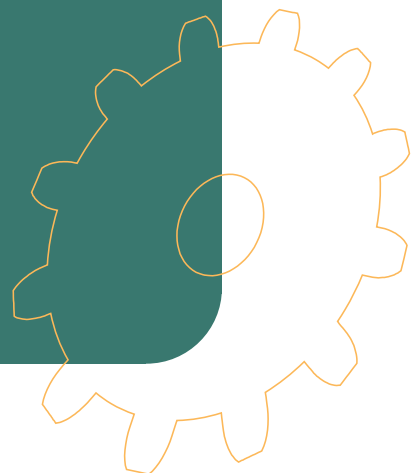




Starting Up Manual

empowerment



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Preface

In the year 2000, JINT vzw set up a platform for youth organisations for creating innovative projects in cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Several Flemish youth organisations invited their sister-organisation in the CEE countries to work together in further developing youth work and youth policy in Flanders and in Central and Eastern Europe. The project was named emPOWERment!

The platform offers the possibility of exchanging knowhow and experience in methodologies, in creating networks and in promoting the region. Several projects were set up by the participating organisations, and trainings and seminars are being held all over Europe on diverse themes with the support of the Flemish community, the European Youth Programme, the European Youth Foundation and national governments of the partner organisations.

To create an added value to the Youth Field both in Flanders as in the CEE countries, the participating organisations decided to write the results of the cooperation and international meetings down in the form of a manual.

At this point, the three thematic manuals available are:

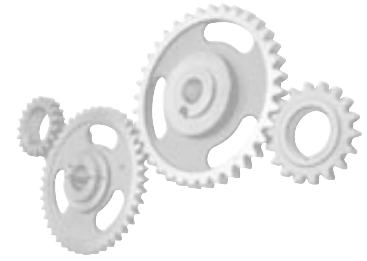
- Starting Up Local Youth Work
- Volunteer Management
- Organisational Management - Trainstorm '03

These emPOWERment manuals try to pass through in a modest way, the information and the experience gathered during the several trainings and seminars. These manuals were achieved with the help of many people and want to address to youth workers, both new in the field as experienced.

If you want to know more, if you have questions about emPOWERment, if you want to comment this manual, you can always visit the website www.cnip.jint.be or contact JINT vzw, the supporting office for emPOWERment in Brussels, or contact the emPOWERment partner in your country. Contact information can be found in appendix.

We wish you a nice reading and an enthusiast engagement in the youth work!

emPOWERment



Introduction : Starting Up Local Youth Work

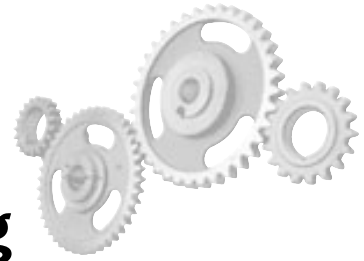
This manual is the result of a co-operation between young people from the Shtime Youth Centre in Kosovo¹, Flandria in Poland, and local youth groups in Romania. All wanted to share their experience about starting up local youthwork with each other during a seminar in October 2002. The initiative for this seminar was taken by the Belgian youth organisations Somepro and Youth Balkanactie, in co-operation with Jeugd & Gezondheid Gent and JINT vzw. Finally, they want to share this experience with you.

You are a person who is interested in starting up a youth organisation in your community, and you do not know how to make a start. In this manual, you will find a lot of useful information, and many tips and suggestions. In case you have experience in the field for like ten years already, this manual may not be very interesting for you; however, we strongly advice you to read the manuals *Volunteer Management* and *Organisational Management*, since these could mean a new impetus in your organisational life and your experience in the field of youth work in general.

In this manual, you will find the most important issues concerning starting up local youth work. The information is presented to you step-by-step. In the first chapter, we present you a testimony in which a young person tells you about the importance of having a youth organisation. The second chapter tells about the seven items that are connected with any youth organisation. In the third chapter, we provide you with an overview of what we think are the most important issues you will be confronted with when starting up local youth work. In some of the subsections, you will find a table with problems you might face with possible answers to resolve them, and some small stories of real organisations. Finally, in the fourth chapter, youth workers from Romania, Kosovo¹ and Poland tell their stories; they tell how they started up their organisation, and these stories may be inspiring for you to go on with your plans, and start your own local youth organisation.

We hope this manual will guide you through the not so easy task of realising your plans. We hope it might be an inspiration and a motivation for you and your friends to succeed. (Never hesitate to give this manual to your friends or to any person you think is interested in starting up local youth work.) Good luck!

¹ Note from the editor. The authors have used the name Kosova to refer to this region, which is in fact the Albanian name. The editor has chosen to refer to it with the name Kosovo which is commonly used in English. This choice is of a purely linguistic nature, and is free of any political or historical prejudice.



1 The importance of having a youth organisation

A testimony.

“Three years ago, we had the opportunity, me and my friends, to start a youth organisation in our village and - after some time - to become a leader in that organisation. Believe me, it is the most incredible thing, when you can see children have fun and enjoy themselves and even when we are 24 years old, we are still children and can participate in this. That moment you have the feeling that you have done something useful for children. And because I had the chance to feel this, I can give you some strong reasons to convince you to start a youth organisation.

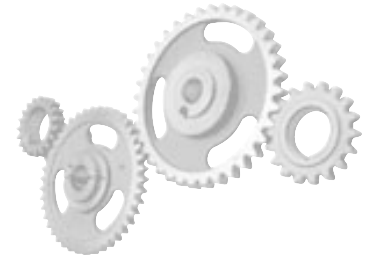
To develop their capacity to think, children do not only need communication, they also need friends, persons older than them, who can give them support, trust, new information and, most importantly, give them love without asking something in return. Youth organisations, as places where young people can meet, feel free, discuss and play, are necessary all over the world, especially in those communities where young people do not have such a place.

We know that communication and friendship between people is important for our society. It is very important to help people to communicate and essentially, this is the main purpose of a youth organisation: ‘learning by doing’.

To do something in your life, you have to be very well informed, and this is the second purpose of a youth organisation. It is easier to learn new and necessary information when you are young, and when you are young you easier broaden your knowledge horizon.

Another purpose of a youth organisation is to establish friendship between young people. You do not have to stay alone on an island. To become a lonely person is not good for anybody. You have to create friendships with other people. People who can help you when you are down, give you strength and support. It is all about developing social skills (solidarity, democracy, consideration, tolerance, acceptance, respect, living together,...). These are the main purposes of a youth organisation and strong reasons to start a local youth organisation.

This little story, I hope, will make you realise how important it is to have such a youth organisation in your community, not only for children, but also for leaders, because they can be for the second time children and learn some responsibilities and it is also important for the parents of the children, because they can have some free time and/or more educated children.”



2 The youth organisation: step by step

2.1 What is a youth organisation?

YOUTH ORGANISATION

Our definition of a youth organisation is a local (1) youth movement (2) with a group of leaders in charge (3) with members (4) who mostly do games and activities (5) they organised themselves (6) on a regular base (7).

There are seven important items that we have highlighted in our definition.

1. *Local.* The base of all big youth organisations is still the local group(s). By local we mean *in a small community*, be it a village, a quarter of a city, or a town. So when you want to start a youth organisation, be sure to know your geographical borders and make sure that the organisation is within walking distance.
2. *Youth movement.* An organisation for young people (6 to 16/18 years old) ran by young leaders (16/18 to +/-30 years old).
3. *A group of leaders in charge.* The leaders run their own organisation morally, financially and concerning policy-decision. They have vision. A board of parents is possible, but only as an advisory board.
4. *Members.* See topic "Members" (section 3.1 in this manual).
5. *Games and activities.* This is the basic philosophy of a youth movement. Playing games is important for children. *Learning by doing* is a method of learning is promoted in a youth movement. Let the members learn where their capacities are. So, it is also important to offer a wide range of activities (creative, competitive, in group, trips, hard, intelligence,...)
6. *Organised themselves.* The leaders prepare, lead and evaluate the activities. A leader or a group of leaders is also responsible for an age group (for instance 9-12 year old) to create a feeling of trust between the members and the leader(s), but also within the group of leaders itself.
7. *A regular base.* This can be from once a week till once a year. Or only during holidays. Just decide what goes best for you and/or your group.

2.2 Structuring the youth organisation

Before beginning the preparations for starting up local youth work, you have to find the answers to some important questions. Questions about general things, things that you really need when you want to start up a youth organisation. The next table shows some general questions to ask before launching the organisation. Answering these questions, makes you build the structure, the base of your organisation, that will be very important in the future. This is important because, if everything goes well in the beginning, you will have a very big advantage in the future too. The answers to these questions can be found in this manual.

<u>Main issues</u>	<u>Questions to ask before launching the youth organisation</u>
Aims and Objectives	What is the objective of this organisation? For what kind of youth is this organisation useful? What age should the target group have? Why is this organisation important for young people? What is the expected result?
Contents	What activities will be done? How many leaders do we need? Of what age should the leaders be? What is the chosen approach/methodology?
Where and When	Where will the youth organisation be implemented? When does it start?
Practicalities and Finances	How to get the support from the local authorities? How to find volunteers to help? How to make the others understand it's very useful what we want to do? How to gain some money from the activities?
Communications and Contacts	Does information circulate within the youth organisation team/leaders (<i>internal communication</i>)? How to make contact with the target group (<i>external communication</i>)? How to make contact with the local community? How to make publicity for the youth organisation?
Expectations	What to expect from the youth organisation? What will the financial condition of the youth organisation be like?

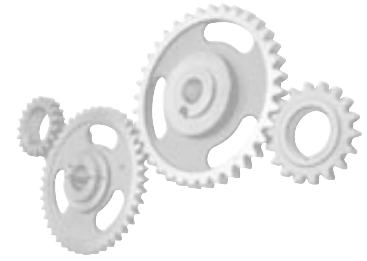
2.3 Life cycle of a youth organisation

To start a youth organisation sometimes is difficult and sometimes is not. This depends on what kind of support you can get from the local authorities, community, and other 'important' people. You can have big problems or you can have small problems. The important thing is to cope with these problems. You can do different things, such as discussions with people who can help you resolve the problems, also discussions with the leaders from your team if you have team problems, and many other. Remember one thing, you do not have to fight all alone to start the organisation; you can always rely on someone to help you, to support you, to give you ideas and new strength when you are down.

LIFE CYCLE OF A YOUTH ORGANISATION

1. At first, you are *Sceptical* because there is some uncertainty about the future. Will it be easy to do everything? Will you find some help? Is it necessary to have a youth organisation?
2. After some discussions with your friends and local authorities, however, you become *Enthusiastic* and you prepare the start of the organisation. At this stage, everything goes well, but you realise that it will take time to realise your project.
3. There are no visible results yet, and you start questioning yourself. Is it really worth it? This is the *Dark Night* of your organisation, the most difficult part. However, try to hold on and go for it.
4. You are trying to resolve the problems and after some time, you start seeing the results. Finally, you realise that it was not such a bad idea, and everything starts going better and better.

Always remember this. It is very important to keep your enthusiasm and to keep faith in yourself and in everyone involved. Even if you have a problem for one moment and you think it is impossible to resolve it, hold on. For every problem, there is a solution. Stay calm, have patience, work hard, and keep on discussing with others.



3 Main topics

For starting up a youth organisation, you basically need a place, leaders, games, and, of course, children. However, a lot of other things will appear to be important once you are really starting. This section gives an overview of the most important topics.

These topics do not exist just by themselves. They are all linked to each other. However, it is good to pay attention on every item separately. Try to put it in the perspective of your own situation, and try to see what your priorities should be.

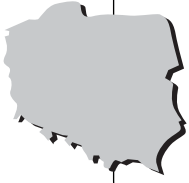
3.1 Members

MEMBER

A member of an organisation is someone who joins the activities on a regular basis. S/he is a person who wants to play games, to spend some time with others, to share information and, most importantly, to have fun and feel free.

Of course, your organisation needs members. On how to find these members, you will read in the section "Recruitment" (see section 3.3 of this manual). On how to keep these members, you will find some useful information here. Members should be given time to express themselves, to make contact to others, and to explore their talents and their *non*-talents. Do not focus on one thing while playing games. All the members need the opportunity to develop themselves. Here are some guidelines.

The best guarantee to keep your members in your organisation is to have good activities every time. Make sure that these activities are adapted to the specific age of your members: organise other activities for 5-8 year old children than for 13-15 year old ones. As a leader, it is important to be very enthusiastic and also, for instance, to greet your members every single time you meet them. A brief "hello" makes them feel connected with the organisation. Some special things may add to this connection: provide them with a 'coming activities' paper in their mailbox, write a small newspaper, or give them a keepsake or a souvenir.



Poland. We work with youngsters in our own community, but we are part of Flandria. This organisation is also active in other communities and not only for youngsters. This umbrella organisation has a good name and we are part of it, so we use this credibility for the purposes of our own organisation.

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
<i>Your members do not show up anymore.</i>	Start evaluating what went wrong and try to focus on old and new members to attract them. Make your movement attractive again.
<i>Your members show some disappointment in your movement.</i>	Ask them why and try to adjust your activities to your members' needs.
<i>Your members do not know you.</i>	Say "hello" to your members if you are a leader, this hello will encourage them to come to the youth organisation.
<i>The parents of your members do not have the necessary information about your youth movement.</i>	Make a booklet for all the children's families. This way they can get to trust you.
<i>The parents like to know what you're doing in your movement and how their kids are behaving.</i>	Try to keep in contact with the parents of the children.



Romania. We work with children between 6 and 14 years of age. It was difficult in the beginning, but we got support from the director of the local school and also from the teachers. When we have activities, every child goes to the others' houses to tell them that they can come to the meeting place. This is possible since there are not many children in our village.

3.2 Volunteers and leaders

VOLUNTEER

A volunteer is not just a member. S/he is someone who takes more responsibility in the organisation. We also call him or her a leader.

A volunteer is a person who wants to help without asking something in return, a person who wants to participate for free, and a person *who wants to go for it*.

Your organisation cannot exist without volunteers or leaders. On how to find these volunteers, you will read in the section "Recruitment" (see section 3.3 of this manual). On the profile of these volunteers, and on the way they should be treated, you will find some guidelines here.

A good leader has to be motivated; more, s/he needs to show *motivation*. This speaks for itself. A leader may want to attract other volunteers, and volunteers always choose the organisation in which they believe the most (see section 3.3). So, as an organisation, it is important to look for these volunteers who show a lot of interest and motivation to do the best they can for the organisation.

A volunteer needs to have a responsible attitude. S/he needs to show *responsibility*, since the other volunteers will want to count on this person, and, of course, s/he has to be responsible for the children in their group or organisation.

A leader needs to show *initiative*. New and fresh ideas are important for the organisation. The context in which the organisation starts, may change through time: new needs, different interests, new members,... Within your community or municipality, it is important for the organisation to be flexible and to anticipate on changing situations without losing your identity.

Continuity in the group of volunteers is very important for the development and chances of survival for the organisation. Otherwise, the training a volunteer might have received and the experience s/he gained would be lost for the organisation when this volunteer leaves the organisation after some time. The organisation needs volunteers it can rely on.


Leadership implies *availability*. Motivation, good ideas and responsibility are very important, but are useless if the leader does not make time for the organisation. Starting up an organisation asks a lot of effort, and takes a lot of time.

Volunteers and leaders must show tolerance, not only towards different ethnical or religious groups, but also towards those people from a different background or with a different point of view and different ideas that can be found in every organisation. Everyone's opinion is worth listening to and it is in the interest of the organisation to involve everybody in this way. However, always make sure that the opinion of everyone involved in the organisation stroke with the general view and vision of your organisation. (On mission and vision, see the manual *Organisational Management*).

A leader should have authority and authenticity. Young people still need to look for their borders, but there are limits. Leaders should know how far they can go. However, the leader also has to make sure that every member can use his or her specific talent for the benefits of the group. The member will feel appreciated. (See section 3.1 "Members" of this manual.)

Finally, leaders should act as a group. The importance of this group is that not every leader will come up with all the skills that we have described. All the leaders' skills have to be combined in a group. In this group, both male and female leaders (and members) have equal rights. There can be a group leader, but this person is surely not the boss. The whole team of leaders has to make the decisions.

Of course, the volunteers and leaders also have certain expectations to you as an organisation. They need to be rewarded from time to time. It will motivate every individual and the whole group of volunteers, and therefore is a kind of teambuilding. These rewards may be small things or bigger, such as an encouraging tap on the shoulder, a 'thank you' card, a picture of the group with some texts on it, a small dinner, an evening out together or a party especially for them. Finally, we want to suggest you to take a look at our manual about Volunteer Management, which deals with this topic in a more detailed way.



Poland. The volunteer movement *Youth and Health* is a project of the *Association of Mutual Help 'Flandria'* for youth. Here the young volunteers have the opportunity to learn how to organise plays for children during summer camp. This is the way to learn new skills, but also to become more sensitive and compassionate and to integrate in society. Participation in activities of a voluntary movement gives not only opportunity to have a good time, but also to establish friendships.

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
<i>Nobody knows the tasks and what s/he should or can do.</i>	In an organisation, you have to divide the tasks based on personal interest, knowledge, background, skills, and experience. This is the principle of the right (wo)man on the right place.
<i>A task is not suitable for a person.</i>	Discuss it and s/he can choose to do something else and to take other responsibilities in the future. No matter what decision will be made, it is always important not to humiliate the volunteer.
<i>The organisation only has one or just a few leaders.</i>	<p>There are several possibilities to deal with this problem: make your organisation more attractive by making it a little different, convince everybody (mayor, parents, potential members and volunteers,...) that the organisation is worth supporting and participating in, make sure that <i>fun</i> is a keyword in the organisation. In case this only leader really wants to be the only one, try to intrude.</p> <p>In general, when a problem shows up, it is important to talk directly to the people that are involved. This is important not to create misunderstandings that might lead to gossip and even worse situations.</p>

3.3 Recruitment

RECRUITMENT


Recruitment is the way to find people to help you, including volunteers and leaders (see previous section), members (see section 3.1), and other people who want to support the organisation.

Your youth organisation cannot work without leaders, members and other persons who can help you. All these people need to be recruited. In this section, you will find some guidelines to look for possible leaders and members.

In the beginning, when you are starting up your local youth organisation, you need *leaders* to help you. You can ask your friends to become leaders and help you, and they can ask their friends. One of the key things to do is to create a good group and to have fun together. This will create a certain *commitment* with every leader, and this commitment is needed to 'go for it'.

It is quite impossible to start up all alone. You have to divide the responsibilities between some or all of the persons involved. A list with the most important things to be done in the beginning, would include: looking for a location where meetings will take place in the future, looking for support from the mayor, and maybe also support from the director and the teachers of the school, and, searching for money, materials, and, of course, members.

Indeed, without these *members*, the youth organisation cannot survive. There are many ways to recruit members. You can inform about your activities in *schools*, since there, you have all the young people from your community together. This can be done by putting up posters, talking in



Poland. We are recruiting members from school classes. How? By talking with the director of the school and inviting persons to see our work. We invite children, so they can see what kind of games we do, or we invite the parents of the children, so they can have the opportunity get to know our project better and have more trust in us. For us, it is difficult to find children for the camp.

front of classes, and explaining about your activities. Ask support from the teachers, since they have to understand that it is very important for young people to have a youth organisation. If possible, use the *local media* such as a local radio station, newspapers and magazines from other organisations where you can find members for your organisation. In small villages where there are not many young people, you can *invite* everyone to come to your organisation. Inform the *mayor* about your plans, maybe he can support you to make them come true. Also talk to your *friends* about the organisation. They will tell it to someone else, and so on... This is called *mouth-to-mouth promotion*. Make publicity about your organisation by handing out *posters* and spreading *flyers*. Surely contact *other organisations* that also work with your target group, which organise similar activities, or which work in the same municipality or community. Within this network, all kinds of information can be exchanged: common problems, solutions, and interesting contacts, but also the activities each organisation of this network is presenting. You can also co-operate organising activities.

Finally, you can organise a *friend-day* when all the members can bring their friends to the activities, or organise an *open day* when the members can come with friends and parents. That day, organise a lot of animation, and make sure that there is a lot of fun. As always.

A last tip we can give you is to make a visit to the children's houses, since their parents need to know about your project and you need their support. The parents have to be made aware of the benefits of the youth organisation for them and their children.



Kosovo. We are recruiting members from high school. How? By organising meetings, so we know what the people want, what their wishes are, and so that we can give them information. By looking for key persons who are interested to help. By talking with youth. By making publicity on the radio. By distributing flyers. By putting up posters. For us, it is not difficult to recruit members, but it is difficult to keep them.

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
<i>Problems to keep members and leaders in your youth organisation for a long time.</i>	Try to stay as calm as possible, if you do not find members and leaders from the beginning. Everything needs its time.
<i>If you recruited persons with different visions, this can create a lot of discussion between the leaders.</i>	When you recruit persons, be sure that you explain the future leaders what is expected of them. Search very well and with attention the persons you need. Tell new persons what your organisation stands for.
<i>At the beginning when people are helping you, it is possible that they are looking for personal interest.</i>	Find leaders who are interested in the target group. Check at the beginning what their personal motivation to join is. If it is not compatible with the organisation's vision, you can tell them they better not be a leader.
<i>It is possible that you recruit persons and that you realise afterwards that they do not fit in the group.</i>	Check if it's the group's fault or the person's. Try to find a solution for both the group and the person.
<i>The parents of the possible members are not convinced about the importance of allowing their children to come to the youth organisation. In general, you do not find trust in your organisation.</i>	Convince everyone about the importance of the youth organisation (see box "The importance of having a youth organisation").

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A YOUTH ORGANISATION

One way to convince the parents and teachers about the importance of having a youth organisation is to confront them with some strong arguments such as: the children can learn how to communicate with each other, and they can learn to appreciate the qualities of other persons. Convince the school with the same arguments. As soon as the teachers are convinced that it is a good thing to have youth work where young people can communicate and do a lot of things, they certainly will help you to convince the parents.

In a youth organisation, children can develop their capacity to think and do things as they should do. They can learn new things, share information, find their own hobbies, make new friends, learn how to work in group, and learn to respect other opinions.

3.4 Network and contacts

NETWORK

A *network* is the connection between the youth organisation and every person or organisation from outside involved, in order to help, to improve and to support the youth organisation and youth work in general.

CONTACTS

Contacts are the meetings and the relations between the persons who are starting up the youth organisation and other persons who are willing to help them.

Having a network will help you to start, continue and develop your local youth organisation. You will be able to share experiences and ideas. This network can help you to find solutions for your problems, to make your organisation more interesting and to find members and leaders. Especially connections with persons who have a certain influence and who can help you are important for your chances to success. Therefore, contact local authorities and schools. When you need something, for example a location, you should go to the right person who can help you, because discussing things with the right persons is the key to the solution.

You have to choose one of the leaders for taking care of your network and contacts, a leader who knows how to convince others about the importance of your plans. This leader needs some special skills, such as being calm, knowing how to talk with important people, knowing how to respect the others, making the others understand him or her, being diplomatic, and knowing all the details of the project. Networking is not a task for one person. Everybody is responsible for your network. By being friendly or supporting other local organisations, you build a good image for your organisation, since everyone will link you as a leader to your organisation.



Romania. Here the contacts between the leaders and the local authorities are made in different ways. Ana-Maria tells: "Someone of our youth organisation is going to the mayor or the director of the school every time when necessary. The youth organisation's place is in the school, so when we have problems, we are going to the director or teachers. It is very important for the person(s) who is (are) taking care of contacts and network, to be bold and courageous. Everything goes well now, because one of my friends knows the mayor very well. She convinced the mayor that the youth organisation is very good for children."

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
<i>You do not know the people who can have an positive effect on starting up your organisation.</i>	Go to the important people of your town and explain.
<i>You lack money for telephone, fax and other things that you need to communicate.</i>	Try to help yourself with the means that are present. You can always talk to people. Building a network does not necessarily have to cost a lot!
<i>You suffer from a lack of understanding from the influential people who are living in your community, and also from a lack of understanding from your community.</i>	Present your plan and organisation in front of the local community and other persons. This way, they will understand what you want to do, and they will realise that it is very important for young people to have a youth organisation.
<i>You are confronted with local authorities that do not want to collaborate.</i>	Invite people who want to help you to see your work and your activities.
<i>You are opposed to parents who prefer to keep their children at home to work on the field. The children do not realise that they need to play.</i>	Look for other organisations (local, national, or international) that have experience with this.
<i>You simply do not know how to cope with all of this network thing.</i>	Be optimistic! This is very important because without this, you can lose your faith pretty easily!

3.5 Activities

ACTIVITIES

Activities are small and big events for young people, to make them feel good, do pleasant things, have fun, learn new games and to develop their social skills, interests and physical capacities. By playing together, all of these things will be stimulated and developed.

When starting up a youth organisation, *activities* is one of the most important topics to consider and to take care of. First, you have to see for what kind of goal you want to do what kind of activity. Only then, you can start developing activities.

You can do activities of different natures. Among the most common are inside games, group games, individual games, games in the town or city, games in the fields, handcrafts, expression games (e.g. music or theatre), sport, table games, games in the woods, non-competitive games, and a quiz. You can also organise trips or go on a camp with your members. You can, for instance, organise trips around the country, trips near of your local community, and trips around the playing ground place. If you have woods nearby, you can go there and play interesting games about finding some insects or you can hide one of the members and the others have to find him.

Before starting an activity, you need to prepare it: when, where (find a proper place to do the activities), publicity, materials, explanation for the members (they have to understand what you want to do). After the activity, you need to make an evaluation, and you need to prepare a programme for the next meeting.

When you have activities, it is very important to split the children in groups. They can be grouped by age or by game or activity.

LEARN THROUGH PLAYING METHOD

Learn through playing is an internationally known method in which activities are organised and *the game* or *playing* is the central issue. Through the game, young people can grow in their social and psychological development.

A lot of values are passed by playing a game on a regular basis: solidarity, democracy, justice, debate, tolerance, accepting each other, living together, respect,... And also a lot of skills are passed: creativity, fantasy, working together, express yourself, assertive attitude for yourself and others,...

All these things are passed in an subconscious way. Playing is fun and just by playing, children learn these skills and values.

A local youth group is not fixed on one kind of activity. That is what sports, theatre, music and dance clubs are for. The strength of a youth organisation is the mix of these activities.

This does not mean a sports activity cannot be planned, but in a youth movement the competitive part is *not* the central issue. Playing the game and having fun without excluding someone is what matters.

A youth movement can also organise dance or singing activities. The key word - again - is *fun*. You can sing out of key or dance not correctly. It does not matter.

Activities have to take place on a previously announced moment. Mostly, it is for half a day. We call this a *game day*, even when it is just an afternoon, or only before noon,...

GAME DAYS

All the members come together on a game day. Mostly, it is restricted in time (for instance afternoon, evening or before noon). The leading team (two persons or more) is responsible for an age group and stays with this group (e.g. for a whole year). Every age group has their own programme of activities that are suited for their age.

Here is an example of a timing of a game day.

13:30 RECEPTION

Volunteers arrive at the terrain and they are ready to welcome the first members. All the kids are expected to be there at 14:00.

14:00 STARTING MOMENT

This is a general starting moment with all the members. Everybody stands or sits together. The leaders of each group tell the children what activity they are going to do. Possibility to sing a song or a big game with all the age groups together.

14:15 ACTIVITIES

The activities start in the different age groups. Every age group goes to a suitable place to play. For instance: 6-9 year old: handicrafts with natural material (inside), 10-12 year old: wood games (woods), 13-14 year old: team games (fields), 15-16 year old: ball games (court).

16:00 BREAK (optional)

Time to interrupt the activities and drink and/or eat a bit.

16:15 ACTIVITIES

Resuming the activities. It is possible to start a new activity. For instance: 6-9 year olds finished their handicrafts and start laying field games.

16:50 END OF ACTIVITIES AND CLEANING

Leaders and members clean together. 10-12 year olds return from the woods

17:00 GOODBYE AND LEAVING

End of the game day. The members return home. The leaders wave their members goodbye and are ready to answer the parents' questions if there are any.

17:10 SHORT EVALUATION


The leaders clean the last bits. They talk with each other about the game day and make notes about what has to be changed next time for a better organisation. The leaders set a date for the next meeting to set a date for and prepare the next activity. Even better is when the group of leaders has a fixed date to meet.

MATERIAL

If possible, a local youth group should have a few basic materials, such as a ball, chalk, rope, crayons, old paper, scissors and glue.

THE THREE STAGES OF EVERY ACTIVITY

1. The first step is the preparation of the activity. Meet with the leaders who are going to prepare the activities. They will decide what will be done, by whom it will be done, and which materials are needed. You have to prepare the activities at least two days before, since a good preparation is a crucial step to a good activity.
2. The second step is the activity itself. Make sure to find the right activity for the right age, to find the right materials that you need for the activities and to find the right place for the activities and meetings. Invite people to see your activities. This way they will have more trust in you and your organisation and maybe they will support you in the future.
3. The third step is the evaluation of the activity. By evaluating, you can see what was wrong and what was good. You can learn and make sure that next time you will not make the same mistakes. Ask the children how they found it and if they have any suggestions for future activities. Find a place where you can go with the other leaders to have a drink, so you can talk and laugh in an informal way.



Poland. The members from *Flandria*, youth organisation from Poland love children very much. Every time when they have activities, there is happiness and joy. All the members are so happy and that is the reason that every time they have more and more members in the organisation. The young people can find all kind of activities there, e.g. day camps, camps for one day. During these camps, the children can play, eat, have fun, and enjoy the day together with their leaders, because they are one big family.



Kosovo. We have games with children, but we have also courses for the members (computer courses, English courses). For these courses, the members pay a small fee. This is one of the ways to get money for the materials that they need for the activities. Also the children can come there for doing their homework for school. As you can see we are very well organised, the volunteers like this work a lot.

3.6 Motivation

MOTIVATION

Motivation is a wish you feel inside which is important for you and for others and becomes a reason pushing you to create.

Motivation is something that gives you new force and energy to go on with your plan, to realise your objectives, and to put in practice your ideas.

Motivation is all about optimistic thoughts, positive thinking, not giving up fast. People are motivated when they really want and/or like to do something, when they are interested in something, and when they can benefit or learn from something. These three things are all possible in youth work, be it not all in the same proportions.

When you want to start up an organisation, you have to motivate people. This can be done in many ways. These are just some suggestions: create personal development, give support and create friendship, have an open communication, stimulate, know each other's borders (tasks, responsibilities, mental borders), say motivating words such as *thank you* and *well done*, respect each other, do not abuse your authority to others, let everybody take some responsibility and stimulate the talents, explain the beauty of a youth organisation and working together and have fun together. Also make sure that your members have a good time. If they are satisfied, the leaders are too.



Romania. There is a strong relation between volunteers and members. We are friends and we help each other. We are motivated because we know a youth organisation is a very good and noble thing. After meetings we go and have a drink; this can be a motivation.

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
<i>You suffer from wrong internal communication; misunderstandings, and a lack of support within the group. There is a bad delegation of the work to do and of the tasks and responsibility.</i>	Learn from your experience. Get to know each other very well by informal moments; talk with each other. Try to learn from your mistakes.
<i>You have no free time left.</i>	Everyone has to decide for him- or herself what is or is not possible. Be clear in it.
<i>You have difficulties with your or someone else's character. E.g. someone does not like children, someone is lazy.</i>	If people do not like children, they should not be in a youth movement. The basic motivation of a leader is having some interest in playing with children! Try to find out why and try to work on it. Try to reach a common solution.
<i>You do not feel any appreciation for the work you do. There are problems in the group. There is no social network you can rely on.</i>	Our advice: do not give up. When you grow as a movement, people cannot keep on ignoring you. Do not forget that it takes time to build a network.
<i>One of the leaders does not feel good in the group.</i>	Find something s/he is good at. Let them discover new talents. Give compliments to each other. Talk to the person.
<i>You have no creativity.</i>	Brainstorm with the group, learn from each other, visit a library, surf to the internet, read magazines and books, take courses. Do some <i>procreative</i> activities with the leaders; in this kind of activities you can all develop and stimulate your creativity.

3.7 Skills

SKILLS

Skills are your talents, your behaviour, your capacities, and your ability to use all this. Skills are the leader's abilities. It is possible to train your skills by taking courses.

Among the best-known examples of leader skills are initiative, experience, engagement, possibilities, realistic views, creativity, imagination, good ideas, and patience. Some persons have a lot of these skills, but a perfect person does not exist. Different persons with different skills adjust each other and make a group complete. In your organisation, the group of leaders needs to have certain skills. However, not every leader has the same skills. Every leader has got his or her talents and skills: one can invent games, the other one can play songs very well, the third one is good in contacting people, the fourth one is a good organiser, and so on. All you need is a good combination. Then a group can do a lot more than a single individual.

Giving you ready-to-serve tips about skills is quite impossible. However, here are some guidelines. Training skills is a growing process. Either you just are skilled, either you have to develop your skills just by getting experienced in something and by following courses. It is a personal learning process to look for the skills you want to develop.

Personally as a leader, it is important for you to experiment in training skills, e.g. by talking in public. If you are not good at it, be the first to do it and learn from it by evaluation. You should also have an open mind, and be open for every discussion. You need to know how to discuss and how to listen. You need to have faith in the group and the movement, and enjoy your work with a lot of imagination and creativity. Try to be organised and think quickly, but do not take decisions too fast. Communicative skills are very important for you. You have to be spontaneous and



Kosovo. A leader from Shtime tells: "We are like a family. Everyone is taking care of something else. For children, we have computer courses. One of the leaders is taking care of this course; he knows how to work with the computer, so he has this specific skill."

you need patience. You need to be flexible in what you are thinking and doing. You need a little experience as well, and you should work hard to become better. Be responsible and enjoy your task to work with children. Stimulate your skills by taking courses. Learn to accept criticism from others. You can learn a great deal from them and you can grow as a person.

In the group, you need to be open-minded and try to agree with each other. Also here, you need to be responsible, but you should not forget to be spontaneous. Enjoy your work and think quickly. Be friendly when you communicate and help each other. When you promise something, you have to make it true. Dare to take initiative and be willing to co-operate. Team spirit is very important in your group. There has to be some tolerance to give people the chance to develop some skills. Help each other by giving tips and hints, and make sure not to hurt anyone.



Romania. One of the leaders knows how to make Christmas cards or Mother Day cards, and every time when something special happens we are working on this. The parents are very happy for receiving these cards, and not only for that. Every time the children are learning something new; it helps them to discover and develop new skills.

3.8 Training courses

TRAINING COURSES

In training courses, leaders learn more about practical things, such as working with children, teambuilding, how to prepare and present activities and many other things, and values. They learn more about being empathic and understandable.

In your youth organisation, the leaders need to take training courses to improve their skills and abilities and to be together with other people interested in the same training. Exchange is important. Another benefit of a training course is that it will motivate the leaders and will provide them with new energy. Also, following courses can create a network since you meet people from other organisations.

In a training course, you can learn how to deal with children and you can meet new people with whom you share experiences, problems and solutions. You can learn how to create your own group and how to manage it. You will also discover new skills you did not know about.



Kosovo. In December 2000, we, a group of young people from Shtime, decided that we needed a youth organisation in our community. After some time *Shtime Youth Organisation* was born and all the young people and leaders started to discuss about important topics. One of the questions that came out of these discussions was: *do we need courses to learn how to deal with children, to prepare activities and many other things?* The answer was yes, and we decided to give courses for all the leaders from the organisation. We had the opportunity to be trained by international trainers.



Romania. All the youth organisations from all over the country come together in Cluj to take courses for learning how to deal with children, how to explain the activities to the members, why it is important to have a youth organisation, what the main skills of a leader are, new games. We were trained by leaders from Belgian youth organisations.

3.9 Evaluation

EVALUATION

Evaluation is the process of talking, writing, drawing about a topic, past activities or a person to get a clear view about its qualities and problems to learn from them in the future.

There are different kinds of evaluation. The first type is formal evaluation, which takes place during the meeting in a structured way. Therefore, you need a good preparation and there has to be a moderator, which is an objective person who leads the group during the evaluation. The moderator can, for instance, be the co-ordinator, since he knows the problems in the group. The other type of evaluation is of an informal nature. It takes place when talking to others and is not structured. Still, you can learn a lot from this kind of evaluation. Evaluating is not easy. You need to have a good mood in your group, otherwise, things can go wrong. Be sure there is a mood of brotherhood, tolerance and respect towards each other, otherwise, people will feel personally attacked.

Evaluation is important to solve problems as soon as possible, to avoid making the same mistakes again, to have an idea how everybody thinks about something, and to make plans for the future by evaluating the past. The main goal of evaluating is giving constructive critics and bad critics as a lesson for yourself and the whole group of leaders. Everybody makes mistakes, but next time you have to look for a solution so it will not happen again.

You need feedback from everybody, because everybody's vision and opinion is important. Ask the members what they think about the activity. They are your target group and therefore, their opinion is necessary. You can even ask them what activity they would like to do. Maybe they come up with suggestions you had not even thought about. There are some simple techniques to evaluate with young children. You could work with weather signals (sunny = very good, sun with a cloud = good, clouds = mediocre, clouds with rain = bad, dark clouds with heavy rain = very bad). This feedback you need from the other leaders, the members and their parents must concern many things, such as the vision of the group (which can change...), your activities, your ideas, your skills, and, of course, you as a person yourself. Make sure always to evaluate as soon as possible after an activity, an event or the moment you had to deal with a problem.

Finally, do not forget to evaluate your habits and your traditions. Dare to change your traditions when necessary.

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
<i>Besides a training course for leaders, where can somebody learn how to work with children?</i>	Find trainers to train your leaders on different levels (local, national, international). Experienced leaders can organise a course for the new leaders.
<i>You are confronted with participants who do not want to collaborate.</i>	Find motivated leaders who really want to learn new things and become skilled.
<i>There is a lack of rules on a course. This can lead to problems, such as participants who are sleeping till late and staying awake all night, while laughing and disturbing the others by running out during the night. You can also have problems with participants who are phoning during the course or who are not present in time.</i>	When you are preparing a course, formulate also the rules. For example: no use of cell phones during the course, everyone has to be present, and no chewing gum during the course.
<i>Of course, also the trainers may be not prepared well.</i>	Discuss with the trainers, before the course, what they will teach and see if they are prepared. Explain what is expected of them.
<i>Someone is hurt by a remark during the evaluation.</i>	Make clear to the person that has made the remark that evaluating should be constructive.

Some more suggestions:

- Organise courses for your leaders with different topics.
- Organise a course about the skills that are important to a leader.
- Try to create some relaxing evenings for the participants of the course with music, stories, small games, candles, nice discussions or dances.
- Always try to explain in advance the goal of the course as clear as possible!

3.10 Communication and Public Relations

COMMUNICATION

Communication is the process of transmitting a message to somebody else. We consider four basic elements: the *sender* sends the *message* via a certain *medium* to the *receiver*.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations are commonly known in its abbreviated form PR. It is the total of all communication you have outside and inside your organisation. PR is responsible for your image.

In our definition of communication, we have distinguished four main elements that we will discuss here. The *sender* is the person or organisation that wants to transmit a message. In a youth organisation, the sender is mostly the group of leaders. The *message* has to be clear; it should answer questions such as what, when, who, where, why and how, and it should be adjusted to the particular receiver. In your case, this message might be an announcement of a game day. The *medium* is the channel you use to transmit the message; it can be a telephone, an e-mail, a letter, a flyer, a poster, a newsletter; a radio or just a spoken message to someone. The *receiver* is the person the message is addressed to. This can be the members or their parents. For you as a sender, it is very important to approach every type of receiver in a specific way; the message you are transmitting to the members is of a different nature than the message you are transmitting to the parents.

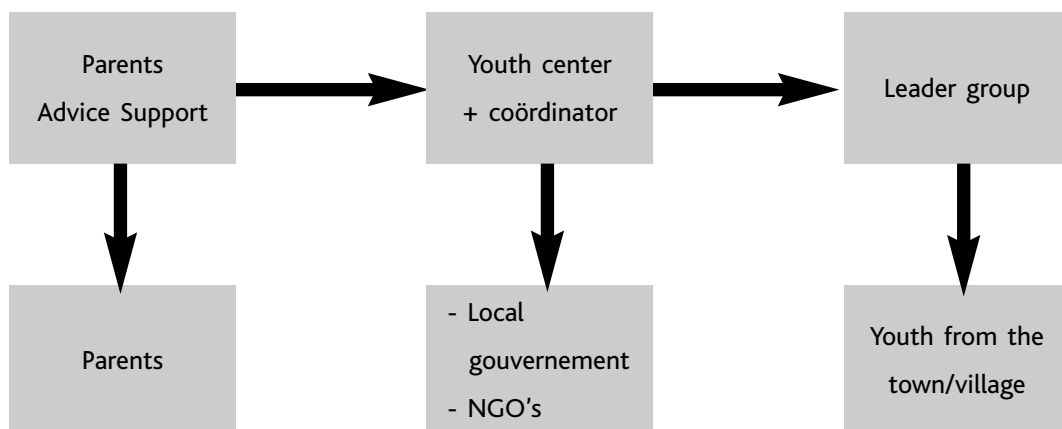
In a youth organisation, we can distinguish *internal* and *external communication*. Internal communication is your communication with the other leaders of your group; you discuss about internal affairs such as the programme, troubles, difficulties, actions, evaluation,... External communication is your communication with others, for instance, the members, the parents, the government,... You can only have good external communication when you have a good internal communication, since everyone of your organisation has to send the same message to the outside world.

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
<i>You are confronted with gossip and misunderstandings. The so-called informal evaluation has become uncontrollable. People keep on insinuating lies about a certain topic that is related to your organisation.</i>	Do not be afraid to make the topic formal, and discuss it on a meeting. Do not forget anyone's privacy and keep the evaluation inside of the group.
<i>The leaders are discussing about the activity in front of the members while the activity is still going on. The members are confused.</i>	Prepare your activity better. Everybody should know what to do at what time and in what way. Try to avoid discussing things in front of the members. You do not want to be considered incompetent.
<i>The members and their parents exaggerate in evaluating the activities.</i>	Every opinion is important, but make sure that you are in control of it. Parents and members can only give advice. The team of leaders is still in charge of the group and the decisions being made.
<i>The leaders live far away from each other, so it is difficult to keep contact.</i>	Make a phone-call, send a copy from the reports of the meeting, and send pictures.
<i>The outside world wants to know what you are doing.</i>	Work on your PR. Show the people what you are doing by e.g. an open activity.
<i>The parents want to know what you are doing.</i>	Make a newsletter (e.g. monthly) to inform the parents.
<i>You suffer from a bad internal communication; the leaders do not listen anymore.</i>	Try a different approach. There are different techniques you can use. Look for them in the library, or just create one yourself.
<i>People have misunderstood a message you have sent.</i>	Try to find the possible problem in your communication scheme; did the misunderstanding occur due to you as a sender, due to a badly formulated message, or due to a wrong medium, or do you only hold the receiver responsible? When you communicate to others, your message has to be clear. Say what you need to say; nothing more, nothing less.

A direct communication is important to avoid misunderstandings. Never forget that a lack of communication is also a message. If you do not communicate with your children, they will not come anymore. If you do not communicate with the parents, they will lose their trust in you and their children may not be allowed to come to you anymore. If you do not communicate with the mayor, you will never get his support.



Kosovo. This may be too big for beginning groups, but you can adjust it to your local situation.



3.11 Vision and Common Values

VISION

Your vision is the general view that everyone in the organisation shares. In general, you all have the same opinions and ideas.

COMMON VALUES

Your common values are the practical application of your vision. These are the values you find important and want to give to the children by playing with them.

Values are mostly not the aspects you talk about first when you are starting up a youth organisation. You often share some values with the other people starting up, but you do not explicitly talk about them. At this stage in the evolution of your organisation, the only vision you explicitly share is that you want to play with children and give them a good time. When your organisation is growing, we might say, your values grow with you. Therefore, it may be good to think and talk about these values. The leaders of a youth organisation should have at least some values in common, otherwise you will have difficulties sooner or later. Make sure that these values are not pushed from the outside; the priest of your village, for instance, cannot tell you that it is better to work only for catholic youngsters, or only for Muslims, or only for protestants, or only for whichever religion.

When you have discussed about your values in your organisation, you should write a vision statement (see manual Organisational Management). This vision statement includes the aspects that are important for the organisation and which every leader can agree with. This statement tells what your organisation is about. You tell for whom the organisation is supposed (both genders or not, age,...), which topics are emphasised in the organisation, and in which area you are located. This vision statement should be made public; this way, young people and their parents can decide whether they want to become members or not. An example of a vision statement is the following: *we are a democratic organisation, open for all youngsters (from 7 till 12 year) from Dumitresti, regardless of race, origin or religion.*

Finally, we want to add some tips and hints to this topic. Of course, every leader of a youth organisation is different; they differ, for instance, in character and way of thinking. So, to come to solutions which are shared by everyone, you need to have discussions. Therefore, a shared vision is important, so that you can always check whether a decision fits in the vision of the organisation or not.

The choice of the values you subscribe in your organisation can differ from country to country and from organisation to organisation. It is the leaders of the particular organisation themselves who choose the values.

Here are some examples of possible values for youth organisations: openness for youngsters from all religions, openness for youngsters from all ethnic origins and no racism, boys and girls are equal and have the same chances (the team leader of your organisation can be a girl or a boy, or you have two team leaders, one of each sex), no political ideology (you do not subscribe the ideas of one political party), solidarity (e.g. invite youngsters from an orphanage or poor youngsters and you do some extra effort to reach them), democracy (e.g. not only the team leader of your youth organisation takes the decisions, but the other leaders have an equal voice, and decisions are taken by consensus), no violence (e.g. do not hit children who do not want to listen).



Romania. Amy has big problems with vision and common values. The reason is because she is the only leader. So there is a lack of common ideas and opinions about activities and meetings with members and leaders, and also a lack of responsibilities. The ones suffering from this far from optimal situation are the children, while they have to be our priority when we want to start a local youth organisation.


3.12 Infrastructure

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is a place where you can do activities with youth and where you can have meetings with volunteers. Infrastructure is also a place where you can keep your materials and spend time with your friends. Location, meeting place.

When you think about a possible infrastructure for your organisation, make sure that you have space both inside and outside. On the one hand, you need room inside because the weather can be bad, and because you need a place to keep your materials. On the other hand, you need space outside to play games when the weather is beautiful. The outside place can be, for instance, a football field, a park, or a school ground. It is not easy to find a location, especially not the inside part, but there are many ways to find a place. In the optimal situation, you have a fixed location; this way the members know where to find you. Find out where you think you can find a suitable location. Try to contact the owner and to make arrangements about using the place. These negotiations may take a lot of time; so do not be fixed on just one location. If the local government (your mayor or council) supports you, they can help you to look for a good place. Maybe they can even offer you a place. Ask for their help! And also, never give up looking for a good location! Do not expect to get the ideal location from the first time. Start with the place you *can* have. After a few years, you can grow and look for a better location.

Never forget that you can play everywhere; not finding a location to store your materials does not mean that you cannot play at all. Just be a little creative, and some solution will turn out.



Romania. Finding a place was very hard for our local organisation in Ladesti. It was difficult because we could not find understanding. We needed a place for our youth organisation, and the local authority, the mayor, said that they did not have a place for us, but that they would look for one. We were very happy, but after one week the happy faces of the leaders were gone. Every day, we got the same answer from the mayor: he was looking for one. We did one important thing: we never gave up and did not lose our hope. After keeping on asking, we have our own place now.

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
<i>You have problems to find a place inside or outside.</i>	Go and ask the director of the school from your community; maybe he has a free classroom.
<i>You do not have an inside space; you do not know where to store your materials and where to have meetings when the weather is bad.</i>	If the school has a sports hall, ask the director to give you that room when the weather is not good enough to play outside.
<i>You have difficulties to find money to rent a place.</i>	Also try to get a location for free. You really do not need that much.
<i>You lack support from your friends, local authorities, etc.</i>	Keep on asking your local community and the mayor every time when they have some free room. Never give up is the key here.



Poland. There was a contest in our local community. The prize for the winner of this contest was a large amount of money. A local organisation organised the contest, and we were the winners. With this money, we could rent a place for our youth organisation.


3.13 Money

MONEY

Money is what you can use to exist and to develop. Money can make your existence more comfortable, but it can never be the main goal of your organisation.

A place to play, leaders and members are enough to start a youth movement, but money can give you more possibilities. Money can only make things more comfortable. However, we do not consider it as a necessity to start, especially not if you have already a location. You do not need money to do activities. There are more than a thousand of activities and games you can do without using money. If funding is a problem, you can always find materials in nature.

To raise funds, you have to show the outside world the quality of your activities. This way, you can get trust from parents and other important persons (see network). Maybe after a while they are interested in sponsoring or paying a small fee for the activities. However, you cannot let your members all your costs, since no-one would show up anymore. You just can ask a small solidarity fee for each activity. This way, you can save some money, which you can use to invest in activities. In this manual, we will not give you a detailed overview of methods of fundraising. We will only give you some suggestions to find money. You can get money from membership fees, course participation fees, own profitable activities, local authorities, regional authorities, sponsorship (maybe you can find some companies who want to give you money for your activities and you can make publicity for them instead), and international partners. It is necessary to have an open bookkeeping. There has to be one person responsible for it. Finally, we recommend you to consult the manual about Organisational Management.



Romania. In Murgesti, for the youth organisation of Istvan, the situation is very difficult. Istvan: "In our organisation, I have to take care of the money. After a lot of thinking, I found a solution. I thought that every parent should be proud of his or her child. Here comes the solution for my problem. I started organising shows with children who come to the youth organisation, and I invited all the parents to see the shows, but to get in, they had to pay a little money. The fee was not high, but it was sufficient to realise our plans and ideas."



Kosovo. We organise courses for the children: computer courses, English courses and others. All the children who want to come to these courses, have to pay a fee. This is one of the ways to get money.

3.14 Timeline

TIMELINE

The timeline of a starting organisation is very simple: you *prepare* the starting up, you have a *first activity*, and from that moment on there is a certain *continuity*.

In the previous sections, we have discussed some important topics for your organisation. In this section, we will try to put them on a timeline.

The *preparation phase* starts with an idea, and this idea has to be worked on. You have to turn it into a model and ask yourself questions, such as: how will you work, what is your target group, and with whom will you lead the organisation. You need to prepare your first activity, which should be amazing, head-blowing, and above all: good. Put a lot of energy in this activity, since it is the first contact of the organisation with your community.

In this phase, you have to find as many volunteers and leaders as possible. The more leaders you get motivated, the more members you can cope with. You have to recruit also other persons who are interested in your organisation and who want to help you. Concerning the network you want to establish, you need to make sure that everybody knows what you want to do and how you want to do it. Everyone and everything needs to be focussed on preparing the first activity of your organisation. Skills are not the most important at this stage; the most important is the motivation to start up your organisation. If your motivation is not sufficient, you are doomed to fail. Extra training for you and the other trainers is not necessary yet. It is too early for evaluating, but make sure that your activity is adjusted for children. A clear communication is indispensable; try to divide the tasks as good as possible. Announce your first activity in any way you can: via flyers, mouth-to-mouth, radio, posters, a little funny action one week before the activity to announce it,.... Almost everything is possible. You do not need a very clear vision statement in the beginning; you share some common values and a vision with the others, but this topic will grow more important when your organisation grows. Infrastructure is not really important yet; just try to find a good location for your first activity. Finally, do not worry about money at this stage.

During the *first activity*, you meet your (possible) members for the first time. Try to make a good impression; be enthusiastic. This is the moment to recruit members: at the end of the day, you can ask the participants to come back the next time. So, have a next date ready by this time! Your communication with everyone should be as positive as possible; be friendly, give everyone a good time, reassure the parents and your community, and have fun. This way, you create an attractive profile for your organisation. Evaluating the first activity will learn you what was good and what was not good; you can find out about everybody's feelings, and whether your leaders want to continue or not.

From this moment on, you find yourself in a stage of *continuity*. This period is a stage of continuity because three elements keep on re-appearing in a fixed order. These elements are preparing the activity, doing the activity, and evaluating the activity.

This is a period in which you try to expand your movement. After your first activity, you should recruit some more members and, if necessary, leaders. Normally, the members who are old enough may become leaders. Hopefully, your members will grow in number; if not, or worse, if the number is diminishing, you should evaluate this topic. In the ideal situation, you have a group of very enthusiast, motivated, collaborating, creative, always present, child-friendly and skilled leaders. If this is not the case, you may have some problems with the volunteer group. Evaluate this topic when necessary. While growing, your movement will have an impact on your community, whether it will be big or small. You interact with other organisations, other people, on different levels. Always be aware that you profile yourself while talking, negotiating or having a meeting with others. Try to keep your image clean and healthy; if this is not the case, look for causes and evaluate this topic. Make sure you have a variety of activities. Be as creative as possible in preparing your activities and try to remember that every member is different and likes different things. You can vary on different levels (see section 3.6 "Activities"). Being a youth leader, your skills will grow, just by having experience. When young leaders need some training, more experienced leaders can guide them. When you need skills you cannot find in your own group, you look for them in other groups or on other levels (local, national, international). Do not think you know everything yourself already. By taking courses, you can develop or even learn skills and attitudes. Beware that the motivation of a leader is uncontrollable. From sceptical over enthusiastic to the *Dark Night...* (see section 2.3 'Life cycle of a youth organisation' in this manual). If one of the leaders does not feel satisfied anymore, the group should intervene and try to get him or her back on track.

While growing, a shared vision and common values become necessary. At the beginning, this was an informal topic, but at this point, it has to become clear. Try to have an evolution. Do not be afraid to throw overboard the old values to replace them by new ones when you feel the time is right for this. However, do not forget your roots either. Look for a healthy balance.

When doing more activities, you need more materials, and more infrastructures. However, more infrastructures mean more problems, and more tasks. Make sure to do something useful with the money. Your members should benefit from it, not some individuals of the leaders.

In this section, we gave a rough overview of the timeline you will experience in your own organisation. In the next sections, we will give you some last tips and suggestions, and some real do's and don'ts.

3.15 Tips and Suggestions

The difference between theory and reality: planning the organisation

- ▶ planning in time
- ▶ planning in activities
- ▶ planning in resources: human (leaders), technical (materials)

The core group - managing the volunteers in a bigger organisation

- ▶ make sure that your organisation is co-ordinated by a core group, which is not
- ▶ too big and which can delegate tasks to a broadened group of people
- ▶ try to find people with specific skills who can give value to the organisation

Local counsellor: with a little help from your friend

- ▶ a trust person
- ▶ a person with specific skills

Connecting with other organisation

- ▶ do not stay on an island with your organisation
- ▶ try to find connections with existing organisations that can strengthen your work and organisation

Public Relations

- ▶ members have to know that you exist and that they are welcome
- ▶ start with clear objectives and ideas
- ▶ look for sponsorship, but also for money from the local community and target group

Finances

- ▶ make the budget as realistic is possible
- ▶ make sure that all the costs are covered by finances (sponsorship, participation fee, money raising activities)

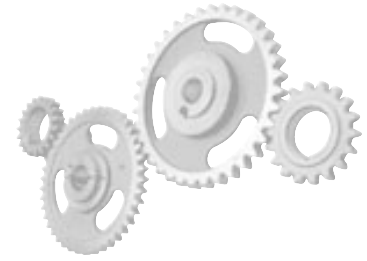
3.16 Do's and Don'ts

DO

- discuss your objectives with your friends, leaders, and local authorities;
- get a second opinion about what you want to do;
- ask yourself if you really want to do it;
- write things down (plans, objectives), and provide them to the persons who can support you in the future;
- make your friends, leaders and target group understand the plan you propose them;
- make a list with what kind of activities you can do;
- check what kind of support you can receive from the local authority;
- put all the activities together in one calendar or plan, and check if it is realistic;
- take time for planning, preparation and evaluation of the activities;
- make a list with all the materials you need for your activities;
- find friends to help you realising your plans;
- do everything for the young people.

DO NOT

- let your project depend on one single activity;
- put too many activities in one single period;
- think that the perfect plan exists;
- overestimate your capacities, since you also need energy and periods to recover;
- just put the activities together hoping that they will build on each other by accident;
- hesitate to review your objectives, plans, if you cannot justify them anymore;
- confuse the objectives with the activities;
- start a youth organisation alone, you need someone to support you;
- start your organisation before talking with influential people of your community;
- get stuck in passivity, fatalism or pessimism.



4 Stories from different youth organisations

In this chapter, we collected some testimonies from youth organisations from Romania, Kosovo, and Poland.

4.1 Romania



This is the story of the youth centre of Ladesti. Ladesti is a small village in the Southwest of Romania, where you can find a lot of young people. We did not have a common space to meet, discuss and feel free. For that reason, four years ago some young people from our village decided to start up a youth organisation, which was a good idea for the community and the young people. We were enthusiastic, happy and thought that everything would be easy and everyone would help us, but it turned out not to be like that. At first, we needed a place for the youth organisation, but no space was available for this kind of activity. This was one step back. But we did not give up. Some of the youngest people went to the mayor every day for a place, but the answer was the same every day *we do not have one but we will look for it*. We were very lucky because a person from the community was helping us; this helping person was the doctor. She went with us to the mayor, and everything was resolved. Finally, we had a place for our youth organisation. At last, we could start! The first thing to do was cleaning the room and make it look nice and familiar for the future members of the organisation.

Besides the problem with the space we had another problem. That problem came when we started doing activities; we had no members in the youth organisation. The parents of the kids from the community preferred to keep the youngest home for working or doing other things. This was another step backwards, but not as badly as the other one. This problem was easier to resolve by talking with children at school and talking with their parents, and with the help of the teachers. In the beginning, there were only a handful of members, but they enjoyed participating in our activities, and step by step, more people showed up. Now, we have two places for the youth centre: one in the school and one in the cultural centre. We have activities every week and all the children are happy.

A young woman is telling: "At the beginning of October 2002, I went to visit a good friend of mine in Dumbrava near Cluj, a very big and beautiful city in Romania. Travelling was difficult : five hours in the bus. She has got a youth organisation in her community, and the main purpose was to visit the organisation, to see what is new and how things are going. I was interested because we have a youth organisation in our village too and I wanted to share some information with her, because it is easier to work when someone gives you new ideas. It was a rainy day and outside it was so cold, but despite this they had activities in the youth centre. That day, I saw happy children. It was the birthday of one of the members and they had a very big party with juice, food and a lot of games. Everything was beautiful, despite all the problems they were facing. In that village, Romanian people, gypsies and Hungarian people are living together. The Romanian and Hungarian parents do not like their children playing with gypsies. They do not consider children as children no matter what religion and faith they have. For me, it was a great pleasure to see happy children from different cultures playing together with happy faces. The youth organisation started three years ago, and that had asked a lot of effort. Now, only one girl is taking care of this organisation; her name is Amy. She is a very good and loving girl. She has very good ideas for the youth activities; one of that was *a surprise party for all the members*. I hope that in the future everything will be okay for their youth organisation, because it is a very strong one and they are doing very good work there."

4.2 Kosovo



1990. In almost all Kosovan municipalities, the youth life was pretty disorganised because of the political situation. There were not a lot of chances for the Kosovan youth to show their creativity and to organise different activities which would be useful for them and for the civil society in general. Finally in 1999, the Kosovan people got their freedom. As a result, a new life started for all the Kosovan inhabitants. The youth of Kosovo started to organise their lives. After the 1999 war, a lot of youth initiatives were taken in a way to fulfil youth needs. One of them was the initiative of the Youth Centre of Shtime.

"Shtime is a small town in Kosovo. It has about 33000 inhabitants, 60 % of them are under 25 years. Even before the war, it was very poor and it was almost impossible to organise any activity for young people. But after the war, this situation had gone even worse; a lot of destroyed houses, schools, and other buildings were the result of the war. Youth activities were totally unthinkable, the only place for the youth to go out and to meet each other were the different bars of the town, which were not comfortable at all for developing any useful activity and to have fun. In December 2000, the four of us - taking into account all abovementioned on one side, and the needs of the youth of Shtime on the other side- started to discuss on very important topics. Some of the questions which resulted out of this discussion were: where is the youth of Shtime, what are they doing, what are their needs, how can the youth of Shtime start any activity or create something new, how can they change this situation which was a real disaster for them? Within our discussion of this small group of friends, the idea submerged of organizing a meeting with a larger group of young interested people. We invited young people from Shtime and villages in the neighbourhood and also youth from the high school in Shtime etc. The meeting was very nice. We identified a lot of needs of the youth, such as a proper location where the youth can organise different games and show their creativity, a lack of infrastructure (a room for the meetings of the youth), a lack of material for activities (musical instruments, sports equipment), a lack of support from the local government for youth activities etc. But in the same meeting, we discovered one very important thing. All the participants were very motivated and willing to try and create something new, to start something, that would be useful for us and the other youth of Shtime. So, the youth resources were there as well as a lot of talent in different fields, such as music, sports, dancing, poetry, drama, and painting. The next meeting was organised after one week. In that meeting, also the municipalities' officers for youth issues and some representatives of the international NGO's which had a psycho-social programme and was dealing with youth issues were invited. The meeting was very important and very fruitful; there have been

discussions about a lot of important issues, and it showed that something could be done. A lot of proposals resulted out of this meeting: e.g. to establish a Youth Centre in Shtime, to find a proper location for the Youth Centre, to find financial support for the materials which were needed to start the activities, to elect the youth representatives (youth leaders) who would be responsible for organising activities, to get in contact with sponsors and the local government about finding support from them, to inform youth about the next meetings or activities (this group later on was named as a Youth Leadership Group - they worked and still work as volunteers). In the same time, this elected youngsters should be respected people from the society, and they should have a lot of knowledge, skills, and have to be motivated to work with youth, etc. Most of the proposals were approved by the participants of the meeting. After this meeting a lot of discussions between the YLG (youth leadership group) and the representatives of sponsors and the local community took place about all the things necessary to start the youthwork in Shtime. Finally, in April 2001, after a lot of effort the YLG and the support of the Municipality and an International NGO (International Medical Corps), Shtime Youth Center became reality. A location was found (ex-secondary school building), the sponsor took care of the materials for the activities. Our youth leaders were trained by international trainers. In the early beginning of the activities, the young people of Shtime were asked a lot of questions about the kind of activities they preferred to do in the Youth Center. After a short period, the activities started. Those were games, sports, music and dancing, arts and drama, health education, etc. As a result, there was a lot of fun, a lot of new friendship and a lot of smiling faces. The dream of the four young people from the start of the story, but also the dream of the most of youngsters from Shtime became reality.

After starting up the activities in the youth centre, a very urgent need was a close cooperation with the parents of the children who took part in the different activities (educational, recreational or game activities) organised in the Youth Centre. The Parent Advisory Board idea came out of the Youth leadership meetings. Its purpose was to inform the community in Shtime about what is going on in the youth centre: what do we offer their children and how can they help the youth centre with organizing activities. The other purposes were to involve the community in planning the future of the Youth Center, to hear their advice and ideas, and to see what they can do about the youth centre's sustainability, to support the youth morally and financially, and, if it's possible, to help the coordinator and the Youth Leadership Group in strategy planning. The Parent Advisory Board has been established in July 2001, after a lot of discussion with parents and other people from community of Shtime. The Parent Advisory Board has seven members who represent the community of Shtime. Two of them are women. During the selection of the PAB members, it was preferred but not necessary for a PAB member to be, for example, a director of the school or a

person who is in a position to support the youth activities (municipal youth officer etc.). PAB meetings are planned every first Monday of the month; the co-ordinator of the youth center is the chairman of the meeting. The members of the Youth Leadership Group are also present in the meeting. The coordinator and YLG members are supposed to use the meetings to discuss the needs of the youth and other problems concerning the Youth Center. The agenda of the meeting has to be prepared by the co-ordinator in cooperation with the YLG. One of the YLG members takes notes about everything being discussed in the meeting. The role of the PAB is very helpful for the Shtime Youth Center. Several times, they support youth activities in different ways (morally and financially). The best example is the internet connection project. In cooperation with the PAB, we found a way to create the internet connection in the youth centre; so, since July 2002, our members but also the non-members can use the internet almost for free. There were several other projects, which have been realized in our Youth Centre by the support of the PAB.”

4.3 Poland



Our first activity was in summer 1997. It was a day camp. A day camp means that children can come to us, and we organise activities that start at 8:30 in the morning and finish around 15:00. During the day, children get breakfast and lunch. The first day camp was for about thirty children from our city, Inowroclaw. The *Social Help Centre* of Inowroclaw appointed the children. They were from families with social problems.

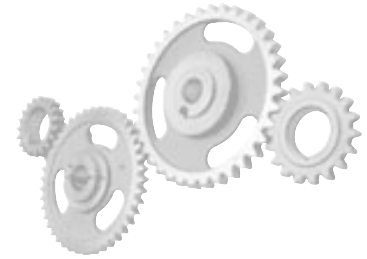
The day camp was organised by *Flandria*, our organisation. We were very inexperienced volunteers. Just a group of willing teens (ten persons) to do something important. We had one head leader, and she was a professional teacher. A group of volunteers from J&G Gent joined us. They had a lot of experience with children before, but Polish children were something brand new for them. We all did this camp as volunteers. The children's smiles and the lot of fun we had were more than enough as a payment for our work. The day camp took two weeks. We used high school as a place for activity, because it was empty during the summer period. The activities that we did were both small and large, both inside the school and outside on the playground and in the big park of Inowroclaw. Volunteers delivered food. Every afternoon, our Belgian friends gave us a kind of course about methods they use during the camps in J&G.

How did we look for new volunteers? We did not have a great recruitment system. After the first day camp, we made some new people come to the secretary's office of our organisation to get to know more about our group. Some of them said: "It is nothing for me," but others wanted to try. Then our organisation gave them small tasks to find if they really were willing to cope with it. Nowadays, the method is almost the same.

How do we motivate the volunteers? Motivation is something very difficult in the very beginning of a group. For our volunteers, it is not a great problem; maybe because we have not so many members. We know each other very well; so, if we notice that someone lost his or her enthusiasm, we try to help. Sometimes people just go away, but new ones come in and that is the meaning of a volunteer's movement. At this level of our group development, we are not able to do it in another way. We try to do our best in the way of giving a lot of opportunities for our volunteers to achieve what they expect. Mostly, just playing with the children is the most rewarding for most of us. It is the primal value in our group, but our members can also find other valuable ways of their work.

How do we reach new children? For the day camps, we have a list of children from the Social Help Centre of Inowroclaw, but for the camps that we do during the summer, we recruit children from the families of *Flandria's* members and also those family friends that like to send their child for the camp. It is not a very formal way. Before any camp or day camp started, we had kind of leaflets (brochures) in which we presented our summer programme.

What were the difficulties? As volunteers, we did not have to solve all formal problems with day camp organisation. All things such as money for the children, food, place for activity, and insurance were fixed by our co-ordinator from the organisation. We were responsible for the children and for the camp's programme. In the beginning for us, volunteers, the most difficult was coping with not enough experience. Sometimes, we did not have ideas for the games. For our group, it is important to do activities that are not very expensive and on the other hand attractive for the children. Lots of children had some problems with hyperactivity, but that is our main target group for the day camps. These are children suffer with ADHD (= Attention Deficiency, Hyperactivity Disorder children who suffer from a serious behaviour disturbance). Not only do these children require special attention but also a considerate and well-adjusted approach. If you take into account that we had no experience of working with the children at all before day camp, it was really not so easy to be good leaders. But we had a lot of support from the Belgian group about the games, planning, timing and relations with the children.



5 Your story

Here does your story fit. You are ready for take-off now. Do not be afraid, and try to realise your plans. If you really want to do something for the children of your community, do it now. As you have read, many people have done it before you, and you are the next in line. You can do it too! Use this manual, and soon you will tell a story as great and wonderful as the ones you just have read! Once again: good luck!

Participants seminar

“Starting Up Local Youth Work 2002”

In October 2002, 32 young people met in Bilsen, Belgium for the seminar “Starting Up Local Youth Work”. It was during this seminar that the basic writing of this manual was done. Herewith you will find the contact information of the several organisations and the names of the participants, sorted by country

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