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Core Values in Youth Work: Building Skills for Empowerment and Inclusion



TRAINING COURSE
22-29 OF NOVEMBER, 2025
SFANTU GHEORGHE, ROMANIA





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About InnoEdu

Asociația pentru Inovație în Educația Adulților (Innovation in Adult Education Association) is a non-governmental organisation founded and officially registered in 2008. We are based in Sfântu Gheorghe, Covasna county—an intercultural city where Romanians, Hungarians and Roma communities live side by side. Embracing this diversity, our organisation creates projects that bring together young people from all three ethnic groups, encouraging cooperation and mutual understanding.

We organise local youth activities and take part in international projects, particularly within the Erasmus+ programme. Our team includes trainers, social workers, economists and teachers—experienced, dedicated and highly motivated individuals committed to supporting young people's development.

Our **mission** is to promote quality, innovation and the recognition of youth work in line with the EU Youth Strategy. We aim to inform and train young people, foster volunteerism, and implement both local and international youth initiatives in the fields of culture, education, sports, environment and entrepreneurship.



Website: <https://innoedu.ro/home-romana/>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/InnovationAdultEducation/>

Introduction



Core Values in Youth Work is a Training Course that is designed to empower youth workers to make complex or sensitive social topics more accessible for young people.

The overall aim of the project is to enhance the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of 40 youth workers from various European countries by equipping them with innovative non-formal education methods and tools. The training aims to improve their ability to design and facilitate inclusive learning experiences that promote teamwork, cultural sensitivity, and personal development among young people with fewer opportunities.

Using creative non-formal methods such as visual facilitation, storytelling, and interactive design, participants learn to turn abstract concepts into engaging learning experiences, while co-developing a practical toolkit to support youth civic participation and critical thinking.



Objectives of the TC



- To foster intercultural awareness and sensitivity in youth work: Participants will engage in activities designed to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding, such as cultural evenings, story-sharing, and collaborative exercises that highlight cultural differences and similarities. Participants will learn how to incorporate intercultural sensitivity into their youth work practices, ensuring that activities are inclusive and respectful of diverse backgrounds.
- To equip youth workers with the competences to support young people with fewer opportunities: Participants will learn to design and implement activities that are specially tailored to the needs of young people with fewer opportunities, focusing on inclusion, empowerment, and skill-building.



- To understand the principles and methods of non-formal education: Participants will learn about various non-formal education techniques, such as creative reflection tools (mind mapping, journaling, drawing), digital platforms (Youthpass, Miro, Padlet), and interactive activities to engage youth effectively.
 - Participants will explore different approaches to learning, including non-verbal communication exercises and reflective practices, to foster a holistic understanding of non-formal education.
 - To develop the skills necessary for designing and facilitating youth work activities: Participants will enhance their ability to plan and execute youth work activities that are inclusive and culturally sensitive, using strategic planning frameworks like SMART objectives and the Youthpass learning process. Participants will gain practical experience in managing group dynamics, leading interactive exercises, and facilitating reflection sessions that support youth development.

The importance of Youth Work



The youth work enhanced by this project is crucial because it significantly contributes to developing youth work practices at local, regional, national, and European levels. The project's main goal is to strengthen the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of 40 youth workers by equipping them with innovative non-formal education methods and tools. Key Areas of Impact for Youth Work.

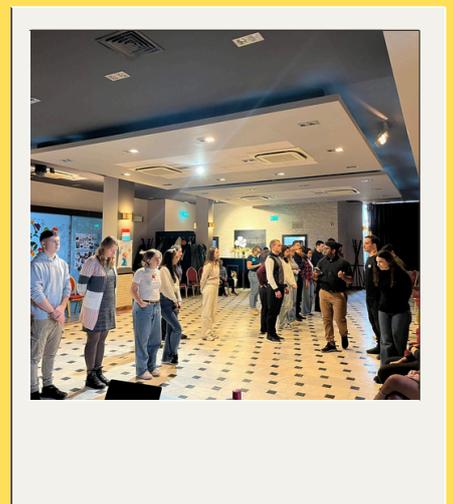
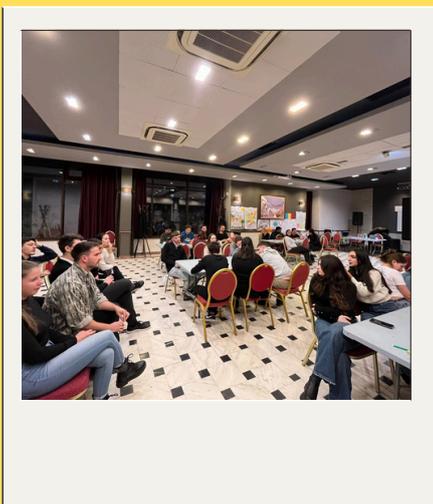
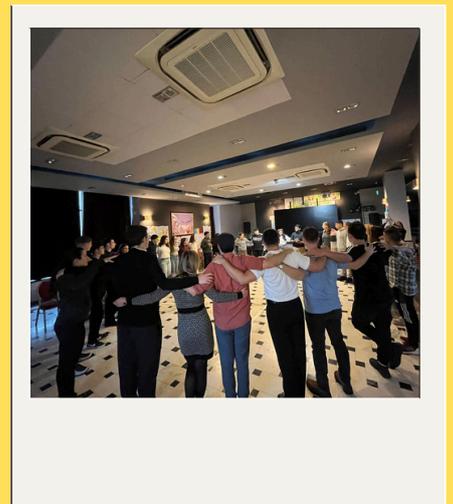
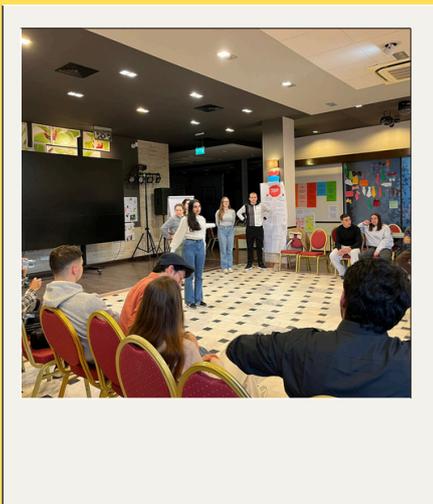
Youth workers are change-makers who operate in a world where divisions can sometimes grow stronger than connections. Our role is to create spaces where young people feel seen and valued and are reminded that their voices matter and they belong. Ultimately, youth work is about: **"...creating the spaces where young people can change the world."**

The **Core Values** training focused on practical and ethical principles that guide high-quality youth engagement. These values shape how we work with young people and how we build trust. Our Core Values: **inclusion, respect, empathy, collaboration, diversity, solidarity, democracy.**

The Non-Formal Methodology

This training was based entirely on non-formal learning methods designed to translate these abstract values into practical action. Workshops prioritized:

- **Experiential Learning:** ensuring that participants don't just talk about inclusion, but experience what it feels like to be excluded or privileged.
- **Active Participation:** Participants are considered co-creators of this experience. Every conversation and group activity is an opportunity to learn something new.
- **Reflection:** All activities include mechanisms for reflection, discussion, and evaluation to consolidate learning.



The Challenge: Design for Impact

During the training course, participants collaborated to move from theoretical understanding to practical facilitation. The challenge was simple yet profound: Design a short, non-formal workshop based on the Core Values of Inclusion, Empathy, or Empowerment.

This task required participants to apply several key steps learned during the training:

- **Needs Assessment:** Identify a specific challenge related to social exclusion or diversity faced by local youth.
- **Aim & Outcome Definition:** Clearly define a specific aim for the workshop (e.g., to break a stereotype, to teach non-verbal communication).
- **Methodology Integration:** Select and adapt non-formal methods, using creativity and minimal resources.
- **Tangible Results:** Specify clear, observable results or learning outcomes, ensuring the session is replicable.
- **Pilot Testing:** Present and test the workshop live with their peers, receiving feedback cards and constructive criticism on their facilitation.

Experiential Learning: Workshops for Empathy and Inclusion

Together We All Belong - The Privilege Walk

- Aim: To help participants experience how different life circumstances and privileges shape opportunities, building empathy and responsibility.
- The Message: "Privilege is not guilt—it is responsibility."
- Tool: The activity serves as a powerful reminder that individuals start life with different opportunities and fosters awareness of invisible advantages and barriers.

Colour Theory - An Experiential Look at Exclusion

- Aim: To demonstrate processes of inclusion and exclusion in group formation.
- Tool: Using coloured dots/stickers placed on foreheads, the activity observes how unspoken status or difference affects social dynamics and group formation.
- Learning Outcomes: Participants gain an experiential understanding of what it feels like to be included or excluded, and reflect on how social inclusion, exclusion, and discrimination emerge in everyday interactions.

Muted Together - A Silent Act of Inclusion

- Aim: Introduce the topic of inclusion for students and people that face difficulties in society, such as those with special needs.
- Tool: A silent acting exercise where groups represent social topics (e.g., Bullying, Racism, Acceptance of disabled) using a still image (scene).
- Learning Outcomes: Learners will be able to recognize inclusion in their every day life and learn about different types of exclusion/inclusion.



Experiential Learning: Cultivating Connection and Growth

Know by Flipping - Challenging Stereotypes through Play

- Aim: Breaking stereotypes and promoting change of perspective.
- Tool: A competitive group challenge where teams answer Q&A focused on common myths about inclusion after completing a bottle-flipping task.
- Learning Outcomes: Participants learn the most common myths about inclusion, strengthen teamwork and communication, and improve their ability to look at situations from different perspectives

Colorful connections - Cultural Sprint for Diversity

- Aim: To boost diversity awareness and facilitate social integration and informal connection.
- Tool (Cultural Sprint): A time-bound exchange where participants share keywords on sticky notes related to: Dance & Music, Food, and Language traditions from their home regions.
- Learning Outcomes: Increased intercultural awareness, practicing small-talk and social communication skills, and strengthening the sense of belonging.

Flying Fishes - Identifying Dreams and Barriers

- Aim: Personal development.
- Tool: An art-based task using a balloon metaphor where participants map out: dreams/goals (in the balloon), things that prevent them (under the balloon), and things that will help them overcome the problem (on the strings).
- Learning Outcomes: Awareness of the similarity between each other and a deeper understanding of the group.



Digital Tools: Enhancing Connection and Learning

Our training leveraged **digital tools** not just for efficiency, but to actively enhance communication, knowledge sharing, and continuous learning. **WhatsApp** proved essential for continuous communication and fostering a strong network among participants and trainers, extending engagement beyond the physical mobility itself. Throughout the activities, tools like **Mentimeter** and **Padlet** transformed group work, enabling real-time feedback, brainstorming, and collective documentation. This focus aligns with the overall European Youth Strategy goal of promoting digital transformation in youth work. Furthermore, the dedication to creating a Digital Toolkit ensures that methods and resources collected during the training remain accessible, promoting the broader adoption of these strategies across Europe. Participants actively contribute to this shared, accessible resource base, guaranteeing that the project's innovations remain relevant in the long term



Study Visits: Connecting with Local Youth Ecosystems

Participants experienced diverse organizational models, from innovative youth hubs to established NGOs, fostering valuable regional and international connections.

Exploring Sfântu Gheorghe's Hubs

The group visited the **Startup HUB**, an important center for innovation and entrepreneurial support. The hosts provided a detailed and comprehensive presentation on their organization's mission and extensive portfolio of work.

Website: <https://startup-hub.ro/ro/>

Youth Empowerment and Festival Culture

The afternoon focused on youth-led initiatives within the region, specifically through a presentation about **HÁRIT** and the acclaimed **Sic Feszt** annual youth festival. This provided a practical example of large-scale youth mobilization and cultural programming, highlighting:

- **Community Impact:** How local youth organizations can maintain high visibility and serve a large demographic through major events like SicFeszt.
- **Youth Advocacy:** The broader work done by organizations like HÁRIT in representing and advocating for young people's needs in the region.

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/harit.ro/>

Website: <https://sicfeszt.com/>



Vocational Excellence: VET Center Romania

The day included a comprehensive visit to the **VET Center Romania** (Vocational Education and Training Center). The hosts provided a detailed overview of their organization and the scope of their work. This was crucial for youth workers to understand the connection between vocational training and non-formal learning in addressing issues like youth unemployment and early school leaving.

VET Center's website: <https://vetcenter.info/>

The Human Side of Service: Red Cross

The day concluded with a visit to the Red Cross Association. Here, the focus shifted to humanitarian service, emotional support, and volunteer mobilization. This exchange allowed participants to learn about emergency response, community support services, and best practices for engaging and maintaining a dedicated volunteer base, a critical component of strong civic engagement.

Official website: <https://crucearosie.ro/>



Regional Youth Activism: Braşov County Youth Council (BIT)

The morning was spent with the Braşov County Youth Council (Braşov Megyei Ifjúsági Tanács), also known as BIT, a prominent regional youth association. The hosts provided a meticulous and detailed presentation showcasing their entire body of work, including their organizational structure, projects, and mission.

Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/bit.brassol/>

Youth Association in Săcele

In the afternoon, the group visited a local youth association in Săcele, a municipality adjacent to Braşov. This provided an essential contrast, showcasing grassroots, community-level youth work and direct service provision. Participants learned how smaller, local organizations manage limited resources while maximizing local impact and maintaining deep ties with their immediate target groups.

Webpage: <https://hmik.ro/>



Free Afternoon in Braşov



This day was full with joy, big smiles and the participants became even more connected to each other...



Youthpass ceremony

The **Youthpass Ceremony** serves as the official and emotional culmination of the training course. This event is more than just handing out certificates; it is a shared moment of **reflection, recognition, and celebration** that validates the dedication and personal growth demonstrated by every participant during the week.



The **Youthpass** is the European instrument designed to formally recognize non-formal and informal learning outcomes achieved by young people and youth workers in projects like ours. By participating in diverse activities—from the strategic planning of the Flying Fishes workshop to the empathetic challenge of Together We All Belong—each participant successfully strengthened skills across the Eight Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. This certificate acts as a tangible portfolio piece, officially acknowledging the growth in areas such as intercultural competence, critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership. It provides youth workers with a clear tool to articulate their new competencies in their professional lives and for future projects.

Youthpass



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SO

MANY



BEAUTIFUL



MOMENTS



TOGETHER





Conclusion

The **CORE VALUES IN YOUTH WORK: BUILDING SKILLS FOR EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION** training course was a success not in its completion, but in the active transformation it sparked among 40 youth workers from 10 countries. Over the course of the week in Sfântu Gheorghe, Romania, participants moved beyond theoretical concepts to build a powerful toolkit founded on the necessity of Inclusion, Empathy, and Empowerment.

A New Standard for Youth Work

This booklet is the embodiment of that collaborative energy: it features innovative methods like the Colour Theory and Together We All Belong exercises, which translate complex social concepts into tangible, replicable learning experiences. By actively designing and testing their own workshops, participants now leave equipped with Learning Activity Templates that will promote a higher standard of youth work across regions and countries. We have ensured the continuity of this learning through a shared Digital Toolkit and ongoing communication via WhatsApp, establishing a robust, connected professional network.

The **true conclusion** of this project will be measured in the positive changes witnessed in the young people reached by these trained workers—those who will now find safer, more inclusive spaces to learn, grow, and ultimately, change the world.



Partners



Vortexica (GEO) - <https://vortexica.wordpress.com/>

Bridge 4 Youth (NT)

Career VET sro (SK) - <https://www.careervet.sk/>

SCAMBIEUROPEI ETS (IT) - <https://www.scambieuropei.info/>

Gənc Sahibkarlar Klubu İctimai Birliyi (AZE) - young.entrepreneurs.club.pu@gmail.com

EDUCATION 360 (UA) - <https://osvita360.com/>

Profession VET DOO (RS) - <https://www.professionvojvodina.rs/>

AYUNTAMIENTO DE MARACENA (ES) - euromaracena@gmail.com

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InnoEdu (RO) - <https://innoedu.ro/home-romana/>