



THE YOUTH WORK GROWTH CIRCLE

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**CONCEPT DEVELOPED BY THE ABC OF YOUTH
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The Youth Work Growth Circle points to the important processes that constitute youth work. They are an ABC of youth work, showing us the roots of working with young people.

We asked those questions:

- What is happening in youth work today?
- How to encourage young people to engage in youth work activities?
- How to build sustainable relations with young people within youth work groups?
- How to establish strong youth groups?

Evidence-based: *The Youth Work Growth Circle was designed on the basis of the 32 interviews with youth workers (8 per country, Poland, Germany, Italy, Slovenia) and 8 focus groups with young people who are members of diverse organisations, participants of projects and engaged in youth work. The interviews were conducted in 2017.*

TWO MISSIONS OF A LEADER

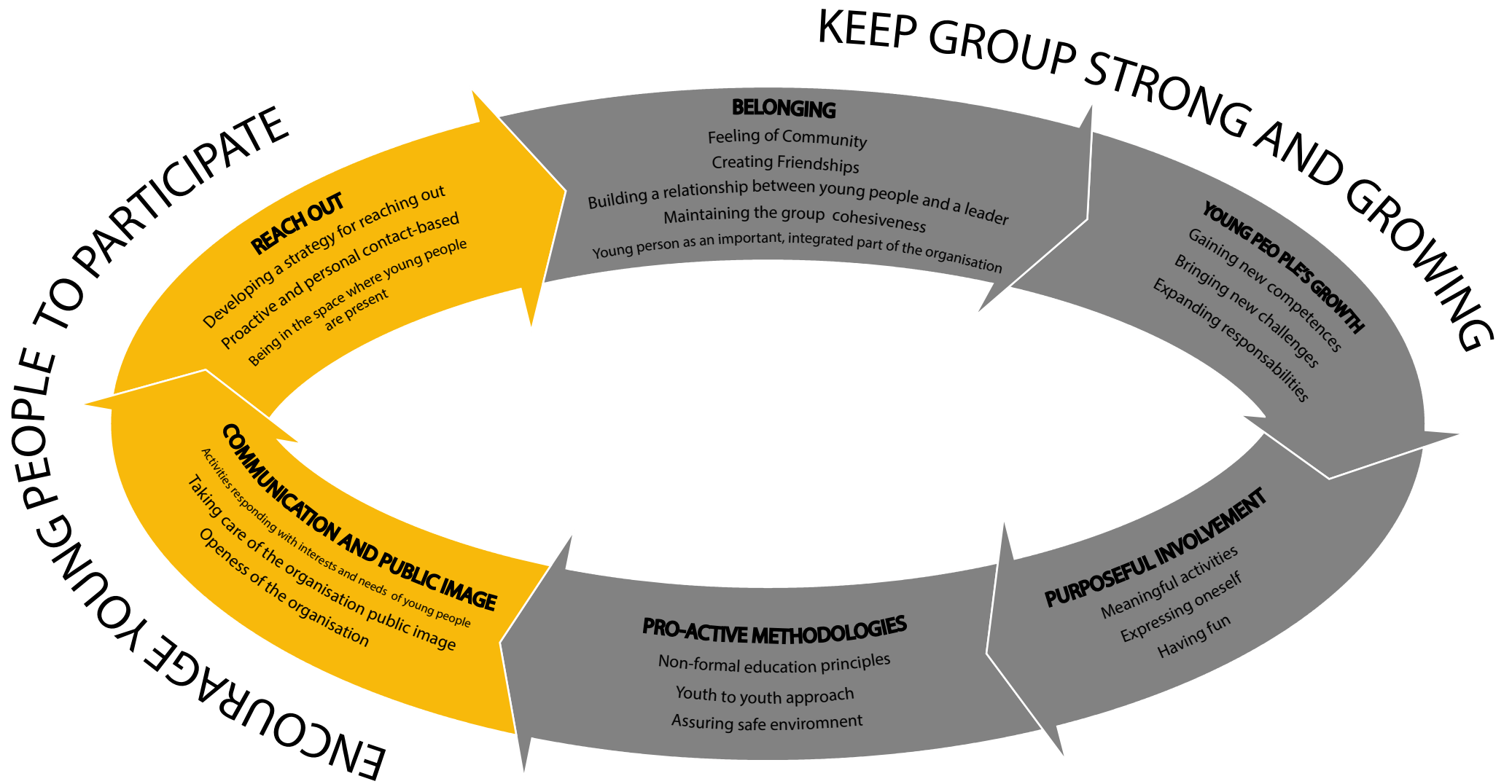
Mission 1: Encourage young people to participate

To do this, an appealing image of an organisation or a project is important, but also for young people to engage in youth work, important is an appealing image of an organisation or a project, but also improving reach out towards young people, so we include many diverse groups of youngsters.

Mission 2: Keep groups strong and growing

As we want our work to be sustainable and young people being involved for longer periods of time – we strive for organisation which is attractive to young people, that makes them feel that they belong, supports them in their growth, and uses proactive methodologies.






YOUTH WORK GROWTH CYCLE



**MISSION I:
ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE
TO PARTICIPATE**

**COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC IMAGE I.1
REACH OUT I.2**

1.1 COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC IMAGE

PROCESS What happens in groups?	EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS What should we look at? Which indicators could a leader set to »observe« a specific process?	POSSIBLE ACTIONS Concrete ideas of what to do (and how) to improve the quality on a specific process. The ideas should be reconsidered and adapted to each group.
<p>1. Activities responding with interests and needs of young people - Activities in the organisation are interesting for young people. They are based on youth's interests and needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation's activities are perceived as attractive, innovative, 'new'. • The organisation offers rare opportunities (e.g. travel to foreign countries, taking part in specific events, workshops etc.). • There is possibility of sharing and/or developing a hobby, learning. • The activities fulfil young people's basic needs (e.g. accommodation, food, learning, place to stay). • Young feel that their activities can bring change in local communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise presentations of the activities of the organisation, where members share their experiences, show photos or films. • Learning from the experience of other organisations. • Offering free of charge trainings or courses. • Weekend away with the association (to get to know it and to know future members). • Be active in school fairs and try to do a presentation which is different from the other presentations. • Members talk about the organisation to their friends.
<p>2. Taking care of the organisation's public image - the organisation is perceived as attractive, successful, doing good things for a cause, the public have heard about the organisation etc.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many young people have heard about the organisation/ The organisation is known in local community. • The organisation is recognised by the local community. • Young people hear about the organisation from friends. • The organisation collaborates with diverse stakeholders, especially with schools. • Organisation is perceived as open for new members (not just for group of friends). • There is a public website or page promoting the organisation, which is regularly updated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operation with other associations, schools, universities, political parties – participation in their events. • Promotion at public events. • Informative and updated website. • Project outputs on the internet (photos, videos etc.) made with involvement of young people. • Take part in competitions (e.g. school competitions). • Leaflets, posters informing about activities. • Organising open workshops, presentations in schools, universities. These activities can be a good chance to show friends how the group works and what activities can lead to. • Organisation is present in social media, where all main events are described. • Participating in "Open Days" at universities, schools, NGO fairs and other open events, where the organisation can present their activities. • Organising picnics within local communities. • Promotion among parents. • "Celebrity" support - young people are interested in the activities, when they see that important people to them support the organisation. • Participating in activities of other organisations and institutions.

3. Openness of the organisation - the organisation is open to new members and it is perceived in this way

- The organisation reaches more difficult to reach groups.
- The organisation is inclusive for all youth, including those from disadvantaged groups.
- The organisation is perceived as “open”.
- Participating in the activities is fully open and voluntary- young people can leave the group if they do not feel comfortable anymore.
- Process of joining and leaving the organisation/group is transparent and simple.
- Involving current members to invite potential new members and introduce them to organisation.
- Open calls (e.g. to join activities, projects, trips, exchanges).
- Organisation cherishes the diverse experiences’ of their members.





1.2 REACH OUT

PROCESS What happens in groups?	EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS What should we look at? Which indicators could a leader set to »observe« a specific process?	POSSIBLE ACTIONS Concrete ideas of what to do (and how) to improve the quality on a specific process. The ideas should be reconsidered and adapted to each group.
4. Developing a proactive strategy for reaching out - communication with all stakeholders, especially young people, is planned and implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation has a reach out strategy designed and adjusted to young people who can potentially become members. • There is a clear idea how is an organisation target group and who they are (their needs, interests). • There are regular efforts to reach out new members. • The promotional activities take place both online and of-line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use new technologies (like social media, home pages, websites, Instagram, etc.) but also personal contacts. • Organise exhibitions, happenings, flash mob, concerts, live shows, plays. • Schools and universities are a good way to get to young people in education. • Reaching out related tasks are assigned to the people in the organisation. • People responsible for reach out may need some training or learn from experiences of other organisations. • Organisation of a public event, which promotes the organisation’s activities.
5. Engaging new members based on personal contacts - during the process each person is taken care of individually and there are methodical ways to get in contact with every potential interested young person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal-contact recruitment activities are organised. • Young people have known somebody from the organisation before joining. • There are pathway/ways designed to communicate with new members which involve personal contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving the previous participants or organisation members in the promotional events. • Direct conversation with young people after a presentation about the organisation. • An application form with basic questions (motivation, interests) as a first step, then face-to-face conversation with the leader. • Materials (e.g. leaflets) prepared to give to the potential members during the personal meeting.
6. Being in the space where young people are present - searching for contact with young people in their territories/contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation does a mapping of the youth presence in the village/district/city. • Leaders are present in spaces where young people are: schools, concerts, stadiums, festivals, online space, streets, and shopping malls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching young people in the places where they are - so pupils in schools; young refugees through organisations that support them etc. • Street work: the presence in the young people’s spaces (parks, bars, formal and informal meeting spaces). Allows engagement of many young people. • Diverse forms of mobile youth work. • Being present in the “on-line spaces” may be important to establish or maintain contact with young people. • Youth leader finds something in common with young person as a starting point. Shows them that he/she is interested in their hobbies.



MISSION 2: KEEP GROUPS STRONG AND GROWING

**BELONGING 2.1
YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROWTH 2.2
PURPOSEFUL INVOLVEMENT 2.3
PRO-ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES 2.4**



2.1 BELONGING

PROCESS What happens in groups?	EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS What should we look at? Which indicators could a leader set to »observe« a specific process?	POSSIBLE ACTIONS Concrete ideas of what to do (and how) to improve the quality on a specific process. The ideas should be reconsidered and adapted to each group.
7. Feeling of community - young people who participate in the organisation develop a feeling of belonging to a group and identify with it; They build bonds within organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people have a sense of identity within the organisation. • Young people feel they belong the organisation. • Young people feel attached to the other group members. • Young people share organisation's values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising team-building activities within the organisation on a regular basis. • Organising celebrations after successes. • Organising for young people time "outside" the organisation: integration events, e.g. going out, cinema, sport activities, trips etc. • Young people build together the organisation identity and the identity changes along young people ideas. • The discussions on values of organisation are held. • The organisation have common symbols (e.g. logo, mascot), rituals (e.g. welcome event, organisation song or dance), common vocabulary (e.g. nick names for places, members, functions).
8. Creating friendships - an organisation offers an opportunity for meeting other young people, developing acquaintances, socialising between young people, spending time together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people have met new friends in the organisation. • Young people spend time together offline. • Young people from the organisation meet also outside the organisation. • Young people communicate between each other (face to face and on social platforms). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial encouragement for socializing. • Team building activities, "adventures", challenges together. • Offering a space where young people can meet (familiar space, accessible, informal) e.g. youth centre, social room, sofa on the corridor. • Usage of an online social platform for socialising between events and meetings. • Organise time to talk about our member's interests (e.g. hobby fair), so the members get chance to know each other better.
9. Building a relationship between young people and a leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are in a close contact with a leader. • Young people are listened to by a leader/a leader respects the ideas of young people. • Young people feel respected by the leader. • Leaders motivate young people. • Young people understand the roles and responsibilities of group members and the leader. • There is a good communication and co-operation between young people and leader. • Leaders are dedicated to their work, enthusiastic and enjoy what they do. • Young people trust the leader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth workers/leaders spend time with young people. • Leaders listen to young people needs, ideas and opinion, making sure there are dedicated time to do this within the meetings or in the activity plan. • Leaders challenge young people, but do not put too much pressure. Everyone participate as much as he/she wants and is ready to do. • In the case of a failure the leader is able to show young people the positive aspects and learning outcomes of the experience. • Leaders treat everyone in a fair way. • Mentoring system. • There is a good communication established between leader and the group.

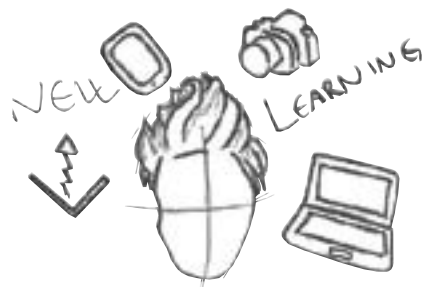
<p>10. Maintaining the cohesiveness of the group - the group is becoming cohesive, there are ways to deal with internal divisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each members is included in the organisation activities. • There are no internal divisions within the organisation and “unsolved” conflicts. • There are established modes how to mediate in cases of miscommunication. • Leader takes care when the mediation of conflict is needed and finds solution to them with young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader should be trained in risk management, conflict mediation. • Leaders have support/supervision/mentorship in times of crisis. • In the activity plan are set spaces for open group discussion, sharing of needs, problems and improvement proposals related to the organization functioning. • Avoid isolation of selected members or subgroups within the organisation. • In case of failure or need of support there are established ways how to communicate it and manage it. • Transparency in communication.
<p>11. Young person as an important, integrated part of the organisation – every young person feels appreciated as a member and their participation is important for the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people actively participate in planning and realization of the events in the organisation. They have an influence on the activities and programme. • Young people can propose and develop their own ideas and activities. • Young people feel important part of the organisation. • Young people feel that they are valuable, appreciated, needed and noticed. • Leaders pay attention to each member of the organisation. • Young people know what is happening in the organisation. • Young people are informed directly about events (personal communication, personal message/phone call). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth leaders actively listen to young people’s proposals and reflect on them with young people, at different stages of projects. • Leaders appreciate and notice young people’s involvement and contribution. • Organising celebrations after successes. • Young people know about the organisation work, the opportunities to participate and future roles they can take on. • Appreciation of young people’s contribution e.g. small, symbolic awards for their involvement (diplomas, personal gifts, public recognition). • Next to personal communication, the organization may use selected on-line channels for a quick and direct communication with members (ex: dedicated social platform, communication application like WhatsApp or messenger, newsletter for members...). • Regular meetings in the organisations (of the whole organisation and in subgroups).





2.2 YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROWTH

PROCESS What happens in groups?	EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS What should we look at? Which indicators could a leader set to »observe« a specific process?	POSSIBLE ACTIONS Concrete ideas of what to do (and how) to improve the quality on a specific process. The ideas should be reconsidered and adapted to each group.
12. Developing competences - organisation offers opportunity to develop competences, skills, gaining new knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people develop their competences and skills. • Young people gain new skills, practical experience and new knowledge. • Young people are trained, monitored and supported by leaders. • Young people are aware of their progress and self-development through evaluation and self-reflection. • Leaders support evaluation and self-reflection process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools for self-reflection and self-assessment offered for young people e.g. regular evaluation sessions with young people (face-to-face or in a group), setting goals with young people. • Leaders are focusing on process rather than on results. • Young people participate in workshops or training courses offered by organisation or other institutions. • Organisations has a developed system of roles/levels/responsibilities and it is discussed what a young person can learn through it. • Mentoring, coaching. • Ideas are gathered from young people what training they would enjoy.
13. Bringing challenges - young people face new challenges in the organisation, they are trying out their skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people feel challenged. • Young people can reveal their strong sides and develop weaker ones. • Young people get to know different social realities, contexts, groups. • Leadership for young people is open – if they want and when they are ready, they can become leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in public events and competitions. • Adjusted, individual challenges for each member as a self-development and motivation tool. • Visits to other organisation or unknown, rarely visited places. • Elements of gamification - competitions, gaining levels, lists of achievements, ranks, promotions, moving up in the hierarchy at the organisation (be careful as too much competition may be destructive).
14. Expanding responsibility - young people have growing responsibilities within the organisation, they take more responsibility with time and can manage it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people can create ideas without any barriers. • Young people accept growing responsibilities (e.g. becoming leaders after some time, managing project, leading activity). • Young people have an impact on the shape of their activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibilities (even very small ones) are given to young people as soon as possible and they rise with the experience. • Leaders facilitate distribution of tasks and responsibilities. • Leaders educate and prepare their successors. • Leaders show their own experience and the way to become a youth leader. • Organisations has a developed system of roles/system/levels/responsibilities, but it should be flexible and negotiable. • On the meetings, young people talk about how they manage with the new responsibilities.



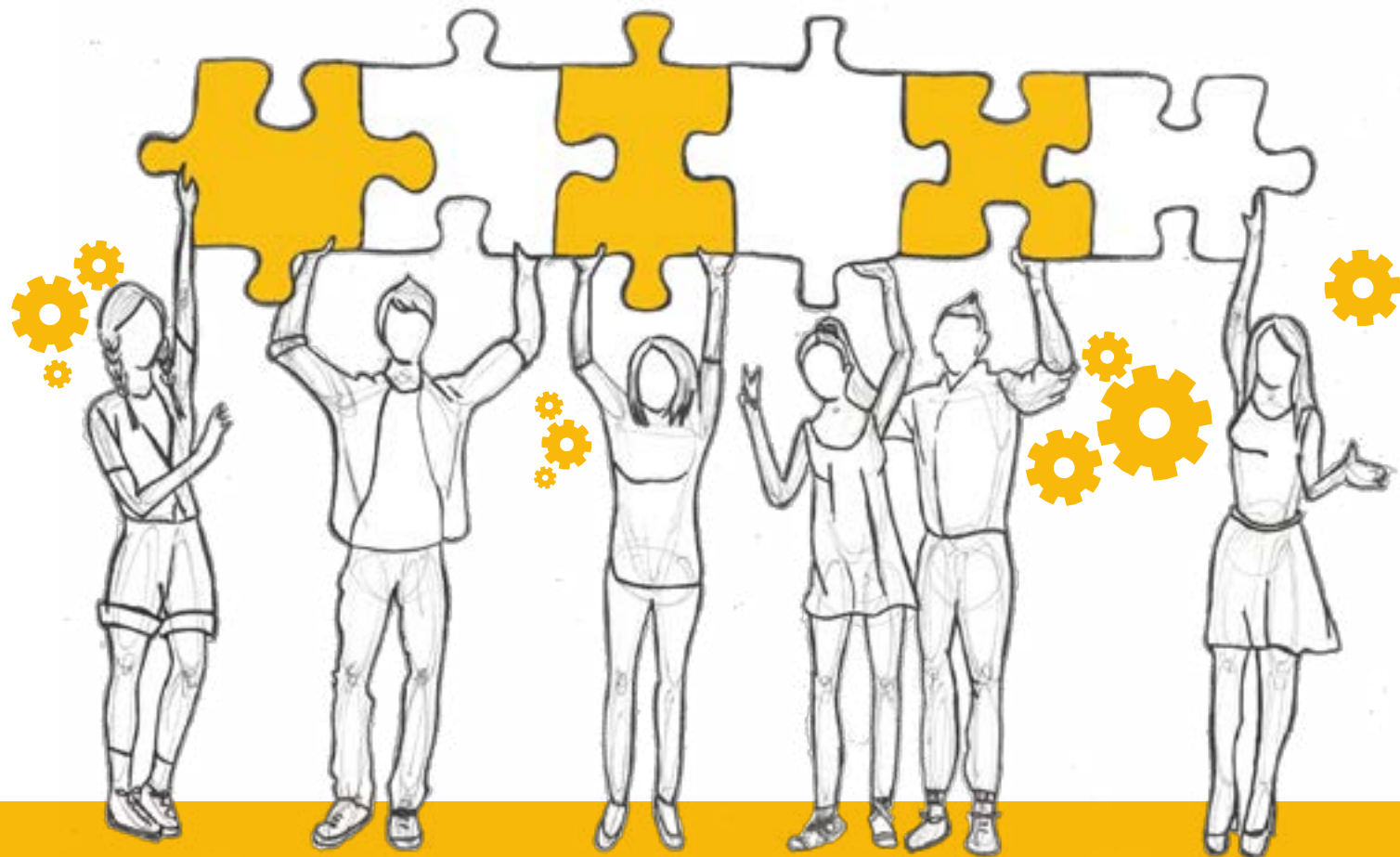
2.3 PURPOSEFUL INVOLVEMENT

PROCESS What happens in groups?	EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS What should we look at? Which indicators could a leader set to »observe« a specific process?	POSSIBLE ACTIONS Concrete ideas of what to do (and how) to improve the quality on a specific process. The ideas should be reconsidered and adapted to each group.
15. Meaningful activities - the activities developed are interesting, based on their interests and needs, and useful also for the community or a cause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities are interesting for young people. • Activities planned are based on youth's interests and needs. • Young people feel that their activities are useful, they serve a cause/ they know why they are doing the activities (<i>doing something for other people/offering something to the community</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are included in development of mission, vision and organisation's strategy. • Youth leaders are curious about young people's interests, they talk with them about it. • Youth leaders follow trends concerning young people and reflect how they impact organisations. • Mission, vision, values and organisational philosophy are communicated to young people outside organisation (e.g. blogs, newsletter, videos, social media, ambassadors). • Using the results of evaluation - planning based on the previous feedback.
16. Expressing oneself - young people have a space in the organisation to express their individuality and personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people have a chance to express their identity within organisation work. • There is a space in the organisation for young people for cultivating personal interests and bringing their own passions or hobbies/talents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people actively participate in planning of the events in the organisation. They have an influence on the activities and programme. • Young people have different roles in the group and can change them. • Leaders learn about the personal skills and passions of the participants in order to promote them and create space of expression. On this base they offer chance to express skills, ideas and creativity: active participation in designing and organizing events, improve the physical space dedicated to the activity (painting the walls, graffiti, recycled furniture, drawings, stage backgrounds..., improve the on-line spaces through their skills and creativity (contribute to improve blog, Facebook page, add new social platforms...), promote and give value to their artistic and multimedia skills (video-making, music, painting t-shirts...) • "Crazy brainstorming" – what we would like to do, even if it seems impossible
17. Having fun - activities are attractive, young people enjoy them, there is opportunity to have joyful moments and laugh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people enjoy the organisation activities. • Young people are satisfied with what they are doing. • Young people get a chance to vent. • Activities for young people are varied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth workers should not be oriented only towards results but also towards processes. • Leaders ask suggestion to young people about the activity they enjoy the most and involve them in planning. • Leaders should allow young people some free time for exploration and joy. • Explore occasions to celebrate and laugh.



2.4 PRO-ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES

PROCESS What happens in groups?	EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS What should we look at? Which indicators could a leader set to »observe« a specific process?	POSSIBLE ACTIONS Concrete ideas of what to do (and how) to improve the quality on a specific process. The ideas should be reconsidered and adapted to each group.
18. Non-formal education principles - youth work as an educational process that happens in different settings mainly with usage of activating teaching methods and giving maximum space for participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are participating voluntarily in the organisation (without forcing). • Recruitment is happening in a non-formal atmosphere - instead of interview - loose, relaxed conversation. • Active participation of youth in all stages of project cycle. • Young people can initiate and develop own ideas. • Young people learn by doing. • Young people learn also through difficulties and failures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are encouraged but not forced to participate. • Leaders work with the groups using non-formal education principles • Learning objectives are set by young people and leaders, according to young people's needs and abilities. • Process rather than product approach. • At the beginning of the project, young people should their roles in the project. • Young people work in small groups, so all members can express themselves. • In case of failures, discuss it and think of emergency plans for the future. • Leader accepts if someone does not want to participate. He or she does not force young people to participate.
19. Youth-to youth approach - young people spend time with each other and during activities learn from each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are learning from each other. • Young people work in small group of peers. • Young people observe and take examples from their peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are present in all divisions of the organisation. • Leaders promote peer mentoring, cooperation and mutual help among young people. • Young people announce on the table (or website) on their skills and knowledge and other members can ask them for support if needed. • Some activities are done in small subgroups without direct supervision of leaders.
20. Assuring safe environment – young people feel comfortable in the organisation, in both physical and mental aspects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people feel safe in the organisation. • Young people are not stressed in the organisation: they feel comfortable there, although sometimes they are challenged. • Young people can express their opinions and feelings. • There is nice, friendly and open atmosphere in the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming and respecting an agreement by all members of the group and related consequences of violating the agreement. • Leaders should give responsibilities that are challenging but manageable. • There are clear rules at the organisation – e.g. what to do in case of violence of conflict. • Young people have mentors to whom they can talk to when they are facing difficulties/need it. • No cases of violence or bullying are silenced, leaders take responsibility to deal with them.



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