E - GUIDELINE

INTEGRATING THE DIGITAL INCLUSION IN THE WORK OF NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCILS AND MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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The project “Integrating the Digital Inclusion in the work of National Youth Councils and Member Organizations” aimed to integrate the concept of digitalization and inclusion into youth work for supporting meaningful participation of young people with social, cultural and geographical obstacles in the work of National Youth Councils and member organizations in Eastern and Southern European. With the financial support of the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and organization of the National Assembly of the Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the project achieved empowering youth workers for an inclusive environment in the work of National Youth Councils and youth organizations and establishing interregional partnership for sustainable adaptation of digital inclusion in youth work. This publication was developed within “Integrating the Digital Inclusion in the work of National Youth Councils and Member Organizations” project.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Modern society is a society of high technologies. The Internet has embraced the whole world and all spheres of human life. Online stores make it possible to make purchases without leaving home, online broadcasts allow you to watch TV shows, news programs, etc. Exchange of information, job search, communication between people, recreations are moving into the virtual world today.

Access and use of information and communication technologies impacts individuals and the community as a whole. The technology itself is the tool. A digitally inclusive community is important to economic and workforce development, civic participation, education, healthcare, and public safety.

Digital inclusion is the ability of individuals and groups to access and use information and communication technologies.

Building a digitally inclusive community requires participation and support from all sectors: libraries, community-based organizations, business, government and policy makers. Digital inclusion strategies vary widely. Even projects that seem similar are implemented differently, often to accommodate local populations and utilize existing resources.

The most common reasons an individual would not be an internet user and/or have a home broadband service are cost (of the technology and/or the home broadband service), relevance and lack of digital skills.

Based on the foregoing, the question should be asked: "How often is young people limited to access to certain information, where does the root of this problem come from?". The youth circle, like any other community, is a separate world - where their own jokes, mistakes, stupidities, ideas, beliefs and worldviews, energy, maximalism, goals, dreams and desires are born and live, in other words - the worldview and the formation of one's "I ".

I propose to look at the historical background of this problem. The term digital is centuries old and relates literally and simply to the use of whole numbers, or digits, from 0 to 9. In the 1800s, analog machines allowed for slide-rule and cashier calculations, the representation of time (e.g., clocks), the remote sending and receiving of sound waves (e.g., radio), typewriting, and printing, and used such devices as punch paper cards to create "preprogrammed" loom settings for weaving patterns, computational mathematics, and so forth. In the 1930s and 1940s, these early computers were modified using Claude Shannon's digital electronics, going digital, so to speak, by using binary data in the form of series of Qs and 1s to create computational meaning (Ifrah, 2001). The first computers were used to enhance human ability with regard to computation and calculation (hence the name "computer"), but the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) and other codes later allowed computers to process letters, characters, punctuation, and

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"Building Digital Communities: A Framework for Action", 2011
https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/digital-inclusion.html

other symbols in addition to numerical figures, creating a system wherein text could also be organized and manipulated.

Although early predictions of the rising importance of information in society was not solely an American phenomenon (e.g., Umesao, 1963), the concept of "information poverty" grew from the American dialogue during the second half of the 20th century when serious attention was given to both poverty and information. Researchers such as Daniel Bell (1960) and Fritz Machlup (1962) had recently demonstrated that white-collar information-related services were quickly overtaking blue-collar industrial labor as the mainstays of economic strength in the United States and elsewhere.

Information storage and retrieval had advanced rapidly post-World War II and had created a rich information environment where more information could be accessed by more individuals than any time previously in history, and news and educational resources were available in more formats than ever. Print, radio, and television streamed information to households, workplaces, and community institutions.

Speaking of the present, as we approach 2030, developing digital skills has become critical to professional success. These skills include generic competencies like conducting internet research, online communication via email or instant messaging, the use of professional online platforms, and knowledge of digital financial services.

As advanced digital skills become more important for employment and entrepreneurial success, some experts predict that there might soon be a "talent gap" for workers with advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) competencies. This need for qualified workers is exacerbated by various socioeconomic inequities, such as the lack of Internet access at home.

Lack of digital connectivity is just an initial barrier to obtaining the technological skills and education that young people need to succeed. According to the How Many Children and Youth Have Internet Access at Home report, a joint effort by UNICEF and the ITU, over two-thirds of the world's school-age girls and boys aged 3 to 17 years (1.3 billion children) and 63% of youths aged 15 to 24 years (almost 760 million youths) lack Internet access at home. Globally, some 2.2 billion children and young people aged 25 years or less do not have access to an Internet connection at home.

Access varies widely depending on countries' relative wealth: in high-income countries, 87% of children and young people have an Internet connection at home, but in low-income countries, just 6% do. A young person's access to an Internet connection (and hence digital skill development) often relies on the wealth, income, and living standards of their parents.

For example, Denmark ranks 1st out of the 27 EU Member States in the European Commission's 2021 edition of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). Denmark leads in Connectivity, ranks 2nd in Integration of digital technology and Digital public services and 4th in

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Thompson, Kim M., 1971 - Digital literacy and digital inclusion : information policy and the public library / Kim M. Thompson, Paul T. Jaeger, Natalie Greene Taylor, Mega Subramaniam, and John Carlo Bertot.

Thompson, Kim M., 1971 - Digital literacy and digital inclusion : information policy and the public library / Kim M. Thompson, Paul T. Jaeger, Natalie Greene Taylor, Mega Subramaniam, and John Carlo Bertot.

https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/digital-inclusion-of-youth.aspx

Human capital. Denmark has slightly improved its scores in all DESI dimensions, except for Connectivity which has improve significantly.

Youth and children with access to information and communication technologies are coming of age as digital natives. As early adopters of ICTs, they are uniquely placed to harness the power of digital technologies in new and imaginative ways.

ICTs can enhance education, reduce youth unemployment and promote social and economic development. However, for youth to benefit from this transformative power of ICTs, they must be equipped with a range of digital skills and have affordable access to connectivity.

The world today is home to around 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24, with close to 90 percent of them living in developing countries. In Africa, where the population is 1.2 billion, about 41 per cent of the people are below 15 years old while another 19 per cent are youth between 15 and 24 years old. Youth, in many developed and developing countries, especially girls and young women, face disproportionate exposure to poverty and unemployment.

All stakeholders, including governments, academia, the private sector, and civil society can design strategies which help develop young people's digital skills and support full economic, social, and digital inclusion for all youth. Digital technology can help enhance education, reduce youth unemployment, and promote socioeconomic development, but for youth to benefit from these opportunities, all young people must be equipped with a range of technological skills and have affordable access to connectivity.

Youth have the right to achieve full economic, social and digital inclusion. ICTs are tools through which both young women and men can substantively contribute to, participate in and leverage their social and economic development. Connected to each other like never before, young people want to contribute to their communities, propose innovative solutions and drive social progress and change.

2. GOING DIGITAL

2.1. What is digital transformation?

Digital transformation is understood as a multi-stakeholder and inclusive process encompassing the co-design, implementation and utilization of people-centered digital technologies with and by young people, youth workers and other relevant stakeholders. It changes the way most areas of the youth field operate and describes the evolving integration of digital technologies into social, economic, and cultural processes and structures.

Digital transformation refers to both the practical changes in organisational functioning as well as society's evolving cultural and social norms. The practical application of digital

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https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/80483
https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ITU_Youth_Strategy.pdf
https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/digital-inclusion-of-youth.aspx
https://participationpool.eu/resource-category/digital-transformation/

transformation might include the conversion or adaptation of traditional, non-digital and manual processes into digital processes (e.g., going paperless). The evolution of cultural and social norms can be seen in the way digital technologies influence, for example, modes of self-expression, communication and participation (e.g., the use of social media for youth-led campaigns/projects). Young people, youth workers and other relevant stakeholders require appropriate support (e.g., digital literacy education) in order to participate, benefit from and contribute to digital transformation in Europe.

The fast-paced and disruptive nature of digital transformation means that most (if not all) areas of the youth field are impacted by the possible opportunities and challenges digital transformation might bring about. Opportunities might include, for example, the formation of innovative, cross-cultural and time-efficient digital tools and processes in the youth field. Particularly, pandemic accelerated digital transformation in the work of Youth Councils and youth organizations. The activities and projects in online and hybrid formats became more prominent due to their time-efficient and inclusive nature. On the other hand, challenges might be related to people's lack of digital access or/and skills, which might negatively impact democratic participation and civic space. This is the case when youth with lower life standards have no access to internet or they lack skills to benefit from the opportunities digital transformation offers.

There are specific areas which are the parts of digital transformation:

- **Access**

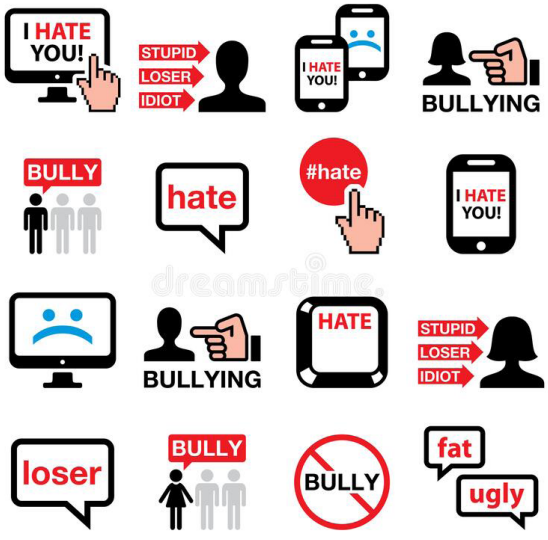
There are specific issues related to access to infrastructure, information and certain tools. Reliable internet access and efficient digital infrastructure are crucial in the youth sector. In order to address any digital inequalities in Europe, all stakeholders should be provided with affordable access to digital devices and access to the internet. Any youth-focused digital transformation efforts should aim to address the needs of some of the socially, economically and digitally excluded youth. To operate within and respond to digital transformation, the European youth field requires an appropriate digital infrastructure that would enable the implementation of the evolving technologies and technological processes (e.g., next-generation technologies such as 5G).

- **Participation**

Sometimes, digital tools facilitated the participation of NGOs in decision and policy-making processes at national level. On the other hand, it has limited the participation of young people who do not have access to digital tools, nor have competences in digital literacy. Therefore, meaningful participation should be central to European efforts to co-create and sustain digital transformative processes in an inclusive, informed and democratic way. Whenever possible, digital transformation efforts should be approached as a multi- stakeholder and inclusive process – encompassing the co-design, implementation and utilisation of people-centred digital technologies with and by young people, youth workers, educators (formal and non-formal), youth workers and other relevant stakeholders. Meaningful and informed participation should be seen as an essential mechanism- to ensure that the youth sector's needs are reflected in all topics concerning digital transformation (e.g., digitalisation of youth work services, online safety, AI-driven innovation). Meaningful and informed participation should also take place at all stages and in all areas of digital transformation.

- **Digital human rights**

In a digital world, human rights evolve. It can have positive and negative effects on the human rights. On one side, digital tools provide new and more efficient ways to advocate human rights and to reach more people. On the other side, it can be used for violation of human rights like hate speech, cyber-bulling, and etc. The ethical considerations of the digital transformation process should be examined (and continually assessed) at all levels of digital transformation (e.g., Europe wide, local projects). Any European wide digital transformation processes should be grounded



in human rights and European values. Young people and youth workers/leaders (along with other relevant stakeholders) should be able to exercise their digital citizenship without surveillance, data profiling and algorithmic manipulation. To achieve this, there should be ongoing dialogue between the stakeholders, European bodies and the private sector to ensure that all technological changes are youth-centred/people-centred and do not entail any risks to young people's human rights to participation, privacy and self-determination.

- **Sustainability**

Sustainability includes an understanding of the protection of resources. With the increase in awareness in the world, the understanding of the protection of the resources is changing day by day. Any digital transformational process should be assessed on its potential environmental impact. The EU's youth sector should aim to consider how/i

projects might affect the climate crisis. Sustainability in digital transformation should also be seen as an approach that aims to create responsive, sustainable and long-lasting digital solutions.

- **Skills**

In order to respond to the challenges (e.g., disinformation, data profiling) and opportunities (e.g., innovative digital education solutions) related to digital transformation, stakeholders might require skills such as critical digital literacy, media literacy, data and AI literacy, and many more. All stakeholders should be supported in obtaining and developing their digital skills and competencies.

Digital transformation also requires an agile mindset, whereby education is not seen as set in stone, but rather as a responsive and adaptable process of life-long learning. Digital transformation processes have a detrimental impact on the rapidly evolving civic, environmental and socio-economic (e.g., new forms of employment) landscapes. The European youth non-formal education settings need to be systematically supported to empower all young people (and all stakeholders) to become confident, conscious and informed citizens, employees and consumers. To this end, youth workers and youth leaders should be supported and motivated in building their capacity and competencies related to digital transformation.

Whether one favors or hates it, it is certain that digital transformation will further enter to our lives including the youth work. Therefore, it is safe to say that digital transformation is the integration of social needs and digital technologies.

2.2. What is social and digital inclusion? More importantly, how does it affect youth work?

According to the United Nations, social inclusion is the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities – that everyone, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential in life. Such efforts include policies and actions that promote equal access of youth to public services as well as enable youth participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Digital inclusion, on the other hand, refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). It includes 5 key elements:

1) affordable, robust broadband internet service;
2) internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user;
3) access to digital literacy training;
4) quality technical support;
5) applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration.

Digital inclusion must evolve as technology advances. It requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional and structural barriers to access and use technology. As it is stated in the Screenagers International Research Project Report in 2016, "…if youth work fails to embrace the use of technology and social media there is a risk of 8becoming outdated and irrelevant to young people who use youth work services". It would therefore be important to have a continuous debate on the future of youth work: how will artificial intelligence, for example, affect cultural phenomena associated with young people and youth work practices?

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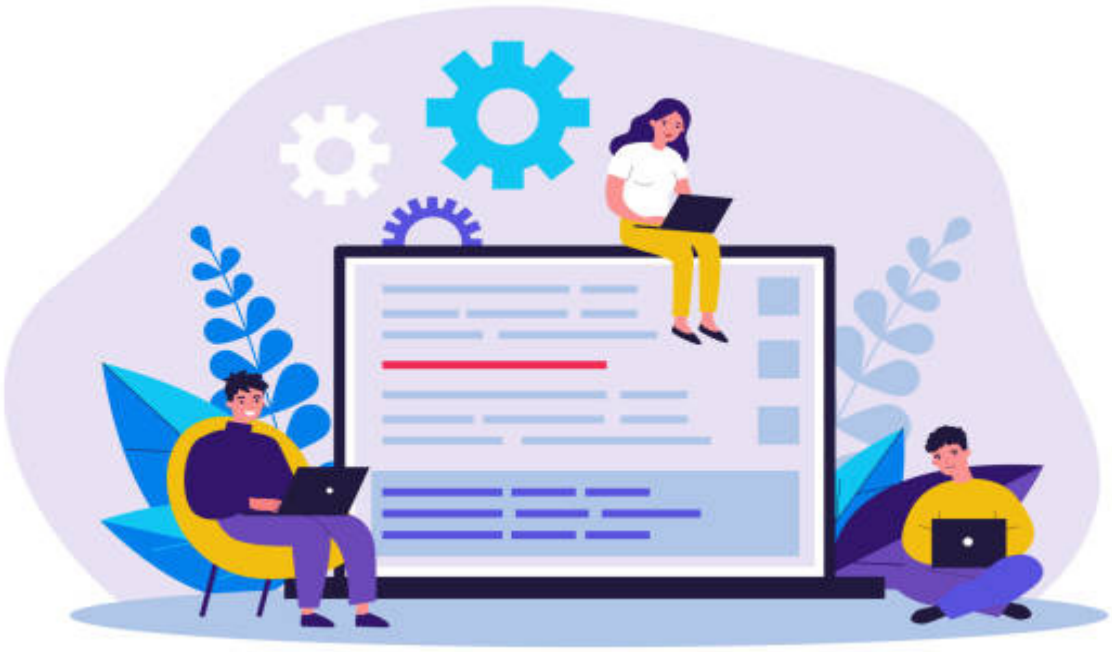
https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/social-integration.html
https://www.digitalinclusion.org/definitions/#:~:text=Digital%20Inclusion%20refers%20to%20the,and%20Communication%20Technologies%20(ICTs).



Secondly, the key role of youth work is to support the empowerment of young people and their capacity to be active in a society that is becoming more digitalized and technologized. To achieve this, youth work must reach into the world of young people's experience, and operate in the environments inhabited by young people, including digital cultures and environments. An even more important role for youth work involves preventing a digital divide between young people, by ensuring that they have access to digital technology, and by enhancing their technology-related skills.

3. APPROACHES TO DIGITAL INCLUSION IN YOUTH COUNCILS

3.1. Capacity Building for National Youth Councils and Youth Organizations of Applying Digital Technology in Their Work

Before the pandemic entered our lives, mass majority of the activities and initiatives by the National Youth Councils (NYCs) were conducted physically. Digital tools and methods had a little part in the day-to-day activities of the youth organization. Although the evolution of the digital technology started before the pandemic, it became a necessity during and post-COVID period as NYCs and youth organizations were forced to transform many of their activities into digital or hybrid format due to the restrictions. It exposed the fact that youth NGOs were not ready for this unexpected, but inevitable change as many of them lacked sufficient amount of digital literacy and competence.

On this regard, NYCs can play an impactful role. They should invest in by equipping their structures (staff, bodies, member organizations) with skills and knowledge, as well as relevant opportunities to effectively use new digital technology and tools in ways that empower them to assume an active role in shaping society online. As a starting point, it is important to develop the capacities of the NYC staff and bodies. The youth workers in the NYC should be involved in the capacity-building trainings, study visits and exchange of experiences with other organizations which possess advanced knowledge and experience in this field. Then, with developed knowledge and ability, NYC staff can

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https://www.verke.org/uploads/2021/02/ced60e23-digitalisation-and-youth-work.pdf

achieve to the digital transformation of their member organizations through initiating new and innovative strategies to integrate the work of their member organizations into digital inclusion. NYCs and youth organizations can also advocate equality of opportunities to the youth from all categories, particularly the ones from disadvantaged background. The reason is although digital inclusion provides effective, innovate and easier access to the resources, not everyone has an access to it, which cause to an exclusion of large part of young people to benefit from digital opportunities. Therefore, it is a responsibility of the youth organizations to advocacy inclusive youth policies to achieve digital inclusion.

3.2. Digital Youth Work

Digital technology or applying it to youth work is not a new phenomenon. However, is the impact and scale of digitalization within society, including young people is becoming more intense. The process of digitalization has also changed the civic skills that will be required among young people in the future, as well as the ways in which young people manage their social relationships. A couple of years later, it would be extremely difficult to find jobs for those who has a little or no knowledge of digital tools. This means that the digitalization of youth work is an absolute requirement for keeping up with the demand of time, and it is no longer appropriate to distinguish digital youth work from face-to-face activities, or treat it as a separate method or branch of youth work. What is important that NYCs, youth organizations and youth workers should focus on integrating their activities into the trends of digital world.

Digital youth work means proactively using or addressing digital media and technology in youth work. It is not a youth work method – digital youth work can be included in any youth work setting (open youth work, youth information and counselling, youth clubs, detached youth work…). Digital youth work has the same goals as youth work in general, and using digital media and technology in youth work should always support these goals. This can happen in face-to-face situations as well as in online environments – or in a mixture of these two. Digital media and technology can be used either as a tool, an activity or a content in youth work. Digital youth work is underpinned by the same ethics, values and principles as youth work. Youth workers in this context refer to both paid and volunteer youth workers.

The example of innovative practices in delivering digital youth work and upskilling youth workers` digital competences can be categorized as the following ones:

- Using social media in sharing information;
- Online youth counselling;
- Supporting digital literacy;
- Enabling participation with digital tools;
- Supporting cultural youth work online;
- Supporting the development of technological skills;
- Using digital games in youth work

There are some important competences that youth workers should possess in order to better function in this field. When looking at the planning, development and implementation of digital youth work activities and projects, it is important to not only focus on the skills related to using digital media but look more broadly at the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to ensure an engaging and meaningful digital youth work experience. An agile mindset is crucial for youth workers to perform their work in our dynamic society. Three dimensions impacting the success of digital youth work are identified as following:

1. Digitalization of society;
2. Organizational digital development;
3. Youth work competences.

3.3. Participatory Methods

The success of the usage of digital tools and methods into the work of National Youth Councils and youth civil society organizations is defined by the users. For prosperous integration of the digital agenda youth organizations should continuously improve and adjust the tools that they use. For this purpose, youth councils and youth organizations should practice participatory methods in order to create and integrate digital tools that are most adjusted to their target group.

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https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fbc18822-07cb-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1

Community mapping as a process provides a clear understanding of the uniqueness of one community or target group, helps better understand the needs and expectations of the targeted community and most importantly it enables space for co-design and cooperation between the council or NGO and their target group. This method helps ensure applicability and usability when designing, introducing or implementing certain technologies in the work of the National youth councils and NGO's, the available resources of the target group should be taken into account.

Focus groups as a participatory tool give useful insight on adapting the different tools and methods used to different target groups. Discussing the integrated tools with different groups of young people helps in utilizing resources and ensuring the needs of specific target groups are met. It helps answer questions such as:

- Is this platform/resource/tool adapted to the needs of the different genders?
- Is it applicable to young people with disabilities?
- Is it accessible to young people from remote areas?
- Should it be in different languages?

Surveys and questionnaires are useful to test the newly implemented tool with the wider general target group. Using this method provides answers to questions such as:

- Is the platform user friendly?
- What should be improved?
- Would you use it?
- Would you recommend it to others?

This helps create useful tweaks to the tools/resources that would make them more accessible and used by young people.

3.4. Rights-Based Approach

The rights-based approach is based on the idea that human rights are universal and inalienable, and that young people are not merely beneficiaries of policies, but active rights-holders, while the governments have the duty to uphold those rights. In the digital sphere, all young people, regardless of their background, place of residence, abilities or other characteristics, should have equal access to digital tools and technology. In accessing their right to education, youth should be exposed to digital literacy, including media literacy, the development of critical thinking and other digital skills.

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4. CASE STUDIES

The case studies are based on the follow-up projects implemented as a part of the "Integrating the Digital Inclusion in the work of National Youth Councils and Member Organizations" project which was financially support by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and organized by the National Assembly of the Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The project aimed to integrate the concept of digitalization and inclusion into youth work for supporting meaningful participation of young people with social, cultural and geographical obstacles in the work of National Youth Councils and member organizations in Eastern and Southern European. The project activities included 5-day seminar in Baku focusing on various aspect of digital inclusion in youth work and interactive discussions and group works. After training phase, follow-up projects and publication of guideline were initiated, as well as partnership between partner organizations were established. In total, 18 youth workers from NYCs and their member organization in Azerbaijan, Croatia, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, Romania, North Macedonia, Moldova and Georgia were involved in the project activities.

Within this project, 6 follow-up activities were implemented by the project participants from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. The main idea of these projects was to provide the youth workers the opportunity to practice the learned experience by applying it in their own country on follow-up projects. They applied tools, methodologies and techniques they were taught by the experienced trainers in this field. The projects were implemented in online, offline and hybrid formats included activities like awareness raising trainings, publication, info session, and development of mobile application.

As a result, in total more than 120 young people directly benefited from these projects. You can see some of these projects below as case studies.

Case study 1: Romania

Title of project: "Manage volunteers easily via Volunteers Factory MobileApp" project
The name of implementing partner (NYC or NGO): Moldavia Cultural Association and FONTIS (Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Youth from Iasi)
Implemented by: Madalin-Gabriel Florea

Context of the project

The issue addressed is to have a mobile application in our group of NGOs where we can add the tasks worked by our volunteers. This would help us later, under the volunteering and youth law, in Romania, to create a certificate of competences for each individual, showing how many hours the volunteer worked, what did he/she do, when and what were the tasks given to him/her. When managing many projects and activities, this task needs a lof of time for every volunteer. By digitalizing and automate this process, we win time and allocate it to other important activities in an NGO, such as project-writing, reporting or implementing new initiatives. Some of the functionalities of this mobile app are:

- Login / register using in-app / Google / Facebook authentication;
- 2 types of accounts – volunteer account and NGO account, with specific profiles and information to be completed;
- NGOs can create tasks which have an ID number. If the volunteers input this ID number in the earning window, he or she will receive the amount of hours worked for that task.
- NGOs can make announcements which will appear to volunteers;
- Volunteers will earn points, experience and unlock badges based on the hours worked;
- Volunteers can generate the certificate of competences with all the done tasks in that NGO, also selecting the timeframe in which he / she wants the tasks to be added from (for example, only from 1 to 10 September 2020). This PDF will be printed then signed and stamped by the NGO and its done, they have a certificate for their experience.

Activities

Activity no. 1: based on the initial architecture, the app had to be finalised using the help from an IT consultant with experience in the field of mobile app development (paid consultancy, invoice attached).

Activity no.2: while we were getting closer to finishing it, project manager had a meeting with another NGOs representatives to gather feedback and start testing on their own. This meeting took place in the House of Students Iasi, an institution specialised in working with youth NGOs in the city.

Activity no.3: moreover, we had a non-formal education festival in the city (organized by us in the 2nd biggest shopping mall – IuliusMall Iasi), where we had a stand with our NGO and 3 activities – a short video presentation, a Kahoot with information about us and an oral questionnaire for receiving feedback after testing our app. Activity no. 4: based on the feedback gathered at activities no. 2 and 3, we finished the app and released it on Play Store/App Store (we bought permission to release, invoices attached).

Activity no. 4: based on the feedback gathered at activities no. 2 and 3, we finished the app and released it on Play Store/App Store (we bought permission to release, invoices attached).

Results

The results achieved are the ones we aimed at the beginning of this project:

- to publish one mobile app for volunteers to be managed by NGOs, with English presentation video here: https://youtu.be/Khmw1ZmTjk4
- to test the app with 3 NGOs who enroll in the app (database screenshot attached);
- to have 50 enrolled users on the app (which we had at Gfest, while testing and collectin feedback to improve the app);

Lessons learned

- A longer time window is needed for certain tasks (therefore, for each deadline there should be an extra deadline – just in case there are delays, COVID restrictions, etc.);
- All devices are important (not everyone can afford smartphones with wider screens);
- We should all automate as many processes as possible in our life, to grow and evolve;
- Even though there are many digital tools available on the Internet, youths tend not to be interested to search and spend time understanding it, if there is not a greater purpose or motivation attached to this activity of learning – for example, with our stand at GFest, we made education cool and attractive, so they listened, but in the classic meeting we had a smaller attention span;
- Collect as much feedback as possible (in an anonymous way) when developing a digital product.

Case study 2: Azerbaijan

Title of project: "Digital Integration and Inclusion 2.0" project
The name of implementing partner (NYC or NGO): The National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Implemented by: Kamilla Mammadova

Context of the project

To start with, the main purposes of the project are to acquaint the participant with the notions of Digital Transformation, Integration and, most important, Digital Inclusion. In order to acquire this knowledge productively they were given an opportunity to take part in topic-based discussions, debates as well as group-workshops. this knowledge productively they were given an opportunity to take part in topic-based discussions, debates as well as group-workshops.

Activities

Talking about the project, the main part of the follow-up was consisted of theoretical knowledge that was presented in the form of entertaning presentation supported by visual aids. For example, based on researching papers participants were introduced with the condition of Digital Inclusion in the World, what challenges people face right now while dealing with this issue. However, it is vital to mention that participants had gained an opportunity to work in groups so to create own ideas and suggestion on mentioned topics. As a sample, participants created e-works (on social medias) to share their impressions on one of three key topics: Digital Integration, Transformation and Inclusion. Another example to illustrate their active involvement was analysing the weak and strong sides of Digital Transformation that Azerbaijan is passing through.

Talking about the participants themselves, the focus group of the follow-up was chosen among young people about 20-25 years who work in different field. Such as, Information Technology, Education, Youth Work, Social Work, Finances and so on. It is vital to mention that participants were chosen by the degree of their involvement and connection with digital space. Participants were highly motivated to participate o their own, however, to increase their motivation warm-up activities as well as sessions for sharing their own e-experience and background were used as the tool for networking by me, as the main facilitator and trainer of the follow-up.

Results

Overall, 17 participants were involved in the project as well 2 people as volunteers during the follow-up. As a result of the training, they have got knowledge and practical tools for further effective acquaintance and work with the digital space.

Initially, the call for follow-up was posted on my personal social medias and shared among my friends, colleagues and peers. Furthermore, the results and feedback of the participants were shared on their social media to spread information about the existence of such project and its usefulness.

Frankly speaking, the initial variant of the project supposed to be built-up on bigger number of participants, however, the high involvement of participants during the training was satisfying enough to conduct and conclude two day's trainings.

Lessons learned

Firstly, I would thank the main organizers as well as donors for setting up the training as well as opportunity to conduct the follow-up on such an actual topic as Digital Integration and Inclusion in the Youth Work.

Secondly, it has taught me vital skills and knowledge on how to be an organizer, facilitator in its mini version. As an example, analyzing the big data and turning it into the laconic and useful information pieces, creating the project proposal, building up the budget, agenda and reflecting on failures and success.

As a conclusion, the project itself was useful however conducting own mini version of the project has improved successfully both personal and professional skills.

Case study 3: Moldova

Title of project: “Digital skill” project
The name of implementing partner (NYC or NGO): NGO “Pharos”
Impemented by: Nicolai Dishli

Context of the project

The project aim is to improve the level of digital literacy of the youth leaders from Ceadir-Lunga district of Moldova. To achieve this goal, the following key objectives were set:

1. Identifying the level of knowledge and needs of young people in the field of digital inclusion

2. Conducting a course of seminars for youth leaders of Ceadir-Lunga rayon to increase the level of knowledge in the field of digital tools that contribute to inclusive education and self-development.

The beneficiaries of the project were 15 youth leaders of Ceadir-lunga district from 16-20 years old.

Activities

The main activities in the project were 2 training sessions on 18-19th of December of 2021.

The first online training was conducted in an online format, where such questions were raised about what structure is better for online training, what opportunities the main online platforms have. Digital tools such as jamboard and kahoot were used.

The second training was conducted in an offline format. This method was chosen as the best for the adoptiтп of the material. The second training was mainly devoted to the problems of digital inclusion in the country, the concept of digital inclusion, what tools and levers exist to ensure digital inclusion in the region. since the second training was conducted offline, game elements were widely used.

There were 15 youth representatives of Ceadir-lunga rayon from 16-20 years old.

Results

15 young people of Ceadir-Lunga district improved their level of knowledge in the field of digital inclusion. They found more in topics such as a problems of digital inclusion in the country, the concept of digital inclusion, what tools and levers exist to ensure digital inclusion in the region, about what structure is better for online training, what opportunities the main online platforms have.

Information about the ongoing training was posted on Facebook and everyone could declare their interest in participating.

Lessons learned

Before starting a project, it is necessary to better understand the needs of the main beneficiaries, which would be more effective in choosing a program. In this regard, a short survey or interview would be methods of learning the needs of the target group.

5. CONCLUSION

The potential of further work on the development and improvement of the integration of the digital youth work can play a significant role for the future of youth work in Europe. There multiple stakeholders such as policy makers, international organizations, NYCs, youth organizations, youth leaders and activists should work collaboratively in accordance with the needs of youth work to achieve digital inclusion in youth sector.

From policy-makers side, it is crucial to recognize and advocate the value of youth work in supporting young people to navigate increasingly digitalized lives, in a way that empowers creativity, self-expression, resilience and youth voice. They should incorporate digital youth work into youth strategies, policy and legislation. Moreover, digitalization should be embedded into professional frameworks for the workforce and invested in capacity building. At the same time, the policy-makers should take into account facilitating cross departmental working in exploring the role and importance of the youth work sector in the digital age. Particularly, to support the youth work sector's needs for platforms to provide appropriate features for educational professional engagement is a necessity. The access of disadvantaged youth to the internet and digital world must be one of the core focuses of the policy-makers in order to contribute to the digital inclusion. If this aspect is not taken into serious consideration, it will contribute to the exclusion, illiteracy, unemployment of disadvantaged youth as digital transformation processes accelerates in every part of the modern world.

On the other hand, NYCs and youth NGOs must understand that youth work approaches, goals, ethics and professional boundaries should be considered in the context of digitalization and valued for their impact. Whether we as youth workers agree or disagree with it, but we are a part of the extremely digitalized processes and we need to act swiftly and accordingly to adapt the demands of the modern world. The youth NGOs should understand that young people don't have innately high digital literacy and skills and they should advocate for it and contribute to this process through their projects. They should embrace iterative processes and learning from failure in evaluation and reporting: encourage experimentation and permit changes to planned activities. Also, they must put efforts to fund staffing, infrastructure, equipment, and regular training for in this regard. Investing on research is also a crucial task of the NYCs and youth organizations to learn about the impact of the digital youth work. NYCs must support staff within funding organizations to understand the value of digital youth work and promote sharing best practice.

Moreover, youth leaders and workers should also advocate digital and inclusive youth work in various spheres and platforms to achieve integration of digitalization into youth sector. In general, the stakeholders individually and collaboratively should play their part in youth policies and activities to sustain and advance digital youth work.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE), composed of 47 member states and more than 800 million people, was established in 1949 to integrate after World War II. The activities of the Council are unique and based on three core values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

European Youth Foundation

Founded in 1972, the European Youth Foundation (EYF) plays a central role in facilitating co-operation between the Council of Europe and young people, their active participation in civil society and political decision-making.

National Council of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (NAYORA)

Founded in 1995, NAYORA, the only confederate structure of youth organizations in Azerbaijan, unites 146 youth organizations around it, becoming a single center of coordination and cooperation of the country's youth and organizations, organizing and ensuring their international integration.

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Youth Foundation.

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