# Youth worker's guide

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# Basic concepts of youth work

## What is non-formal education?

Education is the process of learning, which leads to gaining skills, knowledge, beliefs and values and enables a person to achieve a goal. Education is a lifelong process; therefore, children start getting education at home and continue the rest of their lives. Education can be considered as the best instrument to determine and positively change the quality of a person's life. It has an important impact on person's employment opportunities and whether an individual can get a decent job and properly integrate into the labor market. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 officially and universally declared education is a basic and fundamental human right, no matter what people's race, gender, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political view and disability are, they at least should get free elementary education. As Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Thereby, education is an effective and crucial tool for poverty reduction and elimination of gender inequality, fostering international peace, prosperity, economic growth and sustainability in the world.

In general education is divided into three types such as formal, non-formal and informal education. Formal education is related to different educational institutions particularly schools, universities, colleges, various specialized programmes, different educational centers for professional training and learning and offers diplomas, degrees and qualification in order to verify your knowledge and achievements. Formal learning is official and structured that occurs in the education system of the countries and is recognized by appropriate authorities at the local level. Formal education has predefined goals along with methodologies and follows official curriculum. As labor market and society is highly competitive, in most of the fields a person needs to have formal education and obtain a degree.

Informal education is the type of education that is connected to the experience, values, skills and knowledge, which a person gains incidentally or intentionally from everyday life and the learning process is not designed beforehand. Activities that may provide informal learning can include reading literature, educational magazines/newspapers, watching educational programs via internet or on TV, visiting museums, educational fairs and different daily life activities at home and interaction with friends, etc. Therefore, informal education is based on independent learning along with gaining experience with various resources and in different places. Moreover, informal learning process can continue during the

whole life and an individual may get knowledge and specific information that will be beneficial for their personal and professional development without the need to get official recognition or receive certificates.

Non-formal education is referred to the type of education that occurs outside of the formal system with the intention of developing and improving various skills essential for work and daily life and contributes to the individual's personal, professional and socio-cultural development. Comparing to formal education non-formal education is more flexible and focused on the learners itself. This type of education enables people to explore and learn more about themselves, people from different backgrounds and the world that they live in. Non-formal education is for everyone and there may be included people from different groups such as people with cultural differences, social obstacles, economic obstacles etc. Non-formal education is for people for all ages including young people as well as adults.

One of the most significant features of the non-formal education is that an individual is involved in the activities organized in the field of non-formal education due to the fact that they choose it on their own and not because they are obliged to do so. Furthermore, the appealing side of non-formal education is that a person is able to get engaged in the specific educational program according to their interests and the eagerness to involve in the field in which they need to enhance their knowledge the most. Besides that, the advantage of non-formal education is the fact, that mistakes are acceptable and a person is able to take time in order to analyze and work on them. It is significantly effective for young people since it will enhance the awareness of active citizenship and will raise employability chances to find decent work. Activities in the field of non-formal education are of great significance since they have major impact on progress of society both for developed and developing countries.

Activities in Non-formal education is planned in the way that can be easily modified according to needs of both individuals and groups. The activities in the field of non-formal education does not last for a long time and is more likely to have low intensity. Non-formal education is particularly applied in different kind of activities such as seminars, training courses, workshops, youth exchanges etc. Moreover, all of these activities are held in non-formal and friendly environment. The topics covered in non-formal education may be various including entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, environmental awareness, literacy training, human rights field, integration of minority groups, job-oriented training, community development etc. People have the opportunity to develop awareness along with the wide range of skills and competences, such as: leadership, teamwork, intercultural awareness, critical thinking, problem solving, time management, planning and organizing skills etc. An individual is able to access the non-formal education through reaching various types of organizations, associations, youth centers, community groups etc. One of the most crucial attributes in non-formal education is learning by doing which is based

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on learning from experience. According to this approach there is no need for individuals to have frequent supervision from the trainer/facilitator. Engagement in learning process enables them to enhance knowledge and gain experience. This type of approach is very individual and problem solving and involvement in the activities is highly depended on the learner itself.

## What is Youth Work?

Youth work refers to diverse range of social, educational, cultural, environmental, political and sports and physical activities using non-formal and informal learning. Activities are organized with or for young people both working in individual and group bases as part of voluntary participation and might be various according to the type of organization and the group of people involved. Consequently, youth work enables young people to create possibilities for a better future and enhance their active participation, personal, ethical and social development, socialization, social cohesion, international cooperation, integration and inclusion into the society. Youth work helps young people to take initiatives and find strength in themselves in order to make changes, which are beneficial for their community. Hence youth work, young people are more eager to involve in decision making process and engage with youth policy. Youth work is accessible for everyone and is focused on young people and on the desires and issues that they may have. Youth work is critical in terms of ensuring the quality of activities and is open with experiments and new approaches. In addition, youth work promotes solidarity among individuals and raises awareness in intercultural communication. As result, youth work allows young people to find non-formal education possibilities that are relevant and in accordance with their interests and needs to improve their skills and develop competences. Youth work helps young people to achieve the standard that they are capable of. Apart from this, non-formal education activities are safe and enjoyable for young people. Youth work commonly has educational purpose; therefore, it exploits non-formal learning and all of the characteristics and methodologies of non-formal education. Besides that, it may include experimental learning, mentoring, supporting etc.

 The target group of youth work, it is certainly young people, however the range of age may vary from country to country. The specific target group of youth work can differ according to the type and purpose of activities that can have personal development as the main objective or different particular issue. Despite that, the activities may be universal and relevant for all groups of young people. In addition to that, the target group of youth work may include children and the adults as well.

As for the people who deliver youth work, youth work is provided by youth workers who may be paid or involved as volunteers. They may be professional youth workers or have practical experience in working

with young people using non-formal and informal learning. More detailed information about the youth workers will be thoroughly discussed after several topics will be reviewed in this guide.

## Forms of Youth Work

The types of organizations that are involved to deliver youth work can be various, such as associations, non-governmental organizations, clubs, centers, social welfare departments etc. Hereby, the forms of youth work can vary. The popular forms of youth work, are: youth centers, detached/outreach youth work, school-based youth work, youth projects, informal youth groups, youth camps, youth organizations, youth movements, youth information and community youth work.

**Youth centers** are referred to the meeting centers for young people, which are attributed with different essential facilities to organize activities for youth. The environment is comfortable for young people and are well equipped for social interaction providing both indoor and outdoor activities areas. The activities organized in youth centers are not usually structured however, they are under supervision and control which creates the safe environment for young people. Youth centers are creating opportunities for young people to improve different skills and abilities. They may include improving social, emotional, physical and cognitive abilities. The youth centers support young people to develop their artistic skills by organization programs for music, theater, art, dance etc. Besides that, there may be programs for science, sport and club meetings for socializing and playing different games. With different activities and meetings in the youth centers young people are supported to identify and solve the issues that may concern them in their everyday lives. Youth centers enable them to get the opportunities for non-formal and informal learning and the rest of the possibilities that will be useful and effective for their well-being and successful life.

**Detached youth work -** is the type of youth work that is delivered without using specific location and pre-organized activities for young people and carries out to the place where they are both physically and mentally. The target group of detached youth work involves young people who are vulnerable or coming from socially marginalized groups. Detached youth work is provided by detached youth workers who identify the needs and issues including homelessness, emotional health, drugs/alcohol abuse, reproductive health of young people and support them. Youth workers usually go to the places where young people most likely are gathered and may be involved in risky activities. They make effort to gain young people's trust and mutual respect and assist them with the problems that they might need to deal. Detached youth workers use informal and social learning methodologies in their work.

**Outreach youth work** is delivered to the young people's own place and encourages them to involve in center-based youth work. Outreach youth workers provide information about the different opportunities

that can be found in their community and motivate them to be engaged and get the full benefits from different available youth programmes. Moreover, after identifying the needs of young people, they are offered the services that are specifically organized for them. The target group of outreach youth work are excluded youth who are not reached by any types of youth workers and are not engaged in different non-formal or informal learning programmes.

The objectives of detached and outreach youth work are concentrating on welfare of young people and improve their social relationships in order to have the positive effect on their lives. Detached and outreach youth workers aim to empower young people and increase their confidence and self-understanding which will later help them to become more independent individuals and will decrease the tendency of their risk seeking behaviors. Consequently, young people will most likely result in being well-educated and prosperous youth. Moreover, there is high possibility that they will be more integrated and involved in their communities.

**School-based youth work** is delivered at schools to positively affect young people's well-being and support them in dealing the issues that they may encounter in their lives. The aim of school-based youth work is to encourage the active participation and active citizenship, develop their values and increase the motivation of young people. With the help of school-based youth work, young people's self-confidence increases which raises their chances to achieve success. Youth workers and school, work together for the young people's development by organizing various clubs and classes for youth. Comparing to ordinary youth work, the activities in school-based youth work take place at school and not during while young people's spare time.

As school is based on formal education it has more rules, which pupils have to obey, therefore it creates the environment where young people may not be very open to their teachers. On that account, youth workers are individuals who can guide young people and support them without any judgments. Since youth workers acquire essential skills and experience for working with youth, they use different methods and instruments from non-formal and informal education, which makes learning more fun and exciting. The existence of youth workers at school enables teachers to concentrate on teaching their subjects and doing their jobs properly without any interruption, whereas youth workers take their time to support vulnerable young people and minimize the possibly to be excluded from their peers. Youth workers urge young people at school to get involved in decision making process and become the active members of their communities.

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**Youth projects** provide various and interesting opportunities for young people. It suggests different possibilities to acquire new skills, competences and gain experience with the help of non-formal and informal education. Youth projects have considerably favorable effect both on the organizations and participants as well. Youth projects enable young people to raise community awareness and improve the skills such as critical thinking, decision making, leadership, group working, problem solving, communication, time management and different organizational skills. The activities of youth projects are designed beforehand. Moreover, the types of youth projects can be various, such as: training courses, seminars, workshops, study visits, youth exchanges, etc. The youth projects are usually organized according to some common standards. One of the most important principles is voluntary participation using non-formal and informal learning methods. Youth projects are held in wide variety of atmospheres, both indoor and outdoor places. The projects are conducted by trainers, facilitators, youth workers, experts and some activities may be implemented by participants themselves. Usually, volunteers of the organizations as wells as youth workers are involved in all the stages of the project including initiating, planning, implementing and evaluating.

Participating in youth projects enables young people to raise their knowledge in specific topics and issues, strengthens the values such as equal opportunities, tolerance, freedom, solidarity, respect for human rights, etc. In case a youth project is international and participants are coming from different countries and cultures, they learn working in intercultural atmosphere. Besides that, they find out more information about different cultures and its customs and learn from each other. The activities of youth projects are usually interactive as participants are active listeners, share their ideas and respect each other's points of view. Furthermore, participants are involved in reflection activities, which enable them to define and observe their learning outcomes.

**Informal youth groups** refer to groups composed by young people in order to organize activities on their own and promote youth participation and non-formal and informal learning. One of the most crucial facts is that the "informal youth groups" are not formal and do not have defined structure, therefore, youth organizations or any official agencies do not supervise and manage them. In addition, while information in formal groups and organizations is spread with top-down strategy, which means that key persons share information to the people who are below them hierarchically, in informal youth groups it is equally shared by each member. As Activities and programmes organized by informal youth groups are challenging and inspiring, they help participants raise their confidence and promote personal and professional growth. Moreover, participation enables them to develop their skills and competences, which are essential for their successful lives. Involvement in informal youth groups allows individuals to communicate and spend

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time with their peers, learn from each other's experience and take an active part in their community. The programs designed for youth ought to be easily accessible and safe. Additionally, young people are engaged in the informal youth groups as members and take part in the activities and programs on a voluntary basis.

What are the reasons for creating informal youth groups? Being geographically close to each other allows young people to socialize and interact more, which raises the chances of being united for the same interests and purposes and voicing more opinions that would otherwise be disregarded. Besides that, when experience, attitudes, views and behaviors of young people are alike to each other, this may urge them to integrate and form a group.

**Youth camps** are defined as programmes which are under supervision designed for children and teenagers. Youth camps enable young people to be involved in educational activities, which mostly are fun-based. The activities organized in youth camps are both indoor and outdoor and provide a safe environment for youth. Youth camps are designed under a specific theme such as academic or non-academic subjects and have specific purposes and outcomes determined. Besides that, the themes may be diverse such as sport, music, craftwork, information technology, painting, dance, drama, etc. In addition, the camp leaders may be youth workers, trainers, facilitators, volunteers of the organizations, etc. They have the responsibility to supervise the camp, facilitate the activities and ensure the quality of the programs.

Participating in youth camps has many advantages which can benefit young people both at schools and in their lives. Youth camps provide an opportunity to participants to improve their social skills, learn to work and communicate with their peers and camp leaders. As young people are out of their comfort zone, they become more independent and the sense of self-reliance, self-identity and self-esteem significantly raises. Some of the activities may be challenging and they may have some obstacles to encounter, however, taking part and dealing with the difficulties will give the feeling of accomplishment. Usually, youth camps promote a healthy lifestyle and young people are involved in various physical activities. Involvement in outdoor activities helps them become more attached to nature instead of technology and gadgets. Moreover, by having healthy food choices in camps, they are most likely to develop healthy-eating habits. Youth camps give young people possibilities to meet their peers and make friendships with the ones who have similar interests, views and tastes. Most importantly, they start learning working in teams and as a team by setting common goals and strive to achieve goals together. Consequently, youth camps provide opportunities for young people to develop personal development skills which helps them to succeed in their lives.

**Youth organizations** are organizations that are established to serve and provide opportunities for youth and can be various types such as non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary, etc. The working field of youth organizations can be cultural, social, political, environmental, religious, ethnic, sport and more. The activity level of the youth organizations can be local, regional, national and international as well. The projects organized by youth organizations can be diverse such as training courses, seminars, workshops, flash mobs, competition, charity events and other community events. The founders and key persons of the organization can be young people as well as adults with common interests and commitment. Each youth organization has a charter of the organizations, where the goals and working field of the organization is defined. Youth organizations can be formed of either just several members or numerous members working in different departments and branches too. The purposes of youth organizations are encouraging young people to become socially and politically active and ensure them with the opportunities to develop personally and professionally. Youth organizations promote non-formal and informal education and enable young people to engage in various voluntary activities with different roles including organizers, participants, facilitators, etc. The topics of the activities can vary from their interests in particular fields such as human rights, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, or the issues of young people and community such as bullying, segregation, intolerance, issues connected to migrants and ethnic minorities and more.

Youth organizations have many benefits both for individuals and for the whole community. Being a member of a youth organization helps a person develop different essential skills and competences. It enables individuals to improve personal and interpersonal skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, leadership, decision-making, etc. Members have the opportunity to improve different organizational skills notably project management, strategic planning, identifying issues, goal setting and various administrative skills. Youth organizations create an environment where the members have the possibility to communicate, work and collaborate with a wide range of people both coming from their own country or from abroad. If a youth organization is involved in international activity, it allows members to build international collaboration and work in an intercultural atmosphere as well. As for the advantages at the community level, by being a part of the organization, young people start organizing and get involved in the projects, which is useful for the community. Once young people are active at the local level, they start being interested to solve the issues that may exist around them. With their active part in the organization and community, it is important to mention that people start realizing and acknowledging young people as the crucial elements for the prosperity of the society.

**Youth information** represents a form of youth work that assists young people by providing reliable and up-to-date information and guides them in decision-making. Decisions made in the period when young people move from childhood to adulthood, have a major impact on their future life. Accurate information to make good choices in different aspects of their life such as choosing the proper field of education, career opportunities and lifestyle and personal wellness are also a significant part. Youth information workers support young people to be informed about scholarship opportunities, exchange programmes and diverse activities for youth. After having information about various opportunities, young people are able to assess different options, compare alternatives, and finally make a choice according to their skills, abilities and interests. That helps them with their future development.

The aim of youth information beside giving direct information to young people is to provide access to various sources and support them to define the quality and reliability of information. Moreover, youth information workers need to be certain that young people are informed about the rights that they have and services that are accessible to them. Consequently, youth information promotes information and media literacy, which is essential for a number of reasons. Primarily, although living in a digital era makes life easier in terms of reducing difficulty to the accessibility of information, it allows individuals to publish information that may not be accurate. Therefore, in modern life there is the need to be aware of different methods and techniques to evaluate information.

Functioning of youth information centers at the local level is crucial for the community development. Youth information centers provide support to each young person without limitation with confidentiality. Each center is working to meet the needs of young people in their community. In addition, youth information workers have proper skills and competences to work with youth and have connection to proper services designed for young people.

To sum up, youth information is an important element of youth work with its primary principles including focusing on youth, identifying their needs and interests, acting accordingly and taking part in their personal and professional development.

**Community youth work** refers to work that is related to community development by empowering young people and ensuring their active participation in resolving issues that have impact on them. Community youth work is delivered in neighborhoods, government agencies, non-profit organizations, churches, schools, universities, community centers and in informal places. People who are engaged in this type of work are called community youth workers. They can be either young people or adults and be involved in different activities in the field of non-formal education to promote activism and community values.

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Community youth workers organize and implement different projects according to the needs of people of all ages that will be beneficial for the community. For instance, they take initiatives in environmental issues and organize tree-planting activities with the intention of taking part in ecological development of their community. Community youth workers organize recycling activities and promote the importance of recycling in their society. Moreover, they organize different activities to help senior citizens, stray animals, homeless people and other people from different vulnerable groups.

With the help of community youth work both young people and adults are able to positively contribute and take an active and meaningful part in the society. Offering services and addressing the needs of people has a positive impact on their community. People who are involved in different activities have the possibility to gain experience, improve social and professional skills and be involved in voluntary work that has many advantages. Taking part in community youth work raises overall life satisfaction since helping other people along with voluntarism provoke positive feelings. Consequently, people learn how to deal and react to different social issues and become more responsible and socially aware members of the community.

## What is a youth worker?

**A youth worker** is someone who works with youth in order to help them in their personal, social, professional, cultural and educational development using non-formal and informal education. Youth workers work with young people in two ways. One approach is working directly with youth, identifying their needs and supporting them accordingly. Moreover, they help young people to define problems and council them in the process of analyzing and solving the issues. Youth workers are open to listen to young people and support them in defining their life goals along with guiding them. Another approach is planning and implementing different types of projects using non-formal and informal learning. The topics of the projects can be various in terms of needs and interests of certain young people. The common feature of the projects is the benefits that young people get by participating, such as getting information and raising knowledge in specific fields, developing essential skills and abilities for their personal and professional life, expressing themselves, gaining experience and learning from each other.

Youth workers work in non-governmental organizations, youth centers, schools, community centers, churches, youth clubs, detached and outreach programmes and other health and educational institutions. As youth workers offer options to young people, they empower them and offer various possibilities that they may not be able to find out without them. Youth workers help young people to raise their confidence and self-esteem. They encourage them to deal with personal and social issues and develop the skill of risk

assessment in different social situations and how to manage it. Youth workers ensure that the working environment is positive and friendly and that young people do not have any barriers to be open and express themselves. They take part in broadening young people's minds and developing success-oriented mindsets.

Beside supporting young people, youth workers are in charge of administrative tasks as well. They usually plan, implement and monitor different youth projects and small activities along with making and managing project budgets. After identifying the needs of young people, they seek for different sources of funds, write project applications and apply for the funding. After the implementation of projects and activities, youth workers disseminate the results in the local community with different sources of media, such as social media platforms, webpages, newspapers, magazines, TV programs etc. Besides that, they also make confidential records which includes information about the young people that they work with.

Furthermore, youth workers are involved in the process of recruiting, training and guiding the volunteers in their workplace. They collaborate with other youth organizations, youth centers, schools and other youth groups in order to offer more diverse opportunities for youth, reach a bigger audience, involve more people in the activities and raise the number of beneficiaries. Moreover, youth workers have connections with the aforementioned institutions at the local, regional, national and international level.

## What kind of skills do youth workers need?

Since youth workers work in different environments and with various backgrounds of young people, they need to acquire specific skills and abilities in order to fulfil tasks perfectly. Having the following attributes will help an individual to become a good youth worker. Some of the skills and abilities are as follows:

- Excellent communication skills;
- Active listening skills;
- Ability to be calm in stressful situations;
- Good organizational skills;
- Ability to be empathetic;
- Ability to handle unpredicted issues;
- Strong interpersonal skills;
- Ability to refer to youth with broad spectrum of backgrounds;
- Ability to build trustworthy relationship with youth;
- Ability to use considerate approaches;
- Ability to take initiatives;

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- Ability to ensure equal opportunities for young people;
- Leadership skills;
- Team-working skills;
- Ability to understand and support young people;
- Collaboration skills;
- Adaptability and flexibility skills;
- detail-oriented skills.

Good youth workers require specific personal qualities, which they need to use in their everyday works. Some of the essential qualities of youth workers are:

- Being energetic and enthusiastic;
- Being self-motivated;
- Having non-judgmental and fair behavior;
- Commitment to youth;
- Being approachable;
- Having sense of high responsibility;
- Being inspirational;
- Being compassionate;

Besides having the aforementioned skills, abilities and personal qualities, youth workers should acquire certain knowledge, that is essential for their work. They should have knowledge of health and safety procedures in order to ensure a safe environment for young people. All youth workers have a responsibility to take care of young people, assess, and manage any possible risks. Beyond youth workers, the whole organization along with its staff and volunteers should be aware of those responsibilities and contribute in making the youth work environment safe for young people. In order to ensure safety, every organization follows health and safety policies approved in their countries. One of the most noteworthy points include supervision and detecting any incidents occasionally and checks on the safety of equipment by the people who are in charge of monitoring. Besides that, while planning different activities for youth, the structure of risk assessment is designed in advance. In addition, to ensure further safety measures, youth workers should be aware of different policies such as confidentiality, child protection, anti-bullying etc.

In order to organize various activities properly, youth workers need to have the knowledge of different methodologies and learning styles and search for the innovative ones, select them properly based upon

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the activities, adapt and use it practically. They should be aware of principles of non-formal and informal learning.

Furthermore, youth workers ought to have knowledge of project management as they are involved in all of its processes including initiation, planning, execution and closure along with monitoring and control. They should manage the quality in different aspects of the project and ensure that the project fulfils the aims, objectives and desired results. Besides that, they take part in the dissemination phase and encourage young people to disseminate project results in their communities. Additionally, youth workers understand financial management and fundraising methods. They use this knowledge in order to raise funds for certain projects when it is necessary.

Youth workers have knowledge of team building and are capable of improving engagement of young people regarding individual and group approaches in different activities. They know various coaching methods and how to use them properly and timely. Youth workers should understand conflict management, how to identify and how to prevent conflicts on time. Moreover, they should be aware of different working methods and approaches with young people coming from diverse groups and backgrounds. Also, youth workers ought to have information on techniques for giving and receiving effective feedback.

Finally, it is important for youth workers to be aware of youth policy along with updates and regulations connected to youth in their countries. They should have knowledge of human rights including the understating of youth rights as they work with young people. Youth workers ought to have information about how to use information and communication technology, media and digital tools in order to promote youth work.

## Values and principles of youth work that youth workers need to consider

Youth workers take part in making a big difference in young people's personal and professional lives. Developing personally and socially refers to raising knowledge, self-awareness and self-understanding, thus it is how young people can build relationships with other people. Youth workers provide young people with numerous opportunities, encourage them to become active members of society and add positivity and joy in their lives. Therefore, the role of youth workers is crucial in this whole process. In order to successfully deliver their work and achieve those aims, youth workers need to be aware of the principles and values of youth work.

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To start with, youth work should be diverse since young people from different groups should have access to it. Youth work allows young people to build a positive attitude and awareness towards people coming from diverse backgrounds including socially, culturally, racially, religiously, sexually etc. Besides a diverse environment, inclusion is an important part of youth work and it is essential to promote it and create the atmosphere, where all people from different backgrounds will be able to actively participate, will be welcomed and their opinions will be valued and accepted.

Youth work is based on the needs and interests of youth, acknowledges their potential and offers opportunities accordingly. Youth workers accept and respect that young people are skillful individuals and have autonomy, personal life, unique character and their own points of view and encourage them to express themselves openly and authentically. Additionally, one of the main values of youth work are equity and interdependence. Equity refers to fairness and is defined as the quality of being impartial, where every person is treated fairly based on their needs. Interdependence refers to being connected and working collectively for a common purpose along with relying on each other.

One of the major principles of youth work is being based on voluntary participation where young people are actively involved in all processes of non-formal and informal activities including initiating, planning, implementing and evaluating according to the cases where they have ambition and interest. Since involvement is not compulsory, young people's enthusiasm raises significantly. Moreover, they become more motivated to actively participate and be productive in the fields that they are interested in. Furthermore, the sense of responsibility increases connected to the group they are working with and they improve their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Youth work recognizes that all young people have their own rights and help them to raise awareness and respect human rights. Furthermore, youth workers should be willing to be involved in advocating young people's rights. Youth work empowers young people and supports them to become socially active in their community. It encourages them to take initiatives, protect their and other people's lives, and take actions in solving both personal and social issues that may affect the quality of their lives. Moreover, youth work is based on the principle of safety, protection and well-being of young people including mental, physical and emotional health.

Youth work is built on valuable and trust-based relationships with young people. However, relationships between youth workers and young people must have specific boundaries that young people should be aware of beforehand. Youth workers set and encourage young people to follow specific rules that help them to understand the possible consequences and enhance the sense of responsibility. Furthermore,

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youth workers should create an environment that will be joyful, non-judgmental and based on friendly interaction.

**Ethical standards for youth work**

It is needless to say that youth workers must act according to the ethical framework and follow the professional code of ethics. Although youth workers may carry out the work ethically without using the code of ethics, it is important to have it written down as it helps them to be well aware of work that they do and identify their roles as professionals. It is notable that code of ethics can be considered as the general approach to working with youth. Following the ethical standards can lead a youth worker to the right path in terms of analyzing the responsibilities that they have and to the way of their personal and professional development.

The field of youth work is very diverse and requires a set of rules according to the code of ethics. The key rules include respecting young people, treating them with dignity and eliminating the behaviors that may embarrass them. Youth workers must not discriminate against young people based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexual identity, mental and physical ability, political ideologies, etc. They must respect and maintain the confidentiality of young people unless they have the consent from youth or there is a possibility of any danger to them, youth workers or to other individuals in their community and there is the necessity to release the information. Moreover, youth workers should promote young people's rights and support them in decision-making and also inform them about all of the issues that may be connected to them.

Youth workers are responsible for the safety and welfare of young people during any kind of activity organized in the field of youth work. Besides that, they should manage the safety of the activities and conduct risk assessment. In case there is the situation that youth workers consider dangerous, they need to warn and contact proper authority. Additionally, youth workers should make balance between preventing risky activities and motivating young people to be involved in challenging learning activities. Furthermore, before becoming a youth worker and starting work with young people one needs to make sure that they are competent and well-prepared to take responsibility.

Youth workers contribute in promoting equality, fair attitudes and social justice for youth.  As soon as they identify young people or their coworkers' as discriminatory actions, they must not tolerate and should take actions to eliminate them. Youth workers put focus on the policies that can be unfair or may discriminate against young people and make effort in modifying them in case it is necessary. Furthermore, they should be full of willingness to improve the conditions of young people.

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One of the most noteworthy aspects of the ethic of youth workers is to acknowledge the boundaries between their private lives and working lives. Although youth workers always need to be ready to support and care about young people, they need to keep proper distance and develop professional relationships with them. Youth workers must not build romantic or intimate relationships with young people they work with, as their actions may be considered exploitative or against the law particularly in case they are underage. It is unethical to be oriented towards gaining personal benefit and concentrating on self-interests while doing job-related tasks. Youth workers must not promote their own beliefs, attitudes and opinions and must maintain personal and professional integrity at work. Moreover, youth workers need to keep in mind that the way they behave outside the working environment should not harm young people in any way.

It is important to analyze that youth workers should be accountable to a wide range of people including young people, their parents or legal guardians, supervisors and the rest of the people from the community that may be directly connected to their work. They need to recognize that being devoted or accountable to certain groups of people might possibly lead to conflicts of interests. In such cases, youth workers should take responsibility to find solutions and take proper actions to balance conflict situations. Besides that, youth workers should give the access of information to young people particularly information about the activities organized in the field of non-formal education. Moreover, they should always make sure that every task that they do in their professional life is not against the law. Once youth workers are in charge of sharing resources they must acknowledge not to act in a biased way, therefore, both social and economic resources should be spent for the target group's interests. Also, youth workers should constantly make sure that they put maximum effort in making their work as far as possible. On the contrary, in the situations when they are not capable to act so, they should address young people to the appropriate specialists or agencies. Furthermore, youth workers need to ensure that they are responsible for their own actions and decisions as well as the results that they may cause.

It is essential for youth workers to acquire appropriate skills; therefore, they should constantly be eager to grow professionally and gain new competences. However, they should not do the work and take charge of the tasks that they are not properly capable of. In fact, they should search and apply for the educational programs, which will enable them to raise knowledge in certain topics and improve work-related skills. In order to self-assess and monitor the quality of the work that they do, youth workers should be willing to get feedback from the young people they are working with, as well as colleagues and supervisors.

One of the noteworthy aspects of ethics of youth workers is supporting and encouraging other youth workers and coworkers. Youth workers should treat each other respectfully and build good professional

relationships. They ought to be full of willingness to support and give advice to the beginner youth workers, those who are just taking their first steps in this field. In addition, they must avoid making their views known openly in the society or using social media platforms that may discredit their profession and harm their colleagues' reputation. Overall youth workers should maintain professional integrity in the workplace.

There is no doubt that youth workers are individuals with their own personal attitudes, views and backgrounds, therefore, they may influence youth workers' jobs. Accordingly, the values of youth workers and young people may vary. For this reason, youth workers need to understand and accept this difference and variety of values. Youth workers should try to build self-awareness and develop non-judgmental attitudes in such cases. In order to reach it, they should constantly self-reflect and evaluate themselves and be engaged in the activities where they will be able to develop professionally and personally.

**How to become a youth worker?**

Once a person assesses skills and competences and decides that is capable and has an interest to become a professional youth worker, initially, he or she will come up with the question how to become a youth worker. The question may be easy to ask, however the path towards becoming a youth worker, might be considered as full of obstacles and variability. The reason for this is connected to the lack of availability of opportunities to get higher education as well as official certification which should be recognized by the government. Another major problem is the absence of the common structure of this occupation. Not every country has proper policy for youth work and it may not be regulated by law either. Moreover, the country may not have a youth work act or its specific framework for provision as well. In addition, it can be noted that some countries may choose the strategy to include youth work in the educational or health system.

There are options to raise knowledge, gain competences and experience in youth work. The alternatives are as follows:

- University degree;
- Apprenticeship;
- Volunteering in different organizations;
- Applying directly;

**University option**

As mentioned before, not every country has university programs for youth work. However, youth work study is available in the following European countries: UK, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, etc. When a person enters the university to study the field of youth work, beside studying the full program of youth working, they may study and practice with community work as well. Students are also able to study academic fields such as psychology, counselling, inclusive education, cultural studies, project management, strategic communication etc. The knowledge of these areas of study will help to acquire proper skills and competences for youth work and will enable them to fulfill their work thoroughly and precisely. Beside academic studies, university enables students to put their knowledge into practice and provide various internship opportunities in different organizations, centers or agencies. They may stay in the organizations and get paid employment; nevertheless, it will increase their career prospects and help them to find decent work after graduation.

**Apprenticeship option**

Apprenticeship is the other way to become a youth worker as it provides on the job training where people are able to earn wages too. Although apprentices may not earn much at the beginning of their apprenticeship, the salary could increase in different cases such as fulfilling the levels of apprenticeship or according to the agreement between the individuals and employers. Apprenticeships can last for a minimum a year up to 6 years. Moreover, it is important to note that apprenticeship enables people to develop essential skills, competences and knowledge related to job and have working experience and finally increase their career opportunities.

**Volunteering options**

Another alternative for a person who wants to become a youth worker is volunteering in different organizations, centers or agencies that work in the field of youth. Volunteering is quite beneficial as it provides opportunities to develop skills and competences for desired occupation. By becoming volunteers in the organizations, individuals are able to learn about youth working while doing practical work and involving in different activities in the field of non-formal and informal education. Involvement in the projects can include both participating and taking part in the organizing and implementing processes. In order to develop essential skills for youth workers, they participate in various training courses both at the local and international levels. They may have mentors who will support, provide guidance and monitor their development. By observing other experienced and professional youth workers volunteers are able to learn to motivate and empower young people, encourage them to solve the issues that can have common concern, create a safe and friendly environment for them, take active part and contribute to the

local community and other activities related to youth. Moreover, by gaining experience they will develop useful job skills and increase their career chances. Furthermore, since one of the most essential aspects of volunteering is passion and willingness towards the work that you do, it will enable them to develop positive attitudes in their daily basis while working with young people and encourage them to have the same attitude.

**Applying directly option**

Applying directly can be considered as another option to become a youth worker. If a person has knowledge, experience and competences in certain fields such as teaching, mentoring, community development, social working or in the field of physiology, they can directly apply for youth workers jobs. However, it is important to note that they should have experience and knowledge specifically in working with young people. Required skills and competences in the above-mentioned fields are more or less common and relevant for youth working. Therefore, specialists of these fields may be able to manage to fulfill the tasks of youth working and after gaining practical experience become professional youth workers too.

# Protection and welfare of the youth

## Youth protection and welfare

The main commitment of the society is to ensure the well-being of the youth, favorable conditions for preservation, development and investment in the youth on the territory of the whole European Union.

The condition of young people and their place in society must be one of the important priorities of society and determine the need to create a targeted policy. In order for youth policy to be successful, clear coordination is needed between all institutions working on youth issues. The state policy in the field of youth is based on the priorities set in the national program and strategic documents, as well as on the principles and guidelines in the acts adopted by the institutions and bodies of the European Union.

The current guide is ambitious, with a long-term horizon of action, it sets the basic framework, outlines the vision, goals and priorities for the development of young people. The need for comprehensive actions aimed at the development of youth policies, education and full development of the individual, equal opportunities for all young people in the field of education and the labor market and the promotion of their active citizenship are recognized. Its implementation will ensure synchrony in the actions of the interested institutions and will significantly increase the effect of their actions.

Care must be taken to develop competent and enterprising young people and to direct them to active public life. At present, the main challenges facing society are related to the possibility of finding a job, the level of income and working conditions. This is also the area in which young people are most directly aware of the consequences of the economic crisis. One of the main reasons for the need for this guide is the lack of mechanisms to involve young people in the decision-making process. It is the responsibility of all institutions across the EU to create such an opportunity for inclusion that will support the full development of young people and the building of their active citizenship. In this way, they will have the opportunity to voice their needs and problems, as well as share their willingness to engage in decision-making processes.

Young people must have the opportunity to realize their potential. This applies to everyone, but action should focus on those with fewer opportunities. This vision is based on a dualistic approach:

- Investing in young people: providing more resources to develop policies that affect the daily lives of young people and improve their lives;

- Providing opportunities: providing opportunities for young people to realize their potential and thus influence the development of society.

A fundamental principle of modern youth policy is to develop better interaction between it and all other policies such as education, employment, inclusion and health. This will be done with the help of youth activity and the efforts of young people.

The above is possible only when achieving clearly defined goals, some of which are:

Objective 1. Increasing the role of young people in civil society, which inevitably includes

- Providing opportunities for communication between institutions and young people
- Institutional support of young people in defending their rights
- Participation of young people in local government to solve youth problems
- Training of youth leaders.
- Implementation of joint projects and initiatives between young people and local government

Objective 2. Development of regional youth policies

- Improving the skills of youth NGOs, schools, sports clubs, theater and others. cultural clubs, community centers and local partners for development, financing and management of joint projects
- Involvement of youth civic structures as partners / consultants, etc. in planning youth development at the local level
- Supporting the exchange of experience between young people from different countries
- Development and promotion of youth volunteering

Goal 3: Increase physical activity and promote a healthy lifestyle

- Improvement of the existing and construction of a new sports infrastructure
- Conducting various information campaigns for prevention of drugs, alcohol dependence and sexually transmitted diseases
- Investments for development and improvement of health services
- Implementation of educational systems for prevention and healthy lifestyle

Goal 4: Improving the quality of education and awareness of young people

- Continuation of the renovation, repair and modernization of the technical equipment in the educational institutions, improvement of the energy efficiency in them
- Creating learning opportunities as a set of measures to prevent early school leaving
- Implementation of lifelong learning and vocational training programs
- Flexible systems for vocational education and training according to the demand on the regional market
- Improving the qualification of the pedagogical staff

Objective 5. Prevention of poverty and social exclusion of those who are disadvantaged

- Realization of the full potential of the youth centers and their use as a tool for inclusion
- Increasing the intercultural awareness of all young people
- Supporting youth participation in the development of policies aimed at preventing social exclusion
- Providing support for young families

Goal 6. Increasing employment among young people and their integration into the labor market

- Support for start-up entrepreneurs and self-employed through professional training
- Organizing job fairs for young people with representatives of local business
- Creation of youth business centers, business parks, exhibition halls

The main principles for the realization of the set goals are based on the following:

- Consensus between the interested institutions: - Consensus is needed in the formation and implementation of the bagpipe for the development of young people, because the condition of young people is a priority issue, the solution of which requires joint efforts of all responsible actors.
- Sustainability - the achieved results to be based on the principle of combining public activity and municipal and state policy;
- European character - compliance with and application of European principles, norms and standards for working with young people.
- Legislative provision - is developed and implemented in accordance with the regulations.
- Information provision - the document has a public character and aims to reach the widest possible audience

From all the above, the following result can be outlined - Creating an opportunity for full development of young people, building their active citizenship and realization, the opportunity to voice their needs and problems, as well as to share their willingness to engage in decision-making processes should become the responsibility of all interested institutions in society.

## How to protect young people from incorrect development

If we can say that positive youth development is a combination between positive experiences, relationships and environments, then we can conclude that incorrect development would be lack of these.

Incorrect development could be a result from not giving the youth people the opportunity the engage with successful people within their communities, not giving them the opportunity to create and develop connections within their schools, organizations, peer groups and families in a manner that is productive and constructive.

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Incorrect development could be a result when grown ups (parents, teachers, mentors ect.) can`t recognize and don't enhance youngsters strengths, when they don't provide opportunities for youth to build up it's knowledge and skills, leadership skills and strengths.

The proper development of our future is in our hands and the lack of knowledge in different basic psychological fields, such as different types of intelligence and personality, it's a huge gap in proper teaching methods.

Knowing what kind of intelligence has each one of our students can make the difference between the bad and good youth development. You could ask – Why this is kay? And we will tell you.

Knowing what kind of intelligence each one has of our students can make the difference between the bad and good youth development. Knowing your students' type of intelligence will give you the key to encouraging, teaching and how to be a real mentor to the particular kid. The youth worker is the person who should find the right way to their mind and give the information in the right way. Don't forget – people have each one of the bottom types of intelligence but in different levels of development.

In order to understand the psychology better, we need to take a look at the different profiles of intelligence and how they are developed.

**How to classify intelligence**

**What is "intelligence"?**

"A very general mental capability that, among other things, involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience. It is not merely book learning, a narrow academic skill, or test-taking smarts. Rather, it reflects a broader and deeper capability for comprehending our surroundings—"catching on," "making sense" of things, or "figuring out" what to do."

Or …

"The ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills."

Some of the questions we need to ask ourselves about school are:

1.      Which was your favorite class?

2.      Which was your most difficult class?

Did you notice that at school, teachers are putting one type of intelligence on a pedestal and do not appreciate the other types?

If you are perfect in math and chemistry, this immediately means you have high level of intelligence, people have big expectations from you. You have huge pressure on your shoulders, because you are expected to be perfect and outstanding at everything. The smallest mistake will be the reason for some serious criticism.

Usually people who are really good at science as math are quite bad at art classes or literature.

In general people have one perception on what intelligence is. A large percent thinks that being intelligent is to have a lot of useful (and non-useful) knowledge and skills, and being able to apply them.

Fun fact: People think that being knowledgeable and skilled at general and random information is a sign of intelligence. It`s not! This is general knowledge. We can`t run from it.

**Types of intelligence**

In 1983 an American psychologist Howard Gardner described 9 types of intelligence:

- Naturalist (nature smart)
- Musical (sound smart)
- Logical-mathematical (number/reasoning smart)
- Existential (life smart)
- Interpersonal (people smart)
- Bodily-kinesthetic (body smart)
- Linguistic (word smart)
- Intra-personal (self-smart)
- Spatial (picture smart)

What other scientists thought were just soft-skills (such as interpersonal skills), Gardner realized they were types of intelligence. He realized that there are many types of intelligence, just from a different perspective.

Not knowing math, you may not calculate the rate of which universe is expanding, but you probably have the right skills to find that person who will.

1. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

Logical-mathematical intelligence is the ability to calculate, quantify, consider propositions and hypotheses, and carry out complete mathematical operations. It enables us to build relationships and connections and to use abstract, symbolic thought.

Logical intelligence is usually well developed in mathematicians, scientists, and detectives. Young adults with lots of logical intelligence are interested in patterns, categories, and relationships.

They are drawn to arithmetic problems, strategy games and experiments.

The learning style for people with logical-mathematical intelligence involves acquiring theoretical knowledge of concepts first, before they can get down to dealing with the finer details.

2. Linguistic Intelligence

Linguistic intelligence is the ability to think in words and to use language to express and appreciate complex meanings. Linguistic intelligence allows us to understand the order and meaning of words and to apply meta-linguistic skills to reflect on our use of language. In other words, linguistic intelligence is seen in your ability to find the right words to express what you mean.

Linguistic intelligence is the most widely shared human competence and is evident in poets, novelists, journalists, and effective public speakers. Young adults with this kind of intelligence enjoy writing, reading, telling stories or doing crossword puzzles.

3. Visual-Spatial Intelligence

Spatial intelligence is the ability to think in three dimensions.

Core capacities include mental imagery, spatial reasoning, image manipulation, graphic and artistic skills, and an active imagination.

Sailors, pilots, sculptors, painters, and architects all exhibit spatial intelligence.

4. Naturalist Intelligence

Being able to "read" and understand nature, and all the living things in and on it, is also a type of intelligence. Having sensitivity for all living and non-living elements in nature makes you "nature-smart".

People with naturalist intelligence work best as botanists, agriculturists, forest and park rangers.

5. Musical Intelligence

This intelligence enables us to recognize, create, reproduce, and reflect on music, as demonstrated by composers, conductors, musicians, vocalist, and sensitive listeners. Interestingly, there is often an affective connection between music and the emotions.

Young adults with this kind of intelligence are usually singing or drumming to themselves. They are usually quite aware of sounds others may miss.

6. Existential Intelligence

Sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence, such as the meaning of life, why we die, and how did we get here.

People with existential intelligence are most suited in jobs in psychology and theology.

7. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

Bodily kinesthetic intelligence is the capacity to manipulate objects and use a variety of physical skills.

This intelligence also involves a sense of timing and the perfection of skills through mind–body union.

Athletes, dancers, surgeons, and crafts people exhibit well-developed bodily kinesthetic intelligence.

8. Interpersonal Intelligence

Interpersonal intelligence refers to your ability to sense other people's feelings, as well as read their motives.

They say that you have above average interpersonal skills if you possess good to very good communication skills – both verbal and non-verbal.

People with high interpersonal intelligence will do great as teachers, social workers, and politicians. Stage and film actors also use their interpersonal intelligence to essay or portray any character.

9. Intrapersonal Intelligence

Self-awareness is also a form of intelligence. If you understand yourself, if you know what you are feeling and why you are feeling it, and if you know exactly what you want and need, then you can confidently say that you possess intrapersonal intelligence.

People with high intrapersonal intelligence are those who would be most comfortable as spiritual leaders, psychologists, guidance counselors, and even philosophers.

*Is it possible to possess all nine?*

Yes, there is definitely a high probability of that.

In fact, some even claim that we all have, to a certain degree, all of the nine types of intelligence.

It's just a matter of some types of intelligence being higher or more apparent than others.

## Proper development in young people

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The principles of proper development of youth can be mainly divided into several components:

1. Demographic processes in young people

The dynamics in the development of demographic processes and changes in the structures of the population in recent decades have a strong impact on the basic systems of society: economic, educational, health insurance and social protection system. In recent years, there has been a new increase in the desire to emigrate among young people, especially between the ages of 20 and 29. If before they were primarily highly educated young people, now they have a decline in emigration attitudes and intentions. The increase is in the lower formed layers. More than a quarter of young people in the EU are definitely interested in temporary labor migration in the big cities of the countries and abroad - they are primarily among secondary professionals and people without work qualifications. This trend has a negative impact on the demographic balance - a decrease in the relative share of the working age population and an increase in the working age population, i.e. increasing the share of the elderly population.

2. Educational structure for young people

Given the negative demographic trends for the community, the level of educational characteristics of the population is a key prerequisite for the quality of human resources. The state of the educational structure of young people is essential for the development of any settlement. The mobility of young people largely depends on their mobility in the labor market, guaranteeing better pay, maintaining a higher standard of living and quality of life. Practice among working youth shows that education is often unrelated to the job found. For 52%, education has nothing to do with work. This is an indirect indicator that young people either did not have a clear orientation of what they would like to do when choosing their education, or have not yet been able to find a job in their specialty. Only a quarter of employees are involved in something directly related to their education. The labor market has not yet led to the creation of coherent education and training systems to meet the new economic conditions. In conditions of high unemployment, enterprises are experiencing a growing shortage of skilled workers, which in turn, along with an aging population, slow economic growth and education reforms, is seen as a significant obstacle to economic growth and attracting employment.

3. Youth employment

Unemployment is high, especially among young people and women, they are employed mainly in low-paid activities, and the lack of labor discipline is also an additional reason. Insufficient professional skills, the impossibility for professional choice of students from an early age, force some school graduates to

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start working most often in the field of services, trade and services. Unemployment, as a problem, has become increasingly concentrated not only among young people with primary education or no education at all, but also among those with a high level of education. Unemployment and unequal access to employment is the main problem in ensuring a normal standard of living. Access to employment is most limited for several specific groups of unemployed: people with primary and lower education; unemployed youth; people of retirement age; people with disabilities of working age. The aim of the society should be to increase their competitiveness by providing an opportunity for work or internship in the specialty / profession they have acquired. This facilitates the transition from education to employment and at the same time will lead to the accumulation of valuable professional experience needed for job placement. As a final result, a reduction in the level of youth unemployment will be achieved.

Despite the good practices and models created under the projects, the entrepreneurial culture among young people is still underdeveloped. They need support both in starting and developing an independent business. There are attitudes towards entrepreneurship, but there is a lack of information about the opportunities for this. The low activity in the field of entrepreneurship among young people is primarily due to the lack of sufficient skills, experience and resources to start their own business. Many of them, who intend to start their own business, prefer to gain knowledge, professional experience in the chosen field, as well as to find the necessary start-up capital. Young people who want to start their own business see entrepreneurship as the realization of their personal ideas and an opportunity for independence. According to a survey of young people in the last year, the reasons for giving up starting their own business are in the first place: lack of funds (50%), lack of a good business climate (38%), and the general assessment that the business is difficult undertaking (30%). Young people recommend simplifying bureaucratic procedures for issuing permits for individual activities, strengthening financial support for young entrepreneurs on preferential terms, introducing interesting and attractive programs for young people in the field of education, strengthening information about projects and programs. related to entrepreneurship and business for young people.

4. Civic activity

The involvement of young people in socio-political life is expressed in membership in non-governmental organizations, political and other civic associations / organizations. In them, young people join united on the basis of their specific interests, according to adopted rules and through various initiatives, participate in solving the problems of young people, ethnic groups and disadvantaged people. Through their representatives in municipal councils, municipal administrations and other institutions, young

people could be directly involved in socio-political life. NGOs are a model for making sense of everyday life of young people, and a potential beneficiary for attracting funding for a number of youth programs and schemes. Young people prefer to express themselves in informal circles, they are active on topics that affect their sense of justice. According to a Flash Eurobarometer survey, Youth on the Move in 2019, among 59,000 young Europeans, including Bulgarian young people, almost half (48%) of young Europeans participate in a sports or youth club or in a youth or cultural organization.

**Participation**

The participation of young people in the decision-making process at local and regional level is carried out mainly through cooperation with local and national authorities. In over 30% of the municipalities on the territory of the EU, municipal youth councils and children's parliaments have been established, which are the most prominent specific form of work with young people. In this way, the views expressed by young people are considered, the general climate of dialogue in society, critical thinking and active contribution is encouraged, using the tools, means and opportunities provided by representative democracy and participation at all levels in society. On the other hand, young people are directly involved in the work of the administration as the average percentage of young people (under 35) holding elected positions is about 6-7%, in some places exceeding 20%. Unfortunately, there are also settlements where there are practically no young people in an elected position.

A 2019 Flash Eurobarometer survey confirms the preference of EU young people to be more active in NGOs and local associations than in political parties. Twice as many respondents as those active in political parties say they have been involved in the work of a non-governmental organization aimed at improving the local community or environment. The participation of young people in non-governmental organizations is of particular importance, as their young people learn important practical skills for their future, gain knowledge and experience that cannot be acquired only in the formal model of the education system.

Active involvement in various initiatives enables young people to take responsibility for their local community, to take care of each other, and to act when they have an opinion on an issue. In the last few years, the number of youth NGOs has grown somewhat, there is resilience and increased capacity in a core of active organizations, both in the implementation of projects under various programs and in the process of participation in decision-making on specific societal issues. An important prerequisite for the participation of young people in the management of youth policies and in the decision-making process is the formation of a youth representative body. Youth work is a broad and universal concept that

encompasses a wide and ever-expanding range of activities of a social, cultural, educational, health, legal or political nature carried out by young people, together with them and for them. It belongs to the "extracurricular" form of education, as well as some leisure activities, and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and voluntary participation. These activities and processes are carried out in conditions of self-government or under the pedagogical guidance of professional or voluntary youth workers and can develop and change as a result of various impacts.

Youth work provides a comfortable, safe and enjoyable environment in which all children and young people, alone or in a group, can express themselves, learn from each other, meet, explore the reality around them and experiment. Youth work has an added value in social terms because it contributes to the development of creativity, cultural and social awareness, entrepreneurship and social innovation among young people; encourages social participation, volunteering and active citizenship; strengthens community building and civil society at all levels; provides opportunities for social inclusion of all children and young people; can reach young people with fewer opportunities through a variety of flexible and easy-to-adapt methods. Youth work is carried out mainly by non-governmental organizations, youth associations, clubs and networks. Most of these NGOs offer combinations of cross-sectoral services tailored to the needs of young people. Although the general trend is for cross-sectoral expansion of youth work, in the last few years of economic crisis, there is an increasing emphasis on activities aimed at projects to promote social inclusion, youth entrepreneurship and the fight against youth unemployment, creativity and intercultural dialogue.

From all the conclusions drawn so far, it is clear that for the proper development of young people, the following conclusions can be made, which correspond to the goals set in this guide:

- improving the business climate and developing economic sectors with the potential to create jobs and promote youth employment;
- undertaking the necessary legislative changes to increase the quality of education in order to improve the adaptability of young people to modern requirements of new technologies and the labor market;
- balanced development of the regions and providing access to integrated services for young people to provide real support for their personal development, promotion of their creative potential and their professional and social realization;
- introduction of public support for services for young people at the local level by delegating activities from the state and funds from the state budget similar to the delegated activities in the field of social assistance and child care;
- providing sufficient funding for national programs aimed at young people in the country;
- creation and implementation of an effective mechanism for information, coordination and partnership in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of youth policy

- increasing the awareness and participation of young people in the policies pursued by the state, regional and municipal administrations in the field of youth;
- development and implementation of measures to raise awareness of young people and society about national and international youth policies.

## Development of young people in society

The development of young people in society is again an activity that the whole society and society as a whole should be engaged in, because it is at a young age that the foundations of proper integration and unity must be laid.

However, for all this to happen in the right ways, leading to active and visible results, the following sequence of steps and actions must be considered:

**1. Promotion of economic activity and career development of young people**

A favorable, encouraging and supportive environment for quality professional realization of young people must be created. Therefore, the transition from education to employment should be facilitated through the following ways:

Improving the quality of secondary and higher education and non-formal learning, as well as promoting lifelong learning, in line with labor market needs by:

- Providing apprenticeships and internships;
- Encouraging employers to provide opportunities for raising the qualification of young workers and employees;
- Strengthening the effectiveness of the links between educational and training institutions and business to facilitate the transition from education to employment;
- Promoting the research interest of pupils and students by participating in various projects;
- Providing access to vocational education and training for disadvantaged young people - young people with special educational needs, young people at social risk or early school leavers;
- Promoting cooperation and opportunities for meetings between employers, vocational schools, training centers and academia;
- Promoting cooperation between educational institutions and youth organizations;
- Promoting non-formal education as a flexible and modern way of building on formal education
- Creating a favorable environment for professional realization and career development of young Bulgarian professionals in the state and municipal administration through:
- Creating opportunities for internships in the state and municipal administration of university students.
- Organizing centralized competitions for junior experts in the state and municipal administration as a modern practice for transparent and effective attraction of young people to work in state institutions.

- Creation of a "fast track" for the growth of young civil servants who have shown exceptional qualities in the performance of their official duties.
- Expanding access to career guidance services to provide support for young people to solve problems related to the choice of profession or professional development in view of individual personality traits and the relationship between these qualities and employment opportunities.
- Stimulating the participation of employers who support the professional integration of young people and increase the productivity and adaptability of employed young people by:
- Providing support and creating a favorable environment for businesses involved in providing jobs for young people
- Offering on-the-job training and integrated training;
- Development of human resource management strategies with special measures for young workers and employees;
- Introduction of new and innovative models for labor organization in enterprises;
- Encouraging and supporting the territorial mobility of young people - hiring people from different regions, incentives for employers related to providing transport to the workplace, etc .;
- Encouraging and supporting the professional mobility of young people - individual career plans, job rotation, retraining opportunities, etc.
- Development of joint programs and projects with youth organizations.

The next step that needs to be emphasized is Promoting the economic activity of young people.

According to labor market research, the mode of occurrence is:

- Expand young people's access to job placement services by informing and advising on motivational and qualification training opportunities, drawing up individual action plans, and targeting suitable job vacancies, including through employment programs and measures and training.
- Providing employment opportunities for unemployed young people who have completed primary, secondary or higher education, in order to facilitate the transition between education and employment
- Consulting enterprising young people in order to develop their own business.
- Encouraging young people with outstanding achievements in the field of innovation and promoting their success.
- Supporting young people with relevant education and innovative business ideas to start their own high-tech business to create technology companies.
- Development of a network of business centers and business incubators for offering services for targeted support of young entrepreneurs
- Support of specialized enterprises and cooperatives of young people at risk - young people with disabilities and other young people at social risk (persons of social assistance, representatives of vulnerable ethnic minorities, persons leaving specialized institutions for providing social services, persons suffering from various addictions, former prisoners and others), representatives of various communities employed in social enterprises, cooperatives and specialized enterprises.
- Support for the creation of social enterprises linked to the provision of jobs for young people at risk.
- Promotion of social entrepreneurship among young people

- Creation of new jobs in the social economy sector and promotion of voluntary and community initiatives generating employment for young people from vulnerable groups
- Equipment and adaptation of workplaces for young people with disabilities.
- Encourage and support public-private partnerships and social entrepreneurship in the provision of services for the development of young people.

The next extremely important step is Successfully reconciling the professional and personal lives of young people. This is important for successful integration in this age range. The implementation could be as follows:

- Development of flexible forms of employment for young people -share one job, part-time work, job rotation, floating work, promotion of telework, etc.
- Creation of conditions for balance between professional and personal life.
- Continuation of systemic policies for gender equality in the labor market, in economic, social and family life

## 2. Development of youth volunteering

The readiness of young people to participate in voluntary actions is growing, but the mechanisms for public support of youth volunteering, as an important manifestation of solidarity and civic activity and a form of non-formal learning, are still underdeveloped. Opportunities for voluntary activities are still limited, the legislation does not give enough rights to minors to participate as volunteers in organizations and initiatives. Volunteering is slowly becoming popular, young people still do not know the value of volunteering. Many young people are involved in international youth volunteering, and they become involved in providing benefits to socially disadvantaged families and individuals. On the positive side, we are moving towards increasing the number of volunteers worldwide: there is a tendency to see volunteering as a cause. Here, the strategic goal is the development of volunteering among young people as a driving force for personal development, mobility, learning, competitiveness, social cohesion, solidarity between generations and the formation of civic self-awareness. Achieving this goal can be done by the following steps:

- Creating more volunteering opportunities for young people, especially for cross-border mobility
- Accession and ensuring the implementation of the European Convention on the Promotion of the Council of Europe's Transnational Long-Term Voluntary Service for Youth.
- Guarantee the rights of young volunteers.
- Legal regulation of the status of young volunteers. Protection from the assignment of activities that have or may have a harmful or dangerous effect on their psyche and health.
- Providing appropriate training and qualification for young volunteers related to the volunteer activities carried out by young people.
- Promoting volunteering through Certification and recognition of training, experience and skills acquired by young people during volunteering.

- Introduction and maintenance of good practices for management of young volunteers for recruitment, training, promotion, monitoring and evaluation, as well as for recognition of their achievements

## 3. Increasing civil activity

This step is extremely fundamental for the development of young people in society and public life. Providing opportunities for full participation of young people in socio-political and economic life and their inclusion in the basic democratic values and standards is the goal that must be achieved here. Young people's self-organization should also be encouraged. Encouraging and supporting the development of youth organizations and associations is also crucial. Promoting and implementing good practices for youth civic activity, creating conditions for support and implementation of youth campaigns and initiatives and promoting civic education and training are also part of the sub-goals facing the whole society. The next steps are: Training of youth leaders; Ensuring effective representation of the interests of young people in the formation of policies, implementation and evaluation of sectoral policies at the regional state and international level; ensuring the representation of young people in decision-making, implementation and evaluation concerning young people; Stimulating the participation of young people and their organizations in the protection, improvement and management of natural resources; Organizing campaigns and initiatives on current topics and in implementation of national and European Union policies regarding young people.

## 4. Healthy lifestyle

The main prerequisite for a healthy lifestyle of young people is the availability of conditions for physical education and sports. The construction of the increasingly popular outdoor fitness grounds for young people would contribute greatly to the development of free sports. Young people in schools have the opportunity to develop their abilities in numerous and extracurricular forms of sports, intra-school tournaments, sports competitions and holidays are held, but sports facilities and facilities in some settlements are morally and physically obsolete, as a policy of states needs to be adjusted. There is a growing trend that after leaving school a large number of young people stop playing sports, their daily life is characterized by low physical activity and insufficient care to maintain good physical shape. The main goal and strategic priority of health reform is to improve the health of nations, create conditions for reducing child mortality, reduce morbidity, reduce health risks and reduce risk factors for disadvantaged people. The existing system of health education does not lead enough to the formation of skills to deal with life's problems, to change the behavior of young people for a healthy lifestyle. The percentage of young people who drink alcohol and smoke daily is growing, especially between the ages

of 15 and 24. The use of drugs and psychotropic substances by young people aged 19 to 24 is increasing. Parents have a crucial role to play in the well-being and health of young people, and additional measures must therefore be taken to support them. Although the overall health status of young people in the EU is satisfactory, some aspects are of particular concern, namely nutrition, physical activity, alcohol abuse, sexual and mental health. A number of factors related to living conditions, namely poverty, unemployment, job insecurity, housing problems, early school leaving and discrimination, jeopardize health and well-being.

## 5. Management of youth policy

There is still a high degree of centralization of youth policy management. There is a need for more active and effective involvement of smaller administrative units in the planning and implementation of youth policies, as well as closer cooperation between the various state bodies in the planning, implementation and evaluation of youth policies. The integration between children's and youth policy is insufficient. The participation of young people in local, regional and national governance is unstructured and incidental. There is a need to improve the effective participation of young people in the management of youth policy and public support for the provision of quality leisure services in view of their growing needs. Pursuant to Recommendation Rec (2006) 1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the Member States on the role of national youth councils in the development of youth policy and the standards set out in the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipalities and , adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the representation of the interests of young people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies can be structured through youth councils. Youth councils coordinate the interests of young people - education, culture, sports, ecology, health, labor and social policy, non-formal education, leisure and development of local communities, through:

- Participation in the formation, implementation and evaluation of youth policy · advocacy campaigns;
- International youth communication;
- Cooperation with municipal and state bodies and administration.

It is necessary to ensure representation, publicity and accountability in the activities of youth councils.

# Mentoring

## What is mentoring?

The most common understanding of mentoring is "a supportive relationship between a young person or a young adult and an older or more experienced person who offers support, guidance and concrete help when younger and inexperienced people go through different periods, entering a new and unknown area, when taking on important and new tasks, or correcting a problem in the past. "

There is a difference between planned mentoring and "natural" mentoring.

Natural mentoring is when adolescents and young people use the opportunity to receive guidance from more experienced people who are not parents to help them deal with a problem or go through a stage in their development or in acquiring new knowledge.

Planned mentoring is when a pre-designed program is used whose goal is to achieve the same goal.

Mentoring has a positive impact on young people's lives. Young people with mentors have a higher completion rate and are less likely to drop out of school. They find more self-confidence, self-esteem and are able to set big goals for themselves and their development. In addition, studies show that behavior and attitudes improve when the young person has a mentor. Mentors help children grow and fill social and / or economic disparities.

According to MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (US), children at risk who have had a mentor are:

55% more likely to enroll in college

52% less likely to drop out of school

37% less likely to miss school

78% are more likely to volunteer regularly

90% are interested in becoming mentors themselves

130% more likely to hold leadership positions

Young people who have a mentor also show better development in school.

The result of the regular meetings between mentor and student are that the young people are:

46% less likely to use drugs

27% less likely to drink alcohol

81% more likely to engage in extracurricular activities

An interesting conclusion is that young people experience fewer depressive states when they have regular meetings with a mentor.

Although meeting a student or child once or twice a month may not seem like much, mentors create a positive change in the lives of their students. Mentors become a person that young people admire and trust, and young people can see their own dreams in their mentor. Being a mentor is very helpful because it gives us the opportunity to be the support that adolescents need, who could change the world tomorrow.

**The 4 steps of mentoring**

Successful mentoring relationships go through four phases: preparation, negotiation, growth promotion, and closure. These successive phases build on each other and differ in length. In each phase there are specific steps and strategies that lead to success in mentoring.

**Preparation**

Relationship preparation strategies

- Initiate contact with your mentor
- Exchange general information before the first meeting with the young person.
- Take time to get to know each other.
- Share past mentoring experiences and those who have influenced us.
- Talk about training and development goals.
- Set personal expectations of mentoring.
- What do you need from your mentor?
- Define "goals" and desired results.
- Frankly share personal assumptions and limitations.
- Discuss personal and learning styles.

Guidelines for the mentor:

- Strive for mutual benefit. Relationships should be defined from the beginning as mutually beneficial. Each participant is committed to the relationship of choice. Everyone should openly share their relationship goals and work together to help achieve them.

- Confidentiality agreement. Maintaining an environment of confidentiality is a critical component for building trust between participants. Without a mutual understanding of the ability to speak freely, as the situation requires, the relationship is unlikely to reach its full potential.

"Promise yourself honesty." Participants should be prepared to share openly what they expect from the mentor-guided relationship and their vision for it. They should be prepared to offer candid feedback if appropriate, even if feedback is critical.

- Listen and learn. Mutual benefit and honesty can only be achieved when both members feel that their views have been heard and respected. Mentors in particular need to remember that the relationship is not primarily related to them.

- Build a working partnership. Consider structuring a working partnership that includes project consulting or active collaboration rooted in the common ground of shared professional goals. This collaboration can lead to discoveries for each participant's preferences, as well as work style, daily responsibilities and professional aspirations.

- Give an example. The actions create the most lasting impression.

- Be flexible. It can help the mentoring relationship and have its own specific goals.

**Sample questions for mentors**

1. What are the expectations of the mentors in this mentoring relationship?

2. What do you think are your strengths?

3. What are the things you want to be improved? In what area do you want to be better?

4. In what area do you want to work during this mentoring?

5. Can you prioritize these things to work on so that the areas that are most important to you are addressed at the beginning of mentoring?

6. Are you familiar with your learning style? What are the best ways to learn new information? Are you comfortable looking for our experiences that may be outside your current comfort zone to build confidence in areas of improvement? How do you feel about this?

7. Tell me about your current job and responsibilities.

8. What are the most challenging things in your job?

9. What are the most exciting things in your work?

10. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?

11. What motivates you? What is stressing you? How do you relax?

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12. What else do you want to tell me?

In the process of "negotiation" you can discuss the following issues:

1. How much time will be spent on mentoring. Be realistic.

2. Write down the end goals and analyze them to fit the SMART criteria

3. Understand the ways in which discussions on progress will be conducted

4. Keep notes to keep track of progress

5. Have rules that must be followed at all costs - privacy for sensitive topics

6. Be flexible. Expectations and plans will change as the relationship develops

7. Monitor progress

8. Understand the way mentors are trained and their type of intelligence. Give him advice on how to use his strengths.

9. Create criteria for success. What is success?

**Establishing SMART career criteria**

Accuracy - set goals with precise deadlines. Be realistic

Measurability - how progress will be measured

Attainable - goals must be achievable and adequate / appropriate

Realistic / relevant - Goals need to be realistic, we often go too far when we set goals. It is better to do things in smaller steps than to be disappointed when expectations are not realistic.

Timely - What is the time frame for the success of the goal? What are checkpoints? Set a time, even a guess, for each goal to check progress.

**Strategies for mentoring**

- Check the order regularly
- Actively listen / advise
- Ask for and give feedback so that the learning experience is satisfactory and the pace comfortable.
- Provide timely support, create appropriate challenges to facilitate learning.
- Request feedback from other sources.

- Use time together to be productive.
- Evaluate goals and deadlines during the process.
- Give constructive criticism and accept and reflect on it.
- Advise on what you know, don't be afraid to admit what you don't. Find other resources if you can't provide guidance.
- Do not avoid difficult conversations. This is a safe place to talk.
- Celebrate every little success!

**Questions to explore your relationship**

- Learning facts, objective data
- Tell me what you have achieved so far.
- What happened?

**Detection questions**

- What did you learn from this?
- If you had to do it again, what would you do?
- What advice would you give to someone who has just started the same project?
- What affects you?
- What are your ideas?
- What would happen if you did _____?
- What scares you about this?
- Tell me three things you would think about when deciding on this.
- What do you feel most comfortable with?
- What conclusions can you draw from the experience?
- What are your thoughts?
- What did he / she do to help the most?
- Give me two alternative ways to think about it.
- If he / she says this, what could you answer?
- What else could you do?
- What is most important to you?

Empowerment issues

- What result are you looking for?
- What will you do first?
- What do you need to do to make this happen?
- How will you start?
- How will you know when you have it?
- Who else should know this?
- What resources do / do you need?
- What is the risk of doing this? Don't you do it?
- How could you get there in your own way?

Advice

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- Identify the real problem
- Determine how they contribute to the problem
- Challenge yourself to think in a new way

# Practical skills and activities

## Youth worker and competences

As a youth worker, you are a motor for change in a rural setting. You can build up relationships with other young people and motivate them to become active in their rural environment and improve living conditions and opportunities for them and their environment.

**Competences**

Competence is the "ability to do something successfully or efficiently". Competence is often mistaken as a synonym with the term „skill". Two elements make competence more than skill. When one person is competent, they can apply what they know to do a specific task or solve a problem and they are able to transfer this ability between different situations. Competence can be disassembled into three: Knowledge, Skills and Values, and Attitudes.

**Knowledge** – it is the cognitive dimension of competence, which you use to know about your work

**Skills** are what you are or should be able to do to be able to do youth work,

**Attitudes and Values** are needed to be done in order to be able to conclude the work efficiently

**7 different functions of competence**

Relations with young people

A competent youth worker should be able to build positive relationships with young people, for this to happen the worker should be an active listener and understand the values of democratic leadership, therefore he is ought to be empathetic, curious and should be interested in the views of the group (young people) he/she is working with. The youth worker should also pay attention to the social context, that means he/she should have knowledge of the social status of the group of youngsters he/she is working with, in accordance to which the youth worker should spend the necessary time to analyze and to use the information appropriately with the group. To involve the young people in planning, delivery, and evaluation of youth work the worker should know their interests, concerns, and needs, to know this information the particular youth worker needs to be an active listener, should be able to identify the aims and needs of the group to successfully facilitate and manage the group. Within the relations of young people, the facilitator (youth worker) is expected to treat the members of the youth as equals and be open to discuss the personal and emotional issues of youngsters in the youth work context. To be fair and trustworthy, the youth worker is able to manage his/her own emotions and be honest, transparent, patient, and empathetic.

**Providing and developing of learning opportunities for young people**

To do so the youth worker is able to identify the learning needs, wishes, and styles of the youth group. The responsible worker should know the necessary learning theories, know-how, group work and also be aware of the diverse backgrounds or disabilities of the members. The facilitator should be also using inclusive educational methods and support youth leaders in the group to furthermore subsidize the efficiency of the provided learning methods. An aspect of utmost importance in developing learning opportunities is the creation of a safe, motivating, and inclusive learning environment. The environment where the session taking place is very important and it directly correlates with the particular activity the youth worker has planned for the young targeted group, which means the youth worker can be quite creative with the choice of the fitting location which will create the needed atmosphere for the specific learning methods. The learning methods used during the sessions are supposed to be creative and in "learning by doing" style to enhance the outcome without monotonous repetitive learning sessions. After the session, the youth worker is expected to provide the young people with feedback and empower them to have some suggestions on how he/she should improve the methods in the next sessions if necessary. The learning does not have to be finished with the end of the session, therefore the youth worker is advised to give youngsters other opportunities and encourage them to learn something more in the future.

**Empower young people to be interested and engage with the society they are living in**

Young people are important for the society, if they decide to take part in the functioning of their community, they can change a lot in bringing the necessary ideas and energy into the area where they are active. To identify their role and take responsibility in their community they need to know the basics in politics and power relations. The youth worker should also explain the relevant policies to them if needed. To achieve the expected goals the youth worker advises on how to develop strategies and take action. He/she is also endorsed to support the values of participatory decision making, democratic leadership, and critical thinking. Critical thinking is very important in today's world of mass media; therefore, it is necessary for young people to understand it and use it in political decisions or everyday situations. For young people to take action it is also vital to have the development of competence and confidence supported by the facilitator.

**Support young people to constructively address international relations**

The youth worker should be able to understand the intercultural theory, be a facilitator of human rights and be able to explain the difficulties in multicultural environments; that means to subsidize the cultural awareness of the group of young people. He/she is also to support and promote intercultural interaction between youngsters to learn about people from different backgrounds, who are from other countries, and have different political or religious beliefs. This comes with many issues, therefore the worker should be neutral, control his/her emotions, be empathetic, tolerant, and in control of the situation, in that regard, it is good to be open to be challenged, challenge others, and orientate everyone to the common good and to common goals. Emphasizing the common grounds is as important as pointing out the differences.

**Evaluation to improve the quality of youth work**

For youth workers, feedback and evaluation are very important. These improve the future performance of the workers and teach young people how to give constructive criticism or how to underline the strengths in the performance of the youth worker. Openness to criticism is important in the case of critique expected. The facilitator should be able to plan and apply a variety of participatory evaluation methods. After the evaluation, the youth worker has to take the feedback into consideration and improve his/her future competences.

The youth worker is expected to evaluate the performance of his team and colleagues. It is important to evaluate the level of cooperation and communication to build the partnership further. Values such as trust, openness to the views of others, orientation towards the common good, and adaptation to unforeseen situations furthermore enhance the good relations in the team of facilitators and partners. Relevant information should not be held but shared with the colleagues to serve the common good and prevent future mistakes and improve the performance in general.

**Developing the organization and making policies/programs to improve the work for young people**

To improve the organization's policies and programs it is good to involve young people to shape the future. The members of the organizations should listen actively to propositions that could improve the aforementioned policies and programs, then democratically decide about the next steps to reach the goal. It is vital to stay open-minded, tolerant, and be open to change. The improvement does not have to come from the internal part of the organization, communication is very helpful, cooperation with your partners is as well. This is going to lead to an improvement of policies and most importantly programs for young people.

**Develop, conduct, and evaluate projects**

Projects which are conducted by the organization should be planned as best as possible. The choice of proper facilitator and leader is vital. The resources are supposed to be managed in a fair way, transparently, and honestly with all the members of the team being equal. Each project should have some visibility in the public eye to be justified and supported by communities, therefore it is necessary to promote it via social networks, newspapers, and other kinds of mass media. According to the events it is recommended to stay cautious and adapt to new or unforeseen situations and use the needed problem-solving skills. Information and communication technologies are nowadays dominant means to prepare, conclude, and evaluate projects, its use is therefore recommended as much as possible.

**Group analysis**

One of the most crucial parts of the youth worker's work is to understand the group of youngsters he/she is working with. To deliver a proper session it is important to understand your target group in order to identify its needs because it is necessary to keep in mind that young people are not a homogenous group. There are significant differences between youngsters belonging to different working-classes, genders, races, sexualities, cultural backgrounds, or youngsters with specific disabilities.

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Therefore it is a youth worker's essential task to identify the differences and similarities in a group before the start of the learning part of the session. Once this part is done and the youth worker is aware of each of the participant's profiles, it is important for the learning process itself to identify the expectations and needs, which brought the youngsters to the session. There are several non-formal methods, which lead to this goal and will be presented below. The main reason why it is necessary to identify the expectations and needs is to understand the profile of the youngster completely. Only after this identification can the youth worker deliver the learning session in the most suitable way for most of the group members and be aware of nuances in each participant's behavior. In case the youth worker is not willing to do this preparational work, there is a huge risk of making the process of working tedious and frustrating and the result of the learning session can be considered by some of the participants as chaotic, not being beneficial enough for their development.

Another important part of youth work is the ability to establish a positive and creative environment for youngsters. The absolute crucial task is to ensure the youngsters that the working environment is a safe space for them to share their ideas, thoughts, and comments. This task is very much only a youth worker's work and it is his responsibility to create this kind of free space for the youngsters he is working with. Once a climate of trust is accepted by all the participants the learning sessions itself can be started with the potential to deliver sessions, which are expected by the participants and during which the participants are willing to cooperate and express their own opinions and comments freely. This ensures the youngster's attention during each session and it is a precondition for their active involvement.

Once the aforementioned steps are assured it is time for the next step, which is to make a team out of a group. It does not matter if a youth worker is working with a small group of youngsters or with a big group, which will be divided. For the correct delivery of session goals, it is crucial to make a team out of those groups.  Functional teams can be created only in case there is trust and willingness to cooperate between the group members. Once groups are created, it is a youth worker's task to ensure proper team building and to help each member find the correct role in teamwork. Mutual understanding in a team and understanding each other's role is a base for creating the environment needed to encourage personal expression and to maximize the contribution of each team member.

The aforementioned tasks of the youth worker have to be always followed, in order to offer any form of assistance for an individual or a whole group during the process of forming teams and preparing for the educational part of the session. To fully understand a "vibe" in a team it is necessary for a youth worker to focus parts of every debriefing session on teamwork and to motivate youngsters to express their feelings and comments on this topic.

In case there are any issues in cooperation, there are always two options for the youth worker on how to handle those issues. The first one is to communicate with the team and let them explain their personal problems with other members and try to ease the tension in a team. This option is more challenging for both the youth worker and the team but can lead to much stronger team building and to positive results. For a youth worker, it is always important to get as much information as possible about the conflict and then decide if the team can still work together or the tensions thwart future cooperation and can be a disturbing element for the whole learning process. The second option which a youth worker has is to create new teams in order to slack off the pressure in one of the teams. This step can lead to significant

consequences in teams where the cooperation works and roles are divided effectively, so a youth worker has to use as much empathy as possible and use his/her previous experiences to solve the situation in order to ease the conflict in a case by case basis and keep other participants satisfied and willing to learn.

## Communication

Communication and its effectiveness are the reason why humans differ from animals so much. Through communication, you can express your wants, your feelings, opinions, etc. For youth workers communication is an important aspect of their work. Communicating is sending encoded messages to each other, the code can be verbal or nonverbal. When the receiving person receives the encoded message, they go through a process of decoding and interpreting that message trying to understand its meaning. Sometimes the receiver decodes the message in a wrong way, or the sender doesn't send the message clearly and it comes to a misunderstanding. For you, as a speaker, you can have various difficulties to make people understand the information in the way you would like them to. The difficulty can be a low voice volume, that you cannot be heard by the audience. Making your message too complex can be also a dealbreaker. The youth worker should also pay attention to remembering the message he/she wanted to say. A particularly common problem are the constant thoughts on how the audience is taking the message or how they may react. The fear of making or not being understood may also worsen your vocal performance.

The youth worker should be also aware of the difficulties the others have when listening. Many are just preoccupied and are not listening, others start formulating the speaker's words in accordance with their personal beliefs, they can start making judgments about the speaker or the message or not asking for clarification when they don't understand the message.

### Verbal and nonverbal communication

Both verbal and nonverbal communication are necessary for a good public appearance, both of them are vital parts for communication, all the types of body language, eye contact, etc. connected with your language, tone, and vocabulary. So if you are not feeling good enough in your communication skills and your public speaking skills, how can you improve?

### Verbal communication

Verbal communication is also referred to as linguistics, the science of natural language. It can be divided into general linguistics, applied linguistics, grammar, and linguistics of individual languages or their groups. These include, for example, English philology or English studies, as well as, for example, Czech studies, German studies, etc. However, the designation philology means a broadly conceived study of language, literature as well as cultural, historical, and geographical specifics of a given area (so-called realities). Linguistics can also be understood as a set of individual linguistic disciplines (especially phonology, morphology, lexicology, syntax, and textual linguistics). Many other scientific disciplines are also involved in language, such as psychology, computer science, philosophy, biology, human anatomy, sociology, anthropology, and others. Since the second half of the 20th century, frontier linguistic disciplines have

also emerged, such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics, etc. However, the fragments of linguistics are not unified, but rather parallel disciplines.

To improve your verbal communication skills, you should obey some rules which are necessary to be a good speaker. When you think before you speak and organize what you want to say your verbal presentation will be more fluent, it is good to prepare it even before your speech. It is better to have short pauses to remember as to fill it with the notorious *"ehh"* sound. It is also important to be clear with your message and not put too much information into it, keep it as clear and uncomplicated as possible. Your tone is also important, for each part of your speech your tone should vary (questions, statements, etc.), you can also fill it with silent moments when an important part of your message is to be said, silence is often heard more, than words. Finally, you should also try to think about the perspective of your audience, how would you like to have the message experienced to keep you attentive and interested.

**Nonverbal communication**

Nonverbal communication is a collection of non-verbal messages that are consciously or unconsciously passed on by one person to another person or a group of people. It takes place during a communication exchange; it can also take place during various social interactions. Simply described, it is communication without words. The nonverbal signals produced are multi-meaningful and can vary both culturally and individually. During nonverbal communication, we transfer messages through a nonverbal platform such as eye contact, facial expressions, posture, gestures, and others. It also includes different kinds of body language, distance, touch, physical appearance, change of voice, as well as eye contact. Research has shown that it is not easy to determine what percentage we perceive as nonverbal communication against verbal communication - while in some research the ratio is about 75% in favor of verbal, other sources report that it is 50% on both sides, while others attribute up to 90% to nonverbal communication. Of course, it also depends on the situation we are in right now. Nonverbal communication makes the first impression of you, according to research it takes just one-tenth of a second for someone to make a first impression of you. It is very important to have nonverbal communication in your mind if you want to become a better communicator. Avoid sitting with your arms crossed, slouching, or fidgeting, and try to maintain a fair amount of eye contact when speaking with other people. When you master these tips for nonverbal communication, you will look more open and your conversations will be more enjoyable for everyone.

**Listening**

There are three different listening modes. Competitive, passive, and active listening. Competitive listening happens, when you are more into promoting your own point of view than trying to understand the view of your communication partner. You are just waiting for an opportunity to attack and find weak points in the arguments of the other person. You are not really listening; you are thinking about what to say to destroy the argument of your opponent and be victorious. During passive listening, we are interested in what the communication partner has to say, but we do not verify if we understood the information correctly. The active listening mode is the most important, we are really interested in the other person's feelings and in the purpose and meaning of the message. To properly understand you should reflect the speaker and verify if you understood the information as it was supposed to be recognized.

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Active listening has various benefits; it helps to identify areas of agreement and disagreement and thanks to that it is easier to reduce the risk of conflict. If we are able to understand the person's point of view, it is easier to help them while seeing the potential flaws which for the person can be difficult to overcome. If we listen to others, our points of view are challenged, and we can see the flaws in it far more easily and therefore change our points of view for the better. An important aspect of actively listening to others is also that communication partners have the feeling they are heard, and it is easier to gain their trust.

**Phases of activities**

**Preparational phase**

It is a youth worker's crucial task to deliver activities suitable to reach all learning goals. During a process of program design, there is a need to understand, who are the participants, who will be taking part in the project, and what are the main objectives of the project, which has to be covered by non-formal activities. Other important information, which has to be known to the youth worker is resources, which are available during the project duration. In this meaning, the term resources do not mean only material provision, but as well environment, where the project is taking part or a season when the implementation will take part.

All the above-mentioned conditions are only a basis for a youth worker, which he has to know before writing the first draft of activities.

Drafting the activities is a necessary process of planning the program content. Youth workers should keep in mind during the process that there are several tips, which help to choose non-formal methods for the training. He or she should feel confident to deliver the methods and should fully understand all of the details. In the best case, the youth worker has direct experience with the non-formal activity as a participant. This gives the youth worker a significant benefit since he/she understands the participant's point of view. Therefore it is better to prepare more than one draft and then recheck its suitability for the exact project. Writing several drafts of activities is useful not only as a preparation for the current project but even though some of the drafted activities are at the end not suitable for the current project, it can still be used for a more suitable learning session in the future. There are several questions, which have to be asked by a youth worker during the drafting process.

Is this activity fitting into a complex project plan?

How long does this activity take?

Will the description be clear for the participants?

Is there any safety risk during this activity?

Is the activity suitable for participants with special needs?

Are there all resources needed available in an educational room?

Those questions are a minimum, which has to be answered during the drafting part of the activity. Even though the whole preparational part was done well, there is only one way to find out if the activity was a success, and it is to practice it during a real session.

**Implementation**

It is crucial to explain the activity to the participants as detailed as possible in a way, which is simple to understand, so the explanation part does not take more time than is necessary. An indicator of telling a youth worker if his explanation was effective is the number of questions asked by participants. There is a simple relation: the more questions are asked the fewer youngsters understand the instructions.

During the implementation of the activity, it is always important for the youth worker to be present close to all of the groups and in case of need to assist them or to motivate them. It is as well desired to observe the involvement of each team member to better understand roles in teams for future activities as well as to potentially motivate inactive team members to be more invested. Once all of the teams present their results it is important to hold a session dedicated to feedback and evaluation. It is crucial to understand the feelings and thoughts of all participants towards the presented activity. Feedback should be done in a positive atmosphere and enough time has to be given to this part of the activity. The youth worker can then evaluate if the activity was a success or there were some issues, which were not expected during the planning part. During longer projects, where the youth worker is for example in the role of a trainer or facilitator, can be each feedback useful, since it gives a chance for modification of the following activities in order to make them more suitable for the participants.

**Evaluation**

The activity itself does not end after the implementation. Youth workers have to always evaluate the feedback for their own usage and it is recommended to write down personal feelings about the activity and ask those questions:

How did participants react to the activity?

How was time management?

Was the activity suitable for this specific group?

How was the evaluation of participants?

Once a youth worker has written their own feelings and answers on the above-mentioned questions, he/she can use them as a part of their own activities portfolio and come back to this text during the planning of the following programs.

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**Activities**

In the previous part of this manual, there were presented ways how to prepare the activity, implement it, and after the implementation how to evaluate its success. In this part, we will look closer to types of activities and some concrete examples will be given.

**Get to know each other activities**

During both long term and short term projects there is always firstly a need to know each other's name and background. Activities which lead to this goal are called Get to know each other activities. The main aim of these sessions is to introduce the whole group, so each group member remembers as many names of other members as possible, but not just the name, in international groups, it is recommended to introduce as well from which country each participant comes from, in order to make the structure of the group more clear. At the end of Get to know each other activity the participants should know the name of at least half of the group and have at least brief information about their hobbies and interests. Without this session, the process of team building would be significantly harder.

There are many effective examples and most of them are well known in most European countries.

A very common Name game is called Name, movement, and repeat.

All the participants are standing in a circle with their faces to the center. Each youngster has to say his name and to do a random specific movement a person next to has to repeat the name and the movement and add his/her own name and movement and it continues until the last participant, who has the hardest role to repeat all the names and movements. The duration of activity depends on the number of participants but usually is expected to last between 15 to 30 minutes.

A benefit of this game is that group members are learning the names in combination with visual stimulus and the second benefit is that there is a need to pay attention to all the participants since they have to repeat the names loudly without any assistance.

The second example of Get to know each other activity is called Three correct two wrong, a version of the game two truths and a lie.

This session requires all participants to have paper and a pen. Each of the participants has to write down five sentences about their life, interests, or hobbies out of those five sentences three of them have to be the truth and two of them have to be false. To give a concrete example:

I have a dog his name is Rex - Truth

My favorite high school subject was Maths - False

My best friend moved to the USA - False

I play in a local basketball team - Truth

I have visited Turkey - Truth

Once all participants are ready they have to stand up, walk around and start to try to guess, which sentences are correct and which sentences are false. The activity ends once all of the participants asked and guessed each other's sentences. Duration including preparation is around 15-20 minutes depending on the number of participants.

This activity is not an appropriate choice as a first Get to know each other game, since it is much more effective to play the game once participants know at least some names of group members. There are two main benefits for participants. The first one is that they will remember the name of the participant plus interesting facts about him/her, which again helps to memorize more names. The second is that some participants may find common hobbies with other members, which can lead to easier ice breaking.

The third Get to know each other activity is called Offline Facebook. This session requires printed forms. Each form consists of a big rectangle for a portrait and 5 lines. Each line will have its superscription, the first one is for a name, the second one for a country, the third one for Hobbies, the fourth one for favorite movie and a book, and the last one for relationship status. Each participant will get one paper and will write down only his/her name. Then all the participants will leave the signed papers in the middle of the room so all of them are mixed. In the second step, all the participants will take one paper from the pile and check the name, once they read the name, which cannot be their own, they have to find this person and ask him/her on the country where he/she comes from and write it down in the line. Once this line is filled participants will again leave all the papers in the middle and repeat the process three more times until the Facebook profile is fully filled. Completed profiles have to be then stuck or pinned on a wall or whiteboard.

Group members will during the activity speak randomly with other participants and will gain more information about their personal life, which leads to better ice breaking and identifies common conversational topics. Since the profiles are visible for the whole project everyone can come and see them and find information about the people they didn't have a chance to speak with or can just refresh forgotten information. Those profiles can then be used in Goodbye activities as well.

## Energizers

Another type of activity is called Energizer. The goal of the energizer is to boost the energy in the group and to improve the level of concentration among the participants. A good energizer has to be short, with clear instructions and simple to understand. Energizers are usually connected with some physical activity.

The first energizer is called Follow the leader

During this energizer, all participants are standing in a circle and one person is chosen to leave the room, once he/she is not in the room anymore the group will choose a leader. This leader has to start making some significant movement (clapping, jumping, dance move) and the rest of the group has to imitate the movement. Once the group is ready the person waiting outside can come back to the room. His/her goal

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is to identify a leader, while the leader is changing movements. There can be several rounds with new leaders and a new person outside the room.

The second energizer is called Get rid of your stickers. Every participant will receive five stickers (random size) which he/she has to stick to clothes, so they are visible. The goal of this game is to get rid of your own stickers by sticking them to other person clothes, while the other person is as well trying to get rid of his/her own stickers. The facilitator/trainer is counting down the time until the end of the round. Once he/she says STOP. Everyone has to freeze and count the number of stickers on his/her clothes. A winner is a person with the smallest number of stickers. This energizer can be very chaotic therefore it is good to execute it in a big room without any obstacles or outdoors.

The third energizer is called Ball for five. To play this game a ball is needed. All the participants are standing in the circle and are throwing a ball randomly to each other and loudly counting each throw. Once they throw the ball for the fifth time, the fifth person has to point at a random person, who will be number six. The goal of the fifth person is to throw a ball too strong, or with a weird rotation, so the sixth person is not able to catch the ball. The goal of the sixth person is to catch the ball, if he/she is not successful it means over in the game, on the other hand, if he/she manages to catch the ball, the fifth person has to leave the game. The end of the game is when there are the last five participants in the circle. This game is more suitable for the outdoor environment but can be played in big rooms or gyms as well.

**Brainstorming**

The following type of activity is often used in daily working life, but it is certainly applicable for youth work as well. The activity is called Brainstorming and it's a perfect way to come up with ideas for next sessions or group comments for the following discussion. The goal of the brainstorming session is to come up with as many different ideas, opinions, or comments on a chosen topic. The crucial rule for brainstorming is to not judge any comment and write them all down. It means the quantity is in the first place more important than quality. In the second phase, all team members can discuss written ideas and choose the most fitting one to come up with a useful plan for the following actions. It is recommended to do brainstorming in smaller groups of participants in order to involve all the group members and to get their comments. It is as well possible to deliver this activity in a big group, which can be useful for a youth worker to get a brief idea about the level of knowledge about the topic among group members. There are several ways to do brainstorming. The most common is to divide a group into smaller teams. Each team has its own flipchart paper and pens or highlighters. The more innovative way which is useful as well for online meetings are brainstorming apps. Those free apps are working on the same principle as the paper version. Everyone can add their own comment, which then will be added on a screen.

**Simulation**

The activity called Simulation has many similarities with a roleplay, but the role of each participant is set. During each simulation is the preparational phase crucial. Each participant has to precisely understand his/her role. Simulations are very useful in the phase of a program when participants are already familiar with the topic and can understand its challenges. A youth worker has to prepare an exact scenario for the participants and explain each role, its behavior, attitude, etc. It is important for the youth worker to

understand each role and solutions of complicated situations, so he/she can present the „correct" solution and be able to lead the discussion.

Time limit is not necessary on the other hand, time should be checked by a youth worker, so he/she can stop the simulation once participants finish the scenario, or the simulation is getting too long without the expected result. It is very beneficial when there are several outcomes regarding one specific topic prepared.

To give an example of simulation from a project focused on unemployment:

In the first scenario, there is an HR manager and one candidate for a job. The HR manager's behavior is very nice and he/she is asking reasonable questions. The candidate is a person, who does not know anything about the company, is rude, and requires non-realistic work conditions.

In the second scenario, there are the same roles, but the HR manager is neutral and not very active, the candidate on the other hand is well prepared and is doing his/her best to get the job.

In the third scenario, the HR manager's behavior is inappropriate and is flirting with a candidate, etc. The candidate has to stay neutral and answer all the questions.

Once the simulation is done, the youth worker has the role of a moderator. He/she asks all the participants of simulation about their feelings and starts a discussion with a group about each of the scenarios. Explains which reactions would be suitable for each scenario and how to behave in a situation, when we don't feel comfortable.

**Lecture and Discussion**

The last activities which will be explained here are Lecture and Discussion. These two activities can be basically described as antonyms because the lecture is fully led by a youth worker/trainer who delivers his prepared presentation or speech and there is no real interaction from the participant's side. This method is not very effective in terms of the amount of remembered information and their application into practice. As well there is a high risk that participants will lose attention. This method is useful for delivering specific information for a large number of people and should be followed by a discussion. Discussion on the other hand is requiring activity from all the participants since their opinions are heard and there is a space for reactions to someone's other statements. During the discussion, the role of the youth worker is to moderate the discussion and can be very passive in case the discussion is going well and participants are sharing their points of view and opinions.

**Debriefing**

**What is debriefing?**

We improve the learning experience by helping the young people to reflect on their experience, share what they have learned, and apply these insights on their lives after the project or the current session. A

proper debriefing process should be structured at least in 3 steps. For every step, there are questions that should make you recall your emotions, what you have learned, and how you will apply what you learned in the future.

**3 Debriefing Steps**

Reactions and Emotions

The first part of the debriefing should be focused on the emotions of the participants, they should be having the opportunity to express what they feel and so get strong feelings off their mind. It is recommended to start this activity with a broad question, so the participants can recall how they felt about and during the activity. When sharing, the others should be listening actively and discussing in a non-judgemental way. The next question should be about what has happened during the activity, which has particularly struck the participant's mind. This will help in the future chronological list creation. You can also help the young participants by asking about particular events that happened during the session.

**Learning**

The next step is to figure out what you have learned from the activity or session. By discussing how the activity can be applied in the real world. Make them discuss how the activity would be applying to a real one in their workplace somewhere else. It is good to let them discuss in pairs or even in groups. They can write about the pros and cons, how the activity could be portrayed in real-life situations. By using a flipchart and a short presentation the participants should be able to show what they think.

**Future application**

The next should be the application of the participant's insights on new situations and discussing how the outcome would differ. You could also ask them what they would do differently if they would encounter this exercise or situation in the future. In the last part, the participants should plan. You should ask them to apply the experiences gained in the last session in real life. You can ask different questions: How can the learnings be applied in concrete cases? Then it is good to ask them about how they will change their real-life actions according to what they have learned from the exercise.

- You should bear these things in mind when planning a session or project:
- Is a structured debriefing process conducted after the activity?
- Do participants have a chance to meet after the activity and share their experiences and reflections?
- Are participants encouraged to think about and understand what has changed as a result of their participation?
- Is the debriefing process supported by the team, considering the needs of individual participants?

Just as participants may need further input to transform their experiences into learning, they may also provide you with valuable information that can help you improve the design and implementation of

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further projects. Also, your youth work colleagues may need debriefing after the project in order to extract important information for future activities.

## Conclusion

If the youth worker follows the recommendations, which were portrayed above, he/she should have a fair knowledge about how to work with a group of young people. As written above a youth worker should have various competences - which means knowledge, skill, and necessary attitudes and values. For being successful with working with a group it is also vital to adapt to the particular group the youth worker is working with. That includes analysis and competences. The youth worker is also a speaker and knowledge about verbal and nonverbal communication is crucial for any activity. Even the worker is a good speaker, the ability to listen to your group or individuals has the same relevance. Every youth worker has to recognize that delivering an activity is not just implementation, but it is a complex process, which includes a fair chunk of preparation and evaluation after the activity or from previous experiences. We can clearly see that there are many activities to fulfil various goals in group work to achieve the final objectives of the whole project or session. After any activity throughout the whole project, dissemination is essential to express feelings, understand the point of the activity, acquire knowledge, and gain an insight into real-life situations out of it. Therefore debriefing activities are the pillar of any project or activity.

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