

STUDY CASES

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ACTIVITIES ARE 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.

"They come here because they've heard that it's a great experience! Friends said that you can learn a lot, do a lot of interesting things"

Magdalena Arabas, Coordinator of volunteering programme at the JCC Kraków



Whether we like it or not, young people will not come to our organisation if its image isn't attractive to them. Young people don't like boredom. Very often they are overwhelmed by school, private classes and extracurricular activities. They look for something unusual, interesting and colourful. On the other hand the organisation has great PR and looks fantastic but lacks interesting events, the result will be the same. Young people want to spend their free time in an exciting way by developing their passions and interests. Only when those two elements are consistent will the organisation project an inviting image to young people. How can the organisation appear interesting to young people? First, it has to be present and active on social media, where it showcases its activities and initiatives. Very often young people learn about the existence of the organisation from Facebook,

when they see their friends tagged in pictures or attending events. If this catches their attention they might dig deeper and find out more about the organisation. Second, the image projected in social media has to be consistent with reality in the organisation, so when young people come to attend a real event, they won't be disappointed. Thirdly, word of mouth is one of the most powerful tools for spreading information. The best recommendations are always from friends and, if friends are members of the organisation and talk about this with passion, that means that this place is really interesting.

Case study - The Jewish Centre Community, Kraków, Poland

The Jewish Centre Community in Kraków is an institution that brings Jews together through social and educational activities. At the same time it plays a role in educating anyone wanting to know more about Jewish culture. The mission of the JCC is to build a Jewish future in Kraków. One of the main aims is to show that, despite historical events, Jewish life in Kraków is thriving. Apart from members, every day the centre is visited by guests from all over the world.

One of the significant aspects of JCC activities is volunteering. Every year it attracts more than 100 young non-Jewish volunteers. The JCC's volunteers have received awards in the "Colours of volunteering" contest organised by the Regional Volunteers Centre in Kraków.

There are many reasons why volunteering programmes at the JCC are so popular and successful. Activities at the JCC are interesting for young people.

The volunteers take part in a huge range of educational, cultural and social programmes:

- Develop various soft skills and gain new knowledge;
- Meet people from all over the world and make stable friendships;
- Propose their own initiatives and activities;
- Feel that their contribution is helpful and has an impact on the community.

The focus of JCC activities is unique, specific and young people can not find anything similar anywhere else. Young people have an opportunity to explore a rich Jewish culture, including taking part in workshops, training courses, lectures and trips. They celebrate with community holidays and mark important dates. They not only become familiar with Jewish culture, history and traditions: first of all they confront and challenge stereotypes by meeting friendly people from all over the world.

Furthermore, young people can propose their own activities according to their interests and passions. JCC's flexible approach provides the means to do it. Although the subject of Jewish culture is very much in focus, there is a space for young people to implement "non-Jewish" events together like leisure activities or projects. It is crucial to recognise individual needs and adjust the activities to a young person's expectations and interests. Each volunteer has personal meetings with his or her coordinator to discuss those issues.

Another segment of JCC structure which attracts young people is Jewish Club Gimel/Hillel, opened for students of Jewish origin. Many of the members have started to explore their Jewish roots very recently as, after Second World War, people tended to hide their Jewish roots. The Club helps them

to deal with their identity and to implement their own ideas, however unconventional. The Club is fully run by young people and all events are organised by them.

JCC runs a Facebook page about the institution but, at the same time, a special Facebook page for volunteers called JCC Kraków Volunteers, which publishes information about activities in a very attractive, visual way with many pictures from events, where volunteers are shown enjoying themselves. Materials are always colourful and attractive, giving the impression that participants can develop and realise their passions and there is always something interesting going on. The Facebook page is the principal place where young people find out about the JCC, mostly through pictures that their friends are tagged in and they may start to think “why not to come and see what is interesting there?”. For many young people the JCC is an attractive place to be.

Young people at the JCC are visible. They appear in all media products prepared and disseminated by the JCC, like videos and articles. One of the most prominent examples was the publishing of a calendar presenting volunteer profiles. From one perspective it was a wonderful way to show appreciation to volunteers; it was also a powerful tool to promote volunteering at the JCC.

During volunteer recruitment, a Facebook event is created and then shared by current and former volunteers. Through sharing many people are exposed to the opportunities at the JCC and the fact that the event was shared by a friend adds more credibility. The JCC offers young people interesting ways to spend their time, experiences that are shared on social media, making the centre attractive to them.

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.

“The reputation of the association is built day by day, targeting the quality of actions on the territory. When there is quality, the internet becomes an effective tool to promote the association and share projects with the local community.”

Giacomo Trevisan, Educator of MEC

Promoting a good picture of the organisation is essential for it to be appealing to potential young members. Leaders should make sure that the proposed activities are of interest to the target groups. They should also promote the organisation by using young people’s language and tools, such as the Internet and social networks. Traditional methods (posters, word of mouth etc.) could also be utilised.

The goal of the leader is to ensure the implementation of events and build a positive perception among the local community by engaging the locals in active participation. The organisation should make

people in the community feel more involved and attempt to relate to their personal life. Aspects like seeking a constant dialogue and co-operation with other organisations/institutions present in the area, proposing joint events, participating in activities carried out by other local institutions like schools, universities, sports clubs or any association that work with young people must not be underestimated. There is a public website or page promoting the organisation, which is regularly updated.

Case study: Media Education Community Association, Udine, Italy

Media Education Community Association (An association for Social Promotion) includes educators, trainers, journalists, graphic designers, media experts, and communications technicians. This organisation promotes and develops projects in the field of Media Education, in collaboration with the local authorities, schools and universities, and other institutional, public or private entities. Its mission is to promote Critical Media Awareness Paths.

The association organises courses, conferences, debates, study groups, cultural events on media literacy issues, and awareness-raising actions. They focus on educational impact of the new media and, in general, the physical and mental wellbeing of people, especially children and young people of school going age.

The organisation manages its public image through two different aspects:

Local Reputation: This is based on achieving and maintaining good relationship with local institutions such as schools, municipalities, sports organisations, cinemas, associations of voluntary movements and cultural organisations. The Media Education Community Association actively and constantly collaborates with them by frequently organising activities, successful events and conferences at schools or theatres or public halls, to which local authorities are invited along with mayors, municipal councillors, journalists and other prominent personalities.

The association promotes its activities through posters and brochures created by their own internal graphic designers and illustrators. Materials about every event are published in the local media, such as local newspapers and television channels. The association builds an excellent relationship with them by keeping them informed about the local activities and making themselves available for interviews or give speeches on the subject of digital education.

Web presence: The association's website is constantly updated with news about all the events and activities carried out by its members. Many articles are written by educators and journalists of the association, and are lucid, informative, educative, and easily comprehensible to a wide range of audience. The organisation is also present on social networks, particularly Facebook, with a constantly updated page on a daily basis and integrated with new content. Often an insouciant or hasty reader does not continue to read all the content. In order to cater to their selective interests and reading, we focus on the importance of communication through images. Therefore, we pay

special attention to the choice of titles, images and slogans that accompany the content, which must be rational, well-explained, and attractive.

Basically, the organisation tries to make a coherent connection between educational messages promoted through offline events and multimedia content it posts on its website and social media pages. The goal is to promote an effective way to use digital devices and internet tools to reach as many people as possible.

OPENNESS OF THE ORGANISATION

The organisation is open to new members and it is perceived in this way

“People who come to STRIM are fascinated by its diversity. Young people come because this is something different that they can do in their lives and they are welcome. Their lives are often boring, monotonous (...) creativity is not there and they find it in STRIM, where they can express themselves”.

Dorota Skwarczewska, Project coordinator at STRIM, youth worker

Young people should feel welcome to join any organisation, project or event. The openness of the organisation is crucial to gaining new members. The important part is the outside perception of an organisation, which sometimes does not correspond with the internal one. Sometimes the organisation perceives itself as open, while local young people consider it as a clique and they may even be afraid to come.

Openness is directly related to inclusiveness. An organisation is considered as an open one when anyone can join and take part in its activities despite different characteristics, difficulties and disadvantages. When young people come to the organisation, there is always someone who will talk with them, answer their questions and support their ideas. Quick replies to their e-mails or messages on social media is a must these days. And quick means a couple of days, not a couple of weeks. Information about a lack of response will be quickly spread among peers and it is extremely difficult to dispel negative views. Open meetings and events are expected as well as an encouraging attitude from leaders and members of the organisation. By publicising what the organisation is doing, members can recommend it to their friends.

**Case study: Youth Development and Integration Association
STRIM (Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju i Integracji Młodzieży)
Kraków, Poland.**

łodzieży

Youth Development and Integration Association STRIM is an active organisations focused on international volunteering and educational mobility projects in the Malopolska region. During over 15 years of existence, STRIM has hosted and sent abroad hundreds of volunteers, organised numerous seminars, training courses, youth exchanges and local events mainly for and with young people. The aims of the association focus on empowerment and integration of all young people.

STRIM is a member of the Polish Council of Youth Organisations (PROM). In 2014 “Salt Crystals” awards, organised by the Marshal of the Małopolskie voivodeship, STRIM received a commendation for “best public benefit”. The aim of the prize is to promote good practice within NGOs.

One of the organisation’s strong points is its openness towards young people wishing to participate in STRIM’s activities. STRIM organises plenty of open events like International Volunteering Day or International Migrants’ Day where everyone who is interested in this subject is welcome. The events are implemented in a non-formal way with a friendly atmosphere and very often young people who come, heard about the association from their friends.

Joining the organisation is gradual and at each stage youths develop, learn and have a different level of responsibility. At the beginning young people might be participants in local events. Very often they participate in international youth exchanges, where they have small responsibilities in the programme preparation.

Every year the association recruits in an open call around twenty five so called “mentors” for the international volunteers that STRIM coordinates. Mentors help foreign volunteers to integrate in the local community and monitor their learning process. Mentors also take an active part in organising some events. After being a mentor many young people apply for membership, which gives them the opportunity to initiate own activities and coordinate projects independently. Members also have a unique opportunity to participate in international training courses and seminars. Very often young people who were sent for a volunteering project abroad join the organisation after their return to the country.

Every new member at the beginning of his or her adventure with STRIM has a guide, a member with more experience, who shows her or him the organisation, explains the structure and rules and aids integration with other members. In majority of cases, new members are inducted by “old” members. Members invite friends to events, who very often stay in STRIM. The level of “integration” with the association is chosen by the young person. Participation is voluntary and a young person decides the extent of his or her involvement.

STRIM is open to all youth, no matter what nationality, place of living, sexual orientation or disability. What matters is their motivation. Volunteers in STRIM have different backgrounds. Members also prepare future volunteers to go abroad for an educational project.

STRIM members are present in all main fairs that attract young people: educational fairs, NGO fairs, youth organisations’ fairs. They conduct meetings in schools, universities and local libraries to promote active participation. The members and international volunteers present the organisation

and opportunities that STRIM offers young people by being involved in the activities. This approach creates openness and a welcoming attitude and, at the same time, young people feel that joining the organisation is “cool”.

DEVELOPING A PROACTIVE STRATEGY FOR REACHING OUT

Communication with all stakeholders, especially young people, is planned and implemented.

“A vacant office in the city centre (Sacile, PN) becomes the venue for four people, who usually meet around the city in search of stimuli, to roll up their sleeves and start doing what they could not do elsewhere.”

Loris Tomasella, SWARTS Studio Partner and Founder

Process Description

The organisation should carefully plan the engagement of new members in its activities. Specific target groups should be identified and the organisation is supposed to develop a strategy for each of them. The organisation should plan its communication with the largest possible number of stakeholders in its area and be able to involve potential members. A strategy for successful involvement should necessarily include the usage of new technologies, such as the Internet and social networks. However, it should not neglect the importance of direct contact with people who attend events, such as concerts, theatrical performances, conferences or flash mobs. Co-operation with local institutions like schools and sports associations are an important part of reaching out to newer potential members. All engaging activities, both online and offline are carefully planned and periodically repeated.

Case study: Swartz Studio, Friuli, Italy

Swartz Studio is a small cultural association based in Friuli, set up by four founding partners. It also involves volunteers (their number is dependent on the activities and events). The main aims of the organisation are to promote Alternative Culture, Music and Art (independent productions) in town where there are few opportunities to access them. Some effective strategies for involving young audience is to provide a social venue where it is possible to spend time together (casual meets), share ideas and passions. Young people come there because they look for a place to reside and feel at home. They enjoy being at the association for two reasons:

- They witness something new happening.

- They witness people who are really committed to improving the community and offering new ways of spending time together and to expressing oneself.

Every person is involved in a different way, few of them just come to spend time together and listen to music and some even participate in creating the events, while others help with preparation and implementation of the activities. There is no fixed pattern of participation.

It is important for each project to have different levels of involvement: a core group that actively supports the association; Passers-by, who just make the place feel alive, participating in the events and sharing ideas and passions; etc.

New people mainly join the association during cultural and music events and then get involved on a voluntary basis.

The Swartz Studio doesn't have a specific target, since it tries to involve people of all ages, especially those who are interested in independent culture and are looking for a chance to spend time together in a free, culturally exciting and creative environment. The majority of the activities that are coordinated by and also target young people

The organisation's engagement strategy is based on three fundamental pillars:

1. Word of mouth: Most of the people who join the events or visit The Swartz Studio during its opening hours do so with a friend or on a suggestion by a friend. People who come to the Studio are curious and look for non-commercial and non-mainstream options. This is a new offer in town, so word of mouth has a very important role. The founders actively promoted this kind of communication through their own friends. People who join based on that communication canal ("word of mouth") are normally more committed and reliable (compared to on-line communication audience).
2. Friends and friends of friends: This approach helps to build a solid, integrated group of members.
3. Use of Social network and web: Social Networks, Facebook in particular, play an important role. One of the main activities in The Swartz Studio is creating events that can be easily promoted through Facebook and reach wide audience.

The real beginning of a relationship is when participants come to the place and meet face to face with people who are already involved.

The methods of involving a well-defined audience into Swartz Studio activities are quite simple and structured:

The first phase includes talking to young acquaintances who think Swartz Studio activities are interesting. After they spread the idea on social media, evaluate the reaction of their target audience. If the reaction is positive and motivated, they start a crowd funding campaign to raise funds to activate an initiative. If the campaign is successful, those who took part automatically (almost always) become a promoter of the initiative.

The interesting aspect of Swartz studio is how they achieve their goal by utilising the potential of the audience and local community involvement, using both face to face approach and digital technologies.

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

“The most important role in current youth work is the leader with whom young people should meet face to face. Youth have to feel that the leader is there with them from the very beginning (...) We live like a family in the foundation”

Marlena Pujza-Kunikowska, President of the CAT Foundation, youth worker

Meeting in person is still the most powerful way of engaging people, especially when we talk about organisations that aim to involve young people for longer period of time. Online “recruitment forms” can work, however it should be followed by meeting at the organisation’s premises. This is the only way when leader can get to know a young person and then adjust the activities to his or her needs. By meeting at the organisation, a young person gets more familiar with it, starts to understand faster and more clearly what is this all about and can experience the culture of the organisation. The fact that leader devotes time to the young person makes her or him feel important and needed.

During the meeting the leader should ask potential members about their expectations, interests, hobbies, and ideas, but do not push them. They will open themselves up, when they are ready to do so, not necessary during the first meeting. The meeting should take place in an informal, relaxed atmosphere, maybe with coffee and cookies. Don’t let them feel like they are at a job interview! The first meeting is crucial: after it the young person will decide whether to come back to the organisation or not.

Case study - Fundacja Centrum Aktywno Leszno, Poland

Ści Twórczej O

Foundation Centrum Aktywności Twórczej CAT is a youth organisation founded in 2008 from the bottom-up initiative of young, enthusiastic people who believed in the potential of youth and wanted to make the local community more active. CAT supports the development of youth and children in Leszno (a small city around 65,000 inhabitants in the middle - western part of Poland). The slogan of the organisation is: we are not afraid of challenges. We believe that there is no such thing that cannot be realised. The main activities of CAT are concentrated around educational opportunities for young people, volunteering, promoting culture and youth participation.

For many young people the first meeting with the organisation is during an open local event in which they participate, like Day of Europe, International Youth Day, Day of Human Rights or International Volunteer Day. If they like the event, they come to the office and declare that they would like to be more involved in the activities. Others come encouraged by their friends, who know the organisation, some previously implemented a volunteering project elsewhere or are already a member. CAT runs day camps and some of the long-term volunteers participate in them. Leaders always try to have personal contact and to spend time with young people in the organisation.

At the very beginning, every potential volunteer or anyone who would like to be involved in CAT's activities has a meeting with one of CAT's members. The meeting is held in a non-formal atmosphere with coffee and cookies. This personal conversation is very important as the co-ordinators get to know the young person more but, at the same time, the young person is becoming more aware about the organisation and what she or he can do there. During the meeting both sides express their needs and expectations and together plan the young person's future involvement. Additionally it shows the personal approach of the organisation and a willingness to adjust the activities and tasks to the individual. It strengthens the feeling of importance and raises motivation of the young person. CAT has a special person who takes this role and is responsible for all newcomers. They call her "couch". This person monitors the progress of every young person at the organisation, leads informal groups of young people but at the same time shows her enthusiasm and enjoys the process.

This very important feature is to create a nice atmosphere during events but also at the office so young people feel comfortable from the very beginning and they wish to come to the organisation.

The ways of reaching different groups of young people are based on targeting the event. Members of CAT organise various presentations and classes at schools. At these meetings international volunteers are present and talk about their own experiences. After the presentation there is time and space for young people to ask questions or just chat with members and volunteers. CAT organises various open events where everyone is welcome, e.g. festivals, handicraft workshops, board games events, movie nights, Karaoke nights, intercultural evenings, shared meals and cooking

workshops. The strong co-operation with teachers, who promote CAT's activities is an important way of reaching young people. International volunteers encourage youth to come to the office and join the activities.

The institution is perceived as open and friendly. It is recognised in the region as a place where young people can spend constructive time by learning, playing and socialising.

BEING IN THE SPACE WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PRESENT

Searching for contact with young people in their spaces/contexts.

"We believe that in order to help people, you have to go out to them and work with them in their own environment. You can change a person only in his/her own environment and not at a clerk's desk. Our approach to work based on building a relationship with a child is very time-consuming, arduous and full of responsibility. On the other hand, it is very effective"

Beata Sierocka, President of CPES Parasol.

In many situations young people will not come to an organisation or youth centre. Often they consider those institutions as something not for them. They might perceive them as something boring, closed or just for the privileged. Or simply they might not know about their existence. Therefore, to reach young people, youth workers should seek contact with them in their own environment and places, where they spend their time: schools, playing fields, thematic festivals etc. To find young people with disadvantaged backgrounds sometimes they should go to the places like railway stations, streets, parks, where they gather and where youth workers or leaders might have a chance to get to know them. They should be present as well at fairs, festivals, exhibitions and clubs: everywhere where there are young people. Examples of those practices represent mobile or detached youth work. The opportunities for young people should not be visible only in those places though. An important part is to be present online, on the channels where young people spend their time: social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, web forums and other web sites.

Case study - Sports and Youth Office, Tallinn, Estonia and Centre for Prevention and Social Education PARASOL, Kraków, Poland

Mobile Youth Work is a specific approach to youth work. It aims at preventing or combating already existing social exclusion of young people. It differs from traditional youth work mainly in where it takes place: it starts outside youth centres, youth clubs, and non-governmental organisations. Mobile youth workers go to a place where young people like to spend their free time and socialise, e.g. streets, parks and shopping malls, and they talk to young people. Youth work is happening in the natural environment of young people on their own ground.

Mobile Youth Work is based on four dimensions: individual aid, street work, group work and community work. Sometimes is called detached youth work. The methodology focuses on two concepts: constructive conversation with young people and building relationships with them. Mobile youth workers seek to create trust and only then, based on received information, they propose a range of positive and fun activities and enable young people to participate in them. Very often they work with disadvantaged young people and the process is long and not easy but, if successful, it opens up the potential of youth and shows them different opportunities. Every year the number of organisations adapting mobile youth work methodology is rising.

In Tallinn there are six mobile youth workers employed by the Sports and Youth Office. Everyday they meet random young people and talk with them about various topics significant to them. They work in pairs just in case of an unexpected situation. They constantly develop their communication skills and knowledge about talking with young people. Mobile youth workers are ready to discuss many different issues, give young people the information they expect and to get to know them better. The important point is to understand the needs and interests of young people. Mobile youth workers' actions are based on deep analyses of the needs of young people and reasons behind them. They defend the interests of young people. They are a bridge between them and the world of adults and its different institutions like schools, the Police, social work, healthcare etc. They enable young people to have a voice and advocate on their behalf.

PARASOL was a pioneering organisation in Poland that introduced street working in youth work. PARASOL's workers reach children and teenagers in their natural environment and offer educational opportunities, especially for those who are at a high risk of developing dysfunctional behaviours. The programme "Rakowicka 10" targets young people who unproductively spend time in public spaces like, streets, parks or shopping malls. Although the majority of them go to school and have homes, most of the time they spend on streets and their free time is not supervised. Being on the street has many consequences: street children face many different challenges in their families, schools and local communities. By involving youth in various projects and activities, youth workers help to overcome these obstacles. Young people are invited to participate in different activities by street workers, who patrol the area daily and make contact with them.

Street workers reach those who normally wouldn't have come to a youth centre. They offer teenagers alternative ways of spending free time and distribute educational material.

The organisation has an holistic approach. Apart from working with a young person directly, there are many actions aimed at their families, schools and monitoring different aspects of the child development.

Futher reading: [https://www.ismo-online.de/logicio/client/ismo/file/buch/ISMO-Mobile Youth work in the global context.pdf](https://www.ismo-online.de/logicio/client/ismo/file/buch/ISMO-Mobile%20Youth%20work%20in%20the%20global%20context.pdf)

FEELING OF COMMUNITY

Young people who participate in an organisation develop a feeling of belongingness to a group and identify with it; they build bonds with an organisation and within it.

A community is based on trust and offers safety to an ever-changing life of an individual. Tilen Lah, Rod Kraških J'rt (local scout group from Sežana), youth worker and a trainer

A mutual feeling of community usually grows through keeping warm, interpersonal relationships and managing common resources.

We speak about strong interpersonal relationships when group members treat each other as persons as a whole, not only as co-workers. In a community, people often share personal concerns (such as health, family, wellbeing, etc.) for each other. Conversations are not always about work and their profession.

Common resources are the second important element of communities. Members of a community feel responsible for gaining, managing and using common resources in a sustainable way. They are directly connected with the resources and establish rules for managing them. Usually formal or informal processes of decision-making are established.

Strong interpersonal relationships and a common purpose result in a deeper identity of a group or organisation. The identity of a community has a set of defined values, purposes and habits but is at the same time open for newcomers to contribute and become part of it.

Case study: leaders from four Slovenian organisations

Leaders are the last to eat

Strong communities that allow people a feeling of security, recognition and participation are not built in a day. They are usually the result of great leaders that were able to put the needs of the people in

front of their own needs (leaders are the last to eat). Thus providing the space for the development of mutual respect and, later, the respect among all the members of the community. To gain some more insight into the matter of leadership and community building, we interviewed four youth workers and youth leaders with diverse experiences from different Slovenian organisations. One of them is a man, the others are women. Two of them are very experienced youth workers and trainers; one is a youth worker, working for a couple of years; while the fourth is at the beginning of her youth work path.

Development of a sense of community

People that we talked to expressed that relationships need to be built intentionally. A relationship between a leader and his group is the key to long-term cooperation and to development of a community culture in which certain rules are observed. The role of a leader is also to support the connection among people and, from time to time, start conversations relevant to the group and support individuals trying to make a connection with others, especially when they are having a hard time.

An example can be observed when people show up at the organisation's events not because of the organisation itself but more because the leader invited them to come.

Other important elements are the results of endeavours that need to be communicated clearly. It is not enough just to be together. Members of a community need to have a feeling that what they do matters to others, not only in their community but also in society in general.

The feeling of community

A sense of community that our interviewees felt were 'feelings of connectedness'. People may fluctuate in a community but the sense of connectedness comes from a common purpose. People are motivated by slowly gaining more responsibility in line with the purpose of the community, through fluctuation in the group. When long-term members of a community leave, people gradually develop seniority and take responsibilities to support the community as a whole.

The same importance goes to the ability to share with others. People that belong to a community have mutual feeling of trust that enables open communication and provides a possibility to understand relations among people and find the appropriate role for each individual.

A sense of security was also one of the important elements mentioned in our conversations. It is not only in relation with the feeling of safety, that the group will catch the individual if he or she would fall. It also provides a safety net to an individual who wants to try something new, that will propel the community forward. A sense of security gives an individual a chance to explore and harvest his or her potential, which may not be possible when alone.

Interviews were conducted with

*Nina Milenković Kikelj,
Lucija Kovačič,
Klavdija Štajdohar,
Tilen Lah.*



CREATING FRIENDSHIPS

An organisation offers opportunities to meet other young people, develop acquaintances, socialise with young people and spend time together.

Friendship is like a green plant. When nurtured it will flourish, but if left abandoned without care it will die out.

Mojca Galun, Socialna akademija, youth worker

In many environments, friendship is a no. 1 value among young people. Especially at a younger age, friends spend a lot of time together. At this stage, young people have a lot of opportunities to meet new friends, because they have few other obligations. Friendships make our life richer. Especially for a young person, friendship is associated with many intensive, positive and negative, feelings and emotions: dependence, love, hate, missing, closeness, security, trust, etc. All these enable young people to explore themselves within the world surrounding them and to learn to manage their relationships better.

In addition to school, places of youth work are probably the most suitable for young people to get to know their peers. Invitations from friends are probably the most important reason for young people to join youth work. Besides those, many activities in youth work, such as common adventures, challenges, international events etc. boost new friendships.

For a leader it makes sense to give young people space to interact with their peers and to pursue their interests. A leader should build friendships among young people based on their common interests and through regular contact with each other in a pleasant atmosphere. The framework for making such friendships should be part of every youth work programme, methodology and infrastructure. If this happens, there is a good chance that the young people will stay with the organisations sustainably.

Case Study: “Viel, halt”, Schwarzwald region, Germany

“Viel, halt” gives young people, with or without disabilities as well as runaway young people, a chance to participate in an intercultural and inclusive environment. The project promotes awareness of equal opportunities, diversity and builds bridges on an equal footing between young people from different living environments and the local community. The project includes a joint multi-day trip in the summer, when the group lives together in a small space for about a week. The group is self-sufficient; it caters for itself and is responsible for the cleanliness of the accommodation. During this time, various workshops with diverse topics are being held. For example: sustainable cooking, theatre and dance, upcycling, media, etc. The project has been repeated for a second year and the core group of young people remained the same. The stability of the group structure is mainly provided by the youth workers.

The focus of the project is to bring young people closer together, to get an understanding of each other's situations and to learn to work together. It shows impressively how friendships between very different people may be formed. And that is precisely the strength of youth work: to bring together young people from different paths of life and to provide them with a chance to get in touch together. But friendships sometimes cannot be formed from one day to another. And especially people from different social and physical conditions need more time to form a bond. There are several factors that can be incorporated: there may be fewer points of contact and common interests and it is harder for them to establish relationships, etc. In such cases youth workers are especially in demand. The task of the group is to form a community in which each member is treated with respect and finds his or her place. Team-building measures are always a good remedy for this. There are many different types, games, common tasks and riddles that are involved in “Viel, halt” in different forms. In addition, other parts of the project contribute to creation of friendships. Living together as a community for a few days, where they have to cook and clean for themselves contributes a lot to

this. In this intense time, young people get to know each other in different areas and sections of the day, when they would usually not come into encounter with each other. This way they get to know each other better and are more dependent on each other as they organise the daily-life of the group. This brings the group closer together. Working hard together in the workshops also encourages friendships, since they have to cooperate among each other.

These and other factors help create a space for young people where friendships can develop and grow. And since this project is carried out annually, the friendships can be intensified over time.

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND A LEADER

“People feel if a leader lacks skills and competences or a vision where are they heading”.

Ivana Naceva, Ljubljanska mreža info točk - Ljubljana's network of info points (L'MIT), coordinator and youth worker

In a youth organisation leaders play a major role. They are the reference persons to the young people and thus contribute significantly to the character of an institution. A good relationship between the group and its leaders is therefore very important. However, such a relationship does not develop from one day to the other; it takes time and the right approach. It is very important that young people feel their leaders respect them. This can be attained in different ways, such as transferring responsibility or taking up ideas of the group. In addition to respect, trust is also very important. Especially in an institution where young people spend their free time, meet with their peers and pursue their hobbies, it is important that there are adult people who show trust in them. Without the necessary confidence of the group, the leaders cannot solve any conflicts or problems within the group or even with individuals. Trust and respect are especially important to young people in order for them to stay a part of an organisation for a longer period of time.. However, it is also crucial that the group is aware of different roles – leader must clearly stay the leader. A close contact between young people and the leaders is conducive, but the leader cannot lose his authority.

To some extent, good relations are also dependent on the character of a leader. If the leaders are motivated and do their work with joy, motivation and enthusiasm will, those qualities will likely spread among the group.

There are really many factors that contribute to a good relationship between the young people and the leaders. But all factors need time, some more, some less. Therefore, it may make sense for a leader to accompany a group over a longer period of time so that a good relationship can develop.

Case study: Alpenverein, Heidelberg, Germany

Alpenverein is one of the biggest mountain sports federations in the world. About 850 000 members and 350 sections exist only in Germany. 11 000 trainers, 23% of them children and youth under 26 are part of this organization. In Heidelberg, where the interviewee comes from, 8000 members and 8 youth groups are included in the organisation. This numbers put Alpenverein among the biggest sports clubs in Heidelberg. At the Alpenverein, the youth leaders mostly take care for a group over a period of a couple of years. This means they organize outdoor activities, excursions, organize and perform climbing courses and much more. Especially in this kind of activities, it is important that there is a strong foundation of trust within the group and between young members and their leaders. In climbing, you need to be able always to rely on your partner 100 %. The long-term commitment and the activities help make the group grow together and also to make the relationship between the young people and their leaders get closer.

Since the leaders bear a lot of responsibility, they must also prepare well. This is why the association offers further training opportunities in the field of team leadership, climbing, etc. for a leader.

What characterizes the „Alpenverein“ is the early transfer of responsibility to the young people. During outdoor activities as well as during excursions, each participant is taken into account, some more, some less, depending on their personality. Some activities are planned by the young people on their own, and the leader only monitors. So the young people have the chance to contribute their own ideas. As a result, they feel they are being taken seriously and realize that they are respected. This also contributes significantly to a good relationship between the young people and the leaders. To give the younger participants more responsibilities is further one of the main factors in the huge sustainability of the youth in this organization. It's not only because they feel they are being taken seriously, because the youth department of the organisation is huge, the youth can also exercise influence on the work in different sections and the organization at large. Proper structure is very important for this. At an early age you can take responsibility in your group, if you want to. For example, a youth leader actively encourages the youngsters to become youth leaders as well. Thanks to the youth department, the participants can gradually take more and more responsibilities and will get acquainted with other youth members, who want to do the same. If you delegate responsibilities to the youth appropriately, they will stay and benefit the organisation in the future accordingly. As a result, a huge feeling of community arises and this will spur a great sense of belonging.

MAINTAINING THE COHESIVENESS OF A GROUP

A group is becoming cohesive. There are ways to deal with internal divisions.

“While planning we pay attention to the needs of participants and plan the process according to that. During the implementation we trust the process. It will take us where we want to go although at the moment it might look a bit messy. And trust young people, they know what they need!”

Alenka Oblak, self-employed trainer

Maintaining the cohesiveness of a group means maintaining the group as a united whole. Cohesion is usually accompanied by good atmosphere in which members feel comfortable. Such atmosphere encourages young people to stay in a group or an organization longer, thereby promoting its sustainability. But what are the foundations of cohesion and what characterizes it?

In a cohesive group, no one is excluded. Everyone feels he or her is being treated fairly and with respect. Therefore, everybody feels to a part of the group. Everyone is there for each other, supporting and helping others. The level of Cohesiveness in a group is truly revealed during difficult moments and crises. How does a group handle critical moments such as setbacks, conflicts and disputes? It is important not to avoid conflicts since they are an integral part of life. Only if not handled properly and resolved, will they become a negative and destructive factor. Therefore, conflict resolution is in many cases a necessary element to achieve the cohesiveness. A group should try to discuss and resolve conflicts internally and avoid bringing the conflict outside the group. It helps if leaders are trained in assertive communication, conflict resolution methods (e. g. mediation: both peer-to-peer and within the organisations) and skills (active listening, asking the right questions, dealing with emotions, empathy, recognising roles, interests and needs) and facilitation. There are various possibilities to act on strengthening cohesiveness. Examples include joint trips, team-building activities, communication games or get-to-know-each-other activities.

Case study: Training for trainers, Socialna akademija, Slovenia

We developed the *Training for trainers* programme to educate new trainers and establish long-term cooperation with them. It consisted of two 4-day modules and a mentoring process with practical experience (short sessions, workshops, etc.). As opposed to a standard training procedure, our goal was to create a team for future cooperation, so it was very important for us to work on cohesiveness of the group.

Take time for yourself (preparation)

The trainers arrived almost at the same time as the participants due to traffic and organisational difficulties. Nevertheless, they decided to go for a very important decision: they took some time to prepare and to come in sync. Participants were told to help prepare everything for coffee break coffee break and have some time for themselves. After an hour, the program started and the team of trainers was able to present itself in a unified front.

Trust

During preparation time, they communicated their needs, as well as their own strong points. This way, they were all very well aware of each other and could take after each other during the sessions. This is how they established a bond of trust between them. This was also communicated to the group of participants. And not only that, they showed it to them. Amid the training they decided to test some methods from the *Art of hosting*. They mainly implemented coaching sessions for participants, who then lead activities the next day. During the sessions, the trainers used coaching techniques (asking questions and drawing from the participants) in small groups. They also provided them with

some additional literature.

But the most important aspect of all: during the implementation they were holding the space. This means being present there and trusting with all your being that the group of participants will do their best. And trust, that everything that needs to happen, will.

It happens what was supposed to happen

After the session, trainer facilitated a reflection at which the small leaders' group could express, what they are proud of and what they would improve the next time. Afterwards the rest of the participants shared their reflections as well. The last words were from trainers, who guided the group into realisation that everything that needed to happen did.

Express your needs and respect the needs of others

Since the trainers successfully disseminated the importance of communicating your needs and paying attention to the needs of others, the group created a strong bond built on mutual trust. The trainers also gave participants time to express themselves and with this, they showed that their needs are really important to them. Because of that, the participants soon opened up expressing their needs and tried to allow space for needs of others.

Trust in yourselves

When conflicts arose, the group leaned on the communication of needs. With initial help from the trainers, who lead the reflection about this first crisis, the participants continued to resolve the issue on their own. One of the trainers, Mojca Galun told us: "This was one of those rare trainings where each and every one of us made huge steps in their personal growth. And it all happened because of the mutual trust. #mamomito (#wehavethis)".

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.

"The Digital Ethical Movement is a group of volunteers who sensitise to 'the potential and the risks of the web' for children and parents round Italy. The aim is to bring the kids from level 'zero' awareness (as it currently stands), to level 'one', in order to open the doors to more structured programs and reduce certain phenomena such as grooming and cyberbullying"

Davide Dal Maso, Social Warning Founder

Young people should feel that they are important and make up an active part of an organisation. Building a friendly and collaborative environment is necessary to ensure enthusiastic and positive participation of young people. Leaders of an organisation are required to have a range of skills connected with teamwork and management. They should know how to deal with internal conflicts or misunderstandings and create a positive environment where all participants feel that they are important and needed in the organisation.

Young people should actively participate and be constantly informed about the organised events and activities, as this would be indispensable for their success. Furthermore, each member has the freedom to express his or her ideas and propose new projects. This approach supports the implementation of techniques and policies aimed at fostering frontal and personal communication between the leader and the young people, and among young people themselves. Simultaneously, it empowers active participation of each member within their working group. It is also important for leaders to show appreciation for the work of the young people and to celebrate the results.

Case study: The Social Warning, Italy

Social Warning is an association founded by 40 people. It includes educators, a digital media manager and social network followers. The average age of the participants is 24 years. They do not have a fixed domicile and are primarily working online, even if their proposals often become real projects developed in specific areas of Italy. The initiator of the association is Davide Dal Maso, aged 23, a young man from Vicenza, who is passionate about digital communication and social media marketing. The purpose of Social Warning is to bring digital culture to students of schools and universities. This is done via training activities aimed at improving the society through a conscious use of the network. In Italy, activities to raise awareness of the risks and the potential of communication technologies are often drawn up by experts and authorities who lack sufficient knowledge about digital communication and the habits of young people.

The innovative aspect of the Social Warning proposal is that young people themselves are authors of the training proposals to raise awareness about the potential and risks of new technologies. Social Warning volunteers mainly meet online to discuss what training courses to implement in different areas with schools and adults.

The working group meets to:

- Define different actions to be carried out.
- Propose new projects.
- Share personal experiences, both positive and negative.

These meetings involve volunteers from all over Italy. Once a training action is defined, volunteers in a specific area meet face to face to better define the operational steps. Once developed, all the

details of the project are presented to the recipients who decide whether to implement it and eventually, suggest amendments.

These activities are:

- Awareness training about the potential of the web and its risks, aimed at students and parents at schools and universities.
- A set of questionnaires regarding internet routines of teenagers and adults.
- Creation of digital communication laboratories in social networks aimed at disabled children.
- Organisation of conferences and participation at events carried out by other people on the topic of social network education.

Activities can be conducted on request of schools, municipalities and associations. This request can be put forward by direct contact with one of the volunteers of the movement, through social media or through a website form.

Activities are organised by volunteers. Clients (e.g. schools, associations, municipalities, institutions) are asked to reimburse expenses for transfers, meals and stationery costs.

To date, 27 activities have been carried out throughout Italy. For each Italian province where Social Warning is active, a live meeting is scheduled every month and an online meeting every two weeks. These meetings may be more frequent, depending on the date of an approaching activity.

Each group has a leader who's role is to mediate between members, to limit internal conflicts or misunderstandings and create a positive environment in which all participants feel that they are important to the organisation. This mediator is selected within the working group by a democratic vote. The current mediator can be replaced on his or her request or by the group. Other means of keeping the volunteers informed are newsletters and phone calls. A strong point of the project is that the school or the institution (where the activity takes place) can issue a certificate to the trainers and this can become an integral part of their voluntary work curriculum.

In addition to this, the host institution is asked to promote the activity through its press releases or through its own social media. The public exposure of the volunteers and the possibility of certifying their skills are an important recognition and motivator for the volunteer's personal efforts and future prospects.

DEVELOPING COMPETENCES

Organisation offers opportunity to develop competences, skills, and gaining new knowledge.

“Scouts gave wings to my spirit, allowed me to widen my interest and applauded it, recognized my creativity and encouraged it. They taught me about perseverance, resourcefulness, responsibility and respect. Because they trusted me and had vision, purpose and valour. With them I felt at home. And how many jobs I got because of skills I learned from scouts – basically all of them, but in particular those, that were not part of my formal education.”

Ana Grasselli, Združenje slovenskih katoliških skavtov in skavtinj, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Society is rapidly developing (technologically and sociologically). Since changes are fast approaching, lifelong learning has become hyper important. Young people need to adapt and are expected to have broader skill sets and to gain them faster as well. Since a formal education does not give them everything they need, non-formal education has to fill in the gaps. It is very important to identify what kind of competences and skills a young person could gain through collaboration with an organisation and how to “sell” those skills to other stakeholders such as their prospective employers.

Nearly every piece of youth work done should also have a learning dimension. We call it learning by doing. It is important for a leader to know young people and offer them opportunities that are interesting to them, a place where they can further develop skills that will help them later in life and also in their future work environment.

The idea would be to teach young people how to set their learning goals, identify their learning outcomes and know how to monitor their own progress. And in the end, also to help them to be able to describe, what they learned and which competences and skills they have.

Case Study: Združenje slovenskih katoliških skavtov in skavtinj (Slovenian catholic Girl Guides and Boy Scouts Association)

What do we want our final product to look like?

Organisations sometimes create a clear description of envisaged results of their youth work. One model is FIDO, the concept of measuring the competences of young people leaving an organisation. Right now a new definition of the envisaged concept is under development but a presentation of the current one will allow us to explore this concept deeper to.

Združenje slovenskih katoliških skavtov in skavtinj (Slovenian catholic Girl Guides and Boy Scouts Association) is an independent, voluntary, youth, educational and open Slovenian Scout and Guide association which was established in 1990 to resume pre-Second World War Slovenian Scouting and was built up on experience and values from other Scout and Guide associations. It is one of the most active non-governmental youth organisations in Slovenia with about 4400 members, aged 6-30 years (of which 800 are volunteers, youth workers or leaders).

FIDO

Model FIDO – Fant in dekle odhoda (Boy and girl in leaving) - was developed at the end of the 1990s as competences model the organisation strives to adhere to. At that time, the organisation got so big that it needed an additional conceptual framework to be able to steer itself towards its primary goal - raising responsible adults. At the same time, many other methods were clarified and standardised to provide a more unified approach in the process of youth development.

FIDO is not really a competences model but rather a description of a responsible, adult person that has some competences in line with the nine key values of the organisation. The key values were identified through organisation-wide research done in 1998. On the basis of its values the mission statements of the organisation were created. For example: “we are rearing for responsibility and initiative” or “we are rearing for religion and sense of belonging to the Church”. From each of these values and mission statements the model of a responsible person was built along the lines of: “a responsible, adult person in regard to responsibility and initiative is ... “At the same time the steps suitable for different age groups of the organisation’s membership were identified. So a clear model for different age groups (Cub Guides and Cub Scouts, Guides and Scouts and Rovers and Rangers etc.) to follow was created. Regarding the process first the ideal end result was identified and then results for the age groups were scaled down to lead to the same final result.

Life of FIDO

The model was used as a tool to support the development of new approaches to work with members and was adopted as one of the core guiding principles in the culture of the organisation. The first attempts at revision of the system were made in 2006; today a thorough revision is underway. The revision is in its concluding phase but the results are not public yet.

The values of FIDO live on in the everyday life of adults, former Scouts. Some of the core values became corner stones in family life where both spouses were Scouts and live on in the next generation of the organisation’s membership.



BRINGING NEW CHALLENGES TO YOUNG

PEOPLE

Young people face new challenges in the organisation and they are trying out their skills.

“A critical moment in communication between youth and adults which I often see is the fact that in most cases adults want something from youth. Young people understand it as insistence. They don’t want to be stressed. The secret is that we don’t want anything from young people. We talk with them in an informal way in their space and wait till they express what do they want and what they need”.

Alexander Arabkin, Mobile Youth Worker

What would be the answer if we asked a young person, what the word challenge means to him/her? Maybe he/she would respond like this: “A challenge is something new I would like to try. I don’t know in advance if I will succeed in it or not. I even don’t know what will happen on the way to completion. But what I know for sure is that I really would like to try!”

A challenge is not completed easily: there is always a risk. Its completion usually demands more competencies than a challenged person has. Challenge is connected with intrinsic motivation. It puts a person out of his/her comfort zone.

Challenges are necessary for the development of young people and they cover several positive aspects. Challenges are fun and even more fun they are when they are solved. Life itself is a challenge and, as a consequence, we can say challenges are preparing young people for adulthood. Only those who face challenges will learn new skills or know their strengths and weaknesses better. The sooner they are recognised and can be worked on, the better it can be for the future of young person. That is why it makes sense to challenge young people, to encourage them and to reflect upon personal development challenges brought to them.

Case study: Stark am Start, Heidelberg, Germany

“Stark am Start” is a musical project, where members organise workshops in different fields and various topics. There youngsters can meet people with different backgrounds and engage in a creative way with diversity. “Stark am Start” is an ongoing project. It works with different groups during intensive workshops to create a musical and to perform it on stage. After the performance, the team starts to create a musical with a new group. During the work phase a trained (theatrical) team of pedagogues uses elements from the theatre of the oppressed, performance art and Heidelberg competence training (HKT). That is a mental training to support personal goal achievements. During the workshops and activities, young people can discover their talents on stage in construction and technology, band, dance, vocals, percussion, hip-hop, documentation and catering. The goal is to strengthen self-esteem of each and every individual, to develop and expand their team skills and to see diversity as an opportunity. With this strengthened personality “Stark am Start” wants to prepare the new generation of young people, who is ready to react to the constantly changing demands of society of the 21st century. The project challenges the young people in

different ways. The workshops themselves are demanding on the participants. Participants learn many new things, e. g. to dance, sing, prepare theatre performances, as well as about working with lights, music work and much more. The groups are always very heterogeneous. Participants are locals as well as refugees, people with immigrant backgrounds, teenagers with Down syndrome; they all participate together in the project and want to be involved. The challenges are also to include everybody and to bring a professional musical to the stage together as a team. To work as a team is very important and everyone has to deal with the huge level of diversity within a group.

Fear of standing in front of several hundred people on stage also needs overcoming and is a real challenge for many. But performing a musical is not the primary purpose. The young people should develop further and be prepared for life with the help of the project. This is where the HKT training plays an important role. Within this workshop young people should face their own personal challenges with the help of their own skills. To do this, participants must first become aware of their own skills. It is also about formulating goals that young people want to achieve and help them achieve them.

Working at eye level

With artistic and pedagogical work, the project aims to contribute to equal opportunities and intercultural openness as well as to the development of diversity competences among young people and in their social space. The initiators implement the project in the Rhine-Neckar region and then produce a concept on the subject of diversity competences, which can be a model for further alliances, educational institutions and schools.

Young people are equally involved in this project, regardless of existing self- and third-party attributions in relation to ethnicity, gender, disability, religion or sexual preference. This approach promotes understanding among them, reduces prejudices and enables an intensive exchange at eye level.

Musical self-staging

Since its inception in November 2016, artists and volunteers invited young people, schools and other networks to participate actively in this diversity project. Currently the group is working on its own rendition of the musical "Streetlight", originally performed by the international band GenRosso. The project is also about showing children and adolescents their strengths and supporting them build their self-esteem, encouraging them to actively and creatively contribute to the society. With performing the musical "Streetlight 2.0" this phase of the project will come to an end, culminating in a joint workshop.

EXPANDING RESPONSIBILITY

Young people have growing responsibilities within the organisation; they take more responsibility with time and can manage it.

"I dedicate most of my time to work with members of the strategic council and project leaders. Others work with people on other levels. Project leaders with club leaders, club leaders with club members ... A more demanding role works with less demanding ones."

Alenka Blazinšek Domenis, Nefiks Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Everybody is complaining that young people are less and less reliable but this also means they get fewer opportunities to distinguish themselves at something. Each of us have had some bad experience, when we trusted somebody too quickly and were disappointed. But unless we give our youngsters challenges and keep expanding their responsibility (within the limits of their abilities of course), they will get bored and will try to find new challenges elsewhere. When assigning responsibilities, it is very important to be acquainted with the young person and their abilities well, before entrusting him or her with a specific assignment. The trick is in finding the right balance between their abilities and the importance of the task we assign to them. Responsibilities that exceed their abilities can scar them as well, making them feel incompetent, causing a loss of confidence and poor self-esteem. However, young people should feel challenged.

The best way to increase responsibilities is by taking small steps and evaluating the process after each task is completed. Youth workers should help young people to concentrate and elaborate on their strong points and developing their deficiencies. A quality mentorship programme can benefit your organisation immensely, since this is the best way to facilitate the "growth" of your future colleagues or your successors.

Case Study: Nefiks Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY IS A PROCESS THAT USUALLY TAKES A COUPLE OF YEARS

A young person cannot take responsibility in an organisation immediately. The process usually takes some time and happens gradually. Therefore some organisations create systems for acquire responsibility through different roles. When a young person gets involved in an organisation, he or she increasingly takes roles with more responsibility and therefore grows in competence.

Nefiks Institute

The mission of Nefiks Institute in Slovenia is to support the employability of youth through recording and recognition of non-formal education. It is mostly known to young people for its so-called non-formal index. Attached to it was a booklet in which individuals recorded competences gathered through non-formal education and, in this way, enhanced their value in the job market. Today the recording of new competences is mostly done via online platform.

In the past an organisation could implement its service – recording of non-formally acquired knowledge – with far less participation from the youth. A couple of years ago Nefiks Institute decided to offer the youth to take more responsibility in the process. Through practice a ‘five level model’ of a ‘gradual taking of responsibilities’ was developed ranging from very simple tasks to very demanding.

Roles

1st level

At Nefiks a young person usually starts as a **Nefiks Tutor**. The role of the tutor is to promote the importance of non-formal education among his or her peers and to support them in registering any competences acquired in a non-formal way.

2nd level

Some tutors proactively engage with clubs and groups of young people that work in line within the methodologies of study circles. As they advance they can become **participants of a club**, where they are responsible for arranging meetings. At the same time, they gain access to a digital base of knowledge that can support them.

3rd level

Some of the participants of the clubs become **club leaders**. At this level they have to learn about group leadership, so they receive continuous training.

4th level

Some club leaders continue their path as **project leaders**. As a project leader an individual also becomes a member of the leadership team, or/and an organisation and usually receives some financial compensation for the work.

5th level:

The highest level is the organisation’s **strategic council**. This is the body that steers the organisation.

How does it work?

Alenka Blazinšek Domenis, a youth worker and the expert leader of Nefiks Institute points out: “I dedicate most of my time to working with members of the strategic council and project leaders. Others work with people on other levels. Project leaders with club leaders, club leaders with club members, etc. People with more demanding roles work with people with less demanding roles.”

The process of an individual’s growth doesn’t necessary lead through all five levels. However, Maja, the current director of the organisation (by the statute of the organisation only a young person can fill that post) and Nataša, who is now one of the members of the strategic council, experienced all of them. The whole process usually takes several years.

To address the question of what kind of structure could be seen as an obstacle, Alenka replies: “The structure was created intuitively. We never had a clear goal to develop it. But with the expansion of the organisation and with a bigger number of young people participating, you are forced to do it if you want to provide the same quality as you did before.”

MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES

The activities developed are interesting for young people, based on their interests and needs, and useful also for the community or a cause.

"I felt this idea of scouting, it caught me, I feel that it makes sense (...) Young people learn and act in small groups: a community, where everyone is important, everyone is heard, where they can be involved in meaningful activities. Everyone is a part of a group process and all group members achieve their goal together."

Adam Bałas, Scout leader, 12th Group "Preria", Kraków-Podgórze District



Young people will be strongly attached to the organisation if its activities make sense to them, to the organisation and to the local community. Meaningful activities mean that young people can contribute to society, they feel useful, their level of social responsibility grows and they see the effect on the community. It is about generosity and feeling that they also can make a difference. And very often this works as a powerful motivator. At the same time through these activities young people

get to know themselves better, their own needs, interests and values. Activities are important for their personal development and they see their own personal progress. Young people have a sense that they spend time doing something important and useful. It is also about taking on responsibilities, developing of self-esteem and a wide range of other social skills very much needed in adulthood. At the same time young people do what they want, what makes them happy and what is important for them without pressure.

Case study - Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego ZHP)

The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego ZHP) is the biggest scouting organisation in Poland. Currently has more than 100,000 members and continues to grow. The main aim of the organisation is to educate young people and to support their development and shape their characters by addressing challenges. The Scout movement has developed an educational methodology and specific rules. The basic values on which this education is based are contained in Scout law, which all Scouts promise to obey. Education in ZHP is based on moral norms derived from Christian cultural and ethical values. The organisation instils attitudes of respect for every human being while recognizing the system of spiritual values as a personal matter for every member of the ZHP. ZHP has a complicated structure with numerous sub-groups and, although the mission and rules are the same in every unit, the work might differ.

The strong point of ZHP is its structure which fosters small, lasting groups and developing activities together. Each small group has a whole set of unique symbols, rituals, history and traditions that constitute the group. Having small patrols and troops has a positive influence on a group's identity and strengthening friendships. The Scouting system is leader based, but every member can be promoted. A leader follows current trends in youth work. He or she talks with young people about their interests and values. Tasks are set by a leader based on members' expectations, capacity and needs. Young people through their involvement in activities grow up and may become leaders.

There are two complementary sides to youth work with Scouts: constantly developing Scouts' competences and service in the local community.

Scouts have to be challenged so there is always space for improvements. Challenges also influence the interests of young people. They want to be in the movement as there are always surprises waiting for them. Challenges are adjusted to individuals. They have to be difficult but at the same time achievable. They reach different skill levels, specific competences and they receive badges recognizing their achievements. Ranking system is a very powerful motivator. The Scout movement includes elements of gamification aimed at increasing the level of involvement of young people. Learning by acting makes the process enjoyable. Scouts plan their learning and chose competences that they want to focus on.

At the same time the Scout movement contributes a lot to the development of the local community. ZHP members support their local communities by running numerous charity events based on their needs. According to the Guide and Scout Promise, each Scout has to “give his or her willing help to other people”. This mission places more importance on their actions. Members feel that they are needed, respected and that their activities are useful and make a difference. Each Scout can propose an activity and then implement it with the whole group. Spending constructive time with the troop at meetings, camps or events is enjoyable, fun and at the same time meaningful.

The Scout movement is successful, because it combines education and constant development with a sense of responsibility for the community in which they live. Members feel that they can change and shape the world.

EXPRESSING ONESELF

Young people have space in the organisation to express their individuality and personality.

“You are very important for me, your words and you as a human being.”

Valentina Lotti, Theatrical Operator

Each and every young person is an individual with his or her own personality, passions, interests, background, education and work experience, and should be perceived as such by other members of an organisation. Every person needs to be fully accepted and appreciated for his or her own personality and be able to enhance his or her capabilities. Young people should have the freedom to express their ideas within the organisation, pursue their passions and improve their skills. A leader has a duty to listen and to evaluate all proposals carefully. Goal is to involve all members in planning of the activities as much as possible and to allow their active participation. An open dialogue with young people promotes a positive and safe work environment for young members who have a chance to express their ideas and proposals.

To make this possible, a leader should be sensitive and recognise different talents and abilities of young people and provide opportunities to use them. He or she can foster their growth and development, by organising and entrusting them to specific tasks and activities. Keeping an open mind toward each proposal coming from young people might be challenging, however, youth workers together with young people can decide what can be implemented. For that, brainstorming can be useful, as well as, providing well-defined spaces for organising activities that can increase and encourage young people’s creativity.

Case study: Theatrical Association of Conegliano territory, Italy

The Theatrical Association of Conegliano is a cultural organisation that works with the youth, aged 7 - 18, with the objective to promote culture in the Conegliano area (Northeast Italy). It focuses especially on theatrical activity and, at the same time, tries to create a positive relationship model for the personal growth of children, teenagers and young people. The association deals with cultural and artistic promotion. The involvement of young people is a fundamental aspect in the structuring and designing of activities.

The team is comprised of young people, who at the same time have experience and competences to work with other young people. The value of active listening in supporting and expressing young people's ideas, passions and interests is emphasised by members of the organisation. In order to ensure that the association becomes an "active listening" organisation, it must be open and available to everyone and also listen to their reactions and be aware of the limitations of these points of view. With active listening there is no place for judgment and advice. Practising active listening is not about searching for different solutions.

A key criterion for the success of these kinds of activities is to always be open-minded to all the suggestions from kids and young people. Usually educators and youth workers can recognise the value of the "active listening" method, however, they do not often use it in their practice. They are startled by the creativity of young people because it does not fit with their "mental patterns." Keeping your mind open to all the young people's proposals, even when they seem to be absurd, is a way to open up to new, creative and educational horizons.

One of the last plays performed by The Theatrical Association was based on some very creative proposals, which came from kids, and it obtained interesting results, both on the artistic level and on the public involvement level. If young people perceive that their work will be implemented, they will surely become closely connected with the organisation.

HAVING FUN

Activities are attractive. Young people enjoy them. There are opportunities to have joyful moments and laughter

"If he/she knows the organisation and knows that it is fun there, he/she will come."

Andrej Pivk, NGO Skala, Ljubljana, Slovenia, youth worker

Fun is a big factor when we are choosing our friends, which hobbies to pursue and where we want to go for vacation. Young people are no different. They prefer to do activities that attract them and those that bring joy. With the increasing amount of organisations doing youth work, it is important

that you provide young people with activities that will bring smiles to their faces and give them deeper satisfaction. It is also important that the work in your organisation will bring them joyful moments and that you foster an environment where they can laugh. Since only young people know what is attractive to them and what they will enjoy, include them when/while planning activities and making plans for the year.

You can include fun elements by inserting humour (insert some fun comparison slides, make appropriate jokes at meetings), hold different events as parties or celebrations (successes, birthdays, common holidays) or play games. This kind of 'out of "strictly business" fun' will bring you joy and will help you build stronger bonds.

Case Study: Youth Centre Domžale, Slovenia

How fun supports long term involvement?

There are many occasions in an organisation that call for celebration, fun activities with active members and sometimes an even wider group. In the next case study, we present how an organisation uses the celebration of success as an element of youth work for supporting and motivating volunteers.

Youth Centre Domžale (Center za mlade) was founded in 1998. It is a public institute, located in a town of Domžale in central Slovenia. The main aims of the Youth Centre Domžale are **to provide support for youth**, give them **opportunities to spend their free time wisely** and **encourage them to get actively involved in society** on a local, national and international level. The organisation achieves these goals through various activities implemented on their own or in co-operation with other local and international partners. The youth centre has 4 employees and a network of around 20 volunteers that participate in the implementation of activities.

Plac za mlade – Hang out for Youth

At some point, the need to create a special place where young people would have a chance to hang out, play board games, table tennis and reading was identified in Domžale. A process of consultation with the youth was launched in order to crystallise the idea and develop it for implementation. Two meetings took place to identify the place, equipment and furniture required.

Meetings were followed by four actions, where young people built the furniture themselves. The main materials used were transport pallets. There were around 15 participants and they created six couches, a small table, four movable wall panels and two bookcases. Most of the participants were already volunteers of the organisation while some joined the group just to join the fun of creating furniture out of pallets.

Celebration

Before the grand opening of the Hang out for Youth, the organisation invited all the youth who had

participated in creation of the furniture to meet in Hang out. Some pizza and drinks were prepared in order to celebrate this success. Young volunteers were very happy to feel the expression of gratitude from the organisation on behalf of all the youth using the place. The event had no special programme and was not facilitated. Its sole purpose was to thank the volunteers and provide the opportunity for them to chat, relax and celebrate their success.

During the first two years of its existence, the youth place was decorated with graffiti as a result of a graffiti workshop. It is a living place with the youth coming every day that also provides place for workshops with parents and youth workers.

Longer term relationship

Many of the volunteers that were involved in making the furniture are still active volunteers in the organisation. One of the volunteers that joined only for the work actions is still active in another youth organisation in the local community. She often approaches the youth centre to implement joint youth projects with both organisations.

All in all this instilled ownership of the place among the youth and the young people who were involved in the making of the furniture. Those that were invited to the celebration still maintain very good relationships with the organisation.



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.

“If you do authentic work, if you have a good structure and interesting offers, if you are close to their needs and you give them opportunities to unfold themselves, more and more people will come.”

Heike Phillip, Founder of AtelierSieben

Non-formal education usually takes place outside traditional educational institutions. It is characterised by the voluntary participation and it is based on learner’s needs. It usually empowers young people to address their own educational objectives through it. For that reasons, non-formal education is – much more than the formal one - relevant to young peoples’ future challenges.

According to UNESCOs four pillars of learning, young people in non-formal education learn to know, to work (career education), to be (personal identity) and to live together (community education, citizenship education, etc.).

Non-formal methodology engages many dimensions of a young person individually: different senses, different learning styles, and different cultural backgrounds. In a well-prepared learning process young person can find his/her own way to new knowledge and skills. The process that enables this is called self-directed learning.

Non-formal education is also characterised by the fact that young people can try and fail. Learning by doing is an important element. Task of youth workers is to encourage young people to go their own ways, to pursue their own ideas and to try them out. Young people can and should also be allowed to fail. Failures should be seen as a learning process. The process that the young people undergo should be more important than the result.

Case study: AtelierSieben, Schwelm, Germany

AtelierSieben is an NGO in Schwelm, Germany, for women, children and youth, especially those with migrant background. In this NGO participants produce different products like clothes, make-up, colours out of natural resources. The idea is based on a movement called “7 Gardens”, but the NGO brought in its own new and innovative ideas. The "7 Gardens" projects focus on the extraction of natural colours from plants. Because these processes are easy to learn, they are appropriate for everyone. While “7 Gardens” uses these methods in various projects in the field of sustainable development, AtelierSieben uses them and link them to other educational offerings in the organisation. The aim of the NGO is to give the participants opportunities and space to bring in their qualities, to unfold themselves, make them independent and give them future perspectives.

Voluntary participation

They rely on “Mouth to mouth” method and believe it be a very powerful tool. In their experience if you want to make young people stay, you shouldn’t force them to do something. Everything they do

should be because they want to do it. As a basis for non-formal education, they also stress that voluntary involvement is important.

Open to all

Public access for all interested in participation is also a typical feature of non-formal education. Openness is also an important characteristic of the organization AtelierSieben. They are open to new participants but also their new ideas.

Taking in consideration the needs of learning person

Currently it has 20 volunteers and offers different courses with diverse topics. This NGO is always developing its ideas with regard to the qualities and interests of their volunteers and participants.

One example: *A young woman worked as a teacher in her home country and she also wanted to bring in her qualities to Germany. So the NGO started an Arabic language course open for everyone. Now more than 50 people of different ages and origin, Germans as well, joined the course and learn together.*

Some of the other ideas are: production of make-up, production of clothes in an individual style, learning Arabic and teaching young people, how to produce colours out of plants. The non-formal education activities are diverse and all aim to give the participants opportunity for development.

Learning by doing

Especially when making and working with colours, there are hardly any limits for the young people. In these activities, young people can be creative and bring their own ideas to life. It's quite simple, learning by doing. Youth workers show and explain the basics and encourage the participants to try it out themselves. Fun is an important factor, but through concrete activities young people grow and develop their self-esteem. That is why reflection and evaluation together with young people is an important part of the process.

YOUTH-TO YOUTH APPROACH

Young people that spend time with each other during activities learn from each other.

"Seeing the boys working for the improvement of the social context, after having transmitted the necessary skills with the speed of contagion, is truly "out of the ordinary"

Davide Sciacchitano, Blog Coordinator

An organisation should promote collaboration and co-operation among its own members. In this way, young people can learn innovative working methods and acquire new skills, both through informal learning and peer-to-peer methodologies. Every individual within the organisation can take

an example or be taken as an example by others. An organisation should also promote personal and professional growth of each individual person and create a basis for developing mutual esteem and personal relationships among its various members. These aspects improve the quality of work. A leader should enhance time spent on informal learning and, at the same time, organise small working groups and ensure that each individual takes part in the activities.

Young people should be entrusted with responsibilities and autonomy in the area in which they are training or mentoring (tutoring) their peers as well as others in the organisation. They might develop projects in teams with other members without direct supervision of the leader or at least with a limited supervision. The goal is to create many opportunities to learn from direct contact with other young people and increase their ability to work in a team (team work skills), their autonomy and accountability.

Case study: Blog Fuori dal Comune, Gemona Italy

The project "Blog Fuori dal Comune" was developed during the partnership between the Magrini Marchetti High School and the network "B*sogno d'esserci", in the past year, the initiative also involved students from other schools. The aim is to use peer education to stimulate young students to reflect about being active citizens and about the future of their own area of interest. The project is open to young people, aged 14-19.

To achieve these objectives, the project involves creation of a "Multimedia Team", with the support of an educator. "Multimedia Team" produces and publishes video interviews, reports or other multimedia products using the Internet and Social Networks. This methodology aims at building critical awareness and thinking. The educator coordinates and directs the work, and at the same time, allows a high degree of freedom to the young people. There are blog groups responsible for uploading content on the website. The projects always come from proposals of the young members running the blog. Each idea that is being implemented is chosen after a careful evaluation and discussion with its proponent. Every blog contributor usually works within a small group of peers, writes articles, or makes videos or graphic content.

The areas of work are: Environment, Territory, Solidarity, Youth Volunteering, Refugees' Reception, Management of Public Goods, Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality.

The youth group meets during the school year. Since the first recruitment phase there is an annual campaign to involve new youngsters. Many youngsters stay for the whole school year and even continue in the following year, which makes groups sustainable. Some students stay even for a period of five years (the entire duration of high school).

Every year, new members join the blog. At the beginning of the year, leaders (oldest blog members) organise some presentations in high schools to tell new students about the project and encourage recruitment. The oldest blog members lead the youngest, but in general the work environment is very collaborative and equal.

An active role of the "veterans" is important during the presentation. The participants from previous years can share their experience and motivation with their peers, especially first and second grade

students. Most of the youngsters who joined the group did so following a suggestion from a friend. Organisation of public events or production of multimedia output helps to raise curiosity and interest about the group among peers.

The project ensures the participation and involvement of its members by creating an environment where everyone feels important and respected. Listening to students' ideas and giving value to them during activities is an inseparable part of this process. For which the following policies are implemented:

- Listening to participants' interests, ideas and developing them. Sometimes it requires changing planned activities. Giving a chance to young people to express themselves without judgment.
- Stimulating the discussions, inspiring participants by showing them examples of projects, videos, articles.
- Challenging them by joining school/youth competitions in the field of media production.
- Challenging them by setting goals and deadlines is very useful for motivation and keeping them focused.
- Organising public events, where they have to take care of organisation and also public speaking. These are very good exercises that open them to new experiences, give them satisfaction and contribute to team building.
- Periodically organising team building activities.

An important part of the blog's work is the production of videos. Some of them had big echoes on social networks and won prizes in local competitions and raised a lot of attention in their school and local community.

The actions mentioned helped in supporting all the other strategies and to attract new youngsters to search for information and join the group. Events and media production are created with active involvement of youth and are mainly addressed to their peers. The activity gradually gained more visibility and reputation through events, media production and awards. The meetings of the blog members allow young people, through discussion and group work with their peers, to acquire digital skills and skills that will be useful when entering the world of work.

ASSURING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Young people feel comfortable, both physically and mentally in an organisation.

"All this precaution is necessary, so we don't need to speak about safety with the youth at the events. As one of my colleagues said: If you don't encourage thinking about something that is forbidden, you avoid major obstacles."

Matjaž Vodeb, Director of Zavod Bob

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, safety is the second most important stage after basic needs, like water, etc. Fostering a learning environment requires meeting all the basic needs of the youth. A safe environment consists of both: physical safety and mental health.

A physically safe environment is described as healthy (clean water, sanitation, disease free, injury prevention) and free of threats (self-destructiveness, dangerous risk-taking, substance abuse or physical hazards). Mental health emphasises on [emotional](#) well-being, the capacity to live a full and [creative](#) life and flexibility to deal with life's inevitable challenges.

An organisation should encourage a nice, open atmosphere, which allows for structure with clear rules to coexist with young people's ability to feel comfortable. You can achieve it with support, care, good health practices, non-coercive forms of persuasion, assertiveness and non-violent behaviour. Leaders should be qualified and act professionally, treat young people with respect and help them in their endeavours. We are all still developing emotionally and mentally. And we have to help each other learn, how to correct non-productive behavioural patterns.

In order to assure safety in our environment, it is suggested to make an effort to predict possible outcomes in advance, to implement preventive actions and also to know how to act if something does happen. It is crucial to act in a timely and appropriate manner if something happens.

Case study: Zavod Bob, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Zavod Bob is an NGO based in Ljubljana. It is renowned for its street youth work with 100 volunteers, 16 employees and around 50 professionals. This organisation believes that in terms of assuring a safe environment everything comes down to youth workers. They operate a daily youth club that specialises in street youth work. They firmly believe in democratic decision making (the whole team, even the volunteers, makes decision for the whole organisation) and are working closely with Ljubljana's municipality in preparing Ljubljana's youth strategy. Recently, they have also been working on starting a digital youth centre.

When Zavod Bob first began with street youth work, they picked the most troublesome location (Ljubljana's Plaža, a popular spot for the youth to get drunk on Friday evenings), they came up with a way of attracting attention of the youth (free pancakes) and the action began. First time they didn't think about notifying the authorities and when the local constabulary noticed their activity - the commotion in their eyes - they cleared the street.

In the years of practice the staff at Zavod Bob learned two important lessons about establishing a safe environment:

- A safe environment is based on a clear structure; where everything works within an agreed structure and everybody respects it. Each violation of the agreement results in an immediate investigation.
- Even the safest environment could be dangerous, if there is no person who is at peace with himself or herself, with his or her work, his or her team and who would transmit that peace to a wider group.

Their further recommendations include safety on both mental health and physical safety:

Let the process flow

Safety should be established in a way that doesn't involve stressing about it. A working team predicts all potential situations in advance, so they can always talk about the future and not about the past. And when they stop the process, it's time for reflection. Until the process is running, do not interrupt it. Matjaž views safety depends on ensuring the process is running smoothly (without outside influences and with leadership).

Supervision

If the Staff experiences a fall-out in a group, they provide supervision which means making changes to the environment. Mentors inform participants at the beginning of any project that an outside supervisor is available to them, and can use his/hers assistance during the planning phase. If it's a long term activity, they get to know the supervisor (for instance, as a visitor to the event). This is a way out even from the most stressful situations.

Update the authorities

Street activities require co-operation with police and local constabularies, so they know in advance where the activities will take place. In subsequent years after the "clearing of the street" incident, policemen in plain clothes were present at all their activities, but now they just need to be ready on call. Prior to events groups of volunteers visit the local police station, where they learn that the policemen are there to help them.

"Crisiser": outside observer

They invented a special role of a "crisiser", one of the team members whose job is to watch the group and observe how they function. He or she has the power to stop an activity at any given time. If he/she thinks it is time to stop, he/she contacts the group that is implementing the activity and disperses or goes elsewhere. If necessary, their next step is to inform the authorities.

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