

**A brighter future -
we need more of...**



12. Adapting youth work in a society shaped by migration

Many European countries are shaped by migration. Different sectors and actors have a responsibility to support that to be a more positive thing. Here are some proposals of how youth work could be adapted to better support communities shaped by migration.

Reach out

People with a migration background bring things to the table. By reaching out within different communities, different strengths, languages and experiences can be brought into youth work. Increasing recognition of the value of youth work and non-formal education in those communities will help with accepting involvement. People from the same community can act as role models. They can be hired as part of your organisation, to help deliver the projects and activities, based on their experience and expertise; not as a 'favour', but rather a professional offer. There should be programmes to train different people to become youth and social workers, not as volunteering, but as paid employment.

Increase representation

Migrant youth should have representation in the staff of organisations, in the youth workers, in the policy makers team. Decisions should be made with the needs of their community in mind, more relevant to their every day reality. The Programmes that are delivered, or the approach within them, should be adapted to a different perspective. Only by owning the process, and co-creating it together, can those perspectives and needs be fully represented throughout.

Work with diversity

Young people should be treated as individuals, not as a representative of a community or culture. Their needs will differ and vary according to their own situation and experiences.

Increase knowledge

First and foremost, many people in the host society need to learn what migration is, and how it affects people. Knowledge and understanding of the reality of people's stories is vital, youth workers should be able to detect the experiences of people. Knowledge of the migration chain makes a difference too - migrants that come from similar places, or have similar experiences have similar push factors and similar needs. Communities of migrants often share knowledge between themselves, so use that communication system as a bonus.



"Youth workers should have an international history" **Participant**

Different experts from different sectors have alternative ways of seeing society, they look through a different lens. There should be a connection between specific specialists who know how to work with different groups of young people. Roles such as psychologists, social workers, employment office etc should be heard, and in turn they also need to understand the diversity of needs of different migrant youth.

Youth work should be open for a wider spectrum of people, languages and cultures. Diversity is the keyword for the youth work team; diversity of methods, diversity of approaches, diversity of experiences. Adapting methods and being open to innovation and new ways of working is vital. Having a diversity of languages in the team, a diversity of experiences that allows them to relate to more and different young people, will ensure a wider reach.

Recognise acquired competence

Very often youth work projects aim for new competences, new experiences. However, many newly arrived migrants already have a lot of experience and learning, it just needs the right support and safe space for reflection and to be recognised - by the individual, and by others. Their biography and the challenges already faced are something to be appreciated, learned from, and built on. From there, new knowledge for their new situation can start to be built.

Widen the curriculum

Youth work with migrants is often limited to language courses, legal training and social orientation. There are often not enough resources or capacity to do much more than that, even if the needs show that more and different topics should be covered. Youth workers would like to do more. If they could focus less of their time on administration and grant processes, they could spend more on needs-based pedagogical approaches.

Lower the threshold

In some countries, it's not possible to provide youth work to young people unless they speak the national language. Access to the opportunities is limited, if language is limited. Youth work should be open to more communities of young people (see 'Reach out' and 'Representation').



Connect to the local host community

A connection should be made between the needs of migrant youth and the needs of young people from the local community. A dialogue should be built, and projects that combine the needs, to allow for a mix of young people inside, who all identify with the objectives and want to work together for the aim. Don't start from the point: "we know what's good for them", but rather "let's talk, what shared needs are there?". Connect the need of the community with the need of migrant young people.

Meet young people where they are

Have a mutual respectful approach, not a hierarchical or patronising one. Build positive relationships to increase trust, and respect difference and experience.

13. Some indicators for good projects with migrant youth

These best practices are based on ideas and experiences gathered from participants involved in youth work with young people from migration backgrounds. The exercise focused on determining the criteria for the success of a youth project and identifying the indicators that demonstrate this.

Young people have a stake in the process

Success involves integrating young people's contribution at different levels, giving them the tools to make a meaningful contribution to the decision-making processes. For more info, see Hart's ladder of participation

Motivation to participate

Motivation is a key indicator, that reflects young people's willingness, desire and enthusiasm to take part in the project.

Meaningful participation

True success is achieved when young people do not simply participate, but actively help to shape and own the project. They own the space.

Diverse group

The inclusivity and the diversity of the participant group are essential to contribute to a more enriching and representative project

Respond to the direct needs of young people

The topic, activities and methods must relate to the interests and needs of young people: aligning the project with the preferences and requirements of the target audience guarantees its relevance and impact.

Young people come back to do it again

Repeat participation means they had a positive experience and an environment that fosters the ambition to continue and be involved more.

Awards and recognition

External validation can signify acknowledgment and appreciation for the project's achievements.

Transferable outcomes

Success extends beyond the immediate project, with results that can be applied and adapted in different contexts.

Young people are happy at the end

The satisfaction and happiness of the young participants is a subjective but crucial measure of success.

Reduced dependency, Increased autonomy

Success is evident when participants demonstrate greater autonomy, independence and the ability to make informed decisions by themselves.

Community impact

The project needs to extend beyond participants, to have a positive impact on the wider community as a whole, demonstrating its importance, value and sustainability.

Participants become multipliers

Success is indicated when participants not only receive individual benefits, but also become advocates and disseminators of the project's content, approach and values. They live the learning.

Something changed - impact

Success is marked by tangible, positive changes, demonstrating the project's significant impact on the lives of participants and the community.

Learning and development of competences

Success is measured by the acquisition of new skills and knowledge among the youth, contributing to their personal and professional growth.

Sufficient number of active participants

Success is marked by a high level of active participation, demonstrating it responds to the need and interest of young people.

Outcomes, outputs are produced

Tangible results and deliverables demonstrate the effectiveness of the project in achieving its objectives.

Get funding

Financial support shows recognition from funders of the quality. It helps sustain and develop the project. It enables more to be done, with and for more young people.

Sustainable

Longevity and continuity are the key to success, indicating the ability of the project to endure and remain relevant over an extended period.

Talking with - representation of the target group

Dialogue and representation ensure that the youth are actively involved and their voices are heard and acted upon.

14. Cheat sheet – Tips to overcome current challenges

Several challenges were brainstormed by participants. A self-directed process then led to some first ideas of how the challenges can be responded to. There are three different levels:

- **‘Tips/advice’**, giving some individual possibilities that could be replicated in many places. to help with some aspects of the challenge.
- The **‘Solutions’** are larger scale options that, if delivered, would make more of an impact in solving the problem.
- The **‘Recommendations’** are systemic changes that take more resource and would be instrumental in improving the difficulties listed.



Listed here are some first thoughts that came from just one session in a seminar. This list can be taken further and built on more in many different ways in the future. Each of these challenges can have much wider description and implication, and there are many other good practices and ideas that can help to deal with them.

We are sure you also have thoughts on these. When you read the title of the challenge, can you think of other elements related to it, to describe it? And when you read these first ideas for what to do, can you think of more? What other tips, solutions and recommendations would you have for each topic?

There are 8 different topics explored here:

The Challenging Reality of Young People	Mental Health of youth workers
Language	Administration
Recognition - lack of representation	Needs & Interest-Based Projects
Legal Frameworks (Law)	Safer Space

**Problem/
challenge/difficulty**

**The Challenging
Reality of Young
People**

Young people face a lot of challenges. Here are some:

- Short-termism
- Unpredictability
- Not enough money
- Discrimination
- Classism
- Racism
- Poverty
- Lack of representation
- Prejudgment
- Solutions aren't tailor-made
- Lack of support (community, parents)
- Low confidence
- Difficult adjustment to a new community
- Others don't understand
- Not able to tackle every subject...etc
- Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach.

Tips/advice

- Explore **diverse funding sources**, including local, regional, national, and international grants, along with company sponsorship aligned with ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) goals.
- Acknowledge and **recognise the talents** and experiences of each individual young person, fostering an environment that values diversity.
- Collaborate** with other actors and organisations to enhance support systems for young people.
- Encourage **reflection on personal stereotypes and prejudices** among youth workers to foster a more inclusive environment.
- Provide support and empowerment** to discriminated young people, promoting their resilience and self-esteem.
- Empower young people by supporting their ability to **voice their opinions and concerns**, and for those to be acted on by decision-makers.
- Offer young people **chances and opportunities** to showcase their abilities and potential.
- Be heard!** Engage in **public relations campaigns** led by young people; encourage **demonstrations** to raise awareness and advocate for change.
- Establish **youth councils** that mirror decision-making institutions, providing a direct channel for young people's input.

Solution

- Develop a **public relations campaign** explaining how and why support for young people is crucial to the well-being of society.
- Launch an **anti-discrimination campaign** to combat prejudice and stereotypes, promoting inclusivity.
- Position **youth workers as bridges** connecting young people to psychotherapists and other necessary support services.

Recommendation

- Advocate for EU and government-funded projects with a **minimum duration of five years** to allow for proper evaluation. Acknowledge that outcomes and impact may take time to manifest.
- Actively work to **build bridges and break down walls** that contribute to the challenges faced by young people. Focus on helping youth build bridges to the local community, fostering integration and mutual understanding.
- Raise awareness** about classism, poverty, prejudice, racism, and discrimination in society.

**Problem/challenge/
difficulty**

Mental Health of youth workers

Youth work isn't a profession to get rich. There are many challenges, difficulties and barriers for those who want to do the support, projects and activities with migrant youth. It can be a traumatic and stressful role.

Care and support is needed to look after youth workers too.

Tips/advice

Encourage youth workers to **share their own emotions** with colleagues or a trusted person, fostering a supportive environment.

Establish fixed, regular **meetings with supervision** to provide a structured space for support and reflection.

Incorporate **breath exercises** into daily routines to promote mindfulness and stress relief.

Solution

Create a **sensory room** designed for both youth and youth workers to offer a therapeutic space.

Implement **group supervision** sessions around shared needs, allowing youth workers facing common challenges to share experiences and support each other.

Offer **individual supervision** for more personalised support and guidance. One-on-one supervision can help with processing challenging situations.

Establish a health department or designate someone **responsible** for the mental health of the youth work team.

Conduct **mental health training** specifically tailored for youth workers to equip them with coping strategies and stress management techniques.

Develop **explicit resources** focusing on mental health for youth workers, offering practical guidance and support.

Recommendation

Integrate psychological courses into youth work **programmes in universities** to prepare future youth workers to manage their mental health and wellbeing.

Explore and conduct **more research in mental health for youth workers**, providing evidence-based insights and recommendations.

Problem/challenge/difficulty

Recognition - lack of representation

- 1. Terminology confusion:** Public confusion and misunderstanding between the terms immigrant, refugee, and diaspora. The mix-up of these terms by the public, politicians, and media contributes to misinformation, stereotypes and prejudices.
- 2. Stereotypes and lack of personal contact:** Stereotypes and preconceived notions are a barrier to integration due to a lack of personal contact between local people and migrants. The absence of personal connections and the perpetuation of stereotypes make it difficult to bridge understanding and acceptance.

Tips/advice

Media literacy and clear communication: Clarify and differentiate terms through media work to enhance public understanding.

Personal contact with politicians: Encourage personal interactions between community members and politicians to foster understanding.

Use case studies: Utilise experiences to provide real stories and faces, making the situation relatable to different audiences.

Organise community contact: Facilitate interactions between local communities and migrants through initiatives like living libraries or potluck dinners.

Solution

Raise local knowledge: Increase awareness and understanding among local people about the realities of immigration and refugees - as individuals, not representatives of cultures or countries.

Humanise through stories: Use case studies and individual stories to humanise the experiences of migrants, allowing locals to relate on a personal level.

Media sensitisation: Conduct more media work to sensitise the public and evoke empathy towards the challenges faced by migrants.

Recommendation

Enhance local knowledge: Implement initiatives to improve knowledge and understanding in the local community regarding immigration and refugees.

Community connection: Strengthen links between the local and the migrant communities, fostering a sense of shared understanding and empathy.

Politician involvement: Systemise personal contact between politicians and young people, ensuring their voices are heard and needs represented, putting a human face on the issues faced by migrants.

Problem/challenge/difficulty

Needs- and interest-based projects

1. Lack of coordination and mismatch:

There are coordination issues and a misalignment between migrants and their specific needs in projects. Projects must include migrants from the beginning to hear their needs, and projects then tailored to address them.

2. Difficulty in outreach:

Some young people are hard to reach, making it challenging to engage with the intended target group. The difficulty in reaching the targeted youngsters may come from communication barriers or inadequate outreach strategies.

3. Undervaluation of youth work:

Youth work is not perceived as important in both the host and migrant societies. The undervaluation of youth work complicates efforts to establish and sustain meaningful projects.

Tips/advice

Success stories and role models from the community:

Contact key figures in the community who are respected, acting as role models or well-connected individuals.

Hire paid community members for outreach:

Employ individuals from the community part-time so that youth work is better understood by young people and the wider migrant community. Their linguistic and cultural skills are lacking but are essential for youth work.

Utilise effective communication channels:

Use appropriate channels to reach the target group, including less traditional forms of promotion, social media, and online platforms where young people are active.

Solution

Inclusive programme preparation:

Include young people and key community figures in the programme preparation process, ensuring their needs, motivations, and voices are integral to the project. (and engage them in the project : it's their baby).

Community understanding through involvement:

Gain a deeper understanding of services provided for specific communities by involving them in the creation process.

Highlight Success Stories:

Showcase success stories, featuring examples from the specific communities to inspire and engage others.

Recommendation

Showcase outcomes to more people: Show the impact of youth work to different actors in the migrant and local communities for more recognition.

Ambassador Roles: Systemise the development of individuals from the community sharing their personal stories, allowing new and different audiences to relate and envision their own potential success. Encourage the 'that could be me!' factor.

Persistence and Adaptation:

Persist in efforts to overcome challenges and adapt strategies to better meet the needs of the target audience.

Problem/challenge/difficulty

Language

- 1. Language and cultural barriers** pose difficulties for effective communication between minority communities and local inhabitants.
- 2. Forced Language learning:** Individuals should not be forced to learn a language against their will, neither minority communities or locals. Forced language learning by migrants or locals is wrong. Non-formal learning is voluntary, self-directed and based around needs, interest and motivations of the learner.
- 3. Insufficient language teachers** willing to teach in a practical and experiential manner for both locals and foreigners.
- 4. Communication barriers in public institutions:** Public institutions in the new host society are expected to take care of individuals, but communication becomes a significant barrier.

Tips/advice

- Understand the **needs and motivations** of individuals, finding common ground for successful communication.
- Include the target audience from the very beginning of the project. Allow their **needs and interests** to be expressed at many stages as the project develops.
- Utilise language apps** that assist in translation and language learning to overcome communication challenges.

Solution

- Establish an **international cooperation of language teachers**, conducting regular online workshops using interactive and fun methodology for those interested in language learning.
- Encourage **non-formal communication groups** involving both locals and foreigners, fostering experiential, interactive, and fun language learning.
- Support different methods and **community building tools/practices** that facilitate communication between people speaking different languages. Think wider to connect to different parts of the community.

Recommendation

- Redesign the entire educational system** to promote positive language learning experiences.
- Offer **English language teaching** for all individuals involved in working with the migrant community, creating a common ground for communication.
- Normalise the use of **communication apps** for phones to facilitate multilingual communication.
- Make it **obligatory for all public institutions** to provide multilingual services, ensuring accessibility.
- Multilingual environment:** Ensure that all city services, including libraries, theatres, bookstores, etc., have at least one worker proficient in more than one language.

Problem/challenge/difficulty

Administration

- 1. Administrative workload**, funding challenges, and the pressure to prove project success, often overshadow meaningful pedagogical work.
- 2. Insufficient institutions** or centers dedicated to providing support for the migrant community.
- 3. Understaffed organisations** face time & resource limitations, leading to pressure to make projects successful.
- 4. Balancing administrative tasks with pedagogical tasks**, and other human relation challenges as well as the need to care for individuals.

Tips/advice

- Create a **local area map** to understand which agencies provide support and services for migrants.
- Establish an online space for **peer support between workers** in organisations, fostering knowledge-sharing.
- Recognise self-applied pressure:** Identify areas of work with leeway to reduce workload, allowing for more flexible delivery times.

Solution

Create **integrated spaces** where services for migrants are provided under one roof, improving communication and streamlining pathways for young individuals.

Recommendation

- Cultivate trust in youth workers and organisations** working with migrants, recognising their expertise and commitment.
- Grant funding bodies to accept **diverse reporting methods** beyond numerical metrics, including qualitative reporting and case studies.
- Treat youth as a **distinct ministerial priority**: youth should be connected to, but ringfenced from, other areas like mental health or formal education.
- Consolidate **different types of service provision (including youth work and social care) in one building** to enhance collaboration and resource sharing.
- Advocate for **longer-term unconditional funding**, providing flexibility for organisations to address diverse needs without restrictive conditions.

Problem/challenge/difficulty

Legal Frameworks

- 1. **Insufficient resources**, lack of understanding of backgrounds, and limited willingness to help due to language and cultural differences.
- 2. **Not enough regulation from the government** to address the legal needs of youth, contributing to gaps in support.
- 3. **Youth councils do not work effectively**, potentially due to various factors.

Tips/advice

Provide **clear and easily accessible information** on where to get advice and support regarding legal status.

Solution

Develop the needs and topics of youth work with **participation of representatives from the entire society**, ensuring inclusivity of background, history, culture, etc.

Encourage or enforce participation in democracy to ensure active engagement in addressing legal issues.

Recommendation

Establish strong youth councils in every municipality to enhance representation and effectiveness.

Implement youth work as a **governmental policy with funding** allocated from the government.

Execute youth work through **collaboration between governmental and nonprofit organisations** for a comprehensive and adaptative approach.

Organise youth workers into professional organisations, such as **lobby groups or unions**, to strengthen their voice and influence government policies.

**Problem/challenge/
difficulty**

Safer Space

Many young people from migrant backgrounds have suffered traumatic experiences. The mental health of the young people, and the professionals and volunteers that work with them, is paramount. Providing a safer space for young individuals involves various challenges, and addressing them requires a thoughtful approach.

Tips/advice

Ensure your **actions align with the values you communicate**, creating consistency in the service provided.

Obtain funding to establish, staff, and appropriately furnish a safer space.

Enhance safety for trauma sharing: Foster a safe environment for drawing out and sharing traumatic experiences, encouraging individuals to express themselves bravely.

Learn and implement methods to **counter stereotypes** within the safer space.

Solution

Ensure that information about the safer space is **easily accessible** to all involved parties.

Establish the safer space as a **co-owned and co-organised** entity involving everyone participating in it.

Integrate the concept of a safer space as a **horizontal priority in every project**, emphasising its importance consistently.

Amplify youth voices: Allow young people to voice their concerns, needs, and ideas, giving them a say in the organisation and operation of the safer space.

Empower young leaders: Provide a platform for young people to take a leadership role in shaping the safer space according to their needs.

Recommendation

Research best practices: Conduct research on various ways to establish a safer space, providing youth workers with **information on effective approaches**.

Conduct **user consultations** to understand diverse realities and approaches, ensuring that the safer space meets the unique needs of the individuals it serves.

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