

CHAPTER 2: STRENGTHS OF THE YOUTH / COMMUNITY FIELD

There are many positives, competences and existing benefits that the NGO field already has, in its work with the youth and community related to *green inclusion*. Here are just a few that were gathered through the Green Inclusion Seminar.



COOPERATION

In the youth and community field in Europe, the power of the interdependent NGO community is well understood. Youngsters and youth workers use this power to network and share resources, to build on others' expertise and practice and to connect to interested and committed people that share similar values. It is also recognised that having space and time to interconnect such as international seminars like this one, allows for exchange on shared values or issues, to build on similar aims and can boost their energy and awaken more momentum in their drive for change to go further in their work.

Many of those active in the NGO field understand how to reach out and collaborate with others to augment resources, competence, reach and impact of their work.

There is also an appreciation and respect for the solidarity that comes from working as a community strengthened by shared values.



"We are not an island in what we are doing, there are so many others working in the same direction. And there is potential for many more new projects together."

Participant, seminar



"It is good to be inside the international movement [for green inclusion]."

Participant, seminar



"We need individual actions, but the collective is very important, for the common good of all. It's important for each one to do something to benefit the community."

Richard Apeh, Keynote input



THE NGO APPROACH

Many skills that flourish in the NGO sector are relevant for successful *green inclusion*. Some NGO's act as a central point, connecting to others in the communities, encouraging messaging and ensuring that *green inclusion* values are promoted and embedded. Through this connection, they have the capacity to open up conversations with a wider stakeholder group. Many NGO's also have the ability to engage creatively for problem solving.





"You have the best jobs in the world. There is an abundance of talents and solutions to build on."

Aart Bos, Keynote input



NGOs use project management skills to organise work and the volunteer community. Having a long-term structured sustainable approach for inclusive change will ensure it is longer lasting and more effective. Project management skills are vital in this area, connecting to the grant funding available, especially through Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps Programmes. The more experienced they are with this skill set, the more they have to offer and share with others. This is true for many European-funded project types: Youth Exchanges, Youth worker seminars and trainings, Participation Projects, Strategic Networking, Solidarity Projects, Volunteering – all of these require a set of competences that translate directly to what is needed for *green inclusion* work.



COMPETENT YOUTH LEADERS

Competence encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours and values. Having self-awareness of your own level of each of these is important, as is the readiness to be challenged on any of them, and self-reflect on how to improve. Experience, willpower, enthusiasm and energy can all be seen in youth leaders, and readily shared with others to empower and encourage for more and better *green inclusion* activities.

Role-modelling the values of *green inclusion* is vital, for others to understand, copy and emulate themselves. This includes the youth workers, the other staff at NGOs, and the young people we work with. Change starts at home.

Youth leaders can be seen as change makers. The trust gap between decision-makers and society is unfortunate, but real. By choosing to act in the role of 'conductor' to drive transformation, to make change, individuals can help close that gap.



"What choices are WE ready to make ourselves?"

Participant, seminar



THE YOUTH WORK APPROACH

Many of the needs and values of the social element of sustainability are directly mirrored in the youth work approach. Empowering others to build up their skills, and wider competences, through non-formal education, is core. Experiential learning through creative methods, including nature-based, games or storytelling, can be a powerful approach for *green inclusion* education. Often the benefits of these kinds of outdoor learning approaches can be higher for people with fewer opportunities, especially for those that are less in touch with such non-formal education opportunities and therefore have more to gain by participating. These methods can encourage an affinity and a sense of one-ness with nature.

Through youth work, we should continue to engage, connect and empower young people, as framed by the EU youth strategy 2021 - 2027. This means to continue to: strengthen positive relationships with them, listening without judging; encourage interconnection between them, using role models and peer education, where messages are transformed into something tangible and accessible for different audiences, encouraging action.





"We are here. We want to be listened to. It's not that we are young so we have less expertise. We know our own needs."

Participant, seminar



Youth work empowers young people to use their own voice, to express their needs and ideas, and ensure their involvement in governance systems, so their decisions are reflected in action. This happens even at a very local level. Initiatives to bring young people into the governance of an association can show the power and responsibility of change they can make. It also replicates how the municipality (and higher levels of policy making) can work well, also including the voices, needs and ideas of young people.

Climate justice is a core element of *green inclusion*. It comes from the unequal position that we, as the powerful countries, have done the most polluting so far and the need to make effort to right those wrongs. In this fight, climate justice puts people, human rights and social equality at the core of decisions.

The youth work approach aims for, among other things, inclusion and diversity, human rights, participation, solidarity, community action, democracy, active citizenship, well-being of individuals and communities. It is indeed ideally placed to help put people, human rights and social equality at the core of decisions. That approach can be shared and built on, and should be replicated further and wider by others.

"Top-down is dead. If we continue with the autocratic approach, it can end in wars and similar. Bottom-up is the way forward. Be proud in the role of servant leadership where we have ownership and responsibility of change."

Aart Bos, Keynote input



"Climate Justice ensures that collectively and individually, we have the ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from climate change impacts, and the policies to mitigate and adapt to them."

Lucia Sanchez, Keynote input



THE POWER OF EDUCATION

The power of non-formal education has huge potential for change and connection. Education can help people to see themselves in a new way. They can then use their education opportunities to help transform society. Harnessing the power of youth through organisations leads to committed individuals, and positive change in our communities and societies.

How we educate the youth of today is how they themselves are going to engage with the next generation. The projects and activities that are already being carried out are important and are already having an impact. The choices we make for what that is, and what the future direction is for young people, makes a difference.

"If we don't have the opportunity to be at the table today, but we inform and educate others, then they will be at the table tomorrow."

Richard Apeh, Keynote input



"Even if today we don't see the consequences of the efforts we are doing, the next generations will; as we see the efforts of previous generations in the rights we have today. We should be proud of our power to adapt and re-adapt. Everything we are doing will be worth it and important."

Lucia Sanchez, Keynote input



GREEN INCLUSION



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