

# Toolkit for the Employment Project *Roadmap for Jobs of the Future*

Dedicated to youth workers, trainers, mentors, and young job seekers



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**Authors:**

This toolkit was created as a part of the project Roadmap for Jobs of the Future.

Three organisations were in charge of preparing this toolkit: HUKI (Croatian Office for Creativity and Innovation), Agora Aveiro and Innovation Attitude centre.

Members who participated in writing this toolkit: Katarina Habek, Lucija Žeger, Branimir Suk, Nataša Gološin, Jasna Vejić, Mirza Avdić and Milena Milićević.

**Proofreaders:**

Domenika Brkić Krajinović and Tijana Katić

**Graphic designer:**

Tibor Miglinci

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## Preface

- The aim of this toolkit
- The context in which the material is written
- Who shall use it?



The future of work attracts attention to many stakeholders and individuals these days.

Some of the frequently discussed questions on social media and in face-to-face conversations are: **How we work?** and **Where / in which environments do we work?** and **What are career growth opportunities in volatile times?**

In the 2020s and as we write this in 2025 it is apparent: the pandemic, volatile markets and the economic challenges have accelerated the pace of change for many professionals. For example, in the US the trend “The Great Resignation” was coined, which affected many individuals in Europe and other areas.<sup>1</sup> During the beginning of the 2021 and COVID-19 pandemic, many employees voluntarily resigned from their current jobs in the search of better-paid opportunities and greater meaning.

With the rise of Artificial Intelligence for a wider job market in the 2020s, many people have decided to upgrade those skills for their next role. Also, the increased cost of living, urged proactive people to build additional income streams; such as start a freelance or project jobs in addition to their 9-to-5.

On the positive note, this may be the first time in history that employees feel these two emotions: employees can have the upper hand in negotiating conditions with companies and they can change their career circumstances if they do not feel appreciated.

The future of work is characterized by flexibility, technology integration, continuous learning, and a focus on well-being. This reminds us of the meme which explained that “pandemic (and later economic crisis) were the chief digital transformation officers for many companies and individuals.” These new circumstances showed to organisations and employees that a lot will have to change: **How we work? For what value that we provide are we getting paid? and Which technology tools can help us achieve our goals?**

Under the Erasmus+ project “*The Roadmap for Jobs of the Future*”, our project team has been dealing with the future of work topics from December 2023 until July 2025 when the project was implemented. Our interest and the need for the project was also mapped during the preparation of the application in early 2023 and earlier during our activities with younger people.

This Erasmus+ project was carried out in the consortium of three organizations: Innovation Attitude Centre from Serbia (**INAT centre**), The Croatian Office for Creativity and Innovation from Croatia (**HUKI**) and **Agora Aveiro** from Portugal.

<sup>1</sup> Serenko, A. <https://www.aserenko.com/papers/SerenkoTheGreatResignation.pdf>

The goal of the project was enhancing organizations' capacities in the project consortium in order to raise the quality level of work in the field of strengthening the employability of young people.

**Three specific objectives** also had to be met:

1. to promote the network exchange of knowledge, the best practices and the European perspectives among youth workers and organizations in the consortium in order to improve their everyday operations and achieve greater impact to their beneficiaries;
2. to equip and empower youth workers for supporting young people to find their way in today's labour market and improve their employability;
3. to create better career prospects for young people with fewer opportunities by identifying new ways of cooperating with diverse stakeholders in the field of employing young people.

This toolkit, created by our team, which you are reading right now is one of the major outcomes in the project "*The Roadmap for Jobs of the Future*". We wrote it from our perspective of youth workers and in accordance with the feedback and needs of youth workers that we consulted in Croatia, Portugal and Serbia.

Since this material was written during global times of uncertainty, we are hopeful that it can help young people.

Let's shed a light of hope regarding future prosperity, solid jobs and resilience.

Our intention is that the toolkit will empower youth workers and organisations to increase their competences regarding the future of work as they help young people (beneficiaries) in their career and employability projects.

Likewise, the expertise and practical experience of our and partner organizations in working with young people, especially the youth with fewer opportunities, was presented in this toolkit. The project team created a hands-on toolkit as we considered the current trends in the field of youth work as well as aspects of the labour market that will be important in the close future.

This toolkit is dedicated to the youth organisations, especially the ones in our partner networks, and also youth organisations from different European countries. These organisations deliver programs to youth aged 18-25, the youth at the end of or after high school, at university, during the gap year or in vocational training or working. Also, the toolkit attempts to help NEET youth (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), as well as the young people from smaller towns (outside of university cities) who are striving to obtain education and/or to support their family. Other potential toolkit users are organisations that help the youth at personal crossroads who are dissatisfied with their current profession or job.

Although the entire toolkit is useful for the young people with fewer opportunities, they may especially benefit from examples and frameworks indicated in these chapters: Chapter 2 about Work and life balance; Chapter 3 about Workplace rights and advocacy; Chapter 4 where Stakeholders for employment projects are listed. Also, young people with fewer opportunities can directly apply Chapter 7 related to Volunteering as a step towards a dream job and Chapter 8 which mentions Lifelong education strategies for improving inclusion.

Unless listed otherwise, the toolkit is applicable for youth workers and young people from all backgrounds who are determined about their career growth.

In addition to youth workers, these stakeholders will also find the toolkit useful: youth employment service leads, educators, programme managers, as well as practitioners and organizations focused on youth development and employment.

Organizations, associations and individuals that are involved in youth education programmes can share good practices and thus improve their capacity in working with youth. They are encouraged to do so both in an online and offline setting, when they use the toolkit.

The toolkit is stressing new tools and methods on the employability of young people and to increase quality, innovation and recognition of youth work. The main purpose of this material is to present new approaches, methods and tools to reach young people who find it hard to get access to better career opportunities.

The guide was developed through a review and support by 18 youth associations and CSOs engaged in working with youth from Croatia, Portugal, and Serbia. The aim of conversations with youth associations and CSOs was to get prompt answers about: youth employment in remote areas and outside of major university cities. Likewise, how did associations and CSOs succeed in adjusting their work in the last years considering COVID-19 situation? and Which career development content is the most relevant for youth beneficiaries in their respective communities? In this way, the project team got feedback across several countries on how to develop this toolkit, as a starting point for youth and youth workers.

In terms of the content, the toolkit provides in-depth insights into **nine identified topics and nine distinct chapters**:

1. Intro to the 21<sup>st</sup> century market jobs
2. Work life balance and well-being
3. Workplace rights and advocacy
4. Stakeholders that young people work with
5. Project management and capacity building for youth organisations
6. Job search strategies and personal branding for youth beneficiaries
7. Volunteering as a career-development phase
8. Life-long education and skill development
9. Digital literacy competencies

**It should be noted:** the toolkit is not intended to provide jobs for youth, per se. This material should help youth workers and their beneficiaries develop skills and implement strategies which are necessary to navigate the world of work. The toolkit is only useful if its readers will go beyond understanding the content – they should do what they have read.

By doing so, the toolkit will enable youth to comprehend better the changes happening now and “take their seat at the table”. Then with reviewing this material multiple times and continuing to learn more about the topic, the youth workers will get insights about future changes in the fields of employment and career transitions for youth and young adults.

Enjoy reading this toolkit that was curated with love and dedication!

Cheering for you,  
The team of the Erasmus+ project “The Roadmap for Jobs of the Future”

## Chapter 1:

# Introduction to the 21<sup>st</sup>–century job market



- How has the job market changed over the last 5 to 25 years?
- Which trends can benefit you as a young person?
- What key aspects of job markets in Croatia, Portugal and Serbia should you keep in mind?

The world of work has been changing rapidly in the first three decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In previous generations, such as Baby Boomers (parents of Millennials), many people spent their entire careers with a single employer. Yet the single employer and **jobs for life** are no longer a standard. This shift is noticed not only by recruiters and HR specialists but also by the current workforce and young people entering the career world.

Let's explore some of the major trends and forces shaping the nature of work.

Flexibility, technology, rapid information exchange, continuous learning, and an emphasis on well-being are some of the key factors influencing the workforce of today. Additionally, digitally savvy professionals from older generations who prefer remote work have at least several traits in common with young Gen Z and Millennial employees.

What are some **common denominators** among **these digital workers** across **multiple generations**?

They seek greater autonomy in work and embrace demographic changes, technological advancements and working in global teams across multiple time zones. Likewise, they have proactive attitudes toward career transitions: changing professions, upskilling, reskilling and starting fresh.

In this toolkit and the “**The Roadmap for Jobs of the Future**” project, our team aims to provide valuable information for youth workers designing employment programs and training for young people. These individuals may be only entering the job market or seeking a career change. Likewise, we have mapped out how the evolving world of work impacts young people with fewer opportunities.

It is important to acknowledge that the job market in the first quarter of this century has a couple of components and factors inevitably influencing both those entering the job market for the first time or those considering a new career path.

First of all, **technology development** and the rise of **remote work** are transforming workplace culture every day. The modern job market is becoming more flexible and global, with work frequently relocating across different locations and many services being outsourced to other countries. As a result, the workforce has the flexibility to work from diverse locations or even while travelling. In some cases, the boundaries between work, personal life, and travel appear to be blending into a single, interconnected experience.



Secondly, **skills** and **education** serve as transformative tools for change. Jobs that were unimaginable a few decades ago have become a reality due to technological advancements and workforce development, including lifelong learning, skillbuilding and knowledge sharing.

Today's generations navigate a world where **agility and adaptability** are essential for career success. According to *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs* article, "In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, unskilled and semi-skilled jobs that produce a living wage will continue to disappear. Jobs based on knowledge, or skill sets of specific knowledge, will be the key to economic opportunity. Most workers will need both formal education and practical experience for better jobs in this society."<sup>1</sup>

The third factor shaping the job market, or even disrupting it, is **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**. AI is creating new jobs and activities, not only for those who know how to build complex AI but also for those capable of using AI-powered tools.

At the same time, AI is leading to job displacement, especially in industries where automation and operational efficiency are prioritized for time-consuming or repetitive tasks. As readers of this toolkit, you may have noticed similar trends in your own business community or youth work activities. **How has AI reshaped your environment?**

Furthermore, **digital transformation** has impacted businesses of all sizes, influencing both current employees and those about to enter the job market. Successfully implemented digital transformation projects allow companies to maintain their operational efficiency. They can also benefit from innovative business models and increase revenue from digital channels.

However, digital transformation also presents some challenges, such as job loss for low-skilled workers who are unable or unwilling to re-skill or upskill.

At the educational system level, some workers and institutions struggle to keep pace with evolving skill requirements. Also, as digital transformation raises workplace standards, companies and communities must address the talent gap in STEM fields. In other words, they need to deal with a shortage of skilled professionals in science, technology, engineering, and math.

The fifth factor to consider is the **systematic support for the workforce**, particularly for **emerging talents** and the **unemployed**. For young people, certain risks are more prevalent than in other demographic groups.

For example, during volatile economic periods or recessions, a significant number of young people become inactive and at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training). There are multiple reasons for that: a complicated transition from education to the labour market, unfavorable economic conditions such as low demand and high unemployment rates, or a lack of information about career opportunities. Likewise, young people go through multiple transitions early in life, moving between different phases of education and into the labour market.

This toolkit provides insights into understanding the current job market in EU countries such as Portugal and Croatia, as well as Serbia, an EU candidate country.

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<sup>1</sup> Cobert, R. A. (2005) *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs*, published in *The Economic Development Journal*, assessed March 10, 2025: [https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/Economic%20Development%20Journal/EDJ\\_05\\_Fall\\_21st\\_Century\\_Jobs.pdf](https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/Economic%20Development%20Journal/EDJ_05_Fall_21st_Century_Jobs.pdf)



According to research conducted in **Serbia**, top job opportunities in the country are related to the IT sector (software and technology development, cybersecurity and AI and machine learning), followed by healthcare and medical services (mental health counsellors and geriatric care specialists), and renewable energy sector (solar panel technicians, biofuel researchers). These professions in Serbia are also in high demand: digital marketing (data analysts, social media managers, SEO, and content creators) and financial technology (blockchain developers, digital banking experts and cryptocurrency specialists).<sup>2</sup>

The biggest challenge for youth in the Serbian job market is securing their first job. This is largely due to the lack of work experience compared to older unemployed individuals, leaving them unprepared to navigate the demands of the modern labor market.

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the youth unemployment rate (15–24) in the last quarter of 2024 stands at 25.8%.<sup>3</sup> In response to this, the Government of Serbia is making efforts to improve the position of young people in the labor market, with initiatives such as promoting youth entrepreneurship. Employment measures aimed at better positioning youth include professional orientation and career guidance, additional education and training, as well as active employment policies for people with disabilities.



The **job market in Croatia** is characterized by a significant number of foreign workers, which has led to a transformation of the labor market. The areas offering the most potential for young people to progress in their careers and develop new skills include the IT sector (software development, data scientists, project managers), marketing managers, tourism workers, human resource managers, financial and business analysts, and cybersecurity experts.<sup>4</sup>

A youth study conducted in 2024 by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung<sup>5</sup> revealed that young people who are in the process of securing employment or searching for a suitable job are a vulnerable social group. There are several factors contributing to this: the increasing flexibility of the labour market, the expansion of higher education opportunities (reflected in the growth of the number of higher education institutions and the share of the population possessing degrees of higher education), along with a limited number of jobs mainly due to structural unemployment. In 2023, at the EU-27 level, the unemployment rate for young people in the age group of 15 to 29 years was 11.2%, while in Croatia it was slightly higher and standing at 13%.<sup>6</sup>



The **job market in Portugal** is characterised by high unemployment rates among young people seeking their first job. Approximately 50% of young people (ages 15–29), or 805,000, were actively participating in the labour market being either employed or unemployed. Despite the pandemic, the NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) rate for young people fell from 13.2% to 8.5% between 2015 and 2022. By 2022, there were 138,900 young NEETs

<sup>2</sup> <https://atozserwisplus.com/blog/Top-10-Job-Opportunities-in-Serbia-for-2025>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.stat.gov.rs/en-us/oblasti/trziste-rada/anketa-o-radnoj-snazi/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thinkeurope.de/blog/top-10-most-in-demand-jobs-in-croatia>

<sup>5</sup> <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kroatien/21496-20241212.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kroatien/21496-20241212.pdf>

in Portugal, 8.4% of whom had a migrant background. Among these NEETs, around 77,000 were unemployed (including re-entrants), and 61,800 were inactive (outside the labor market).<sup>7</sup>

During the pandemic, there was a significant increase in remote working practices. Despite a gradual decrease, remote working still accounted for 19% of the total employed population in the first quarter of 2023, particularly in the IT, financial and insurance sectors.

Jobs that value soft skills—such as critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and tech skills—are highly sought after in Portugal, especially in fields like customer service, sales, digital marketing, and IT. Digital marketing roles in Portugal include positions like Digital Marketing Specialist, Media Optimization Specialist, Online Marketing Expert, and Campaign Specialist. Additionally, there are ample job opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sectors, as well as in international companies and language schools.

Entering the labor market is a significant step for young people. Thus, it is crucial that they undergo quality preparation before starting their careers.

This preparation involves learning how to effectively present their skills and experiences to potential employers. Also, the youth should develop self-reflection skills to better understand what they need to do to prepare for specific jobs and what will employers expect from them.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_920758.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_920758.pdf)

## Chapter 2:

# Work-life balance and well-being



- ❑ How to overcome challenges and build resilience when looking for a job?
- ❑ What are some mental health resources for job seekers?
- ❑ In what ways can you, as a youth worker, support young unemployed people?

Mental health and well-being have become central topics in recent years, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, unprecedented changes to daily life took place, bringing about widespread stress, anxiety, and uncertainty that impacted individuals across all age groups. For young people, the pandemic disrupted education, social development, and career opportunities, creating an environment where mental health challenges were amplified.

Recognizing the importance of **mental well-being** has remained a priority ever since, translating into fulfilling the needs for sustained support systems, coping strategies, and community engagement.

One key component of well-being for young adults is maintaining a healthy work-life balance. This is especially critical for youth workers and young people navigating the job market. Achieving this balance involves managing professional and personal responsibilities in a way that fosters mental and physical health. It includes setting boundaries, managing stress, and ensuring time for personal relationships and relaxation.

Failing to achieve this balance can lead to burnout, diminished productivity, and a negative impact on overall health.

This chapter explores the interplay between **mental health, well-being, and work-life balance**. It focuses on two crucial areas:

- » the challenges faced by unemployed youth in their job-seeking journey and
- » the strategies that youth workers can employ to manage their demanding roles while supporting young people.

Addressing these interconnected issues builds a supportive environment where young people can thrive both professionally and personally.

## Challenges of young people when actively looking for a job

Actively looking for a job is a challenging process for everyone: especially for young people who are going through it for the first time and those with fewer opportunities. It often involves not receiving responses to applications, undergoing numerous interviews, and facing rejections for various reasons.

These situations are normal and common for everyone looking for work. When they occur, it is important to learn how to deal with the stress related to failure. It is also important not

to give up, and to believe that we do have the skills and competencies needed to find a job and performing well once we secure it.

Although each person's job-seeking experience is unique, and what works for one person can be entirely wrong for another one, here is some advice and strategies that one may find helpful.

## Manage your time properly

As a young person entering the job market, it's important to experiment with different strategies. After a while you'll realize that job searching is a project in itself. Indeed, balancing job searching, upskilling, and personal life requires effective time management. Without structure, it's easy to feel overwhelmed or unproductive. Your key to success is prioritising the most important tasks, organising your time, and maintaining healthy boundaries.

**Start by setting a structured daily routine.** Dedicate time in your day for browsing job postings, refining your CV, sending applications and other activities related to job search. Try to be present and fully dedicated to your search at this time. Treat this like a work schedule to maintain consistency and avoid burnout. Also, decide how many times you will work on finding the job throughout the week. Would you dedicate at least 2–3 days a week to your job search?

Use productivity techniques such as the Pomodoro method (working in focused intervals) or time-blocking (dedicating set hours to different activities). Apps like Trello, Todoist or Google Calendar can help track tasks and deadlines.

**Upskilling should complement your job search** rather than replace it. Identify courses or workshops that align with your career goals and integrate learning into your schedule. Dedicating as little as 30 minutes a day to a new skill can make a significant difference. You can find some resources here:



<https://www.udemy.com/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/learning/>

<https://www.coursera.org/>

<https://www.edx.org/>

<https://www.skillshare.com/>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/>

<https://www.khanacademy.org/>

<https://upskillcourses.com/>

Finally, review your progress regularly. Adjust your schedule based on what works best, balancing professional growth and personal well-being. Managing time effectively leads to a healthier, more sustainable approach to career development.

## Acknowledge your needs and emotions

Prioritising self-care and personal well-being is essential during a job search. Make time for activities that bring joy and relaxation, such as hobbies, exercise, and socialising. Engaging in such activities reduces the likelihood of burnout and sustains motivation and overall productivity.

Remember that **your employment status** does **not** define **your worth**. You still have fundamental needs for rest, connection, and enjoyment. By taking intentional breaks, you can recharge, reduce stress, and maintain perspective. Spending quality time with loved ones provides emotional support, making the job-seeking process less overwhelming.

**Establish clear boundaries to maintain balance.** Avoid overcommitting to any particular aspect of your routine while neglecting others. If upskilling becomes too demanding, adjust your learning pace. If job searching feels mentally exhausting, step back and allow yourself moments to reset.

Finally, acknowledge and accept your emotions. It's natural to experience frustration, self-doubt, or anxiety, but bottling up emotions can be counterproductive. Openly discuss your feelings: with friends, mentors, or support groups. Such moments of being seen and heard can provide relief and perspective. Recognising and managing emotions effectively fosters resilience, ensuring you stay motivated and focused on long-term goals.

## How to cope with rejection and maintain motivation?

Job searching comes with ups and downs, and rejection is a natural part of the process. While it can be discouraging, shifting your perspective can help. **Rejection does not define your worth** — it's simply a part of finding the right opportunity. Instead of seeing rejection as a failure, view it as a learning experience. Seek feedback when possible, refine your approach, and keep moving forward.

Remember, you are not alone in this situation. Try to find support from people close to you, people with a similar educational background, experts, associations from your local community, career counseling (sometimes available in public institutions), etc. Surrounding yourself with supportive people can help you stay focused and positive. If you need help, the best thing you can do is to ask for it!

To stay motivated, set realistic goals and celebrate small wins, whether it's refining your CV, expanding your network, or landing an interview. Tracking progress, even small steps, reinforces a sense of achievement. Stay flexible and adaptable. If one strategy isn't working, consider alternative career paths, freelancing, or additional training. Volunteering or internships can also help build experience while keeping you engaged in a professional setting.

Finally, be kind to yourself. It's normal to feel disappointed, but don't let one rejection define your self-worth. Keep pushing forward, and remember that persistence often leads to success. Try being **realistically optimistic**: understand the importance of your hard work; hope for good outcomes; and actively work towards realising your goals, while accepting the possibility of negative or non-desired outcomes. Remember that setbacks are a part of the journey toward achieving your goals.

## Mental health resources for job seekers

Job searching can take an emotional toll, leading to stress, anxiety, and self-doubt. Fortunately, various mental health resources can support job seekers during challenging times. Here is an overview of mental health resources:

- **Online counseling services:** Platforms like BetterHelp, Talkspace, or national mental health hotlines offer virtual therapy, making professional support accessible from anywhere.

Many governments and NGOs also provide free mental health resources tailored for unemployed individuals.

Here are some online resources that can be helpful in the context of job-seeking-related stress:



### Better Help

<https://www.betterhelp.com/>

An online counseling platform connecting users with licensed therapists, offering flexible communication methods such as messaging, phone, and video calls.

### 7 Cups

<https://www.7cups.com/>

Provides free, anonymous online text chat with trained listeners and licensed therapists, along with community forums and self-help guides.

### DOTS Mentor

<https://dots.mentor-split.hr>

A Croatian initiative providing resources and support for managing trauma and stress, which can be particularly beneficial for job seekers facing challenges.

### Pričajmo o tome

<http://www.pricajmootome.rs/index.php/zakazite-savetovanje/email>

A Serbian community of psychotherapists and psychologists where you can book a free session as a student.

### Resurs Centar

<https://rc.gradjanske.org/besplatna-psiholoska-podrska/>

Free psychological help for adults, students and parents from Serbia will be available starting in March 2025 and beyond. It will be focused on psychological well-being, job uncertainty, and life transitions.

- **Reach out to career coaching and support groups:** Organizations such as local job centers, career hubs, or online forums (e.g. LinkedIn groups, Meetup communities) offer guidance, encouragement, and a sense of belonging.

By engaging in these networks, you are less likely to feel isolated. Plus, you are getting practical job-seeking strategies from those who have completed their career transitions or are navigating the same journey as you.

- **Try out mindfulness and stress reduction apps.** Our favourites are:



<https://www.headspace.com/>

<https://www.calm.com/>

<https://insighttimer.com/>

With regular mindfulness practice, you will gradually develop a daily relaxation routine that helps reduce stress and anxiety.

Keep in mind that regular and consistent practice leads to building a new habit – the feel-good routine. Research suggests that building a new habit can take around 21 days, with additional weeks needed for it to become a lasting part of your daily life.<sup>1</sup>

Let the benefits of these exercises inspire you to stay consistent. With regular relaxation practice, you are more likely to improve focus, build emotional resilience and reduce job-search-related stress.

- **Participate in exercise and well-being programs:** Physical activity is a proven mood booster. Many community centers offer free or low-cost fitness programs, which can also be a great way to socialise and stay active during unemployment.

If you are a student, there may be discounted fees for training in gyms and other fitness programs. Check for special offers in your neighborhood gyms, fitness centers near your university or workplace, or through online fitness apps.

- **Workshops and upskilling programs:** Learning new skills not only boosts your employability but enhances your mental well-being. You could use numerous learning models: online platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and others mentioned in Chapter 6.

Likewise, Erasmus+ programs offer free or affordable courses, keeping job seekers engaged and motivated. It is also a fantastic opportunity to expand your network while learning and travelling. **More about Erasmus+ programs and other EU initiatives for young people can be found in Chapter 7 dedicated to volunteering.**

To benefit from workshops and upskilling programs, you could connect with local co-working spaces, innovation hubs, Career centres at faculties, Offices for Employment

<sup>1</sup> Calm Editorial Team. "How Long Does It Take to Create a Habit (and How to Do It)? – Calm Blog." Calm Blog, 8 Apr. 2024, [www.calm.com/blog/how-long-does-it-take-to-create-a-habit](https://www.calm.com/blog/how-long-does-it-take-to-create-a-habit)



(in local municipalities or regional), Chambers of Commerce (dedicated to your home country or bilateral chambers), etc. Find out how to communicate with those stakeholders through a list of networking prompts in Chapter 4.

- **Emergency mental health support:** If stress becomes overwhelming, you should contact crisis helplines or local mental health services. Many countries have helplines that provide immediate emotional support.

Using these resources will help you maintain your well-being as a job seeker. The key is to stay proactive and **realistically optimistic** in your job search.

Prioritise your mental health by regularly checking in with yourself how you feel about different job offers, conditions, tasks, and communication. When your job search is sustainable and hopeful, it will bring long-term success to you.



## The perspective of a youth worker: How can you support young unemployed people?

Youth workers have a noble calling as they support young unemployed people and improve their beneficiaries' well-being.

Often, youth organizations serve as safe spaces for young people seeking advice. They foster a strong sense of belonging and contribution, while nurturing valuable connections and skills.

For youth workers, having the right tools to address the stress associated with unemployment and job searching is essential. These tools can then be tailored to meet the specific needs of the young people they support.

Here are some tips and tricks on how to approach this topic in everyday work with a group of job seekers:

- Talk about **what does it mean to actively look for a job** (getting a job is your priority, you're not getting the job without personal engagement, you keep yourself motivated and realistically optimistic, you do everything that can help you in your endeavor like attending additional courses, visiting local unemployment center etc., you stay flexible in your search).

Participants can brainstorm about what this means, assess their search, and identify what else they could do to make the process more active and productive.

- Through different activations and energisers in youth work, help young people **dissociate from their current story**. For example, a young person might repeatedly say “I am doing all these things, and the results I get are always the same.”

For instance, they could be sending a CV to many addresses and different jobs, but they are not getting a response or are not invited to any interviews.

Instead of reassuring them that this story is the only possible future for them, **use questions when working with job seekers** to unlock other options. Ask them, “How can you ensure that you get a response? What can you do differently? Maybe you can communicate with recruiters in companies through other channels besides email? How about using the phone or LinkedIn while you wait for the email response? How can you improve your CV?”

Questions are some of the most powerful tools we can use when we work with young people or other target groups to help them get unstuck.

- The term *stress* is most commonly related to work, but it can be a consequence of many different life situations, including not having a job and actively trying to get one.

To **introduce stress as a topic** with young participants, start with simple exercises where participants identify how and where in their body they feel stress, and how it affects their daily life. Identify the most stressful situations for them in terms of looking for a job – they can brainstorm or perform a theater play where they go through a situation and identify what was stressful in the observed.

- Another way to manage stress is to have young people recall recent situations where they felt fearful about the outcome.

For example, remember a situation that caused you a lot of stress last week or two weeks ago. Let participants write down **7-12 negative scenarios** that they had in mind about that situation: “This is what could have gone wrong and this as well...”

When they finish writing, they need to go back to that list and discuss it in groups of 2 or 3. During those discussions, they will identify how many of those negative situations actually came true. Most likely, none of them have happened in reality.

This exercise can end with a good laugh and relief: we can persuade ourselves that the best outcomes will happen or that our worst fears rarely ever happen. In our journey of self-discovery and job search, stress does not help us find a solution.

- During employment workshops, you can **introduce stress management exercises**. Simple activities that can be done immediately in the group include focusing on breathing, grounding, meditation and engaging in self-soothing techniques such as hugging yourself, gently pressing your hands to your chest, or gently pinching the skin on your arms or legs. These techniques can be effective for acute stress, helping participants calm down in stressful situations. Participants can be encouraged to use such practices in everyday life.

Also, consider some more complex exercises or elaborate activities that release stress. (e.g. introducing creative workshops helping participants express themselves and feel more productive).

- Dedicate time for participants to **understand their restrictive behaviors** and limiting beliefs.

Examples of these beliefs are: “I’m not good enough, I can’t succeed, Everyone else knows how to do things better.”

After the participants have prepared the list, challenge them. Ask young people to **rephrase their beliefs into positive ones**. Push them into the unknown territory of expansion and ask them to read those new versions out loud.

If they challenge with rephrasing negative beliefs, use transformative questions (similar to the exercises above). “How can I succeed? When was I good enough? Does this feeling of being good enough apply to me now?”

Talk about how it feels and how much they believe in the words they said. Together, explore what could help them truly embrace these new versions of themselves. Or perhaps, maybe these versions they’ve always had, but have simply forgotten about

For instance, can they get some kind of recognition, attend additional courses? How about they write down their top 15 successes so far? Can they ask their friends/previous coworkers to describe them and their skills? etc.

## Dos & Don’ts for job search activities

- » **Do:** Allow plenty of time for reflection and unwinding after each session.
- » **Don’t:** Be strict about doing any of the stress exercises – let the participants choose which ones they’re comfortable with.  
  
(For example, grounding is usually done with eyes closed. Still, this can be uncomfortable for some people, so it can be done in a modified way, or skipped altogether.)
- » **Do:** Introduce various exercises, making sure there is something for everyone.
- » **Do:** Actively listen and give time for everyone to talk about their specific situation.
- » **Do:** Make sure participants understand that participation in this training/session is also a step towards making their job search less stressful and more efficient. Give credit to them for being proactive.
- » **Don’t:** Forget to recharge as a youth worker. It may be overwhelming when many people share negative experiences in their job search or their financial circumstances.

Make sure to establish clear boundaries and provide guidance on how to share, ensuring the group doesn’t get stuck in a negative loop. Instead, encourage them to find something positive in every situation—a silver lining in every cloud.

## Chapter 3:

# Workplace rights and advocacy



- What rights do workers have? When can they assert their rights?
- How can young people just starting their careers advocate for their rights?
- How can we implement diversity, equity and inclusion in job markets?

Workplace rights or employee rights are a set of protections and benefits that employees are entitled to under the law. These rights vary from country to country but typically include:

- » The right to a **safe working environment**
  - \* Employers are responsible for providing a workplace free from health and other hazards. Also, employees receive the necessary training and equipment to perform their jobs safely.
- » **Protection from discrimination** regardless of one's race, gender, age, disability, religion, or sexual orientation
  - \* Employers must ensure that all workers are treated fairly and are not subject to discriminatory practices.
- » The right to a **fair wage**
  - \* Employers must respect law regulations and ensure workers receive at least the minimum wage and overtime pay.
- » The right to **reasonable accommodations**
  - \* Managers must secure reasonable accommodations for workers with disabilities unless doing so would cause undue hardship.
- » The right to **privacy**
  - \* Supervisors cannot monitor employee communications or conduct searches without a legitimate reason.
- » The right to **family and medical leave**
  - \* Employees have the right to take unpaid leave for specific family and medical reasons, such as caring for a newborn or a family member with a serious illness.
- » The right to a **workplace free from harassment**
  - \* Workers have the right to a work environment which is free from harassment. This includes sexual harassment, racial harassment, and other forms of pressure.
- » **Protection from retaliation**
  - \* Workers must be protected from retaliation for reporting illegal activity or filing a complaint against their employer. Retaliation can include termination, demotion, or other adverse actions.

» The right to **form a union**

- \* Employees can form a union and engage in collective bargaining with their employers. Simultaneously, employers cannot retaliate against workers who mobilise themselves in union activities.

Since employment rights depend on the country or state you live in, you should familiarise yourself with your local labour laws as a future employee. This is your first step towards becoming fully informed of your rights.

## What is workplace advocacy, and how does it matter to you?

Workplace advocacy is crucial to maintaining a healthy and productive work environment. Practically, it means promoting employees' rights and interests, ensuring fair treatment, and fostering an inclusive culture.

There are numerous ways that workplace advocacy can occur in our communities and societies; e.g. when individuals advocate for themselves or causes they believe in; when unions are engaged; or when advocacy groups address systemic issues.

Advocacy is a way of empowering employees, addressing the issues and promoting a positive culture. In this way, advocacy can improve well-being and organisational success.<sup>1</sup>

## How can employers engage people in the workplace?



- » organise informal discussions
- » have formal discussions at a team meeting
- » use surveys
- » create guidelines and processes that they communicate in guidebooks
- » set expectations of good practices and performance

## 7 benefits of advocating implemented within companies:

- » higher productivity
- » better decision making
- » a greater sense of belonging for employees
- » more diverse talent and skills to solve problems
- » enhanced transparency and accountability
- » increased retention of employees
- » acknowledgment of the value that everyone brings to the organisation

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<sup>1</sup> Rights In Action Incorporated, "Workplace Advocacy: Championing Employee Rights and Well-being." Rights in Action, 29 Oct. 2024, [rightsinaction.org.au/workplace-advocacy-championing-employee-rights-and-well-being](https://rightsinaction.org.au/workplace-advocacy-championing-employee-rights-and-well-being).

## What does DEI – diversity, equity, and inclusion mean in contemporary workplace?

Diversity in organisations indicates that *“the workplace is heterogeneous in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity, and that employees possess various elements and qualities that distinguish them from one another”*.<sup>2</sup>

People with different educational backgrounds, origins, work experiences, professional expertise, and perspectives on life bring diverse solutions to the workplace.

Examples from professional environments have shown that brainstorming becomes more dynamic in a diverse team. Likewise, inclusivity contributes to better business outcomes. In such cases, inclusivity means first of all accepting diversity and then leveraging its advantages within organisations.

Companies with homogeneous teams may be more efficient in completing simple tasks quickly. Yet, in the long run, diverse teams are more likely to solve complex problems faster.

Of course, within multifaceted teams, there is a higher chance of potential misunderstandings, differing opinions, and world views, often leading to conflict. Nevertheless, these challenges are negligible compared to the benefits of inclusivity in companies.

Organisations that foster inclusivity implement 3 values in their focus (as part of their DEI strategy and corporate social responsibility strategy):

- ☐ Diversity
- ☐ Equity
- ☐ Inclusion

**Diversity** is the presence of differences in dimensions of human identity. Dimensions of diversity may include but are not limited to, race, age, sex, gender identity, gender expression, (dis)ability, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, citizenship, socioeconomic status, housing status, marital status, language, and political perspective.

A company that supports diversity **intentionally employs people with diverse attributes**. Such an enterprise has created processes and procedures where differences among people do not block them from cooperating. On the contrary, different characteristics of individuals motivate them to work towards the same goals.

**Equity** is the fair and just allocation of resources, access, and opportunities so that all persons have what they need to succeed, grow, contribute and be represented in all parts of society. In a company's everyday operations, equity refers not only to providing identical resources to everyone, but also to distributing resources and opportunities based on each person's needs.

An **equitable workplace** aims to **remove barriers, unfair stereotypes or biases** that may unintentionally exclude underrepresented employees. Such companies provide their employees equal access to the resources needed to grow and develop as professionals.

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<sup>2</sup> Foma, Elizabeth. “Impact of Workplace Diversity.” *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, pp. 402–410. Society of Interdisciplinary Business Research, [https://sibresearch.org/uploads/3/4/0/9/34097180/riber\\_sk14-026\\_402-410.pdf](https://sibresearch.org/uploads/3/4/0/9/34097180/riber_sk14-026_402-410.pdf). Accessed on March 26, 2025.

**Inclusion** is the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals are involved in community, organisation processes and regular decision-making. Inclusion means that diverse individuals and groups feel welcome, supported, and respected.

In inclusive workplaces, people feel as a part of the team, regardless of their differences. They can participate in decision-making processes equally, and their unique contributions and perspectives are valued.

Companies often forget that **these three principles are mutually reinforcing**. Diversity came first, recognising that people with diverse attributes are not a barrier to working in the same environment. Then followed equity, highlighting that everyone should have the same opportunities. Last but not least, inclusion principles make it clear that all employees are involved in company matters.<sup>3</sup>

While diversity focuses primarily on the demographic makeup of groups and organisations, inclusion emphasizes encouraging participation and moving beyond merely appreciating diversity, to leveraging and integrating diversity into everyday work life. Inclusion is viewed both as a process and a condition.

We can define inclusion as an active process of change or integration, as well as an outcome – the feeling of belonging. As such, inclusion encompasses an **active process of change** (to include) and an **emotional outcome** (to feel included).

A key aspect of inclusion is the **recognition and appreciation of the individuality and uniqueness of every person**. People seek affirmation that their uniqueness is valued within a group or organisation. They also assess whether they have a voice in decision-making, as feeling heard and appreciated contributes to a genuine sense of belonging.<sup>4</sup>

## Inclusion of disabled and other social groups



Disability inclusion refers to including people with disabilities in everyday activities. In such thriving organisations, emotionally intelligent managers will encourage people with disabilities to assume roles similar to their peers who do not have a disability.

Companies that include disabled people do more than simply encourage them. In organisations where principles of DEI are highly implemented, people with disabilities understand which policies affect them.

Inclusion should increase participation in socially expected life roles and activities, such as being a student, worker, friend, community member, patient, spouse, partner, or parent. Socially expected activities become available to everyone, such as: socialising, using public resources such as transportation and libraries, moving around within communities, receiving adequate health care, nurturing meaningful relationships, and enjoying other day-to-day activities.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Nailited, "The Step-by-Step Guide to DEI: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Scale-ups in 2022." Scribd, <https://www.scribd.com/document/633994899/The-Step-by-Step-guide-to-DEI-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-for-Scale-ups-in-2022> Accessed on March 26, 2025.


<sup>4</sup> O'Donovan, Deirdre. *Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace*. ResearchGate, Jan. 2018, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320674512\\_Diversity\\_and\\_Inclusion\\_in\\_the\\_Workplace](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320674512_Diversity_and_Inclusion_in_the_Workplace) Accessed on March 26, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Disability Inclusion." CDC, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, <https://www.cdc.gov/disability-inclusion/about/>. Accessed on March 26, 2025.



Western governments have emphasized paid work as a key route to social inclusion for disabled people. Although the proportion of disabled people in 'mainstream' employment has increased in recent decades, rates remain significantly below those for non-disabled people. Moreover, disabled workers continue to face discrimination and a lack of workplace accommodation.<sup>6</sup>

### Tips & tricks: follow these examples

 **Youth with Disability Forum** (Forum mladih sa invaliditetom – FMI) is a youth organisation from Serbia which has been following the needs of companies and beneficiaries for many years.

They have been conducting numerous activities for young people with disabilities, signaling that they understand how the employment needs of young people with fewer opportunities have evolved.

There are three reasons why Forum is an exemplary organisation for young people with fewer opportunities:

- a. They promote online participation and education accessible to everyone, covering topics such as soft skills and, in the future, professional skills
- b. FMI has its job board and collaborates with employers so that young people are empowered to get internships and full-time positions in accordance with the law: <https://fmi.rs/zaposljavanje-osoba-sa-invaliditetom/>
- c. They also have in their circles numerous highly skilled beneficiaries motivated to learn about financial literacy, programming languages, and jobs of the future (IT sector, digital marketing, work from home). In their work, they classify youth with disabilities as having physical and mental impediments.

 **Centre for the Integration of Youth** has 45 full-time employees.

Its vision is to improve the position of children at risk, by promoting policies and practices in accordance with the needs of children, by improving the quality of work, providing services and developing a model of assistance in Belgrade and other Serbian communities.

Some of their signature services include Drop-in Shelter, education programs, and Social Enterprise Cafe bar 16. Thanks to strong programs, they help youth with adverse childhood experiences and fewer financial opportunities. Peer-to-peer support and collaboration with institutions enables young people who come from low-income families, lack education or have experienced violence to start anew as decent citizens with jobs and a future.

6 Hall, Edward, and Robert Wilton. "Alternative Spaces of 'Work' and Inclusion for Disabled People." *Disability & Society*, vol. 26, no. 7, 2011, pp. 867–880, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599.2011.618742>. Accessed on March 26, 2025.





### To Read:

A relevant document providing guidance for organizations is “International Standards (ISO 30415:2021) Human resource management – Diversity and inclusion.” It states that “Fostering a diverse and inclusive organizational culture can enable individuals and teams to thrive and do their best in conditions that enable effective collaboration and participation. Building fairer, more inclusive, socially responsible organisations can help people, regardless of identity, background or circumstance, to access work and develop knowledge, skills and abilities critical to their personal development and well-being.”

This document provides guidance on DEI for organisations, including their governance body, leaders, workforce and recognised representatives, and other stakeholders. It is intended to be scalable to the needs of all types of organisations in different sectors, whether in public, private, government or non-governmental organisations (NGO), regardless of size, type, activity, industry or sector, growth phase, external influences and country-specific requirements.

### Quote:

***“Creativity thrives on diversity”***

***Morgan, 1989.***

## How can youth workers foster workplace rights advocacy?

Youth workers play a crucial role in empowering young people to understand and advocate for their workplace rights. Many young workers, particularly those entering the workforce for the first time, may be unaware of their rights or hesitant to speak up about unfair treatment.

- By fostering **workplace rights advocacy**, youth workers help create a more informed, confident, and empowered generation of employees.

One of the key ways youth workers can support workplace rights advocacy is through **education**.

- Youth workers can **integrate discussions on fair wages, safe working conditions, anti-discrimination policies, and professional development** opportunities into their programs.

This way, young people will become better-equipped to navigate the workplace. Thanks to workshops, interactive sessions, and real-life case studies, employability topics will become more accessible and relevant.

**Providing access to resources** is another vital step. Access to knowledge, contacts, employability programs and funding opportunities matters a lot to young job seekers.

- Youth workers can connect young people with **labor rights organisations, unions, legal aid services, and career counselors** who can offer guidance and support.
- Encouraging **open dialogue about workplace challenges** also helps young workers feel heard and validated, reducing isolation and uncertainty.
- When participating in employment trainings or workshops, youth workers can help develop essential advocacy skills such as **negotiation, communication, and conflict resolution**.

Role-playing scenarios are one of the most effective ways to practice self-advocacy. In such circumstances, young job seekers receive support from peers. Gradually, young people increase their ability to stand up for themselves in professional settings.

When the culture of **awareness for workplace rights** is built, youth workers make an impact in multiple ways:

- Youth workers support **individual career successes** of their beneficiaries and uplift future role models for other job seekers.
- Also, youth workers contribute to a **broader systemic change**. The culture of making things happen is promoted instead of settling for current circumstances.
- Young people **understand and exercise their rights** by practicing them in a supportive atmosphere. This leads to fairer, more inclusive workplaces that benefit both employees and organisations.

### Tips & tricks – integrate advocacy topics in your programs:



- Introduce the topic of employee rights through practical interactive workshops where youth can learn about their rights through engaging activities like **quizzes, role-playing, or case studies**.
- Use real-world examples to make the concepts relatable. You can simulate real-life scenarios where participants have to identify **workplace rights violations**, such as discrimination or unsafe working conditions. Discuss **solutions** and how to advocate for rights in these situations.
- Discuss advocacy through **storytelling** – share stories of workers or youth advocates who successfully stood up for their rights. This could include local examples or well-known global cases to make the topic motivating.
- Organise a **discussion session** where participants will understand what the action (advocacy) was, what the desired and achieved impact was, how it can be replicable, and what could have been done differently.
- Divide participants into two groups: job seekers and employers / HR managers. Stimulate a **job interview** where appropriate and inappropriate questions will be asked. Job seekers should evaluate the questions on the spot and respond confidently.

e.g. For female candidates inappropriate questions may be related to starting a family and becoming mothers. For job seekers and junior professionals, a salary lower than the minimum wage may be offered.

The latter group of questions violates DEI and workers' rights in a company. Yet by stimulating this situation young people should be trained how to respond to offers that seem off and actually are not fair.

As a debrief in this exercise, participants **should write down a list** of these inappropriate **questions**. They should also write several sentences that are a fantastic start to **longer responses** to rude company people.

e.g. I feel that this question is inappropriate. / This offer is not in accordance with the law. / What are you trying to accomplish by asking me this? / I read on your website that your company protects e.g. the rights of the workers. What you are just saying is not in alignment with that. Or am I missing something?

- In other **role-playing** exercises participants will take the roles of employees and employers. Employees are required to plan an action to advocate for fair treatment, accommodations, or other workplace rights.

Make sure they choose the method, define the change they want, propose a plan on implementing and sustaining the change, make a list of their requests, etc. This exercise can serve to build confidence and communication skills and to provide participants with a useful experience.

- Show young people how to use their tools to make a change – discuss what **tools and communication channels** they could use and for what kind of communication.

Brainstorm how to use tools such as social media to spread awareness about workplace rights. Additionally, they could design a mock campaign or create educational posts about advocacy.

- Explore **cultural and legal differences**, especially in **intercultural environments**. Have sessions comparing workplace rights across different countries or regions, emphasizing how youth can find resources relevant to their location.
- Host **empathy-building activities** – use simulations or storytelling sessions to help youth understand the experiences of diverse or disabled individuals in the workplace.

## How can young people advocate for their workplace rights?



Advocating for workplace rights not only helps employees feel heard, valued, and understood but also enables organizations to gain insight into the challenges their employees face and the support they need to enhance satisfaction, productivity, and success.

This advocacy benefits both employees and the company, fostering a more positive and supportive work environment. Taking a proactive approach in this regard allows individuals to play an active role in shaping their own career paths.

## Tips and tricks for young people advocating in companies:

- » **Get clear-minded.** Once you're clear on what it is you want to advocate for, you're more likely to build a compelling case for yourself.

Ask yourself what you like and dislike about your current role; What challenges do you experience? Do you feel your work is valued? In which ways do you contribute value to your organization? And do you feel appreciated as a result of all aforementioned?

- » **Advocate for your true values.** If you are standing up for something you believe in, but there is no way for your organization to support you in this, perhaps this means that it's not the right place for you. And then you should move on to some other organisation.
- » **Consider who's on the other side.** Ask yourself questions such as, "Does my manager/management have a preferred style of communication? Have I considered the right timing when I will bring up my request? Is my manager the final decision maker? What information could I prepare in advance to ensure I paint a complete picture? Have I given the other party a heads up about what I want to talk about?"
- » **Prepare for the dialogue,** especially if it is a high-stakes conversation. Networking prompts in the next part of this toolkit – Chapter 4 may be useful for you. Always remember that questions are a powerful tool that you can use to navigate the conversation. You do not need to use statements all the time to make your voice heard. Strategic questions, pauses and preparation will also help you go a long way.
- » **Plan your approach to the other party.** Be realistic about what you're asking for, and be as clear as you can be about what you need, why you need it and when you need a response, or just be clear about wanting to start the conversation and build rapport.

In most cases, having the conversation is an excellent start to helping your manager become an advocate on your behalf.<sup>7</sup>

### Literature for additional reading:



- » <https://rightsinaction.org.au/workplace-advocacy-championing-employee-rights-and-well-being/>
- » <https://www.kudos.com/blog/10-ways-to-advocate-for-yourself-in-the-workplace>
- » <https://scwist.ca/advocacy/toolkit/advocacy-in-the-workplace/>
- » <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/416006>

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, Bryan. "5 Tips to Advocate for Your Workplace and Career Happiness." *Forbes*, 18 May 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2024/05/18/5-tips-to-advocate-for-your-workplace-and-career-happiness/>. Accessed on March 26, 2025.

## Chapter 4:

# Stakeholders that young people collaborate with in employability projects



- How can youth workers effectively engage stakeholders in youth career projects?
- When should you use networking prompts for specific types of stakeholders?
- Which communication strategies are applicable for youth with fewer opportunities?

Searching for employment is still a big challenge for young people. In this process, the important role belongs to the stakeholders with whom young people collaborate on employability projects.

This chapter will list the stakeholders and how they contribute to youth employment. It will also explain how to connect young people and their needs with the opportunities that different stakeholders provide.

A **stakeholder** is an individual, group, or entity with a vested interest in a project, organisation, or business. Stakeholders play a crucial role in the decision-making process and support that can be provided to various groups, including youth. The world has changed significantly in the last couple of decades following rapid technological developments, globalisation and demographic changes. All these facts influence youth, youth employment and the development of career paths.

Through **employability projects**, young people can collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders who help them develop skills, gain experience, and transition into the workforce. These stakeholders provide guidance, resources, and opportunities to enhance employability among young people. Not all stakeholders hold the same level of importance, but their roles are essential in the bigger picture.

Stakeholders such as **employers and industry representatives** provide job opportunities, internships, apprenticeships, and work placements that offer hands-on experience and skill development. Also, they share valuable insights about industry trends, required skills, and career pathways. They may also provide mentorship. Eventually, some companies collaborate with organisations to offer training programmes, internships, and other employability initiatives.

**Educational institutions and universities** provide formal education for youth. It is important to recognise the benefits of collaboration between educational institutions and universities on one side, and industry representatives on the other. These partnerships make it possible for youth to **bridge the gap** between what they're learning in the classroom and how they could apply it in the real world. Furthermore, there is constant demand for new ideas and innovation. When schools and businesses work together, it's possible to drive innovation and solve problems with creative solutions.

For young people who are interested in technology jobs, remote work and IT entrepreneurship, the important stakeholders are **ecosystem organisations**. Usually, those are non-profits, think-tanks or associations with many corporate and NGO members. These ecosystem

organisations are dedicated to fostering tech entrepreneurship, employability of young people, and other goals aligned with tech trends, globalisation and local competitiveness.

Some of these organisations are also **co-working spaces, accelerators, innovation hubs, business associations, and ecosystem initiatives**. Depending on the structure of a university, one can also find IT centres and innovation hubs there, especially within business or STEM faculties. Many current students and recent graduates can also benefit from **career counseling**, typically provided by central career centers at **universities**.

In addition to the aforementioned stakeholders from business, academic and non-profit sectors, we should also include the stakeholders from the public sector. This includes the government establishing laws to ensure fair treatment, minimum wages, safe working conditions, and equal opportunities for youth. The government introduces programmes such as youth employment strategies and entrepreneurship initiatives to address unemployment rates among young people. Youth can secure their jobs in public service for civil service roles.

**Public sector organisations**, such as government ministries, local councils, and public agencies, are pivotal in designing and implementing policies and strategies that promote youth employment. They create initiatives like internships, apprenticeships, and job guarantees for young people. Youth offices and youth councils, as part of government departments, play a crucial role in ensuring that young people's voices, concerns, and needs are taken into account, particularly in the development and implementation of employment strategies.

Young people often face challenges when entering the labour market because employers often recruit workers based on experience. **Nonprofit organisations and social enterprises** provide opportunities for young people to gain experience. Young people can gain real-world job experience through volunteering and tangible pro-bono work, which can enhance their resumes. By engaging in these opportunities, students and recent graduates not only build practical experience but also demonstrate their commitment to their chosen field.

**Mentoring, career coaching and employment advising** can significantly impact various aspects of society, including the economic sector and the labour market. This is particularly common in countries that require support for developing human resources and improving workforce competencies. **Advisors** provide value by offering feedback on specific questions, while **coaches** specialise in coaching technique and may not have domain expertise and experience beyond their coaching skills.

Other possible stakeholders include **training providers** who contribute to **personal development** and lifelong learning.

Skill development means that young people can enhance their existing abilities and acquire new competencies. Training providers could offer targeted education to prepare individuals for the demands of the workforce, equipping them with practical, job-related skills, as well as broader soft skills like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership. For youth, skill development means that they can meet current job market requirements, foster economic independence, and contribute to overall personal growth.

#### Useful articles:

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/>



<https://www.invest4edu.com/blog/skill-development-program-for-youth>

### Tips & tricks – try it yourself

**Mentors** can serve as role models for young people in multiple domains. In some cases, mentors are **professional advisors**. These can include career transition coaches, employment coaches or professionals at career centres who are known among young people for being “skilled at mentoring those in the early/different stages of their careers.”

So far we have also benefited from mentors who provided guidance on specific career questions and who happened to be “mentors thanks to their life and work experience.” For example, when we wanted to learn more about entrepreneurship, senior professionals within our network who had already run their own companies were invaluable in offering advice and serving as role models.

By understanding how stakeholders and networking work, you can **gain access to valuable information, resources, and support** from mentors who have 'been there, done that' – whether that's running a social enterprise, working in a specific sector, applying for grants, managing large teams, and more.



Read through our toolkit and revisit particular chapters whenever you feel it's time to take the next step. Remember that different mentors can support you even if you've been developing your career for 20 or 30 years.

**Local communities** and **support networks** play a pivotal role as stakeholders in fostering youth employment. Local communities provide opportunities for skills development and act as hubs for personal connections, helping youth to meet employees. Support networks such as **families, peer groups, and community leaders** provide encouragement, motivation, and advice to help youth navigate job searches, interviews, and workplace challenges.









**Trade unions** represent workers' interests, including advocating for fair employment opportunities for youth. They lobby for labour laws and policies that ensure equal opportunities for young workers, including minimum wage regulations, anti-discrimination measures, mobbing and job security. They are a very useful stakeholder for youth as they want to ensure their working rights are protected.

*To learn more about how to engage these stakeholders, professional associations and advocacy groups, **read Chapter 3** about Workplace rights and advocacy / Diversity, equity and inclusion.*

**Professional associations** represent individuals from specific professions, providing a platform for career development and networking. Their programmes may include activities tailored for youth with fewer opportunities. Likewise, thanks to the power of remote communications, these associations can bring together members from outside the country of operation, such as **successful expat executives** who give back to their home countries (e.g. Croatia, Portugal, or Serbia) as **members of the diaspora**. Typically, professional associations can facilitate connections between young people and industry representatives through mentorship, networking, and other initiatives.

Some of the notable associations that our consortium has been collaborating with are  **IPMA Croatian Chapter** – International Project Management Association,  **Serbian**



**Association of Managers** (sam.org.rs),  **HUOJ** – Croatian Association for Public Relations,  **KOMS** – National Youth Council of Serbia,  **IPDJ** – Portuguese Institute for Youth and Sports,  **FNAJ** – Federation of youth associations in Portugal,  **MMH** – Croatian Youth Network.  **Institute for the development of youth Kult**, BiH;  **Youth Councils** in Bosnia and Herzegovina, BiH,  **NAPOR** – National Association of Youth Workers, Serbia.

We recommend reaching out to them if you have a project idea or are seeking additional knowledge from a specific network.

**Advocacy groups** create campaigns for laws, regulations, and initiatives that promote fair wages, workplace rights, and job creation for young people. Through advocacy, different stakeholders raise awareness about youth unemployment, creating better conditions for the employment of youth with fewer opportunities. By highlighting issues such as youth unemployment, gender inequality and skills mismatch, advocacy groups use the media as a supporting stakeholder to create a better environment for youth with fewer opportunities.

In the continuation of this chapter, you will find networking prompts for youth workers building employability projects in collaboration with various stakeholders.

## 50+ Networking prompts for youth workers engaged in employability projects

Use these prompts when you start a conversation with specific stakeholders:

### Non-profit organisations

1. **Support programmes:** “What programmes or services do you offer to help young people gain work experience or find employment?”
2. **Partnerships with companies:** “Does your organisation partner with companies to provide job opportunities or internships for young people?”
3. **Success stories:** “What are your most successful funding or grant strategies for employability projects?”
4. **Sustainability of projects:** “In which way do you ensure continuity and scalability of your employability programmes?”
5. **Call to action:** “How can we collaborate on a joint initiative or share resources to expand our impact?”

### Beneficiaries (youth participants)

1. **Programme design:** “What kind of support do you find most helpful in preparing for the job market?”
2. **Personal needs in job search:** “How do you think we could better tailor our programmes to meet your career aspirations?”
3. **Overcoming obstacles:** “What challenges do you face pursuing your career goals/ searching for a job, and how can we address them together?”
4. **Job search tips:** “What strategies or methods have you used to find job opportunities?”



5. **Internships and work experience:** “How did internships or part-time jobs help you in securing full-time employment?”
6. **Landing the dream job:** “Which skills or experiences helped you the most in landing your current job?”

## Donors, EU, international organisations and embassies

1. **Funding opportunities:** “What funding or grant opportunities exist for youth organisations related to the future of work and employability?”
2. **Types of programmes:** “What is the best way to involve young people who want to develop their career skills or increase their employability?”  
  
“How can we provide employment projects, mentorship, and internships for disadvantaged youth through EU or international funding?”
3. **Strategic alignment:** “What outcomes or success metrics are most important to you when you fund employability initiatives?”  
  
“How do you identify organisations or projects that align with your philanthropic goals?”
4. **Trans-national youth employment programmes:** “Are there any EU or international programmes specifically focusing on the future of work, AI training and other career skills for young people?”
5. **Collaboration with local ecosystem players:** “How can local organisations align with broader EU/ international employability goals?”  
  
“How do you collaborate with local organisations or companies to create more job opportunities for young people?”
6. **Narrowing down the skills gap (also for the marginalised youth):** “How can we, with your support, create inclusive programmes providing marginalised youth with essential skills like digital literacy and resilience? We want to ensure that, thanks to these programmes, they can thrive in the future workforce.”
7. **Knowledge transfer:** “What are some of the best employment practices from other regions or countries that we can adopt in our local community?”
8. **Insights from the youth sector and donor community:** “Are there any emerging trends in youth-focused philanthropy that we should consider?”
9. **Impact metrics:** “What are the best channels to share insights or data and demonstrate the long-term impact of our programmes?”  
  
“Which metrics do you use as the donor to measure the success of the projects you fund for youth employment?”
10. **Helping youth transition from education to work thanks to grant schemes:** “In which ways do your donor initiatives help young people bridge the gap between education and employment?  
  
How can young people complete a smoother transition into the workforce after completing their studies?”

## Companies (decision-makers)

1. **Job opportunities:** “What types of job opportunities do you currently offer for young people, and what qualifications or skills are required?”

If the company offers remote work, the next question would be: “What remote positions are currently available?”

2. **Internships or early career programmes:** “Do you offer internships or apprenticeships for young people, and how can they apply for them? Is there a particular time of year when you accept applications for new employees, such as a certain month, summer internships, etc.?”
3. **Profile of candidates:** “Do you accept graduates only in their 3rd or 4th year of studies? Are you open to slightly younger students, in their 1st or 2nd year of studies? Can your interns work and study simultaneously, i.e. do you offer flexible working hours?”
4. **Remote work culture:** “Can your junior employees work remotely from their local communities?”
5. **Technology and other tools:** “What tools and technologies does your company use to support remote work, and how should young people get familiar with them?”
6. **Partnership with youth workers/youth organisations:** “What skills do you look for when hiring young employees, and how can we help the youth develop them?”

“When it comes to remote work, can our organisation or other partners better prepare young people to work with your team?”

7. **CSR strategy and success stories:** “Do you have any corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that align with youth employability?”

“How can we collaborate to create tailored training programmes for your industry?”

8. **Time frames and resources for CSR projects:** “Do you have a certain time of the year when youth workers or youth organisations can apply for the projects? Or does it happen on an ongoing basis?”

(NB: Usually, a project cycle, when many donors open their calls, lasts February – March or September – October. Of course, it is always helpful to double-check with the company that you would like to work with.)

Another question about **company resources:** “What is the amount of money you usually allocate per project? Does your fiscal year end on June 30 or towards the end of the year?” – This is useful to know because of the company budgeting: when they are potentially ready to donate to NGOs and youth organisations.

9. **Training and development (also for youth with fewer opportunities):** “How do you assist young employees in developing the skills necessary for growth within the company?”

“How do you encourage young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply for internships and jobs in your company? Which profiles of youth with fewer opportunities have you supported so far?”

## Policy makers

1. **Current youth employment policies:** “What are the key policies or frameworks you use to support young people in finding and retaining employment in our country/ region?”
2. **Government programmes:** “Are there any government programmes that assist young people in developing skills, finding jobs and gaining work experience? What are your plans for the next 1 – 2 years?”
3. **Addressing employment barriers:** “What is your team doing to address the barriers young people face when searching for employment, such as the lack of experience or skills?”  
  
“How do policy measures ensure that young people with fewer opportunities are included in employment projects?”
4. **Engaging youth workers in policy making:** “How can youth workers better collaborate with policymakers to address barriers to youth employability?”
5. **Cooperation with multiple stakeholders:** “What role do you see for public-private partnerships so that we improve youth employment outcomes?”
6. **Promotion of successes:** “What data or success stories would help you advocate for higher support for youth programmes?”

## Universities, educational institutions, career centres

1. **Corporate partnerships:** “Does your university/career centre collaborate with companies to provide students with internship or job placement opportunities?”  
  
“What programmes or partnerships have you developed to help students transition to the workforce?” (This includes both internships and job placements)
2. **Alignment of education with the business sector:** “How do you incorporate employability skills into your academic curriculum?”  
  
“What are opportunities for students to do projects that provide them with real-world experience in the field?”
3. **Skill development and certifications:** “What specific programmes, courses or certifications offered by the university can improve young people’s employability?”
4. **Job fairs and networking events:** “Does your university host job fairs or networking events with potential employers?”
5. **University collaboration with youth organisations:** “Are there opportunities for us to co-create workshops, job fairs, projects, or mentoring programmes?”
6. **Success stories and future collaboration:** “What research or data do you have that could help us improve our youth employability projects?”  
  
“Can you name several student organisations that are active at your faculty? How can we collaborate with them?”

## Media and influencers

1. **Partnership offers:** “Would you be interested in showcasing employability success stories from our programmes?”

“How can we collaborate to raise awareness about youth employment challenges and solutions?”

2. **Shaping the needs of the media audience:** “What types of youth success stories resonate most with your audience?”

“What role can the media play in changing perceptions about youth employability?”

3. **Content format:** “How can we align our goals to create impactful content for young audiences?”

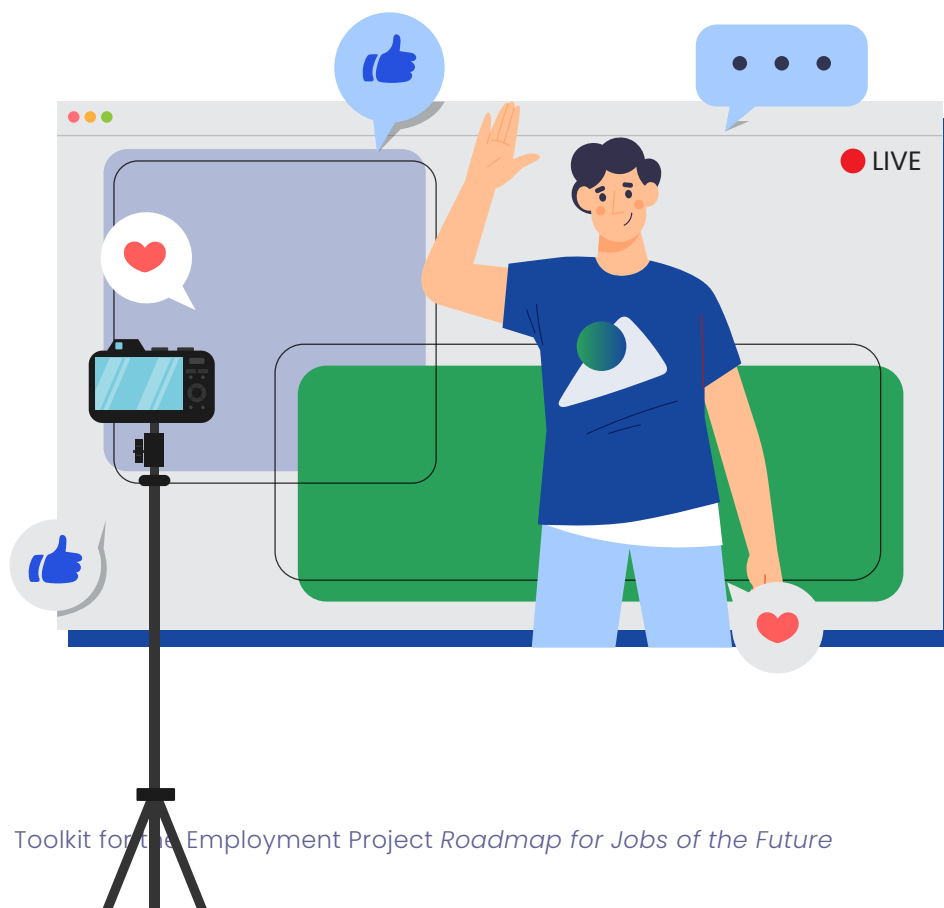
“Is there a format your audience prefers when learning about youth projects or employment topics (e.g. videos, reels, quotes, infographics, statements)?”

4. **Industry insights:** “Have you observed any current job market trends affecting young people? How can organisations better position themselves in the public eye to leverage these trends?”

5. **Role models in society:** “What business professionals or public figures can be role models to young people? How can we partner with them and promote career enthusiasm among youth?”

6. **Social media and building a personal brand:** “What steps should young people take to build their personal brand and make themselves stand out to employers?”

“How can young people use social media effectively to build their professional network and attract employers?”

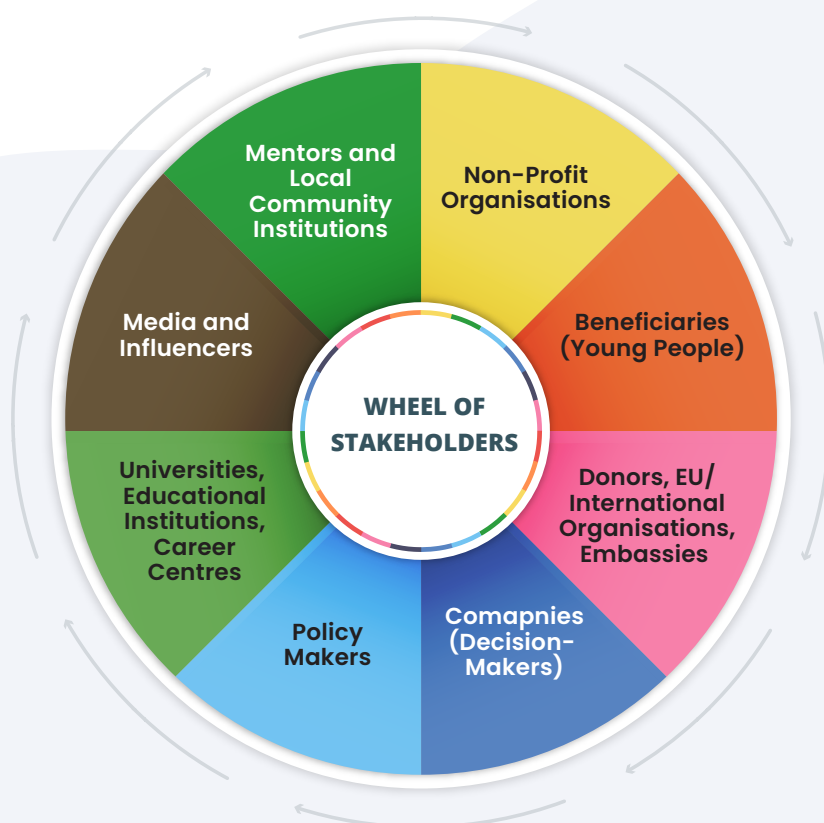


## Mentors and local community institutions

(This also includes innovation hubs, co-working spaces, accelerators, professional organisations, bilateral or national chambers of commerce)

1. **Local job market:** "What local businesses or organisations are hiring young people, and how can our team/youth workers connect with them?"
2. **Support for job seekers and young entrepreneurs:** "Can you recommend any resources or websites where young people can find job opportunities?"  
  
"Are there any resources or programmes available in your organisation to help young people start their businesses?"
3. **Job search advice:** "What advice would you give to young people looking for their first job or career opportunity in your niche?"
4. **Community training or personal initiatives:** "Are there any local training programmes, entrepreneurial initiatives or workshops that can help young people develop skills needed for specific industries?"
5. **Best practices and leading by example:** "According to you, as a successful mentor/innovation hub/coworking leader, what does it take to succeed in this role, i.e. what skills and qualifications should a young person have?"
6. **Youth employment advocacy and networks:** "Can you recommend local initiatives or networks that advocate for better employment opportunities for young people in our community? How can we get involved?"

## All stakeholders for employment projects



## Chapter 5:

# Empowering impact: Strategies for fundraising, project management, and social entrepreneurship

- ❑ How can organisations build long-term sustainability through fundraising and portfolio diversification?
- ❑ Why is project management an essential skill for young people and civil society organisations?
- ❑ What steps can aspiring entrepreneurs take to launch and sustain successful social enterprises?

## Capacity building for organisations: Fundraising, portfolio diversification, and alumni engagement

Organisations that aim to thrive and grow in an ever-changing environment must strengthen their internal capacity. The same principles apply to youth organisations and teams that make an impact for young beneficiaries.

Effective **fundraising, portfolio diversification, and alumni engagement** are essential strategies for long-term sustainability and impact. These efforts enable organisations to secure financial stability, enhance resilience, and maintain strong relationships with stakeholders.

### Here are 3 strategies for your youth organisation to build its capacities:

1. **Fundraising** is at the heart of building sustainable organisations. Consistent financial support for organisational activities becomes more realistic when your team members apply these consistent strategies: diversifying funding sources, nurturing donor relationships, and leveraging innovative fundraising methods.
  - ❑ **Diversification of funding sources** enables organisations to depend less on public funding sources. Do a **brainstorming session** with your team: list potential stakeholders who may fund your initiative or introduce you to new partners and sponsors. Get back to Chapter 4 and the Wheel of stakeholders to include various supporters for your cause: public bodies, companies, universities, international donors, accelerators, etc.
  - ❑ To strengthen your organisation's fundraising potential, start by **crafting a compelling narrative** that communicates your mission and the impact of your work. This story should resonate with potential donors and inspire them to become part of your cause. Align your narrative with future donors' needs that can be researched through companies' official websites.
  - ❑ Embrace **digital tools like crowdfunding platforms and social media campaigns** to expand your reach and engage broader audiences. Build lasting relationships with donors as you communicate regularly and cordially. Share regular updates that highlight the outcomes of their contributions.

- Explore a diverse range of funding opportunities, including **grants from both public institutions and private foundations**. Ideally, you should have at least one team member who follows open calls regularly.
- Think outside of the box, i.e. **look beyond your local area or region**. Your organisation may operate in Croatia, Portugal or Serbia, as is the case with our teams. Yet thanks to the power of networking, you may attract a donor from your country of origin who lives as an expat in another European country or even another continent, such as North America. This successful entrepreneur with philanthropic tendencies may be inclined to support your project, although they live outside of your country of operations.

That is why bilateral chambers of commerce, professional organisations, and embassies are valuable stakeholders for connecting with philanthropists. Refer back to Chapter 4 to craft a strong strategy and find effective opening lines.

- Showcase that you are a good host by hosting a **fundraising event** and ask people to contribute. Ensure that this is aligned with your organisation's values and the interests of your community.
- Tailor your fundraising approach based on donor interests, as you use a win-win strategy and play the long-term game.

Ensure **full transparency in your financial reporting**. Avoid **relying heavily on a single funding source**, and never overlook the importance of expressing gratitude to your supporters – recognition fosters loyalty and continued commitment.

## 2. Now let's see how you may benefit from the 2<sup>nd</sup> strategy – **diversifying your portfolio**:

Let's say this once again to inspire you to take action: when you rely on a single service, product, or donor pool, your organisation is exposed to significant risks.

Dedicate enough time to think of new projects, products and services. Your motivation should come from the fact that taking action now will expand your potential for long-term growth.

- When you **diversify your portfolio**, your organisation receives **multiple benefits**: not only do you strengthen your resilience, but you also enhance the organisation's ability to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- Begin by **assessing your current strengths** and **identifying areas for expansion**. Strategic investments in capacity building will empower your team to effectively manage and deliver a broader range of programs. One of the questions to do so effectively is to have 1-on-1 conversations with each team member. Ask them about their goals over the next 3-9 months: In which areas of their work do they need more knowledge, resources or support? Where do they see the untapped potential for the organisation – the field in which you can step out and create something new?
- You will also anticipate shifts in demand and uncover new possibilities when you **stay informed about market trends**. Your team members should have a daily routine of reading news about their field of expertise. For example, does AI impact your operations? Are young people that you work with particularly interested in some types of digital jobs and remote cultures?
- Some colleagues in innovation ecosystems suggest that it's realistic to dedicate 10-20% of projects and initiatives to innovation each year. Launching too many new projects can dilute your organisation's brand, making it unrecognisable. Striking the right balance



between **innovative ventures and stable, proven initiatives** helps mitigate risk while fostering sustainable growth.

- Additionally, create a culture of collaboration in your organisation and bigger teams: consortiums and ecosystems. By forming partnerships with other organisations, you can co-create new services, make more impact and work with bigger budgets. This leads to more efficient use of shared resources, ultimately boosting impact and sustainability.
- 3. Finally, **alumni networks** represent a valuable and often underutilized asset for organisations to increase their capacities.

There is not just one way of forming an alumni network, and it does not have to require complex technology and too many steps to activate people.


- Former **participants, beneficiaries, or employees** can play a key role in strengthening your mission as they offer mentorship, connect you to new partners, and even provide financial support.
- To foster meaningful alumni engagement, start by creating **dedicated groups on social platforms** to maintain consistent communication and a sense of community. Choose one to two channels where you can start, especially if you do not have too many team members who can oversee your marketing channels regularly.

A good start may be a newsletter + one social media channel where your target group is most active (e.g. LinkedIn for business audience interested in employment and personal growth, Facebook for engagement on posts, Instagram or TikTok for reaching a larger audience for cause-driven initiatives).

- Celebrating **alumni achievements** honors their success and reinforces their connection to your organisation. Hosting alumni-exclusive events — such as webinars, meetups, or networking sessions — can further deepen these ties.
- Encourage **alumni to get involved** by sharing their expertise or contributing to fundraising efforts. Provide them with a **clear set of tasks and defined milestones**, along with deadlines for completion. Since alumni are not involved in your organisation daily, both you and they need to be clear about the next steps.
- Finally, develop and maintain a comprehensive **alumni database** so that relationships can be nurtured over time. This is one of the most effective ways to turn past participants into lifelong supporters and advocates.

## Why is project management an essential skill for young people and civil society organisations?

Effective project management is essential for ensuring that initiatives are delivered on time, within scope, and with measurable impact. By understanding the full project lifecycle and incorporating modern tools and methodologies, organisations can use their resources better and achieve sustainable success.

- To enhance project outcomes, organisations should **leverage digital tools** such as  **Trello**, **Asana**, **ClickUp**, **Notion** or **Monday.com** to organise tasks and workflows. Assigning roles and responsibilities, setting realistic timelines with built-in flexibility, and conducting regular team check-ins are all essential practices.



- Team members should provide comprehensive **documentation throughout each stage** to ensure learning and improvement for future projects. Success also depends on strong risk management and continuous stakeholder engagement. On the other hand, overlooking detailed planning or ignoring team and beneficiary feedback can significantly undermine progress and impact.
- As industries evolve, project management skills are becoming increasingly critical for professionals across all sectors. These skills empower individuals to **adapt, innovate, and lead** in dynamic environments.

Project Management (PM) is a structured approach to planning, executing, and monitoring projects. While it is often associated with the corporate world, its relevance extends far beyond that. PM is a fundamental skill for personal growth, non-profit organisations, and youth workers. By learning the fundamentals of project management, young people can become more efficient in achieving their goals, whether they are launching personal initiatives, managing academic projects, or organising events in their communities.

Project management principles are not just for large-scale projects or businesses; they can be useful in everyday life. Setting clear and achievable goals is the first step toward success. The **SMART** framework for goal setting – **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound – helps individuals define realistic and motivating objectives. Once goals are established, planning becomes essential. Tools like **Gantt charts or Kanban boards** allow individuals to visualise their progress and manage tasks effectively.

Young people can learn more about SMART methodology in Chapter 8, which is dedicated to lifelong learning methods. You will learn how this tool applies to individual and organisational goals.

**Time management** is crucial, and techniques such as **the Pomodoro method** can help you stay focused and organised. Pomodoro technique includes working in specific, time-restrained intervals (sessions) of 25 minutes and has many benefits, from improving focus, minimizing distractions and preventing burnout to promoting accountability and boosting motivation. It is especially valuable in projects that might seem overwhelming. The process is simple yet effective. To break it down in simple steps:

- Take your to-do list and a timer.
- Set your timer to 25 minutes and focus on one task at a time.
- Mark your Pomodoro (session) and record what you have done.
- Take a 5-minute break.
- After four Pomodoros, take a longer, restorative break of 15-30 minutes.

In using Pomodoro, don't overlook three important rules:

1. **Break down complex projects.** If it takes more than four Pomodoros, it needs to be divided into smaller, actionable steps to see your progress more clearly and stay motivated.
2. **Small tasks always go together.** Any task that takes less than one Pomodoro to complete should be combined with other actionable tasks.
3. **Once a Pomodoro is set, it must ring.** You shouldn't use time in Pomodoro for anything else but only for what you intend to do in that Pomodoro. For example, if some ideas or additional tasks emerge during Pomodoro, they must be noted and addressed in another Pomodoro.

In any project, unexpected challenges may arise, making it crucial to assess potential risks and adapt accordingly. Regular reflection and learning from past experiences can lead to continuous improvement, ensuring that each new endeavor is more successful than the last.

Project management is a game-changer for non-profit organisations and youth workers. NGOs often operate with limited resources, making efficiency and organisation crucial for success. Proper application of PM principles can significantly enhance their effectiveness, allowing greater impact on their communities.

Project management helps organisations allocate resources more effectively, ensuring that **time, budgets, and manpower** are used wisely. By utilising structured methodologies such as **Agile, Waterfall, Lean or some elements of the aforementioned**, teams can streamline their workflows and execute projects more efficiently.

The most commonly used methodologies are Waterfall and Agile. You can learn how to apply those methods from  [\*The Agile Sustainability Practices and Innovation guidebook\*](#). It was developed by the International Project Management Association, Croatian Chapter and other partners.

- » **Waterfall** is a **linear and sequential** project management method where each phase (like planning, design, development, testing) is completed one after another. It works best when project requirements are clear and fixed from the start. It is often used in projects funded by public sources where deliverables and deadlines are fixed from the beginning.<sup>1</sup>
- » **Agile** is a **flexible and iterative** approach where the project is broken into smaller parts (called **sprints**), and teams regularly adapt to changes. It's ideal for projects where requirements may **change over time**. For example, if an organisation is planning a podcast series, Agile would be the best approach.

Clear communication and collaboration are also vital because well-defined roles and responsibilities enable teams and volunteers to work cohesively toward a shared goal. Moreover, by measuring the impact of projects and evaluating their success, organisations can progress to the next stage more effectively. Such organisations learn better, grow faster, and refine their strategies for future initiatives.

For those interested in developing project management skills, there are numerous ways to start:

- ☐ Online courses offered by platforms such as **PMI, IPMA, Coursera, and edX** provide accessible learning opportunities.
- ☐ Digital tools like **Trello, Asana, and Notion** can help individuals practice organisational skills and task management in real-time.
- ☐ **Volunteering** for projects is another excellent way to gain hands-on experience.
- ☐ Apply for funding through the European  [\*Solidarity Corps\*](#) program called the Solidarity project where a group of young people can implement a project in their local community
- ☐ **Networking with project management professionals** through conferences and workshops can offer valuable insights and mentorship opportunities.
- ☐ Young people can apply **project management principles** to various domains of their lives, not just their careers. By doing so, they could make a profound difference in personal development and collective impact.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ipma.hr/capm/ASPI-Guidebook.pdf>




Project management is more than a business skill — it is a tool that empowers young people and organisations to be more productive, organised, and successful. By developing PM skills, individuals open themselves to new opportunities, from leading their initiatives to contributing to their communities and advancing their careers. Project **management** can also be transformed into **social entrepreneurship**, where the business owner represents the project manager and the project represents the business. Let's discover how.

## How to make an impact through social entrepreneurship and project management?

The primary condition for generating business success is the team's ability to deliver high-quality products or services on time. These principles apply both in running individual projects and entire company operations.

Practically speaking, this means that project management skills are highly valuable in entrepreneurial paths. The entrepreneur and the project manager are both responsible for the success or failure of the business idea. Both of them can also be used to create and empower impact.

According to the Eurobarometer survey titled  **"Social entrepreneurship and youth"** conducted in March 2023, 46% of young individuals aged 15–30 in the EU expressed interest in establishing their own business.<sup>2</sup> The data also shows that young people have a high level of interest in environmental and social causes in employment, making social entrepreneurship an obvious career path and one of the ways to make an impact.

Here are 45 actions you can take (15 per scenario) when you run your company, join a socially responsible company or run a community-driven project

**45 actions that you can take** as a project manager and youth worker with an interest in **social entrepreneurship**:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2670>



## Run your company



Identify a social problem you want to solve



Research the market and verify the demand for your idea

Define your company's mission and vision in alignment with social responsibility

Register your company and stay informed about legal business requirements (depending on your location, industry, required licences, company size, taxation)

Develop a business model that ensures financial sustainability



Seek mentors and advisors from the industry

Secure initial funding (grants, investors, crowdfunding)

Create a product prototype or a pilot version of your service

You may also use ESG metrics (raw materials from environmentally friendly vendors) or help some vulnerable groups with your services

Establish a social impact strategy and set measurable goals

Build a network of potential partners and collaborators



Utilise digital tools and social media for promotion; invite others to join your causes

Apply for social entrepreneurship competitions

Assemble a team that shares your values and vision

Continuously monitor results and adjust your strategy



Implement sustainable business practices

Evaluate your goals every 6 months

## Join a socially responsible company



Research companies that actively promote social responsibility



Update your resume and highlight relevant experiences

Actively connect with professionals via LinkedIn and networking events

Prepare for interviews with a focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Ask HRs in those companies about their efforts to improve the social business climate

These professionals contribute to social causes through their companies or in their leisure time

Follow companies' ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) strategies and quarterly/annual priorities.

Align your interests and values with those strategies

Get involved in internal volunteer and CSR initiatives



Propose projects with a social impact within your organisation

Participate in corporate mentorship and educational programs

Educate colleagues about sustainability and social impact  
Create posters, organise discussions or deliver short informative talks (15–20 minute formats)

Support and promote diversity and inclusion



Engage in ethical business initiatives

Encourage transparency in corporate practices

Contribute to the development of eco-friendly business solutions by giving your feedback, time or connections

Connect the company with local communities around particular dates, initiatives or milestones

Continuously expand your knowledge on social responsibility



## Run a community-driven project



Identify a specific problem within your community and mobilise the team



Engage stakeholders and research the needs of your target group

Apply for funding opportunities for local initiatives

Involve volunteers and partners in project implementation

Create a detailed activity plan and timeline



Define the project's goals and expected outcomes

Ensure transparent resource management

Organise events and workshops for the local community to present your initiative or other good practices



Each path requires the ability to manage projects effectively — whether it's developing a sustainable business model, aligning with a company's CSR strategies, or organising a volunteer-led initiative.

By integrating project management principles into these different scenarios, individuals can amplify their impact, ensuring their efforts lead to lasting, meaningful change.

### Additional literature:



[https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1DB47JOTGdU\\_xYAOzMtHHNm\\_6taWIOlqi](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1DB47JOTGdU_xYAOzMtHHNm_6taWIOlqi)

<https://www.pmi.org/blog/empowering-youth-with-project-management-skills>

<https://ipma.world/from-knowledge-worker-to-cognitive-worker-how-can-project-management-prepare-for-the-inevitable/>

## Chapter 6:

# Job search strategies and personal branding for youth beneficiaries



- ❑ What are the benefits of personal branding for young job searchers?
- ❑ What are 5 key steps youth organisations and young people should take to succeed in location-independent work?
- ❑ How to navigate applying for jobs in the age of remote work and AI?

According to recent research, young people will change as many as 17 jobs by the end of their working lives, as well as five professions, some of which do not even exist today.<sup>1</sup> This is precisely why young job seekers must develop their personal brand as they learn about the job market and career development opportunities.

In this chapter, we discuss **job search strategies and personal branding** from the perspective of youth workers who should share these insights with young people, who are beneficiaries of their employability projects.

**How do we define a personal brand?** Personal brand is the process of creating a unique identity and reputation for young people that aligns with their personal and professional goals.

Think about your favourite company brands when it comes to food, drinks, fashion, restaurants, cars, household items, childhood toys, phones, computers, entertainment or video games. Why did you choose them? What words do you associate with them? Even cities, countries, and travel destinations have become brands themselves. Some stand out while others struggle to differentiate themselves from the rest.



Similar to companies, our community develops certain perceptions of each of us. These perceptions are reinforced through our reputation. The community that evaluates us can be our friends, relatives, high school and university professors, neighbours, mentors, or our professional network—current colleagues, acquaintances on LinkedIn, former bosses, and colleagues.

For example, colleagues in our business network may say, “She is very reliable and a team player. I will give her this new assignment even though she has no prior experience.” or “Our coworker is always out there for others. He needs to speak up more about his achievements, though. Let’s schedule a 1-on-1 for him with our HR.”

Authors on the website EveryoneSocial.com define,<sup>2</sup> “**A personal brand statement** is 1-3 sentences that explain what you do and why you are unique in your field.” The brand statement summarises “your experience, your skills, and your passion so that people can easily understand who you are and what you offer.”

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hocu.ba/index.php/hocuinfo/nova-generacija-ce-do-penzije-promijeniti-17-radnih-mjesta-i-pet-zanimanja/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://everyonesocial.com/blog/personal-brand-statement-examples/>



Amazon's CEO Jeff Bezos elegantly explained the decision-making in many organisations and how your brand can help you, "Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room."<sup>3</sup> As Jill Avery and Rachel Greenwald elaborate in the HBR text on personal branding, "Your brand is the amalgamation of the **associations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and expectations people collectively have about and from you**. Your goal should be to ensure that the narrative created about you is accurate, coherent, compelling, and differentiated."

### Tips & tricks – try it yourself

For exercise in this toolkit, think about your personal branding.

- » How would your brand statement sound in 1–3 sentences?
- » What associations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and expectations do people collectively hold about you?
- » What would you like them to think of you in the future? Three to six months from now? Or in a year?

### What are the benefits of a personal brand?

Some of the advantages of a personal brand: it helps experts stand out in their field, establish credibility, and attract opportunities. Personal branding can't be built overnight, and here are some steps on how to develop your personal brand while you are searching for jobs and developing your career.

According to MailChimp authors, "**brand promise is a commitment** made by a company to its customers that outlines the value and brand experience they can expect when using its products or services."<sup>4</sup> When you know what you can deliver to companies or other stakeholders, your brand promise can become consistent.

### Steps that young people can take to develop their careers in remote-friendly environments

Young people should feel empowered to collaborate with remote-first companies, as such firms may provide higher salaries than the average earnings in their location/place of origin.

Youth organisations can educate, train, and reskill young people for future jobs. To undertake such employability projects, youth organisations may benefit from the list of stakeholders we shared in Chapter 4 of this toolkit.

Building on that, we list **5 steps of location-independent work that youth organisations and young people should consider**.

*NB: These recommendations are written from the perspectives of a young person, so youth organisations can use them to create training frameworks about employability.*

In other words, let's discuss: why is your location ideal for your dream job?

<sup>3</sup> <https://hbr.org/2023/05/a-new-approach-to-building-your-personal-brand>

<sup>4</sup> <https://mailchimp.com/resources/your-brand-promise-an-invisible-contract/>

## 5-step guideline for your location-independent career in digital-first companies



When you're building your **location-independent career** and **want to land jobs of the future** (which may not be 100% remote), take these steps:

### 1. Understand your profile, needs and how you fit into the company.

- » **Self-assessment:** Identify your strengths and map them out in a CV adjusted for an applicant tracking system (ATS) for recruiting.

Create a portfolio of your projects with screenshots, testimonials of previous clients, volunteering experience and references. Even if you have beginner's competencies as a designer, you can create your portfolio in a PowerPoint or .pdf.

Bear in mind the types of work you enjoy doing and skills that can be applied remotely (e.g. writing, customer service, programming, design, marketing, etc.).

- » **Proactively test the market demand:** Reach out to potential employers or clients as you research different remote roles. You can see which skills are in high demand on websites like Upwork, Fiverr, or LinkedIn.
- » **Upgrade skills with further education and certificates.** If needed, invest time in learning new skills three different ways:

- a. Find courses on **global online learning platforms** such as [Coursera](#), [Udemy](#), [EdX](#), [Khan Academy](#), [Codecademy](#), [LinkedIn Learning](#)

We also recommend regionally relevant resources, e.g. Serbian options like [Krojačeva škola](#) (word play: Tailor-made school) and [IT Academy](#)

In Portugal the leading platform is created by the distance learning faculty [Universidade Aberta](#). In Croatia, check out [LEAP academy](#) for IT skills, AI courses, financial literacy and soft skills.

- b. **Obtain world-class certificates for in-demand skills:**

[Google Career Certificates](#)

[Oracle Certificates](#)

[IBM Courses](#)

[Microsoft Certifications](#)

[ECDL](#) for basic computer skills

- c. Complete **vocational training programmes** in your local community and institutions.

### 2. Choose your career path according to these criteria:

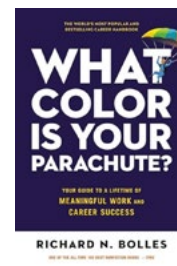
- » **Types of work:** freelance, remote work, and starting your own company.

Decide whether you want to be a freelancer (working for multiple clients) or work remotely for one company.

Read "**What colour is your parachute?**" by Richard N. Bolles to better understand your

career options and personal strengths. The English version can be found [here](#). Check out your local bookstores and libraries for translations.

*What colour is your parachute?* is one of the best career-orientation bestsellers, transforming people's lives since the 1970s (for more than half a century). It has been regularly updated as job markets changed and technology advanced, so it's still helpful in building meaningful careers.



- » Another useful factor in choosing a career path is **your preferred industry**. For example, some industries are more remote-friendly than others:
  - \* tech (software development, web development, cybersecurity),
  - \* creative (content writing, graphic design, photography, video editing),
  - \* marketing (SEO, B2B / digital marketing, social media management),
  - \* project management, customer support, virtual assistance, online tutoring.
- » Finally, many people choose a profession based on **the ease of entry**—such as industries where companies seek numerous qualified entry-level candidates and where the fundamentals of a programming language can be learned within 6–9 months.

Thus, leveraging your **previous experience** or assessing **your potential to enter the field** can be a strong starting point for building your career.

In March 2025, [jooble.org](#) tagged **159,910 vacancies with the keywords “remote work, no experience / in Europe”**.

This is very promising for the motivated youth entering the job market with a solid knowledge of English and no significant work experience.

Two other websites for remote jobs are: [euremotejobs.com](#) and [nodesk.co](#).

Our internet research via these three websites showed that in March 2025, these **10 entry-level jobs are in the highest demand in Europe**:

1. **Data entry clerks** are in charge of inputting, updating, and managing data within company systems.
2. **IT support specialists** provide technical assistance and support for computer systems, software, and hardware.
3. **Customer support** representatives deal with a volume of customer inquiries as they usually respond via calls, email or the company's digital channels.
4. **Content writers** can start as juniors and build up their seniority over time. For instance, entry-level content writers prepare articles, blogs, infographics, landing pages and other written materials for a company's sales cycle.
5. **Social media assistants** create posts in accordance with social media strategy, build social media accounts with consistent actions and engage with followers.
6. **Marketing representatives** support teams with market research, preparation and execution of campaigns, and analyzing data.



7. **Sales assistants** who are just starting can develop lists of leads/potential clients, communicate with them, promote products or services, document results and help out more senior salespeople with other steps of the funnel.
8. **Project associates** help out project managers/coordinators with different project stages: planning, submitting project applications/bids to the donors, implementation, and monitoring of the finished projects.
9. **Human Resources professionals** tackle different tasks within HR departments, such as recruitment, onboarding new hires, and creating strategies for employees' learning and development.
10. **Transcriptionists** listen to audio recordings and transcribe them into written documents.

To refresh and personalise your job search, we recommend that you **type out keywords** "remote entry-level positions + location" or "high-demand remote entry-level positions in Europe" or "well-paid remote positions no experience."

### 3. Build your online presence through several touchpoints:

- » **Create a personal website/portfolio:** Showcase your work, skills, and experience.


Use platforms such as  **WordPress**,  **Squarespace** or  **Wix** to set up a professional website. Those platforms are user-friendly for those who do not have advanced programming skills.

If you are **interested in IT jobs**, you should build your programming portfolio on  **Github.com**. For **creative professionals** in web design, UI/UX design, or front-end development  **Behance** is one of the best options.

If you are interested in jobs more related to people skills than technology, or want to share a document rather than a webpage, **showcase your portfolio in a PowerPoint**. In that case, your presentation will contain screenshots of successful collaborations, people's testimonials, photos from your projects, inserted certificates and other relevant logos and milestones for your career so far.

Once you are ready to share that document further, you can turn that PPT into a PDF for a more elegant look and feel.

- » **Choose your area of interest.** It could be something you're already passionate about or a field where most available jobs align with your skills and preferences.
- » **Analyse job ads.** Examine what skills they are looking for and what tasks they are describing.
- » **Update your LinkedIn profile:** A strong LinkedIn profile is essential for connecting with potential employers or clients. Make sure it's up-to-date and that it highlights your remote-working skills.

No matter how experienced or inexperienced a young person is, it is strongly recommended to create a strong online presence, such as a profile on  **LinkedIn**.

LinkedIn is a **business and employment-focused social media platform**. It provides professional networking, career development, and allows users to post their CVs on the platform. Participation in **relevant LinkedIn groups** enables young people to see and to be involved in current trends in youth employment. Effective LinkedIn groups are often filled with people sharing advice, opportunities, and resources.

LinkedIn is a network where you can follow companies in your field of interest. A LinkedIn profile is a place to present all relevant skills that we possess, digital skills (software, marketing, programming languages, tools), soft skills (communication skills, problem-solving skills) and language skills (English and other languages). Furthermore, social networks provide an easy way to follow industry leaders and network with other professionals, through participation in discussions, conversations with others and learning from experts.

If you are just starting and you don't have any experience, you should **optimise your LinkedIn profile with these steps**:

- ❑ **Choose the right profile picture for LinkedIn.** Your profile picture is your calling card on LinkedIn, and it's how people picture you. Your profile picture must be recent and look like you.  
  
Experts claim that your face in a professional picture should take up around 60% of the picture. Also, add a background photo so your profile gets attention.
- ❑ **Organise your profile headline.** Use the headline field to say more about how you see yourself and your specific fields and areas of interest.
- ❑ **Create an interesting summary.** Your summary is your chance to tell your own story. This is your most personal piece of content marketing.
- ❑ **Expand your network.** This should be easy if you connect your profile with your email contacts. Nowadays, algorithms might even do that automatically. LinkedIn will suggest people you could connect with and strive to engage people from your area of interest.
- ❑ **Do not forget to list your relevant skills.** List the skills that are relevant for you. When you are looking for jobs, and you find a vacancy, you will see how many of your listed skills match the skills essential for the job you might be applying for.
- ❑ **Be present and active.** Add comments and share content. When you add comments to your shares, you give yourself greater prominence within the main feed and express why you think a particular content matters. Well-expressed comments also enable you to share a broader range of content.
- ❑ **Follow relevant influencers in your industry.** This will bring interesting and engaging content to your feed, which you can share with others when you think it adds value. It also helps give context to your LinkedIn profile, demonstrating your passion for what you do.

#### 4. How to navigate your career as you apply for remote jobs?

If a young person is looking for their first job, they should develop digital skills for job searching. Essential knowledge is to know the online platforms for job searching.

For example, in Serbia, the most representative platforms are [🔗 Infostud.com](https://infostud.com), [🔗 Lako do posla](#), [🔗 LinkedIn Jobs section](#), and employment agencies/job portals for white-collar jobs, such as [🔗 Joberty](#), [🔗 Hello World](#), and [🔗 Manpower](#).

Youth employment agencies such as the [🔗 SBU Zadruga](#) and [🔗 Omladinska zadruga](#) provide part-time jobs for the unemployed and students in secondary or higher education. There are also national employment agencies providing specialised training, counselling and employment mediation.

The most recognisable platforms for job search in Croatia are [Moj Posao](#) , [Posao.hr](#) , and the [Croatian Employment Service](#).

The best-ranked platform for job finding in Portugal is [Net Empregos](#). Respectable platforms in Portugal also include [Indeed](#) and [IEFP](#) as the leaders of job market and employment websites.

The introduction and mainstream access to the Internet have led to the rise of online digitisation services and provided individuals the ability to work from anywhere in new, emerging, atypical employment cultures.

**Technology** and **digital platforms** are available resources for youth all over the world. E-learning resources, remote training, and virtual placements have helped millions of young people gain skills that used to be out of reach.

One of the proposals is to use remote-specific job boards for full-time jobs like [We Work Remotely](#), [Remote.co](#), [FlexJobs](#), [remoteok.com](#) .

Also, [Indeed](#), [Glassdoor](#), and [ZipRecruiter](#) are the most representative sites for youth looking for a job on international markets.

Community forums such as [Stack Overflow](#), [GitHub forum](#), [99 Designs community](#) and even subreddits dedicated to technology on **Reddit** are useful for young people. There they can learn from more experienced colleagues and obtain more opportunities than they initially conceived.

### Side jobs and freelance opportunities

Freelance platforms are a practical option for part-time work, allowing young people to gain experience and build a reputation before securing larger clients. The best freelance platforms include [Upwork](#) , [Fiverr](#) , [99 Designs](#) , [Freelancer](#) , or [Toptal](#) for the more experienced ones.

For those eager to start their freelance career, “**The Freelance Way**” by Robert Vlach reveals the best strategies for different types of gigs, teaming up, prices, taxation, and personal productivity. You can buy it [here](#).

Consider freelance opportunities as an excellent way to build your portfolio and gain experience if you’re just starting out. If you’re already employed, freelance work can provide an additional source of income alongside your salary.

If you are open to entrepreneurship and international projects, freelancing is a low-risk option that does not require upfront capital. It *only* requires time, patience and willingness to reach out to potential clients as you promote your services.

In a few years, freelance work could evolve into your full-time career. In some cases, projects from freelance clients may become more profitable than a traditional full-time job in your home country or place of origin.





## What can you do to prepare for the recruitment process and interviews?



There are different reasons why a young person doesn't have working experience. Nevertheless, there is always an opportunity for change. Every change starts with a small step. Thanks to consistency and taking action every day, young people can make a difference over the long run.

In the process of looking for a new job or striving for a more meaningful career path, this advice can be useful:

**Update your CV:** Highlight your abilities, not your experience. Assess your skills and interests, take some time to evaluate your skills, qualifications and interests. When you understand your skill set, you can easily target suitable job opportunities.

Tailor your resume and cover letter to highlight your remote-working skills, such as communication, time management, and self-discipline.

**Stay motivated and connected.** Networking is crucial for finding your job opportunities. Attend networking events or job fairs to expand your contacts within your industry.

If you are looking for remote jobs, join online communities (e.g. Slack groups, Facebook groups, Reddit, or Discord servers) to network with other remote workers and learn about new opportunities.

**Use several communication channels to reach decision-makers (e.g. LinkedIn and email).** In Chapter 4, we mentioned representatives of companies as decision-makers. They are just one of the groups of stakeholders that a young person can benefit from, so re-read this Chapter to gain support for multiple sides in your career.

When communicating about job applications and interviews, it's important to identify your main contact person. This is typically an HR representative, recruiter, or your potential manager/supervisor.

Try to find these individuals on LinkedIn and add them to your network. To do this effectively, ensure you are actively building your LinkedIn presence. If they are not among your first 10-50 connections because you have more contacts, start by engaging with their posts – liking or commenting thoughtfully. Later, you can send a polite message expressing your interest in learning more about the company.

In addition to connecting with recruiters, consider reaching out to employees from companies whose job openings align with your career interests. LinkedIn is a great tool for identifying decision-makers across different teams. When engaging with them, you can ask a few questions about working at the company and their hiring plans. If the person seems receptive and has the time, suggest scheduling a 15-20-minute online call instead of continuing the conversation via LinkedIn messages.

When applying for jobs through various application systems, email will typically be your official communication channel. Rejection letters are often sent automatically via email, leaving little room for feedback.

This is where LinkedIn comes in handy for follow-ups, especially if you haven't received a response or want to gather more insider information about the company. Over time, you can also use LinkedIn as a relationship-building tool—e.g. following up in 6-9 months after earning new certifications and noticing that an IT manager in the company has posted new job openings.



Business professionals on LinkedIn tend to view you as “more real,” so it’s a great platform to showcase your personal brand. Share milestones and achievements, engage with others through direct messages, comments, and publicly appreciate individuals, etc.

### **Learn continuously and develop skills**

This topic is covered in depth in Chapters 8 and 9 of this toolkit. On this page, we want to motivate you to take a definite plunge and to take decisive action about continuous learning.

The world we live in is changing very fast, and our fields of work and employment are evolving at the pace of the global economy and technology disruptions. Even when you have a solid job or reach a certain level of earnings, you need to keep educating yourself, sharpen your existing skills and adopt new ones.

Invest in continuous learning and skills development as you work with mentors 1-on-1 or attend free or paid courses. Likewise, be open to feedback from clients and employers to improve your work. Your open-minded and humble attitude will enable you to maintain a successful career in a desirable work environment: be it location-independent or still in the office.

**Volunteering and internships** are a natural way to start your career. The best first step is to choose volunteering or internship opportunities in a field that interests you. When you engage in causes that matter to you, you increase your chances of getting the job you want.

If your profile is more related to social sciences than STEM, you can build your portfolio of projects in a PowerPoint.

### **Quote:**

***“The process of acquiring a job may be daunting. Yet this is one of the ways to grow over time and to shape our character.”***


The process of acquiring a job is demanding and stressful at times. The best advice is to prepare for the job interview and stages beforehand in every possible way.









Here’s how you can prepare for a job interview:

**Prepare your CV with great attention to detail.** Structure your CV in chronological order, put the latest experience and education at the top. Emphasise keywords in your CV, do not fail to include tasks and responsibilities for your job roles.

Your CV should be saved in PDF format to avoid the possibility that the document won't open after you submit it. Finally, stick to a professional-looking photo in your CV, and remember to add the correct and updated contact details.

A CV that includes a professional photograph, a compelling personal summary outlining why you're interested in the job, and details of your previous experiences, tasks, and responsibilities can help make your application stand out.

Many companies rely on ATS (applicant tracking system) to filter and manage job applications, and you want your resume to pass the test. An **ATS scan resumes for specific keywords, skills, and qualifications** that match the job description. Nowadays, in the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and ATS, you have to adapt your CV for ATS and AI screening. For example, the  **Jobscan tool** uses AI to optimise your CV for an applicant tracking system. It analyses your CV and provides suggestions on how to make it more ATS-friendly.

Besides this one, there are other resume writing tools that will help you in the process of finding a job. Some of them, like  **Rezi** or  **Resume.io**, use AI to analyse your resume and to help with suggestions on how to write a better CV. Other useful resume writing tools are  **ResumeWorded**,  **Resume Genius**,  **EnhanceCV**,  **Zety**,  **CV Compiler**,  **Visual CV**.

Finally, as you aim to secure offers, it's crucial to research the company you've applied to and the specific role you're pursuing.

This preparation offers two key benefits: it will not only help you perform well during the interview, but it will also provide insight into whether the company aligns with your values, culture, and the work environment you're looking for.

## 5. Land a job interview and secure an offer

Job interviews are usually one of the last steps that stand between a young person wanting the job and signing the contract.

In some companies, the interview process may consist of 3-4 rounds, such as an initial interview with HR, followed by a technical interview. In the third round, senior executives and the candidate's future manager may conduct the interview.

Multiple employees may interview the same person to test for hard skills, cultural fit and personality types. Thus, the recommendations outlined before apply no matter how many interviews you have had so far:

**Prepare yourself with questions.** Practice answering the questions that could be asked during the interview; maybe in front of the mirror out loud, in the company of a close friend or a family member, or maybe just thinking about it silently. This is especially important for common interview questions. Avoid generic answers and take time to prepare answers.

Remember that the interview process is a two-way street — you should also prepare questions for the interviewer. Don't ask questions about something already covered during the interview. Questions like: *What are the biggest challenges I will face in the first 90 days*, and *How will success be measured?* show that you are well-prepared for the job interview.

### What to bring to a job interview?

You should always bring several items to a job interview, even if it is not requested:

- ☐ Bring a copy of your CV.
- ☐ A professional notebook and pen. By taking notes, you will look interested in the position and company. But do not take too many notes, just what you need to record.
- ☐ A bottle of water and a bag or briefcase are useful. Put all your personal belongings in the bag and be sure you didn't forget anything.
- ☐ Bring your smile and positive attitude.

### Useful tips for the job interview

The interview is a very detailed process, and interviewers carefully watch everything, from your clothes, behaviour, confidence and how you act under pressure. Depending on their personality type and communication style, some interviewers may try to find your weaknesses more than others. With excellent preparation, you will prevent this.

- ☐ Dress appropriately and avoid any clothing with rude slogans.
- ☐ Establish eye contact with interviewers
- ☐ Have a firm handshake when you greet people.
- ☐ Show positive body language and good posture. Avoid crossing your arms, slouching or having too many hand gestures. Do not play with your clothes and hair.
- ☐ Be polite. When the interview ends, provide them again with a firm handshake.
- ☐ Smile as you leave their office, even if you are disappointed with the information they provided. Maybe your road will cross sometime in the future.
- ☐ It is not unusual that during the recruitment process, you go through several rounds of interviews. This is a completely normal process, since the interviewers can get a better impression of the candidate. It is necessary to prepare for each round of interviews. Advantages of multi-stage interviews are a chance for you to provide information about various skills and strengths to different interviewers, offering a more comprehensive picture of your capabilities and to better understand the work environment and company culture, ensuring a good fit.
- ☐ In case you receive the job offer, request some time to make your decision. Also, if you received a verbal offer, ask to get a printed, official version of the job offer. This can ensure that the offer is valid and provide more details about what the company is providing.

### Pay attention to these 6 factors when you work hybrid or remote:



Based on our experience, we advocate that youth workers and young people working remotely have enough face-to-face encounters. Here are 6 routines that will benefit you long-term:

1. **Set in-person meetings.** Even if you work remotely or in a hybrid setup, make sure you schedule some regular in-person meetings. For example, coffee chats and lunch breaks can deepen your relationships with colleagues or collaborators.

This is a great way to foster a sense of community and ensure you feel seen and heard.

2. **Change your work environment.** Balancing your time between your home office and other locations can help refresh your mindset without affecting your budget.

Consider working from public libraries, local coworking spaces or quiet cafes for better focus. From experience, we know that solely working from your home office can feel daunting and isolating.

If possible, try out these alternative locations. If your company has an office in your city, working from there 2–3 times per week can also be a great option.

3. **Be mindful of your well-being,** time and workload. Adopting a sedentary lifestyle, which includes the frequent use of a computer and a mobile phone, makes it easy to forget to take breaks.

To counter this, try to implement the Pomodoro technique (or a variation that fits you) and take regular breaks as described in Chapter 5. Additionally, Agile and Lean approaches from the same Chapter, along with emotional regulation techniques described in Chapter 3, will also help you come a long way in your work routine.

4. **Master the logistics of the remote work.** This piece of advice boils down to three things that you need to keep in mind every day:

- a. Learn how to coordinate across **different time zones** and **communication platforms**, considering that colleagues may have different daily routines.
- b. Make sure you always have a **reliable internet connection** and adequate tech gear (especially for video calls/meetings).
- c. Understand your **work-life boundaries: Create a designated workspace** at home, even if it's just a small, inspiring corner of your home. Additionally, by working from alternative locations (as mentioned in point 2), you can separate work from your personal life.

**Define your working hours** and group similar tasks together to improve efficiency. Knowing when your work time starts and ends will help you maintain a good work-life balance. Research how to improve your time management and choose routines that feel good for you.

5. **Integrate team-building activities in your work routine.** Stay connected to your colleagues and other business connections via virtual meetups, especially if it is more convenient than meeting in person.

For example, if you live in a different city or remote parts of the same city, or you have a packed schedule, you can use video conferencing tools to host virtual coffee chats or team-building activities. However, whenever possible, prioritise in-person meetings to strengthen relationships.

6. **Join industry events, community gatherings or meetups.** Regularly check platforms and global sites like  [Meetup](#) and  [InterNations](#) for upcoming events in your field, both locally and in cities you travel to.

You may also follow **newsletters**, **LinkedIn pages** or **Facebook groups** of your favourite community organisers, innovation hubs and conference organisers. When you join specific meetups, hackathons, or conferences in your area, you can meet interesting people, stay updated, and discuss future projects. Many of these events are held in person, offering a refreshing break from virtual interactions.

**The following ideas** will be helpful for young professionals starting their careers in IT who are also active as community builders, educators, youth workers, or activists in their free time.



## How to organise face-to-face activities for your local youth community?

**Make a difference by paying it forward for others.**

1. **Bring youth community programmes to life:** Look at the list of stakeholders in Chapter 4 and think of potential partners for the activities you can organise. Also, use Chapter 5 as a roadmap to turn your project idea into reality.

Some outcomes of your efforts might include: organising park and river clean-ups with fellow young volunteers; fundraising for charity causes you believe in; or hosting workshops for young job seekers.

2. **Organise career orientation workshops for local youth:** Topics may include coding, marketing, design, understanding AI, and career skills (like preparing CVs and attending job interviews).

In such events, local schools, libraries or co-working spaces may offer workshop spaces at a reduced cost. Also, consider partnering with other NGOs and companies, especially if you want to bring in experts to share valuable IT skills and future job trends.

3. **Create hackathons or innovation challenges.** These events are intense, typically lasting 24 hours or several days. However, they provide valuable insights into shared young people's needs and how many local partners can gather around a common cause.

Another major benefit is the opportunity to develop and deliver tech-driven solutions for local community challenges. This will motivate participants to get hands-on experience and make a meaningful impact on their local environment.

4. **Plan regular youth meetups or networking events.** Depending on your area of focus, bring together young professionals, company members, educators, activists, and the broader community. Choose a specific topic that will motivate them to share knowledge and inspire them to collaborate beyond that particular event.

5. **Facilitate a mentorship or peer support group.** Decide the key topic and desired outcomes for a **6-12 month** mentorship program with regular meetings.

One way is to **organise sessions** for young people **every several weeks**. Participants can share their challenges, receive advice from peers, and support each other's growth both in their careers and activism.

This format can also be adapted for online participation, just like the meetups mentioned earlier.

Start small and remember that every step counts. As you gather feedback, expand your ideas and initiatives based on the needs of your community.

## Chapter 7:

# Volunteering as a career-development phase

- Which 8 competences can young people improve thanks to organised volunteering?
- How can youngsters volunteer their way to a dream job?
- What are key websites for global youth mobility? In which way can you travel and learn?

**Volunteering is an activity where individuals dedicate their time and skills to benefit others and their community without being paid for their work.** It is a powerful tool for personal and professional growth, fostering a sense of community, and addressing societal challenges. For young people, volunteering is particularly beneficial as it provides opportunities to develop skills, build networks, and explore career interests.

Local communities often offer diverse **volunteering opportunities** that align with various interests and career aspirations. Some of the places where volunteering occurs:

- NGOs such as **youth organisations** (where one can help organise activities, support mentoring programmes, local initiatives for youth rights), **cultural and arts organisations** (helping organise festivals, exhibitions, or performances), **and environmental organisations and initiatives** (participating in clean-up drives, tree planting or sustainability campaigns)
- **Community centers** (assisting with events, workshops, or programmes aimed at specific groups like children, seniors, or migrants)
- **Healthcare and social services** (volunteering in hospitals, senior homes, or with organisations supporting vulnerable populations).

## Organizing volunteering for employability and skill development

**Youth workers play a vital role in guiding young people to explore these opportunities.** They can explain the **benefits of volunteering**, help match young people with suitable roles, and emphasize the transferable skills gained through such experiences.

Here are some **steps** that **youth organizations and youth workers** can take so that their volunteering programmes bring value both to the community and volunteers:

1. **Identify what participants require.** Assess young people's interests, strengths, and areas for improvement so that volunteering matches their career goals.
2. **Design projects related to their skills.** Create volunteering roles or projects that target the improvement of particular competences, such as communication, teamwork, or digital skills.
3. **Collaborate with partners in your local community.** Join forces with NGOs in your areas, businesses, or public institutions to offer structured and impactful volunteering opportunities.

4. **Provide guidance and reflection.** Motivate youth to reflect on their experiences, understand their learning path, and articulate it on resumes or during interviews.

NGOs should have a youth worker who is a **designated volunteer coordinator**. This role can bring significant benefits to the organisation, its volunteers, and its overall mission. The volunteer coordinator has multiple tasks: taking care of selection, orientation, volunteers' contracts, schedules and other administrative tasks. Also, the volunteer coordinator ensures in day-to-day communication that volunteer engagement remains meaningful.

**Having a dedicated volunteer coordinator ensures a professional, efficient, and rewarding experience for both the NGO and its volunteers.** It's a critical investment for organisations relying heavily on volunteer contributions.

## Enhance employability with 8 key competences

A handy tool for structuring one's learning and skills development process is the Youthpass certificate and the 8 Key competences concept.<sup>1</sup> Youth workers can use **8 Key competences as a framework** for organising volunteering projects. By aligning projects with these competences, they ensure that young people contribute and enhance skills relevant to the labor market. Here's how:

Key competence	Volunteering projects/experiences
Multilingual competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach new languages to refugees or children</li> <li>• Host international exchange programmes or language cafes</li> <li>• Support translation work for NGOs</li> </ul>
Personal, social, and learning to learn competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare mentoring programmes for younger students or vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Organize workshops on soft skills like time management or resilience</li> <li>• Participate in group-based outdoor projects (such as cleanups or hikes)</li> </ul>
Citizenship competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist NGOs promoting mutual causes (e.g. human rights or social justice)</li> <li>• Run campaigns for voter or environmental advocacy</li> <li>• Volunteer with local councils on community projects</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/help/faqs/keycompetences/> assessed on March 28



Key competence	Volunteering projects/experiences
Entrepreneurship competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan and conduct fundraising events for non-profits</li> <li>• Organize a fair or a community market, while you coordinate logistics, venues, and schedules for the event</li> <li>• Participate in project management initiatives within NGOs</li> <li>• Search for sponsors during an event, discuss partnerships or pitch proposals</li> </ul>
Cultural awareness and expression competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in cultural exchange programs or arts festivals</li> <li>• Organize exhibitions or cultural events that celebrate diversity</li> <li>• Teach traditional crafts or music</li> <li>• Design promotional materials, brainstorming campaign ideas, or crafting unique activities</li> <li>• Engage in cross-cultural exchanges with international volunteers or participants</li> </ul>
Digital competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run social media accounts or websites for non-profits</li> <li>• Manage databases, schedule meetings, or keep track of resources</li> <li>• Create multimedia content for campaigns</li> <li>• Learn to use tools like Canva, spreadsheets, or project management software</li> <li>• Conduct digital literacy workshops for seniors or underserved communities</li> </ul>
Literacy competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write blogs, newsletters, or articles for community projects</li> <li>• Support literacy programmes for children or adults</li> <li>• Run reading clubs or library support projects</li> <li>• Manage social media campaigns as you create awareness for causes you believe in</li> </ul>
Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology, and engineering (STEM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer in after-school STEM programmes for youth</li> <li>• Assist with environmental monitoring (e.g. biodiversity tracking, waste audits)</li> <li>• Support NGOs with budgeting or data analysis tasks</li> </ul>

# VOLUNTEER YOUR WAY TO A DREAM JOB

As youth workers, our mission is to help young people lead meaningful lives, fully using their potential. When we guide them through the volunteering journey, the following checklist becomes handy. It is written from a perspective of a young person, so you can use it when you communicate processes in your organisation and when you want young people to reflect on their role:



## Step 1. Find your place

- ❑ **Look around:** Check out organisations in your area: NGOs, community centers, or charities that interest you. Talk to people who have already volunteered in those organisations for firsthand information.
- ❑ **Match your interests:** Look for roles that match your skills, passions, or career goals.
- ❑ **Try different things:** Test out different volunteering gigs until you find what clicks. Yet stay loyal to the organisation you believe in. After all, you do not want to build a reputation of the person who is changing teams too often.
- ❑ **Get involved:** Talk to people, attend events, and put yourself out there.
- ❑ **Find your fit:** Stick with the organisation that feels right for you and where you can grow.



## Step 2. Make it count

- ❑ **Step up:** Don't just wait for tasks—be proactive! Offer to run activities and projects.
- ❑ **Express your ideas:** Suggest ideas that could make a difference and help you stand out. They don't have to be big or revolutionary — sometimes, “small” ideas (e.g. small changes in organisational procedures) can have a big impact.
- ❑ **Build bridges:** Connect with team members, mentors, and other volunteers — you're growing your network without even realising it.



## Step 3. Build your skills

- ❑ **Get real experience:** Volunteering is the perfect way to put what you've learned into action.
- ❑ **Level up:** Boost skills like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership.
- ❑ **Be job-ready:** Think how these transferable skills can be communicated to impress future employers.



## Step 4. Show it off

- ❑ **Add it to your resume:** Your volunteer work deserves a spot on your CV, especially if it's relevant to your dream job.
- ❑ **Brag smart:** Highlight the skills and achievements from volunteering that match what employers are looking for.
- ❑ **Use certifications:** If you've volunteered with Erasmus+, don't forget to show off your Youthpass!



## Step 5. Test drive careers

- ❑ **Peek behind the scenes:** Volunteering gives you a chance to explore industries and see what they're really like.
- ❑ **Understand the work:** You'll learn about the roles, challenges, and rewards of different jobs.
- ❑ **Get clarity:** Use this experience to figure out if this career path is right for you — or if it's time to pivot.

### Use this quick check list before you commit to volunteering:

1. Will this organisation let me learn at my own pace?
2. Are people there willing to teach and mentor me?
3. Are other volunteers as motivated as I am?
4. Does this volunteer position match my interests and goals?
5. Is the organisation good at staying in touch (e.g. with formal team members)?
6. Is there a clear start and end time for my volunteering?

***Volunteering isn't just about giving back—it's also about growing and stepping closer to that dream job. So go for it, and remember to have fun along the way!***

**Below we outline several immense benefits for young volunteers:**

- ❑ Organising multiple activities or events within tight deadlines improves one's **time management skills**.
- ❑ Handling unexpected challenges during events or projects helps develop **problem-solving skills**.
- ❑ By working in diverse environments or adjusting plans due to unforeseen circumstances, you'll be more **adaptive**.
- ❑ Mediating disputes within teams or addressing concerns from beneficiaries will help you in **managing and resolving conflicts**.
- ❑ Supporting vulnerable groups or listening to beneficiaries' stories **builds your empathy and emotional intelligence**.
- ❑ Persevering through setbacks or challenges in the volunteering process will **enhance your resilience**.
- ❑ Building relationships with beneficiaries, stakeholders, or other volunteers will **boost your intrapersonal skills**.
- ❑ Building connections with stakeholders and sponsors eventually **boosts your networking skills**. In a multicultural context these benefits get a whole new dimension.

## **Global youth mobility – opportunities to learn and travel**

Global youth mobility refers to the movement of young people across borders for education, work, cultural exchange, personal growth, or volunteering. In an increasingly interconnected world, such mobility offers significant opportunities for personal and professional development, fosters global citizenship, and strengthens cultural understanding.

### **Key areas of youth mobility:**

#### **1. Education**

Programmes like Erasmus+ or international university enrollments allow students to study abroad, gain fresh perspectives, and enhance their career prospects.

#### **2. Work and internships**

Initiatives such as working holiday visas or internships provide valuable hands-on experience, enabling young people to build industry knowledge and skills in a global setting.

#### **3. Volunteering**

Organisations like the European Solidarity Corps offer platforms for young people to contribute to meaningful projects abroad while building intercultural competencies.

#### **4. Cultural exchange**

Activities such as language immersion or arts programmes help participants broaden their horizons and develop essential soft skills like adaptability and communication.



## Try it out – Important websites to start your journey

### European Youth Portal

 <https://youth.europa.eu/>

The official European Union portal for youth. Here, you can find information about the European Youth Portal, Erasmus+ programmes, and the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) – one of the best programmes for long-term volunteering in Europe.

### European Solidarity Corps (ESC)

 [https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en)

ESC is the perfect option for free volunteer work in Europe. It covers travel costs, accommodation, food, and pocket money. It allows you to work in fields such as education, environmental protection, youth work, culture, and social inclusion.

### Workaway

 <https://www.workaway.info/>

Workaway connects volunteers with hosts worldwide, including Europe. In exchange for helping with local projects (eco-farms, hostels, artistic projects), you get free accommodation and meals. Ideal for flexible and adventurous travelers!

### WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms)

 <https://wwoof.net/>

If you're interested in volunteering on organic farms, WWOOF allows you to experience rural Europe, learn about sustainable agriculture, and live with local families.

### GoAbroad – Volunteer Abroad Programs

 <https://www.goabroad.com/volunteer-abroad>

One of the largest platforms for international volunteering. You can browse European projects in categories like working with children, environmental protection, humanitarian work, etc.

### Idealist

 <https://www.idealist.org/en/>

A great website for volunteering, internships, and jobs in the nonprofit sector. You can find volunteer opportunities in Europe in areas such as human rights, education, and social justice.

### Service Civil International (SCI)

 <https://sci.ngo/>

SCI organizes short-term and long-term volunteer camps in Europe. If you want to spend the summer volunteering abroad and meeting young people from all over the world, this is a great option!

### SCI Poland

 <https://sci.ngo/resources/our-publications/>

One of our teams also collaborated with SCI Poland, so we can recommend their programmes and resources.

### UN Volunteers (UNV)

 <https://www.unv.org/>

If you want to be involved in larger international projects, UNV offers both online and field volunteering opportunities across Europe and beyond.

### Global Volunteer Network

 <https://www.globalvolunteernetwork.org/>

A platform that connects volunteers with humanitarian and environmental projects in Europe and around the world.


### Making mobility accessible for all

Youth with fewer opportunities can benefit from tailored programmes, additional financial support, and mentorship to overcome barriers like cost or cultural adaptation. Initiatives like Erasmus+ emphasise inclusivity, providing grants and resources to ensure equal access.

The inclusive volunteering programme of **the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Split, Croatia**, is one of such examples.

Global youth mobility empowers young people to step into a world of possibilities, bridging cultural divides, fostering personal growth, and building the skills needed for a successful future.

### A good practice!

The  **Movimento Transformers** officially established in 2010, is a Portuguese youth organisation dedicated to increasing civic and social engagement across Portugal and beyond, via volunteering and non-formal education.

Their flagship initiative, the “**Superpowers Schools**”, operates in various Portuguese cities and focuses on empowering at-risk children and young people. In these schools, volunteer mentors share their unique skills—referred to as “superpowers” — with apprentices, fostering the development of transversal skills such as teamwork, social awareness, and communication. This peer-learning and mentoring approach not only enhances specific talents but also promotes broader personal growth.

Through their “Street Academy”, they continued nurturing the talents of young people, despite their different starting points. Movimento Transformers has already worked with more than 9.100 young people at risk of social exclusion, ensuring that 60% have increased their leadership and creativity skills. Likewise, 58% of their beneficiaries have increased their sense of social acceptance, and 44.3% have reduced their school retention rate.

Through these and other initiatives, the Movimento Transformers exemplifies effective practices in youth work by actively involving young people with fewer opportunities, fostering their personal and social development, and encouraging active community participation.

## Chapter 8:

# Lifelong education and skill development / non-formal education



- ❑ How can lifelong and non-formal education empower young people to adapt to a changing job market and develop key competencies?
- ❑ In which ways do tools like IKIGAI and Design Thinking help individuals identify meaningful skill-development paths and achieve career fulfilment?
- ❑ What are 8 key competences for lifelong learning according to YouthPass, and how do they translate to success in digital professions?

Lifelong education encompasses all activities that acquire, improve, or expand knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values throughout life. This concept includes formal, non-formal, and informal learning at all stages of life, aiming to help individuals develop their personal, social, and professional skills.

If we map lifelong education onto a person's life timeline, it includes formal programs such as preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education, along with adult education, which is crucial in today's fast-changing world.

However, before emphasising the importance of lifelong education, it's important to understand how we arrived at this point.

For the **parents of Millennials and Gen Z**, education sometimes felt like the defining milestone of adulthood—the gateway to a “**serious life**.” Once formal education was complete, society expected individuals to secure a stable job, earn a living, get married, and start a family. For those born between the 1950s and 1970s, lifelong learning was not the norm; instead, career paths were shaped by the knowledge they had already acquired. The trajectory of their professional lives was also influenced by the socio-political landscape of the post-World War II era. To what extent should individuals be responsible for their financial security? And to what extent should the state provide support through robust healthcare systems and unemployment benefits?

While some **Baby Boomers and Gen Xers** pursued **additional skills or career changes** — either to increase their financial stability or explore entrepreneurial opportunities — this was the exception rather than the rule.

Since **the late 1980s**, a wave of new opportunities emerged for both **the existing workforce and those just entering the job market**. Geopolitical shifts reshaped many regions, most notably in Europe, where the fall of the Iron Curtain led to EU expansion. Meanwhile, the launch of the World Wide Web in 1989 sparked a tech boom, with companies in the U.S. and beyond thriving throughout the final decade of the 20th century. As internet bandwidth improved, information became more accessible, opening global markets, international entertainment, and career opportunities to people who had never been directly connected to these industries.



Do you remember when personal computers became a household staple in much of the developed and developing world during the 2010s?

And when you might have felt like **a citizen of the world** because of **the foreign languages** you speak and the new opportunities you can find **on the internet**?

This brings us to the new career standard for 2025 and beyond. For Millennials, Gen Z, and future generations, lifelong learning has become less of a choice and more of a necessity. Global connectivity and the fluid nature of job markets have reshaped career paths – gone are the days of staying in the same job for a lifetime.

Additionally, job opportunities are increasingly accessible to talents worldwide, regardless of location. Moreover, advancements in technology, such as quantum computing and AI, are setting the pace for continuous workforce upskilling. The message is clear, “You need to continue learning in new environments and using new tools. Otherwise, your work will soon be automated and replaced by a robot or a machine.”

The team behind this toolkit disagrees with that narrative: it instils fear and pressures individuals to constantly speed up. Instead, as youth workers supporting job seekers and those navigating the job market, we advocate for a smarter, more sustainable approach.


Rather than scrambling to master every emerging skill, we should focus on **building awareness and resilience**, anticipating what will be **relevant in the next 6 months to 2 years**. Running endlessly on the hamster wheel of skill acquisition is not the answer. In Chapter 3, we also emphasize the importance of mental health in this ever-evolving landscape.


Therefore, in 2025 and beyond, we can safely conclude that non-formal and informal learning are equally important. They encompass the acquisition of knowledge and skills which is learner-centred. On a positive note, this learning is sometimes unstructured and spontaneous and often carried out by non-profit organisations.

Non-formal education **complements traditional education systems** by offering flexible and practical learning opportunities outside formal institutions. It is often tailored to the specific needs or interests of young people. In many cases, youth organisations and youth workers provide it.

Young people resonate well with this topic as it empowers them to adapt to shifting job market trends and build transferable skills such as critical thinking, communication, and creativity. As a result, they can access learning opportunities regardless of formal education limitations and gain confidence in pursuing personal and professional growth.

According to  **CEDEFOP**, approximately **45% of jobs on the EU labour market** will undergo significant changes due to **technological advancements**.

In addition to this, the  **World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2023** stated: the projected 23% job churn and net decrease of 14 million jobs globally. These changes are caused by a mix of disruptive forces, such as technological advancements, green transition, decline of traditional roles, and shifts in workforce demands.

Also, for you it is worth reading **WEF's findings** about **jobs of the future**.  **WEF's Future of Jobs Report 2025** stated that “workers can expect that two-fifths (39%) of their existing skill sets will be transformed or become outdated over the 2025–2030 period.”

As we can see from the graph below **Core skills in 2030**, WEF's Future of Jobs Report 2025 indicates that “skills such as **AI and big data analytical thinking; creative thinking; resilience,**

### Try this activity for your next youth workshop

Participants are asked to **explore attitudes toward work across different generations**. For example, they will discuss these thought-provoking questions or come up with interesting prompts themselves. They can reflect individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

Here are some **potential prompts**:

- ☐ What would your grandma say about your career if you were talking to her now in 2025?
- ☐ How would you explain to your grandpa or dad your ideal job? Think about how you'd explain it in simple terms (e.g. something with computers, I talk to people from different countries through a screen, etc.).
- ☐ List a few sentences your parents used to describe their jobs to you.
- ☐ What are some limiting beliefs about careers you picked up from your community?
- ☐ How would you explain to your mom that you don't go to an office, yet still get work done?

Then, **imagine you're in a time machine and fast-forward to 2030 or 2035**. Think of a few key questions about careers in the future. Here are some prompts to guide you:

- ☐ Which aspects of your job would you want robots or AI to handle for you?
- ☐ How much money would you consider enough to earn five years from now?
- ☐ What would you say to relatives or friends considering starting their career in 2035?
- ☐ Will retirees and grandparents in 2035 also have a role in the job market?
- ☐ List 3–5 universal career truths that will still hold in 2030 or 2035. (For example: stay ethical and treat others as you would like to be treated; pay the industry standards; and reward the good work of your colleagues)

This exercise encourages participants to explore different perspectives, recognise potential limiting beliefs and bring humour to the serious topic of lifelong learning.

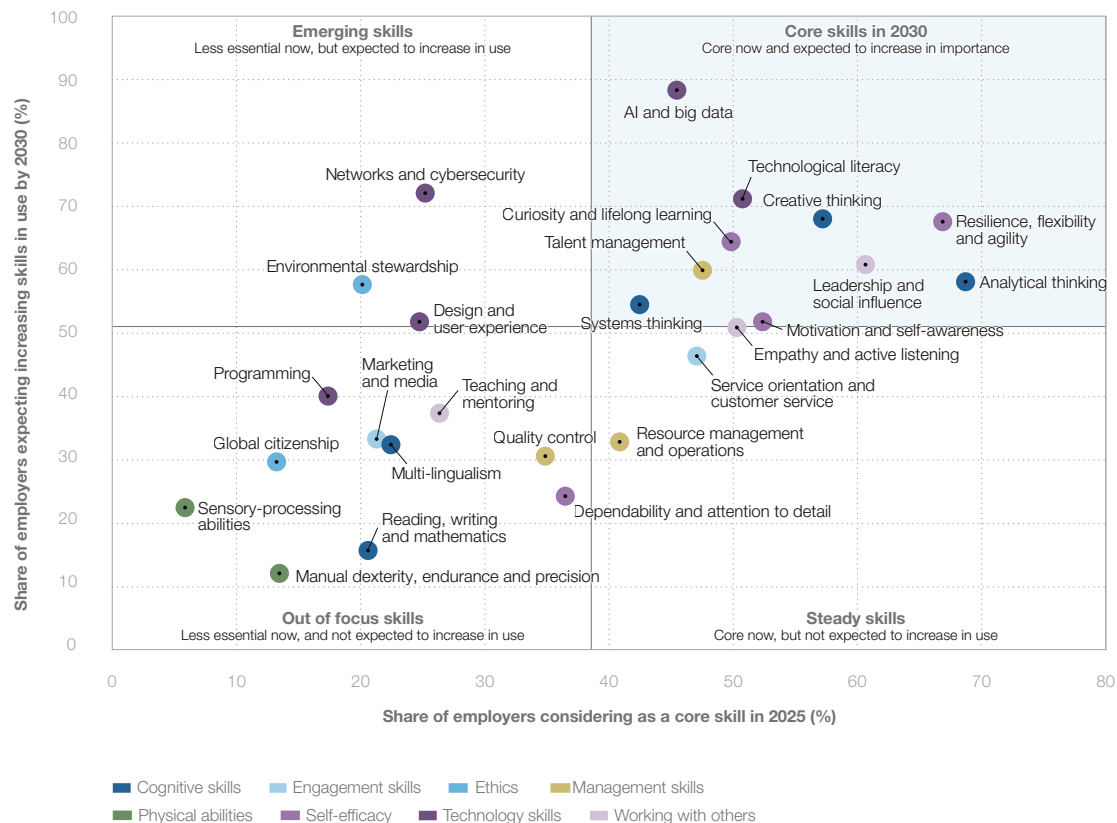
By considering questions like "What would my grandma, aunt, uncle or parents think?" we create a safe space for discussion. This approach also highlights the **continuous progress each generation strives to achieve**.

**flexibility and agility; and technological literacy** are not only considered critical now but are also projected to become even more important."

In the group of **Core skills in 2030**, WEF team also explains, "**leadership and social influence, curiosity and lifelong learning, systems thinking, talent management, and motivation and self-awareness** solidify their importance, emphasizing the continued relevance of human-centric skills amid rapid technological advances."

Thirdly, “**networks and cybersecurity and environmental stewardship** are expected to increase significantly in use by 2030, while most organisations do not currently consider them as core skills.”

### Core skills in 2030




World Economic Forum (2025). *The Future of Jobs Report 2025*. January 2025. Geneva: World Economic Forum. Retrieved March 31, 2025 from <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/>

### Lifelong learning and skill development – essential in a rapidly changing world

According to Eurostat, adult participation for life-long learning in Croatia, Serbia, and Portugal is under the average of the EU (Croatia - 6.4%, Serbia - 19.9%, Portugal - 44.2% - adult participation in formal/ non-formal education, ages 25-64, 2022).

Lifelong learning goes beyond simply acquiring knowledge – it cultivates curiosity, adaptability, and resilience. It also plays a crucial role in promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities, especially for those with fewer resources or formal qualifications. By continuously developing new skills, individuals can stay relevant and navigate the ever-evolving job market with confidence.

This is especially important for **youth with fewer opportunities**, as lifelong learning provides opportunities to **reduce inequality and improve inclusion**. The right to education, training

and lifelong learning is enshrined in the  **European Pillar of Social Rights** Principle No. 1, which stipulates that “everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.”

Lifelong education emphasizes personal growth and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances in life, at work, and within the community. It promotes access to diverse learning opportunities. Positive outcomes in such circumstances is that young people can fulfil **individual aspirations** and **develop capabilities**. Additionally, stakeholders start recognizing knowledge and skills acquired in different environments and through various forms of learning.

As with any form of education, life-long learning also requires a clear direction of skill development. Luckily, some tools can help determine areas one wants to improve, such as IKIGAI and design thinking.

### How can IKIGAI and design thinking help you identify areas for further skill development?

Lifelong learning should be purpose-driven. Instead of asking, “What should I learn next?”, a better question is, “Which skills bring me closer to a fulfilling career or dream job?”

**IKIGAI** helps individuals find meaningful skills as they align their passions, strengths, societal needs with professional opportunities.

- » **What excites me?** If storytelling is your passion, refine your public speaking or content creation skills. If you are passionate about helping others, build skills in project management in NGOs, community organisations or social work. If business ideas excite you, you can explore entrepreneurship, the startup world or digital marketing jobs.
- » **What am I good at?** If you naturally give great advice, you might excel in coaching or leadership roles. If building connections comes easily to you, event planning or community projects could be a great fit.
- » **What does the world need?** If AI is shaping the future, gaining digital literacy is key. If our planet needs rejuvenation, green skills and sustainability education can be the key.
- » **What can I get paid for?** If your ideal job requires project management, learning agile methodologies is beneficial. If your dream job is in marketing, learning SEO and content creation could be the right path for you.



**Design thinking** helps test skills before committing significant time and effort. This approach prevents wasted energy on courses or careers that may not be the right fit.

- » **Empathize** – What problem do I want to solve, and which skills can help?
- » **Define** – What are the must-have skills for my dream job?
- » **Ideate** – What are the different ways to develop these skills (courses, mentorship, real-world projects)?

By understanding IKIGAI and Design thinking in the context of lifelong learning, young people can strategically develop skills that align with their goals.

This can be a great tool when working with **young people with fewer opportunities**, especially **ones in the NEET population**, who often struggle to find the right link between their passions, strengths and professional opportunities.

The European Pillar of Social Rights attempts to reduce the NEET rate among young people (15–29) to 9% by 2030. The goal has not yet been reached, but by raising awareness about lifelong education, youth workers and youth organisations can contribute to the goal and, more importantly, to the increased quality of life of young people.

### **Practical strategies for lifelong learning success:**

**Set clear goals** – Define what you want to achieve, whether acquiring a skill, switching careers, or personal growth. Goals can be defined using a SMART goals framework that helps to set measurable and achievable goals. For example, if you want to improve your public speaking skills using SMART goals:

#### **S** – Specific

Goal should be clear and well-defined: “I want to improve my writing skills, particularly for blogs.”

#### **M** – Measurable

You should be able to track your progress: “I will write two blogs per week.”

#### **A** – Achievable

Goals should be realistic, and while planning, you should think about your resources and constraints. For instance: “I will enroll in an online writing course to guide my progress.”


#### **R** – Relevant


The goal should align with your broader values, needs or long-term objectives: “Enhancing my writing skills will help me communicate better and strengthen my personal brand online.”


#### **T** – Time-bound

You should set a deadline to create a sense of urgency: “I will execute this plan for 8 weeks and complete 16 blogs.”


- **Use technology** – Online platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and YouTube offer online learning options. The great advantage of such online platforms is their flexibility. Geographically, young people from rural areas can listen to courses from Harvard or Stanford.

There are also some national platforms created by NGOs that offer a variety of courses aimed at increasing employability among young people, such as  **LEAP Academy**.


Some platforms like  **TED talks** provide inspiring ideas and different perspectives for young people.

 **TechSoup** is also a notable example, as they provide incredibly discounted or free tech tools for non-profits and youth workers.

- **Engage in non-formal learning** – Workshops, study groups, and mentoring accelerate learning and build networks. In your local surroundings, young people can join numerous free activities, workshops and projects organised by local NGOs.

Erasmus+ provides international opportunities for young people, including training courses, seminars, workshops, and volunteering programs, all of which can be explored on  **SALTO-Youth**.

- **Apply knowledge** – Practice makes perfect. Hands-on experience deepens understanding and skill retention. Seek opportunities in your local community to engage in activities that can allow you to use acquired skills in practice.

For example, if you are developing your content creation skills, you can apply to volunteer at local animal shelters or other organisations that need those skills. Apply for funding through **the European Solidarity Corps program** called  **Solidarity projects**, in which groups of 5 young people can practice their skills and make an impact on their local communities.

- **Track progress** – Thanks to journals, apps, or tools you can monitor results and maintain motivation. Track progress to keep the same level of motivation from the start.

For progress tracking, you can use a designated notebook and write short daily or weekly reflections based on three questions: What did you learn? What went well? What needs improvement? There are also free apps for tracking progress if you prefer digital tracking.

- **Stay adaptable** – Resources, conditions or constraints can change, which can influence progress on specific goals. Young people should keep in mind that goals can and should be adapted – they should serve as guiding stars, not roadblocks.

- **Build a network** – Connecting with mentors and peers provides support and learning opportunities. In the context of accomplishing goals, peer accountability can be a great strategy as it can provide additional support and motivation. Also, expanding a network can often lead to new professional opportunities.

- **Seek feedback** – Constructive criticism refines skills and accelerates growth. Feedback matters as it helps you find your blind spots, builds resilience and accelerates progress. While seeking feedback, young people should:

- » **Ask specific questions** (“What part of my blog needs improvement?”)
- » **Seek feedback regularly** (not waiting for the perfect moment)
- » **Be open to feedback** (do not take it as a personal attack, but rather as a tool for improvement)
- » **Reflect upon it and act** (write down, analyse and create steps to implement improvements)

- **Celebrate progress** – Acknowledging milestones maintains a high level of motivation, and motivation keeps progress on track.

There are many ways of celebrating: reward yourself, share it with a friend, create a milestone map. It all depends on personal preference.





**Be aware — avoid these common pitfalls in lifelong learning:**

1. **Fear of failure** – Mistakes are learning opportunities.
2. **Comparison to others** – Focus on personal progress instead of external benchmarks.
3. **Overloading** – Prioritize quality learning over excessive multitasking.
4. **Lack of application** – Ensure knowledge is practical and relevant to real-world needs.
5. **Limited perspectives** – Diversify learning sources for a well-rounded view.
6. **Skipping reflection** – When you evaluate lessons learned, you can improve.
7. **Over-reliance on formal education** – Explore informal and experiential learning avenues like mentorship and self-study.

**How can young people with fewer opportunities benefit from knowledge about lifelong education and skill development?**

Young people with fewer opportunities will experience following benefits thanks to lifelong education and skill development:

1. **Improved employability:** Lifelong learning equips them with essential skills, such as digital literacy, communication, and problem-solving, which are highly valued in the job market. These skills increase their chances of finding stable and fulfilling employment, even in competitive or evolving industries.
2. **Breaking the cycle of disadvantage:** Access to lifelong education provides a pathway for young people to overcome barriers like poverty, limited formal education, or social exclusion. By gaining knowledge and skills, they can improve their quality of life and contribute to their communities.
3. **Flexibility and accessibility:** Non-formal and informal learning are often more flexible and accessible, making it easier for youth facing financial, geographical, or social challenges. Many programs are learner-centered and free or low-cost, providing practical alternatives to traditional education.
4. **Empowerment and confidence:** Acquiring new skills through lifelong education boosts self-esteem and gives young people the confidence to pursue their goals. It helps them realise their potential and fosters a belief in their ability to succeed.
5. **Inclusivity and recognition:** Lifelong learning systems and company cultures that recognise non-formal and informal education should be highlighted and recommended.




publically. In such systems, youth's diverse learning experiences become valued and they can obtain more inclusive opportunities for personal and professional growth.


6. **Adaptability:** In a rapidly changing world, continuous skill development helps young people remain resilient and adaptable, enabling them to navigate challenges and seize opportunities in the future.
7. **Building community networks:** Participating in lifelong education programs often connects young people with mentors, peers, and communities. This situational learning offers social support and networking, which can open doors to further opportunities.

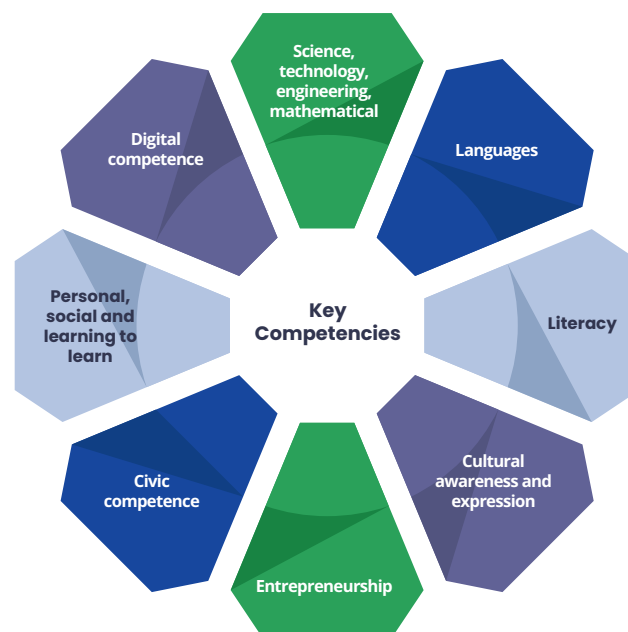
Young people can foster the development of key competencies through lifelong education. These key competencies are universal and include transferable and multi-functional skills such as communication, digital literacy, learning-to-learn, social and civic skills, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, and teamwork that can be applied to most professions.

### How can you implement 8 key competences in your life-long learning?

In which ways does digital competence connect with others?

 **8 Key competencies** are essential for personal fulfillment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion.

As mentioned in Chapter 7 on volunteering,  **8 Key Competences for Life-Long Learning** are a handy tool to structure one's learning and skills development. They are also used in Youthpass, so look at the graph below to remind yourself of each:



In digital professions, the most important competence is the digital one which can be defined as: *'Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cyber security), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking.'*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youthpass.eu/sl/help/key-competences/digital/>

Some of the questions young people can use to reflect on this competence and set their objectives are:

- » “What competencies do you already have in this area? What kind of digital tools do you use for which purpose?
- » Which digital media (computer, telephone, internet, camera, social media, apps, websites etc.) did you use for preparation, realisation and follow up of the project?
- » How did you use information technology and social media to communicate with others in the project? What was new for you and what did you learn?
- » Which computer programmes and new applications did you use? How did you use them and what did you learn?
- » Did you create online tools to promote your project or to inform others about it (website, Twitter, Facebook, blogs etc.)? What did you learn from that?
- » What was challenging in working with such digital tools? Did you have any problems? How did you overcome them?
- » Did you develop your confidence in using digital media? In what way?”
- » What would you still like to learn in this area? Who can help you?<sup>2</sup>

However, key competences are interconnected and complementary, meaning that developing one skill often supports the growth of another. For example, enhancing digital competence can strengthen entrepreneurial skills, as digital technologies serve as a foundation for developing business ideas. Using this framework to reflect upon learning and set further objectives will most definitely empower young people to adapt to a changing job market and increase their employability. It is recommended to encourage young people to constantly reflect upon their learning paths using this framework and reflection questions provided in Youthpass.

To conclude, as individuals and organisations integrate 8 key competences into lifelong learning strategies, they can navigate digital transformation and secure meaningful employment in the future job market.

### **Additional literature:**



[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379994799\\_The\\_Convergence\\_of\\_Ikigai\\_and\\_Design\\_Thinking\\_Crafting\\_a\\_Purposeful\\_Framework](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379994799_The_Convergence_of_Ikigai_and_Design_Thinking_Crafting_a_Purposeful_Framework)

<https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/>

<https://sciencesforce.com/index.php/smij/article/view/230>

<https://facebook.ereportz.com/Apps/uploads/slideshow/uploads/YouthPassCertificate.ppt>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youthpass.eu/sl/help/key-competences/digital/>

### Try these questions in your next youth employment activity

If young people are thinking about a digital career, here are a few key questions they should try answering:

- ☐ How do these competences improve employability in digital careers?
- ☐ Which digital tools and technologies should young professionals master?
- ☐ How can non-formal education initiatives help acquire these competences?
- ☐ In which ways does digital literacy support critical thinking and combat misinformation?
- ☐ How can an entrepreneurial mindset create new career opportunities?
- ☐ What are real-life examples of these competences in action?

As the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of this exercise or a separate exercise, **identify with your group** how each of **8 key competences** can **align with each other**.

Some of useful reflection prompts that you can start with:

- ☐ "What are **5 ways that I can practice** more **foreign languages** (including English) during the **next international training / workshop** about employability? How can I present my efforts related to **entrepreneurship** or **civic competence** next time?"
- ☐ "In what ways can I leverage **digital tools** and **innovative thinking from STEM** to **create sustainable solutions** and take initiative in **addressing societal challenges**?"
- ☐ "Which skills do I need to improve so that I can **analyze new situations critically**, make **informed decisions**, and **adapt to changes** in my job search or future workplace?"
- ☐ "When can I use my knowledge and **personal strengths** to **lead projects**, **collaborate with others**, and **handle challenges** in a professional environment?"
- ☐ "How can I **apply critical thinking** and **scientific methods from STEM** to make **data-driven decisions**, while also reflecting and **learning from each experience**?"
- ☐ "Let me think of 3 scenarios: how can I work effectively in a **multicultural team** while **managing my time and solving problems creatively**?"

The main goals of lifelong education are to realise and nurture individual potential, enhance employability and competitiveness in the labour market, and foster active citizenship.

This plays a vital role in building dynamic and adaptable societies, where people can participate in diverse educational formats according to their preferred learning styles.

## Chapter 9:

# Digital skills, AI and youth employment





- How are technological advancements, particularly AI and digitalization, transforming the job market?
- What digital skills are essential for youth to thrive in the evolving labor market?
- What tools, initiatives, and opportunities support youth in acquiring these competencies?

Technological advancements are profoundly reshaping the global job market. Two major catalysts for these changes are **Artificial Intelligence** and **digital transformation**.

As we have already mentioned, it is fascinating how these tech forces shape today's society. Therefore, **individuals, teams, and even countries need to adapt to those seismic shifts** and take a proactive stance. Waiting for someone else to provide the solutions and for these changes to pass is not a sustainable option.

For example, tech advancements can lead to job losses in some professions and job creation in others. However, the positive outcome of tech accelerations is that we're witnessing job transformations in several scenarios, such as tasks being refined and workers learning new skills to maintain their work status.

 **Research** by CEDEFOP (2024) shows that **6 in 10 European workers** are expected to see some transformation in their job due to AI. There is a strong push for automation of routine work in some sectors. Very often, such automation affects mid-skill jobs. On the other hand, there is a strong job growth in fields like AI & Machine Learning, cybersecurity, cloud computing, data analysis and green tech according to  **LinkedIn's 2024 Jobs on the Rise**.


As the world becomes increasingly digital, job markets are **shifting to skills-based hiring**, as constant growth and learning become essential. Key areas such as digital literacy, technological competences, media literacy, and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the workplace are shaping the future of youth employment.

Understanding and developing these skills is essential for individuals and communities to remain competitive and adaptable in a rapidly changing world where micro credentials and certifications are becoming more valued.

**Digital literacy** goes beyond the basic ability to use technology. It includes critical engagement with digital tools, evaluating information online, and ensuring secure and ethical use of digital platforms. Think about your own experience; you probably realised that digital skills are best developed when you regularly use digital tools and platforms and perform personal or professional tasks.

Youth must learn to **navigate the complexities of online privacy, cybersecurity, and responsible digital communication**. Developing digital skills empowers individuals to engage effectively in personal and professional contexts. As a result, they safeguard their digital

presence and improve their employability. Due to the previously mentioned disruptions in the labour market, employers increasingly seek digitally literate and skilled individuals.

**Digital competences** are part of the Key Competence Framework for Lifelong Learning. They are interlinked with other competences and recognised in the  **Digital Competence Framework**.

(DigComp 2.2) is a tool developed by the European Commission that helps individuals, educators, potential employers, and policymakers understand what it means to be digitally competent.



Their framework is made of 5 competence areas, each containing several sub-skills — in total, there are 21 competences. The first three competences include **information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, and digital content creation**. The fourth and the fifth digital competences are **safety** and **problem solving**.

These are all related to specific activities and uses, whereas the remaining two are transversal, meaning that they can be applied to any digital activity. Problem solving, as one of the most crucial skills in today's labour market, is present in all activities.

Youth can use this framework to assess their level of digital competences and identify areas for improvement. Each area has several competences, and the framework provides explanations for proficiency levels, examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as **use cases**. These use cases are **employment scenarios** for the job-seeking process.

They can serve as lessons learned when youth workers adapt them for group work and use them in non-formal education.

### What digital upskilling initiatives can young people benefit from almost immediately?


There are many initiatives for digital upskilling launched by European institutions, national governments and civil society organisations from which youth can benefit.

Examples of such initiatives are:

1.  **SALTO-Youth** contains the list of **Erasmus+ projects** focusing on digital skills that young people can apply for in the future.
2. The  **Erasmus+ project platform** provides a wealth of resources on **all Erasmus+ projects so far**. It also contains the list of opportunities for organisations and individuals in and outside the EU.
3.  **European Youth Portal** offers European and country-level information about **opportunities and initiatives** interesting to **young people** living, learning and working in Europe.
4.  **Digital Skills and Jobs Platform** is a **central hub for EU-wide** courses, events and resources on digital upskilling. This platform is useful for students and youth workers, as well as companies, training providers, digital experts and job seekers of different ages.
5.  **EU Academy** provides **free online courses** by the **European Commission** on AI, data, cybersecurity and more.
6.  **LEAP Academy** by HUKI offers a range of free courses developed in cooperation with different stakeholders from **Croatia** and the EU.
7.  **Digital Serbia Initiative** provides free online resources and courses for youth in Serbia who are eager to start their own companies or land IT jobs.
8.  **UPskill – Retraining for IT Careers** is a **Portuguese government program** that helps unemployed or under-skilled people to switch to tech jobs.

### Try it yourself – good examples of projects published on Erasmus+ Project Platform:



Check out how our colleagues from Slovenia and Spain  **conducted their project**.

**AVISENSA, Inštitut za psihologijo, svetovanje in izobraževanje, Kamnica and Asociación Mojo de Caña** finished their small-scale project about the impact of the pandemic on young people in October 2023. They tackled three aspects of employment for young people: psychological, technical and social.



Project  **InnovateNOW!** finished in October 2023. It is an excellent example of the inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities.

Project partners included **Pscientífica – Associação para a Promoção e Desenvolvimento Social, Strauss APS, ASSOCIACIO GLOBERS, and Avatud Ühiskond MTÜ**.


Similarly to the countries of authors of this toolkit, they bring perspectives from Portugal, Italy (the neighbour of Croatia), and Estonia. In addition, Estonia is standing out for its strong focus on e-governance and remote entrepreneurship, similar to the growing efforts seen in Serbia.


### Try it out: How can you build digital competences from different communities and industry sectors?




As you've probably noticed, this toolkit isn't focused on a single industry. We encourage you to explore how **digital innovations** and **AI** shape jobs in software engineering, agri-tech, tourism, gaming or any other industry that interests you.


So far, we have attempted to cover general information, but now, we'd like to share a few **industry-specific examples** to inspire you:


 **Gonzalo Hall** and his **company NomadX** provide incredible resources for learning in  **remote communities** about  **jobs of the future**, not only in Portugal, but worldwide.

There are plenty of **Portuguese hubs** listed in the  **2025 Coworking guide for Portugal**.

 **EIT Community RIS Hub Portugal** is your go-to place if you are eager to merge tech innovation with sectors of food, health, manufacturing and urban mobility (through EIT programs).

  **Netokracija** listed  **40+ coworking hubs across Croatia**, so you just have to pick the best community and upskilling opportunities (depending on where you live).

Emerging Europe  **analysed the booming IT sector in Croatia** and how it connects well to Croatia's excellence in tourism, shipbuilding, agriculture and manufacturing.

Croatian  **EIT Regional Innovation Scheme** improves the competitiveness of Croatian businesses by investing in and supporting local innovators.

 The potential of the **Serbian innovation ecosystem** is portrayed, but not limited to these  **members of the Digital Serbia Initiative**.

Also, in 2023, Startup Genome listed blockchain, gaming and life sciences as three major sectors in  **the ecosystem of Belgrade and Novi Sad**.

These links contain  **40+ coworking spaces across Serbia** and 20+  **coworking spaces in Belgrade**. They often organise community activities and meetups regarding digital skills, programming, etc.

Modern workplaces demand advanced technological skills that extend beyond basic computer literacy. Proficiencies in coding, data analytics, cloud computing, and digital content creation have become crucial for roles across industries.

These skills enable young people to meet current job requirements and adapt to future advancements. Moreover, integrating technology into non-digital practices has transformed traditional work models, streamlined operations and created innovative solutions for global challenges.




Artificial Intelligence is at the forefront of technological transformation and disruption, reshaping job markets by automating repetitive tasks and driving demand for specialised roles. For young people, this shift means that entry-level jobs are diminished as the economy shifts towards a skill-based economy.

## How can young people benefit from AI in everyday work and job search?















Careers in machine learning, AI ethics, and human-computer interaction are rapidly expanding, offering opportunities for those with the necessary expertise.

At the same time, **AI presents challenges**, such as the potential displacement of traditional roles, emphasising the need for ongoing learning and adaptation. On the other hand, new job opportunities emerge. According to McKinsey Global Institute (2023), it is estimated that around 12 million people will have to change professions by 2030 due to the rapid development of new technologies.<sup>1</sup> By equipping youth with AI-related skills and fostering their understanding of its ethical implications, we can ensure they are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow.

These are the top **15 scenarios** where you can use **AI resources** as a young job-seeker and professional to upgrade your skills:

- Use  [Coursera](#),  [EDx](#),  [Google AI](#) and  [Microsoft Learn](#) to expand your knowledge from top universities and companies on **AI, machine learning, data sets, and tutorials**
- **Learn** from  [Course AI for Everyone](#) by Andrew Ng for non-technical learners
- **Learn** more from tutorials, courses, and guides for AI usage by  [tensorflow.org](#),  [openai.com](#),  [YouTube.com AI channels](#)
- **Prompt engineering / generate ideas**  with  [ChatGpt](#),  [Perplexity AI](#),  [Promptmetheus](#)
- **Improve communication in English** with  [Grammarly](#) and  [Hemingway](#)
- **Summarize meetings**, lectures and other **voice conversations** with your team (important for freelancers or once you join the company) with  [Otter AI](#),  [Optiverse AI](#),  [Fireflies AI](#),  [Fathom](#)
- Transcribe **voice** prompts into **text** (there are also paid plans if you need it regularly) with  [Otter AI](#),  [Descript](#), and  [Google Docs Voice Typing](#) (use the Voice Typing feature within a Google Doc)
- **Master critical thinking and research skills** with  [Elicit](#) or  [Perplexity AI](#) (summarise articles, analyse data, and get help learning complex topics faster)
- **Data analysis and decision-making** with  [Google Data Studio](#),  [Tableau](#),  [Power BI](#) (analyse data and generate insightful reports)
- **Build a portfolio and a personal brand** with  [Canva](#) or  [Adobe Firefly](#) (design a professional portfolio and create an online presence with AI-powered tools)

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/a-new-future-of-work-the-race-to-deploy-ai-and-raise-skills-in-europe-and-beyond?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/a-new-future-of-work-the-race-to-deploy-ai-and-raise-skills-in-europe-and-beyond?utm_source=chatgpt.com) Assessed March 26, 2025.

- Create your **agents** and **custom GPT projects** with  **CustomGPT projects thanks to OpenAI** (usage-based pricing) or  **n8n** (mostly for technical teams, 24 EUR / month)
- **Develop digital skills** with  **ChatGPT for coding**,  **GitHub Copilot**,  **CodeSignal** (AI-assisted coding can help you learn programming and digital development skills)
- **Prepare for job interviews** with  **Grow Google**,  **Big Interview**,  **ChatGPT**,  **TestGorilla** (assess your skills, prepare for various questions from employers)
- **Network** & leverage **professional connections** with  **LinkedIn AI**,  **Crystal Knows** (use AI to analyse your network, suggest relevant connections, and craft outreach messages)
- **Schedule tasks** & **organise workflows** with  **Reclaim**,  **Fathom** and  **Trello with Butler**.





In a world flooded with information, **media literacy is vital**. The ability to critically evaluate and interpret digital content is essential for distinguishing credible sources from misinformation.

Media literacy also involves understanding the impact of digital communication, fostering responsible engagement in online discussions, and combating the spread of false narratives. These skills are essential as digital platforms become the primary medium for news, education, and social interaction. These skills are particularly important for job roles involving content creation, social media management, data analysis and more. In these areas, a lack of media literacy can hinder job opportunities.




The rise of digital marketing has revolutionised how organisations engage with audiences. Proficiency in using social marketing tools, such as search engine optimisation (SEO), content management systems, and social media analytics, is becoming increasingly valuable. These tools not only help young professionals connect with broader audiences, but also enhance their ability to drive meaningful change and achieve organisational goals.

## Key tools and applications for digital marketing:



### SEO and keyword research tools:

-  **Google Keyword Planner**,  **SEMRush**, and  **Ahrefs**: Identify **relevant keywords** and optimise content to **improve search engine rankings**.
-  **Yoast SEO**: This plugin for WordPress **simplifies SEO optimisation** for blogs and websites.






### Social media management platforms:

-  **Hootsuite** and  **Buffer**: Schedule and analyse **social media posts** across multiple platforms.
-  **Canva**: Create **visually appealing graphics** for digital campaigns. Very user-friendly.



### Email marketing tools:

-  **Mailchimp**: Simplify designing, automating, and tracking **email campaigns**. It just got easier to nurture relationships with your multiple audiences.
-  **Mailerlite**: Manage email campaigns, automate communications, and grow your **newsletter audience** thanks to user-friendly tools. They also have free plans.

### Content creation tools:

-  **Canva**,  **Adobe Spark**, and  **Figma**: Create **sleek visuals**, animations, and infographics.
-  **Descript** and  **Audacity**: Edit **video and audio content** for marketing purposes.



### Analytics and performance measurement:

-  **Google Analytics**: Track website **performance** and audience **behavior** to inform strategy.
-  **Sprout Social**: Receive **in-depth insights** about social media engagement and campaign effectiveness.




### Quote:

***“Key areas such as digital literacy, technological competencies, media literacy, and the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the workplace are shaping the future of youth employment.”***

### Automation tools:

-  **Zapier**: Connect apps to **automate repetitive tasks** and **improve efficiency**.
-  **HubSpot**: **Marketing automation**, CRM integration and analytics in one platform.

### Advertising platforms:




-  **Google Ads**: Create targeted **online ad campaigns**. If you are running a non-profit, you can also apply for Google Ads **free credits** and grants  **in three steps**.
-  **Facebook Ads Manager**: Design **tailored ads for specific demographics** on Facebook and Instagram.

By using these tools, young professionals and organisations will reap multiple benefits. They will optimise their reach and engagement, save time and resources through automation, and enhance brand visibility and credibility.

## Beyond words – the importance of emojis, stickers, gifs and punctuation with a twist

A crucial concept to grasp in the digital age is the use of additional communication tools commonly employed by young people, such as **emojis, stickers, and GIFs**. While these elements are generally considered inappropriate in professional settings and therefore play a limited role, they are highly relevant in youth communication. By understanding how young people use these expressive tools, youth workers can engage with them more effectively and speak in a language that feels clear and relatable. Anyone working with young people should be familiar with the nuances of these modern forms of digital expression.

Modern digital communication, especially texting, has transformed the role of punctuation from indicating grammatical correctness to expressing **emotion and tone**, similar to how the **ancient Greeks** used textual markers to guide speech. For example, the exclamation point signals enthusiasm, while the period can suggest abruptness or even passive-aggressiveness.

A  [JSTOR Daily article](#) explains how punctuation has taken on emotional weight in online conversations. Similarly, a study in  [Frontiers in Psychology](#) found that punctuation use, like inserting periods between words, can increase perceived emotional intensity and alter message interpretation. Finally, research in the  [Journal of Social Media in Society](#) highlights how punctuation acts as a stand-in for the non-verbal cues we typically rely on in face-to-face communication.

A simple yet effective activity: invite both younger and older colleagues to reflect on the meaning of a **specific punctuation mark**, then compare their interpretations. This can reveal generational differences in communication and encourage mutual understanding. It's not the tools themselves that are problematic, but how they are used and understood.

Mastering digital tools empowers young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, to build essential workforce skills and contribute to their communities through innovative initiatives. Staying informed about the evolving landscape of social media and digital communication is essential for youth workers to remain relevant and connected with younger audiences.

The shift from traditional to digital practices has unlocked new opportunities for efficiency and innovation. From automating tasks to using data for decision-making, the digital transformation has revolutionised industries.

Digital literacy, tech skills, and AI proficiency are increasingly shaping the future of employment. Fostering these competencies ensures that young people stay resilient, competitive, and capable of driving meaningful progress in the digital era, where digital tools play a central role.

## Conclusion:

# Emotional intelligence at work and next steps for you

- How can you implement what you've learned from this toolkit?
- Why is emotional intelligence in your career a game-changer?
- How can you keep in touch with toolkit authors & next steps?

As we reach the end of this toolkit, let us remind ourselves of its aim. This publication aims to empower youth workers and organisations to enhance their **competences** regarding the **future of work, career transitions and employability projects**. It provides a wide range of information, advice, recommendations and suggestions for young people entering the job market for the first time or looking for a career change. It also offers various solutions for collaborating with diverse stakeholders to enhance employability.

Developed as part of the **Erasmus+ project "The Roadmap for Jobs of the Future,"** the toolkit promotes knowledge exchange and empowers youth workers to better support young people entering the labor market. One key outcome of the project is to improve career opportunities for young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities. Feel free to revisit any chapter and share this resource with others who may benefit from it.

The process of creating better career prospects for young people, including marginalised youth and those with reduced access to resources, must include one final thing we haven't mentioned before—the concept of **emotional intelligence**.

Daniel Goleman described emotional intelligence as the ability to manage one's emotions in a way that allows them to be expressed appropriately and effectively.<sup>1</sup> In his book **Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ**, Goleman states that emotional intelligence (EI or EQ) is the single largest predictor of success in the workplace, indicating how well you get along with others and your ability to be responsible, honest, and respectful.

Many companies, during the hiring process, assess not only a candidate's intelligence and education but also their ability to manage emotions and build relationships. They pay attention to qualities like self-control, self-awareness, empathy, motivation, and social skills.

People with **high emotional and social intelligence** tend to **do better in life** than those with just a high IQ. People who can regulate their emotions effectively tend to be more successful, confident, responsible, enterprising and more satisfied with their lives. Emotionally intelligent people also tend to accept criticism openly. Today's business environment is marked by changes and growing economic and geopolitical uncertainties. In this context, youth workers are increasingly recognising the importance of emotional intelligence for young job seekers.

Emotional intelligence is one of the crucial steps in finding a job, but not all people are equally emotionally intelligent. The good news is that it can be improved by learning to manage your emotions and understand others' feelings. Every project, activity or acquisition of knowledge is an opportunity for improvement.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/emotional-intelligence>. Accessed on March 26, 2025.

We hope **this toolkit offers you, the reader, an opportunity** to reflect on your personal development through self-assessment and a critical review of your skills and competencies.

You'll likely **return to this toolkit many times**, exactly how it's meant to be used. Growth doesn't happen overnight, but through consistent effort and a commitment to learning. This **persistence** and **goal-oriented mindset** are key traits of **highly emotionally intelligent people**. Motivation shines through when we push ourselves to keep moving forward and reach our goals. We hope that the content of this toolkit **helps you achieve your goals**. We'd love to hear from you along the way, so feel free to reach out and share your progress.

## Acknowledgements

This toolkit and entire project could not have been possible without the unwavering support and teamwork of project organisations HUKI, Agora Aveiro and INAT centre.

Throughout the years, we've collaborated with numerous youth workers, colleagues, volunteers, donors, corporations, agile company teams, startups, universities, innovation hubs, and young people. The insights gained from these partnerships have shaped this toolkit, offering a fresh perspective on the jobs of the future, looking ahead to 2026 and beyond.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the Erasmus+ program and the National Agency of Serbia (The Tempus Foundation) for their support during the Erasmus+ program implementation. The Tempus Foundation provided both the project funding and continuous guidance for our consortium. It is wonderful to see project details and shared vision come together.

During the preparation of this project, we conducted structured interviews with 25+ youth workers from more than 18 organisations across our countries. Additionally, we gathered feedback from youth workers across the wider EU region during training courses, youth exchanges, employment projects, and networking events throughout the project.

As a result, this toolkit was created with insights from young people and job market representatives. The toolkit will be tested and refined during a project activity – a training for youth workers in Croatia during spring 2025. This training will include 21 youth workers, with 3 experienced trainers who will facilitate the use of the material for the upcoming months in their organisations and communities.

Finally, thanks to you, the reader – thank you for choosing this toolkit. May this material serve you in multiple capacities: as youth workers, trainers, or mentors shaping the future of work, and as individuals building long-term careers with determination, curiosity and joy.



## About partner organisations

**HUKI (The Croatian Office for Creativity and Innovation)** promotes entrepreneurial culture and education, focusing on creative and innovative solutions to real-world community challenges. The organisation is committed to individual responsibility and social impact. They provide tailored support to young people who wish to develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship.

HUKI has vast expertise in entrepreneurship, employment, innovation, and digitalisation. The organisation team excels in organising conferences, educational programs, digital training, workshops, coaching, and non-formal activities.

Every year, HUKI implements over 50 different projects, programs, conferences and events and directly affects over 10,000 people, and indirectly over 100,000 people. The association's special focus is on projects related to social entrepreneurship, social innovation, sustainable development, creativity, personal development of young individuals and their inclusion in the local community.

Meet HUKI digitally at:  <https://huki.hr/en/>



**Agora Aveiro** promotes active citizenship and citizen education through various initiatives in Portugal and across Europe using non-formal education methods to encourage learning, creativity and curiosity. Annually, close to 20 volunteers go through the "Volunteering Academy" and many more participate in local and international projects implemented by the organisation.

As the most active youth association locally and regionally, some of their key projects include:

**TEDxAveiro** – An annual conference with 700+ attendees, featuring extraordinary speakers who promote innovation, tech solutions, creativity, and active citizenship.

**Planting the future** – An award-winning project raising environmental awareness, particularly around forest fires in Portugal. The project team educates and engages the community by planting thousands of trees with volunteers.

**Human libraries** – an educational project fostering inclusion, where citizens have one-on-one conversations with members of marginalised groups, such as refugees and people with disabilities.

Meet Agora Aveiro digitally at:  <https://agoraaveiro.org/en/>



**INAT Centre (Innovation Attitude Centre)** develops educational projects, interactive events, and workshops to build youth capacities for future jobs. The organisation helps young people from diverse backgrounds pursue careers in IT, innovation, and remote work cultures, while collaborating with stakeholders from diverse ecosystems.

In 2014–2015, the organisation’s team conducted a global bid to host One Young World, the world’s pre-eminent forum for leaders aged 18–30. According to 15 criteria, this project bid to host One Young World in Belgrade was ranked among the top three global bids.

From 2017 to 2020, the INAT Centre’s annual programs welcomed over 800 participants, and the project team collaborated with 100+ speakers from 20 global IT ecosystems and 100+ stakeholders (companies, public institutions, non-profits, research institutions, and universities).

In 2020, the organisation shifted to digital formats, hosting webinars and a fully online Innovation Attitude Summit. From 2023 to 2027, the INAT Centre pledges to participate in 10 international projects. Throughout European partnerships, it will focus on young professionals’ career development, ICT skills and entrepreneurship.



Meet INAT centre digitally at: <http://www.inatcentre.com/>





## **Toolkit for the Employment Project *Roadmap for Jobs of the Future***

Dedicated to youth workers, trainers, mentors, and young job seekers



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