor and my collaborative working life representatives. Furthermore, my thesis has been examined in a plagiarism identification system.

The examination of the theoretical framework, as well as the data collected from the interviews conducted with this thesis ‘work-life representatives, were implemented with accuracy throughout this thesis. In certain situations, throughout the analyzation of theoretical data, I have determined that certain terminologies regarding the topic that is being examined within this thesis, may be harmful and outdated towards its focus group- individuals on the autism spectrum- and thus, proceeded to not refer those terms, despite of direct quotations from certain sources. This instance incorporated terminologies that may be vastly known and used by the populace, but are however, now discredited by the autistic community. These included terms such as “high-functioning autistic person”. I have proceeded to dedicate a section within this thesis, for the review of these terminologies, to guarantee an utmost ethical finished product for this thesis report.

Throughout the implementation process of the guidelines booklet of this thesis, of which is directed to ensure accessibility towards autistic people in the diverse operative environments such as LGBTQIA+ safer spaces, I took into consideration that the most ethical way to construct a guidelines package for a certain group of people, is to accommodate the very group of people throughout the process of it. However, I did not have the opportunity to accommodate autistic people in the process or conduct further interviews, due to various reasons; such as not being able to reach a certain project that allows interviews with autistic people in the limited time that I acquired. Despite of this, I have ensured that afar from the qualified sources and their thorough examination within the implementation process of the guidelines booklet of this thesis, I have collaborated with two working life partners that acquire a professional background specifically with people on the autism spectrum. One of

the working life partners of the thesis`s booklet includes the working life partner of the thesis that represents Autismiliitto. The other working life partner of the thesis`s booklet includes Luna Goc, an expert on youth services that acquires professional experience with people on the autism spectrum. Luna Goc has worked closely with me during the implementation process of the guidelines booklet, however they are not a working life partner of this thesis, but solely a collaborator of the thesis`s booklet.

It is reasonable to conclude that the concept of client orientation was not applied within the development process of the thesis`s, as the feedback survey or interviews could not be executed for the focus group of the booklet and hence the feedback consisted only of that of the employees of the professional organizations in question.

8 Conclusion and Reflections

In this developmental thesis, my objective was to develop a concrete guidelines booklet that promotes inclusion and accessibility towards individuals on the autism spectrum of which can be implemented in LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. Simultaneously, I aimed to increase knowledge about the vast prevalence of autistic people within the LGBTQIA+ community and the significance of taking their needs in consideration within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces.

The development of the subject of this thesis was deemed necessary from the behalf of both of the thesis`s working life representatives. The subject of the thesis is also a fundamental area to be developed in the field of social services, as it promotes the accessibility towards a marginalized group of people whose needs are often disregarded in various environments and services.

Throughout the development process of the thesis`s booklet, I focused specifically on the operative environment of LGBTQIA+ safer spaces as well as their existing guidelines. During this process, I ascertained through my working life representative ArcoKerava, that several LGBTQIA+ safer spaces do not accommodate guidelines that are directed for supporting autistic people`s needs. This entailed an indicator that determined the significance of implementing the thesis`s developed guidelines package within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces.

The process of writing a thesis should substantially advance the writer's professional development and skills. Both the thesis and the developed product should foster the student's professional development. Throughout the writing of the thesis, I have gotten acquainted to ethical guidelines for research methodologies. Taken into consideration that ethical principles are an imperative aspect of professionalism within the field of social services, yielding my

competence of acknowledging and implementing ethical guidelines within a practice, has translated into a fruitful experience from the perspective of a future social services professional.

One of the most fundamental principles apropos of this thesis, was the inclusion of the thesis's focus group members within the development process of the thesis's booklet. This refers to including autistic people themselves within the development of the thesis's booklet by gathering their suggestions and feedback either throughout or after its development. This is an essential procedure as the booklet of the thesis is directed to promote accessibility to individuals on the autism spectrum through a concrete guideline package. Conclusively, gathering insight from the perspective of autistic people entails a developmental method that promotes utmost inclusivity of the focus group. This method can possibly benefit the finalized product's comprehensiveness as well.

As I considered the magnitude of incorporating autistic people within the development of this thesis's booklet, I contacted a project that could have potentially collaborated with me by giving me the opportunity to gather feedback from autistic people. However, I did not receive a reply on behalf of this project and thus, did not have the opportunity to gather feedback from autistic people. Despite of this, I would argue that my chosen developmental methods have supported the comprehensiveness of the thesis's booklet content and the inclusivity of its focus group in alternative ways. This in respect to the fact that one of the two work representatives of this thesis was representing Autismiliitto, which is an organization that represents people on the autism spectrum. Through my collaboration with Autismiliitto, I had the opportunity to gather bountiful insight apropos of what aspects I should consider within the development process of the thesis's booklet in order to ensure that utmost accessibility and inclusivity is promoted in the final product.

During the writing process of the thesis, I was able to broaden my knowledge around the concept of promoting accessibility and inclusivity towards autistic people. Regarding to the aforesaid, I have familiarized myself with concrete methods that can be implemented in versatile operative environments and situations that can help promote accessibility and inclusivity to autistic individuals. Having said that, I gained understanding apropos of the multidimensional aspects that are involved within the development of an accessible and inclusive space. I deepened my understanding apropos of what accessibility enkindles into when it comes to promoting it; I grasped that it can involve making adjustments to both the physical and immaterial environment, up to the perceptions we carry. I reckon that the adjustments that can be made so as to construct an inclusive approach, are oftentimes left overlooked in the development of services, operative environments, institutes and even daily interactions. This actuality has determined me to administer the knowledge I have acquired

throughout the writing process of the thesis, so as to promote accessibility to autistic individuals within my future professional encounters in the field of social services.

Furthermore, I have pondered more extensively about the methodology in which diverse environments operate, from both a broader scale and specifically in the scale of LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. When it comes to the broader scale, assessing the diverse services and institutes within our society apropos of the methodology in which they operate, I concede that these oftentimes do not take into consideration the diverse range of differentiating needs of the populace, including the needs of autistic people. I grant that the way of which the physical environments are designed, as well as the way in which procedures and services are constructed, do not promote utmost accessibility towards autistic people. Referring to the aforementioned, a heterogeneous collection of needs of those of whom are on the autism spectrum are being overlooked. Pertaining to this, a few of the many examples, involves the disregard of the diverging cognitive profiles, communication methods and sensory reception of the service users and participants in these institutes and services. Whether alluding to the healthcare sector or education sector, or appraising the environment of workplaces and the manner in which websites are designed, I deem that the services and institutes that populace occupy in their regular routines, should all consider the disparate needs that diverse groups of people have. Therefore, I affirm that people that are in the privileged position to design and operate environments such as the aforementioned, are responsible to provide an inclusive and accessible space, in consideration of a diverse range of attendees.

From the perspective of LGBTQIA+ safer spaces, I appraise that it is quite unfortunate that even so LGBTQIA+ safer spaces are envisioned to be an environment that caters support and expects diversity, they often do not reflect this reality to people that are on the autism spectrum, as their needs are being overlooked in many cases. Existing at the intersection of two stigmatized identities (such being part of the LGBTQIA+ community and autistic) is a challenge in and of itself. Moreover, I grant that the meaning of diversity shall be reappraised in LGBTQIA+ safer spaces; diversity in all forms shall be expected, including diversity in the sense of neurodiversity. Furthermore, I determine that diversity shall not be just expected, but reflected within the guidelines of the operative model of LGBTQIA+ spaces; only then we can speak of true diversity, inclusivity and accessibility.

Moreover, I culminate that the lack of knowledge around autistic peoples 'needs, as well as the lack of awareness around the vast prevalence of Autism within the demographic of LGBTQIA+, stands as a barrier in regards of acknowledging Autistic individuals' needs within LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. My hope is that the developed guide-booklet of this thesis, can manifest as a tool within my future professional life in the social services sector, whereas I can possibly promote and implement it in diverse operative environments that I will encounter. As the guide-booklet is developed in a versatile manner, I trust that it can possibly

be applied in various operative environments -afar from LGBTQIA+ safer spaces. In my capacity as a future professional in the field of social services, I may actively promote social justice, uphold professional ethics and among other things, advance the transition to more inclusive and accessible social services by actively sharing the knowledge I acquire in regards of autistic peoples` needs along with the methods to their fulfillment. Simultaneously, I aspire to continuously keep learning about miscellaneous methodologies in connection to endorsing accessibility and inclusivity towards diverse groups of people.

Ultimately, when it comes to further research and development ideas, expanding the thesis`s booklet guidelines package into a more versatile tool in aim of supporting accessibility in variant operative environments, was something I have considered throughout the development of it. However, as my intention was to maintain the booklet within a framework that provides concrete and specific methods of promoting accessibility, I could not expand to guidelines directed for operative environments such as schools as the booklet would then be too broad. Even so, I do foresee that the guidelines booklet can possibly be implemented in operative environments afar from LGBTQIA+ safer spaces, such as youth spaces. Additionally, translating the booklet into Finnish is something that is in my plans in the near-future, as English may not be understood by all people in Finland. Translating the booklet into Swedish was another idea that was pondered, as Swedish is the second official language of Finland. An easy-to-read version and a shorter leaflet version of the booklet are both ideas that I may pursue to develop in the future as well.

Overall, when viewing the writing process of this thesis, I ascertain that it transpired into a fruitful learning experience, awarding me with expanded professional knowledge, writing skillsets and inspiration for upcoming future projects in the field of social services.

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11 Appendices

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Appendix 1: Feedback questionnaire for working life representatives

- Do you consider the booklet is functional and valuable to be implemented in an operative environment?

- Was the booklet informative enough? Does it cover the subject matter comprehensively and adequately?

- Is the booklet`s structure and layout transparent and easy to follow?

- Is the visual appearance of the booklet appealing and appropriate for the target group? More importantly, does the visual appearance support accessibility towards autistic people?

- Does the author transmit respect and enthusiasm towards the topic?

- What further additions, changes or developmental suggestions would you propose to the booklet?

Appendix 2: The title of the second appendix