



G-LAB



Involve youth in
communitarian
laboratories

A Guide for Community-based organisations

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Partners

Leeds Beckett University (UK)

Synergia Puglia (FR)

I and F Education and Development Limited (IR)

Prometeus (IT)

ArteMus (IT)

Aproximar- Cooperativa de Solidariedade Social, CRL (PT)

Amadora Inovation em Unipessoal Lda (PT)

Kadin ve Genc Girisim Merkezi Dernegi - Woman and Young Entrepreneurship Centre Association (TU)

Authors

Prometeus (IT)

Aproximar- Cooperativa de Solidariedade Social, CRL (PT)

Project's coordinator

Leeds Beckett University (UK)

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INTRODUCTION

THE G-LAB PROJECT

The G-LAB project is a European initiative that addresses the challenges faced by disadvantaged youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the implementation of strict measures such as lockdowns, social distancing, and mobility restrictions, young people have been greatly impacted in terms of limited movement, restricted assembly, and reduced access to information and opportunities for self-expression. Through the power of creativity and art, G-LAB aims to connect skills development with inclusion, offering a platform for young people to engage in creative processes that foster active citizenship.

The goals of the project are:

- ❑ Enhance disadvantaged youth's civic education and development by utilizing creativity and the arts to connect skills development and inclusion, with a focus on socially disadvantaged groups;
- ❑ Develop a methodology that combines arts and creativity to empower disadvantaged groups and encourage their active participation in online civic spaces;
- ❑ Foster and increase the engagement of young people in Young Civil Society Organizations, encouraging their active involvement and participation;
- ❑ Increase the ability of community organisations to mobilize and support their communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with strong focus on disadvantaged youth

VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

Virtual communities are not a novel concept. It refers to an online environment where some people find a place to socialize in a different or complementary way of what they find in face-to-face interaction (Rheingold, 2000). According to the EU Youth Report (2018) this generation is the best educated ever and especially skilled in using Information and Communication Technologies and social media. Nonetheless, youth civic participation still being an issue of social exclusion, having many factors affecting the equal access to all the young people which by consequence accentuates inequality across these social groups. It is well known that Youth that struggle with disadvantages are generally fewer active citizens and have less trust in institutions (EC, 2018). In order to approach this phenomenon, we intend to Create a methodology that combines arts and creativity, mobilizing disadvantaged groups to participate in online civic spaces. These virtual communities, made up mostly by

young people, besides being communities of interest, are learning and knowledge-creation communities.

1. PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

The guide for community-based organizations aims to be a comprehensive resource, offering practical information, guidance, and best practices to support organizations in their day-to-day operations, decision-making, and mission pursuit. It serves as a valuable tool for both new and established community-based organizations, providing insights and recommendations on various aspects of organizational management and community engagement.

The Guide helps community-based organizations in:

- ❑ Navigating the Complexities: Community-based organizations are frequently confronted with intricate challenges in areas such as governance, funding, program development, and community engagement.
- ❑ Enhance Organizational Effectiveness: based on the results of the IO1 of the G-LAB project, the guide promotes the adoption of best practices and proven approaches in key areas
- ❑ Empower Growth and Development: Serving as a valuable learning resource, this guide equips organizations with the necessary tools and knowledge to cultivate their skills, deepen their understanding of community dynamics, and adapt to evolving contexts. It fosters a culture of continuous learning, self-reflection, and improvement within the organization, enabling them to thrive and excel.

2. VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES: current trends and inspiring practices

Virtual communities refer to an online environment where some people find a place to socialize in a different or complementary way of what they find in face-to-face interaction. In order to differentiate virtual communities from other forms of online social networks, we can use the notion of community as a social space created and maintained by people who have the necessity or the desire of a safe shared space.

The members of the majority of the communities share a sense of familiarity, comfort, emotional attachment, or feeling at home, that has been theorized as a “sense of belonging”. Secondly, although participation in virtual communities tends to be high beyond the age groups and gender or socioeconomic dimensions, many of these communities were created by young people and they were the most active users. The main reason that motivated them to feel they belong and participate in a

virtual community was to exchange knowledge by interacting with others with whom they shared an interest. These communities are described as spaces to share, discuss and exchange ideas, information, and activism, to show their artworks to the world, to spread knowledge, to promote values related to social transformation, and to create a meeting point to share experiences and publicize ideas.

The consortium has conducted an analysis of national legislation and regulations pertaining to the establishment of virtual communities in the initial phase of the G-LAB project. The findings from the nationwide research indicate that, apart from Ireland, there is a lack of specific legislation or regulations dedicated to governing the development and operation of virtual communities. The only recent new laws, namely in Portugal and France, were prepared in order either to punish the spread of hatred on the internet in the general framework of the fight against terrorism, either to prevent the spread of fake news or to refer the right of assembly, demonstration, association, and participation in a digital environment.

In UK there is the On-line Harms White Paper that is an official government paper to limit the harms that young people can be exposed to. It sets out plans for a new duty of care to make companies take responsibility for the safety of their users. It builds on our manifesto commitment to introduce legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online but at the same time defend freedom of expression. Principally, this legislation will tackle illegal activity taking place online and prevent children from being exposed to inappropriate material. But the legislation will also address other types of harm that spread online - from dangerous misinformation spreading lies about vaccines to destructive pro-anorexia content.

In addition to the initial analysis, the next step was to gather a range of successful practices that could serve as inspiration for establishing well-structured virtual communities.

2.1 SELECTED GOOD PRACTICES

COLLECTION OF PRACTICES

At the beginning of the project, the Consortium has selected 24 practices in the field of how young people learn in virtual communities, with a strong focus on disadvantaged groups. These best practice examples included:

- collaborative initiatives (between state and local organizations)
- individual initiatives
- organizational initiatives
- local initiatives

A total of 24 practices (4 per country partner) were collected and included in a document called “Report on the current trends, key issues, and recommendations to involve disadvantaged youth in virtual environment laboratories through the power of arts and creativity”.

SELECTION OF PRACTICES

This guide reports only one practice per Country. The selection was made by following a grid composed of 6 criteria that followed the parameters:

- o innovation (intensity of new and distinctive feature; what differentiates this from other products with similar characteristics and purposes; the practice’s added value compared to conventional responses);
- o suitability (how far the practice addresses the needs and challenges of schools on EI, how far it respects the context of these institutions and to different learning domains and contexts, the capacity of transferability);
- o usefulness (benefits and added value perceived by users, evidenced in terms of skills recognition, social value and / or personal development),
- o accuracy (the practice is relevant for schools and for teachers, it relies on real situations/ needs),
- o acceptability (stakeholders’ level of acceptance and adoption willingness; does teachers participate actively in the practice; capacity of replication),
- o expected impact (capacity of the practice to produce outcomes in schools’ settings and support teachers to deal with EI).

PRACTICES

PORTUGAL

“Escola Virtual” (“Virtual School”)

The goal of this platform is to provide a set of tools that potentiate the teaching process anywhere, anytime, and in any circumstance. The target of "Virtual School" is students, teachers, parents and caregivers. The "Virtual School" is an e-learning platform that provides tools for all schools' communities about content lectured in Portuguese schools. At the present moment, this platform exists for Portuguese teachers abroad, from all areas, all over the world, allowing them to implement and teach classes in an e-learning format. Another characteristic of this platform is that it adapts to the many challenges that occur every school year, keeping up with those.

This platform is designed with one artificial intelligence algorithm that helps students to study and tell which contains the student is better at and where he/she needs improvement. It also creates online scripts to help schools and teachers to implement new methodologies. The output is an e-learning platform that includes videos, tutorials, exercises, network classes, one pedagogic profile that teachers can consult to check the evolution of students and other resources that help in learning.

This platform manages to encompass several of the existing actors in School

communities, such as students, teachers, and caregivers. It also includes all subjects in the curriculum of Portuguese schools, and approaches them through different resources. Therefore, it is a very complete tool with good results that can be replicated. This platform has a huge impact on school communities, principally in 2020 because of Covid 19 and the lockdown. And have so many testimonies about this impact on the learning process.

Related links:

<https://www.educare.pt/noticias/noticia/ver/?id=167266&langid=1>

<https://www.portoeditora.pt/ensino-portugues-no-estrangeiro/escolavirtual>

<https://www.escolavirtual.pt/Blogue/Artigos/escola-virtual-a-plataforma-digital-prefereencial.htm>

<https://www.escolavirtual.pt/Blogue/Artigos/escola-virtual-no-topo-das-pesquisas-Google-em-2020.htm>

IRELAND

Creative Technology for young people

The idea is to support the training of youth workers in areas including robotics, animation, sound production, visual design, augmented/ virtual reality, and maker spaces. The Creative Ireland Programme is a 5-year all-of-Government initiative (2017-2022) that places creativity at the center of public policy. One of the main pillars of the Programme is the Creative Youth Plan which seeks to enable the creative potential of every young person, especially young people who may be marginalized, disadvantaged or vulnerable. The outputs provided a platform for youth settings in Ireland to voice their experience of 2020 and highlight the impact on their work through the lens of a new, digitally enhanced reality.

Learnings:

There is a desire and willingness from staff and volunteers working in youth settings to develop the use of technology in their settings, with over 80% feeling open to using technology-based tools. Investment is required in the digital competence and confidence of staff and volunteers. There is a lack of knowledge and inspirational reference points for youth settings in Ireland to realize and support opportunities for young people

Related links:

<https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/creative-youth/creative-tech/>

<https://soundcloud.com/deptcultureirl/sets/my-creative-life>

<https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/publications/>

<https://www.youth.ie/documents/review-of-the-youth-work-sector-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

TURKEY

BTK Academy

This platform aims to raise awareness of all segments of society, especially young people and children, through awareness-raising activities for the conscious and effective use of information technologies. In addition, it aims to contribute to the production of a quality workforce needed by the public and private sectors with its in-class and online training certificate programs. BTK Academy aims to contribute to increasing the required competent human resources with certification training. The academy is an online platform with educational content in the field of information and communication technologies. Trainees can participate in certification training without the time and place limitations. This platform continues its operation with online training and sometimes in-class training. Online training takes place with pre-made course videos and exercises. Participants can communicate with experts and other trainees in the virtual environment while their training continues. Training are completed with certification exams. Within the scope of the project, 757 thousand people benefited from the training. While 355 thousand users share their resumes in the digital environment, many users continue to benefit from internships, on-the-job training, and application environments and tools. This platform increases the awareness of users by creating a practical training environment. The continuity of the content is ensured. Content can be developed and enhanced. Participants can communicate and interact with experts.

Related links:

<https://1milyonistihdam.hmb.gov.tr/proje-hakkinda>

<https://1milyonistihdam.hmb.gov.tr/kariyer-rehberi>

🇫🇷 FRANCE

The idea of using virtual communities to promote youth inclusion faces some serious obstacles in France. The research made by French partner has not found practices in this field but it has clearly identified the reasons of this resistance:

1/ First of all, France is a country with a strong cultural identity and a heavy administrative tradition, and there is a kind of mistrust towards virtual world which is rather seen as a threat to society. A lot of politicians and journalists insist on the risk of isolation and lack of social interaction in real life for young people who are “just lost on internet”. In consequence they tend to struggle against the idea of a serious experimentation on virtual communities’ potential as a mean to increase youth inclusion;

2/ The fear of the possible negative effects of this technology is reinforced by the will, we can observe both in government and in the civil society, of protecting French culture against globalisation and against the invasion of the American cultural model;

3/ The French political philosophy, originating from the French revolution insists on the need for a society to gather equal citizens without any kind of possible fragmentation;

4/Another very important issue is the security. Researchers observed a strong connection between online communities and the activism in social causes since online communities encourage young adults to become much more politically active than those from previous generations.

📍 ITALY

GIOVANI2030

GIOVANI2030 was born with the mission of building a better future together. It feels the duty to concretely help young people to keep the engines of trust and enthusiasm running. With the opportunities, benefits, and information we can find on the platform and on social channels, we will have important tools to build your future on a human, social and professional level. GIOVANI2030 does not tell you what to do: it makes proposals to you, it helps you find your path in many aspects of life, from training and experiences abroad to culture, up to volunteering. The general objective is to support youth living in Italy that are looking for new tools and new challenges to grow and find their own way. Browsing the portal you can access many initiatives and events designed for young people, always new and updated.

Related links: <https://giovani2030.it/>

3. VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES: current trends and inspiring practices

The course curriculum aims to equip young civil society organizations and other community-based organizations with the skills to establish and nurture a thriving virtual community.

3.1 METHODOLOGY FOR COURSE CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Part 1, Introduction, explains in more detail the subject of this document, how the training activities will be developed, and presents methodologies and didactical structures.

Part 2, User Group Selection, details the procedures for the identification of the user groups. It explains how the user groups should be selected, what should be the target audience and other relevant specifications. Trainees' characteristics, competencies, and skills are also defined.

Part 3, The online environment, gives more details about the training structure, module topics, and learning specifications.

Part 4, Modules.

Part 5 Course Outline Template presents the typologies of materials and documentation to be utilized and produced during the training course.

Part 6 Pilot.

Part 1, INTRODUCTION

Two crucial targets need to be addressed for training preparation: the definition of the training structure and methodology and the development of training modules. The training activities contribute to the professional training of the involved actors. Taking in consideration the principles of young informal learning, the main characteristics of G-LAB training are:

- simple in form;
- friendly in access;
- easy to start;
- possible integration between modules;
- focused materials, feedback and support;
- ideal for adult learning and professionals;
- customization of modules program and training design;
- provide ongoing guidance and support;
- provide step-by-step, research-proven materials;

According to the above-mentioned principles, the G-LAB course package is adapted to trainees' age, abilities, learning experiences and working conditions.

There should be less amount of fragments and of such a size that is appropriate for the age of the learners' group. Structured and logically related material is absorbed much better.

Overall training methodology

It is essential to select the structure and methodology that will be the most effective for its training environment, considering the factors such as:

The overall learning objectives

The course package begins with module 0 on the topic of youth engagement in general and focuses on the basic skills and attributes required to be successful in civic participation. Following, modules are loosely focused on learning outcomes and provide a very basic understanding of the topic. They contain training tools and links to further knowledge in the form of the digital component and existing tools.

Learning objectives:

- 🔗 Understanding Community Dynamics: to gain a deep understanding of the community's structure, values, needs, and aspirations. This includes learning

about the social, cultural, economic, and political factors that shape the community.

- ❑ Building Relationships and Trust: to establish positive and trusting relationships with community members. This involves developing effective communication skills, active listening, empathy, and cultural sensitivity.
- ❑ Collaboration and Co-Creation: to foster collaboration among community members and stakeholders to address shared challenges or work towards common goals. This includes promoting teamwork, consensus building, and collective decision-making.
- ❑ Developing Leadership and Advocacy Skills: to empower individuals within the community to become leaders and advocates for positive change. This includes enhancing skills such as public speaking, problem-solving, negotiation, and community organizing.
- ❑ Cultural Competence and Diversity: to develop an appreciation for diversity and cultural competence. This involves understanding and respecting different cultural practices, beliefs, and perspectives within the community.
- ❑ Civic Engagement and Active Citizenship: to promote active citizenship and encourage community members to actively participate in civic and social issues. This includes promoting awareness of rights and responsibilities, democratic processes, and community activism.
- ❑ Research and Critical Thinking: to develop research and critical thinking skills to understand community issues, gather data, analyze information, and make informed decisions. This includes learning research methodologies, data analysis techniques, and critical evaluation of information sources.
- ❑ Reflection and Personal Growth: to encourage self-reflection and personal growth through the community engagement process. This includes promoting self-awareness, empathy, resilience, and a sense of social responsibility.

Learning outcomes:

- ❑ Knowledge of Community: develop a deep understanding of the community's history, culture, social dynamics, and challenges.
- ❑ Communication and Interpersonal Skills: enhance their ability to communicate effectively, listen actively, and build positive relationships with diverse individuals and groups within the community.
- ❑ Collaboration and Teamwork: learn to work collaboratively, value diverse perspectives, and contribute effectively to group efforts in order to address community issues and achieve shared goals.
- ❑ Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking: develop skills to identify community problems, analyze complex issues, and propose creative and evidence-based solutions.

- ❑ Leadership and Empowerment: gain leadership skills and the confidence to take initiative, motivate others, and advocate for positive change within the community.
- ❑ Cultural Competence and Respect for Diversity: develop an appreciation for cultural diversity, demonstrate respect for different perspectives, and promote inclusivity within the community.
- ❑ Civic Engagement and Active Citizenship: understand the importance of active participation in civic and social affairs, and develop the motivation and skills to engage in community initiatives, decision-making processes, and social activism.
- ❑ Ethical Awareness and Social Responsibility: reflect on their ethical responsibilities towards the community and develop a sense of social responsibility, demonstrating ethical behavior and considering the broader impact of their actions.

The scope of the training methods

Such as face-to-face intensive sessions, provision of reference materials, online available material, and courses. In the training of the G-LAB project, the consortium decided to go with the online learning method to ensure easy access to training materials.

Training provision

Each partner has provided a version of the elaborated/updated module in English and the national language.

The online environment

Developed G-LAB Course Content, modules, and elements were selected and adapted for becoming online content. The focus was on elements that were appropriate to use online, as opposed to more practical components. These were uploaded in English and all partner languages to either free or very cost-effective online platforms which can store the data and where users can access it easily and freely. For the formatting of the training materials content, it was chosen a ppt template.

Part 2, USER GROUPS

User Group Selection

The trainees/Target groups

Taking into consideration the interest shown during the survey phase and the KPIs in the proposal, the partnership agreement about the number of trained people is the following:

UK - 12,

PT - 12,
FR - 12,
IE – 12,
TR - 12.

Admission conditions

The training course is open for everyone interested in youth engagement and virtual communities building activities and entrepreneurship and fulfil following admission conditions:

- successful completion of the general course;
- fill in the previous experience table;
- Previous Experience

	Not at all	Some degree	A lot
Previous trainings in youth engagement			
Previous trainings in virtual communities building			
Responsibilities in developing some activities in the youth engagement and virtual communities building			
Responsibilities in implementing strategies to engage youth and to build virtual communities			
Experience in European work / European projects			
Interest in contacting young adult operators community outside the region /country			

Part 3, THE ON-LINE ENVIRONMENT

The online environment for G-LAB course package is based on the transfer of the training resources prepared in G-LAB Learning module # ppp template. In addition, the form of training materials was processed through usual technologies and requirements – using multimedia elements and Web technologies, mainly social networks. In terms of the content, the processed information are brief, clear and pertinent in order to obtain the expected results.

In more details:

The online procedure includes, in case of transition from one level to another one higher, after passing the tests, the release of a certificate corresponding to the achieved level. The final, the most effective training methodology was adjusted in accordance with the environment considering factors such as the overall training

objectives (training achievements), trained groups, expected learning outcomes, and scope of training methods.

The training methodology was based on Online Learning methods including: first of all, distance learning methods such as m-Learning and eLearning, but face-to-face meetings e.g. seminars, workshops, practical trainings...etc. were consider as well.

Part 4, MODULES

Training Structure

The objective of the training was to provide participants with the required knowledge and practice to use the G-LAB knowledge and components as needed in the current society. The outcome of the need analyses confirmed project assumptions in regard to the content of the modules developed in G-LAB project.

It was emphasised – as a guideline - that the training content must be concentrated on the modern methods/instruments in the context of the improvements of youth engagement and virtual community building.

The materials were designed in an attractive and usable way and integrated into the project website, available to download on creative commons licence. The extended curriculum is made available in English language and all partners' languages.

"Learning outcomes"	are Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process and which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence
"Knowledge"	is the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.
"Skills"	The ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

"Competence"	The proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.
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Module design

After having evaluated the potential participants' needs and interest levels, the training modules have been developed to be accessed in a flexible and customizable manner, according to the capabilities and existing skills of the trainees.

The topics:

Module 1 - Definition of Youth Engagement

Module 2 - About Virtual Communities for Youth

Module 3 - Methodologies to mobilize disadvantaged groups through VC

Module 4 - How to Create a Virtual Community for Youth

Module 5 - How to manage a Virtual Community for youth

The Module design template followed the structure and methodology that was considered the most effective for G-LAB courses package, considering the factors such as:

- Planned types, learning activities and teaching methods - teaching and learning activities can be adapted and used in a range of course target groups:

Concept mapping;

Participatory Learning in Action (PLA) Techniques;

Questioning;

Formative quizzes;

Problem-solving;

Debates;

Role-plays;

Freewriting;

Small group activities;

Social media activities (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube);

- Teaching hours

The precise timing is a very important part of the course design. During the syllabus development is very important to consider a time necessary for active learning and for learners to complete major assignments and prepare for exams.

- Model of delivery

The course content can be delivered in a variety of ways. However, the following innovative methods can be considered:

- o blended learning, which encompasses a wide variety of designs, including:
- o technology enhanced learning (e.g. using pdf files or ppt presentations);
- o learning management systems as a support tool for face-to-face teaching and for storing learning materials and online discussion;
- o online eLearning, as a form of distance learning, with no face-to-face teaching, including:
- o courses for credits or non-credit courses, offered online and cover the relevant content, assessments, self-testing tools etc.;
- o fully open courses, such as MOOCs;
- o open educational resources, which can serve as supporting materials for teaching and learning.

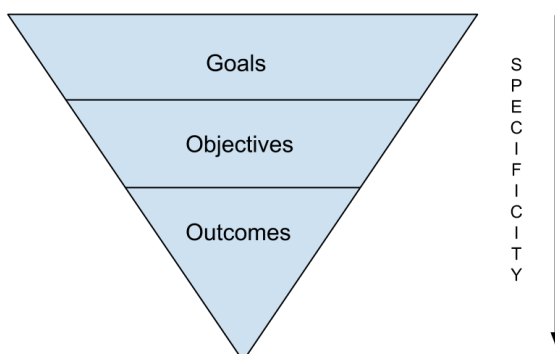
- Assessment methods

The selection of appropriate assessment methods depends on factors like as planned learning outcomes, level of study, target groups of learners and their skills, knowledge and area of expertise, available resources, and delivery mode of the course and so on. Examples of assessment methods:

- o Course exams;
- o Course assignments/projects;
- o Essays;
- o Multiple-choice tests;
- o Self-assessment.

- Course objectives & Learning outcomes of the course unit

Course objectives clearly describe what you intend course participants to learn by the end of the course. Learning outcomes describe an intended or observed state, e.g. what your students will learn or what your students actually learned.



Part 5, COURSE OUTLINE TEMPLATE

The sections of the course outline can be defined as follows:

- ☐ Code of the module, English title of the course/Partner's language title of the course: basic information about the course – code (if applicable) and title of the course in English and in all partners' languages
- ☐ Course description: explains concisely what the course is about and how the overall course will support student learning in the relevant disciplines.
- ☐ Learning outcomes: refer specifically to what students are expected to achieve or learn at the end of the course such as:
 - o Knowledge/Remembering: define, list, recognize;
 - o Comprehension/Understanding: characterize, describe, explain, identify, locate, recognize, sort;
 - o Application/Applying: choose, demonstrate, implement, perform;
 - o Analysis/Analyzing: analyze, categorize, compare, differentiate;
 - o Evaluation/Evaluating: assess, critique, evaluate, rank, rate;
 - o Synthesis/Creating: construct, design, formulate, organize, synthesize.
- ☐ Course syllabus: highlights the main points in each topic/subject in order to help students better understand what is and what is not covered in the course.
- ☐ Learning activities: educational activities consist not only of the study of theoretical learning sources.
- ☐ Assessment type: assessments are part of the learning activities and matches the planned learning outcomes.
- ☐ Required and recommended readings: a list of references and additional readings. The lists can include links to online resources and/or eBooks.

3.2 COURSE TOPICS AND CONTENT

Module 1

Course title: Definition of Youth Engagement

Planned types, learning activities and teaching methods: theoretical framework.
Introduction to Youth Engagement

Assessment methods: questions to be asked during the Teaching of the Module

Learning outcomes of the course unit:

The learner will be able to :

- Define the Youth Engagement
- Quote successful cases
- Understand what are the challenges about YE
- What were the effects of COVID-19
- What are the methodologies for YE
- What are the tools for YE
- What are the technological requirements
- What are the gaps and how to fill them

Recommended or required reading:

- Source:https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261980/Consolidated+papers_reflection+group.pdf/5d365dac-4ba0-4fd9-85bf-0785e09e3631

Language of the course: English

Detailed content for the topic/subject: In this module, potential learners are going to be introduced to an analytic definition of Youth Engagement. Furthermore, learners will be able through case-studies and tools and methodologies to examine the challenges and the effect of the covid.

Module 2

Course title: About Virtual Communities for youth

Planned types, learning activities and teaching methods: theoretical framework. Introduction to Virtual communities

Assessment methods: questions to be asked during the Teaching of the Module at the end of each PPT

Learning outcomes of the course unit: Learners will be able to:

- Define Virtual Community
- List Types/forms of Virtual Communities for Youth
- Know Law/National - European Legislation(s) about VC
- Identify Guidelines and online safeguarding
- Know Law/National - European Legislation(s) about online safeguarding
- Recognize Examples (Good Practices from IO1)

Language of the course: English

Detailed content for the topic/subject: In this module, potential learners are going to be introduced to information about virtual communities for youth.

Furthermore, learners will be able through case-studies and tools and methodologies to better understand what is a virtual community, what type of virtual communities

exist, existing laws that guide virtual communities, laws and guidelines about online safeguarding and examples of good practices on existing virtual communities all over Europe.

The units forming the course syllabus:

- About Virtual Communities for youth
- Definition of Virtual Community
- Types/forms of Virtual Communities for Youth
- Law/National - European Legislation(s) about VC
- Guidelines and online safeguarding
- Law/National - European Legislation(s) about online safeguarding
- Examples (Good Practices from IO1)

Recommended or required reading:

- Blanchard, A.L.; Markus, M.L. (2002). "Sense of virtual community—maintaining the experience of belonging . Proceedings of the 35th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences".
- Beals Laura, & Bers, Marina Umaschi (2009). A Development Lens for Designing Virtual Worlds for Children and Youth. International Journal of Learning and Media, 1 (1), 51- 65
- Capece, G. and Costa, R. (2013). "The new neighbourhood in the internet era:network communities serving local communities", Behaviour and information technology, vol.32, no. 5, pp. 438-448
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Module 3

Course title:

Methodology to mobilise disadvantaged youth's online civic participation

Planned types, learning activities and teaching methods: theoretical framework.
Introduction to mobilise disadvantaged youth's online civic participation

Assessment methods: Practical exercises & filling the 15 tools of the methodology

Learning outcomes of the course unit:

Learners will be able to:

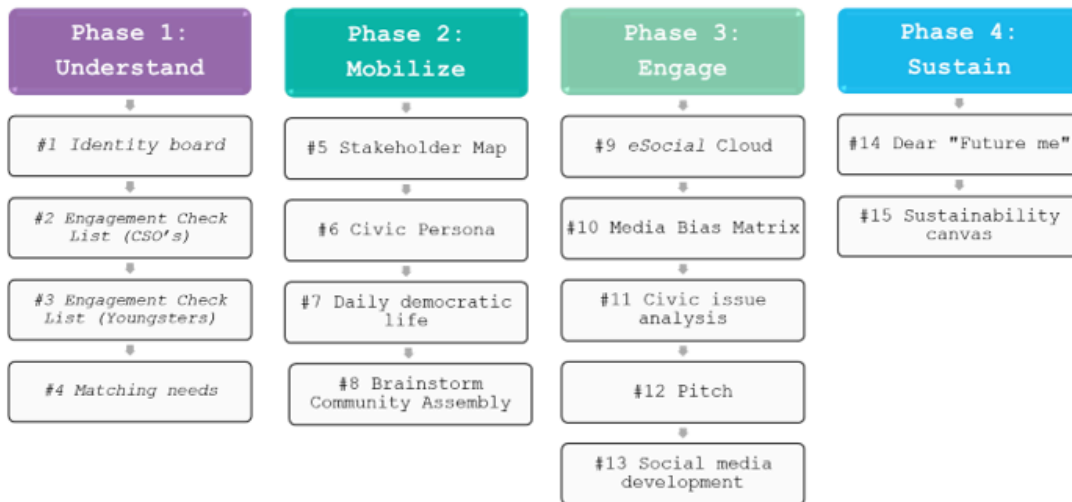
- identify strategies for the implementation of a program to mobilize disadvantaged young people to civic participation
- apply activities where young people experience creativity, develop young people's confidence, self-awareness, self-presentation
- know how to increase young people's skills and capacities required to show creative leadership towards civic participation

G-lab - IO2 - Methodology to mobilise disadvantaged youth's online civic participation

This document intends to provide strategies for the implementation of activities to mobilize disadvantaged young people (for example: ethnic minorities, migrants, LGBTQ community, youngsters with disabilities, etc) to civic participation. More concretely, the methodology is composed by 4 phases: 1) Understand; 2) Mobilize; 3) Engage) and 4) Sustain. Each of the steps contain several practical tools that can be used to promote the youth civic engagement. The 15 tools across this methodology can be used by Civil Society Organization (CSO) in their work with youngsters and by Young Civil Society Organizations (YCSO) and by youngsters themselves. The finality of this process is to help the organisations to apply activities where young people experience creative tools that help develop young people's confidence, self-awareness, self-presentation, and increase young people's skills and capacities required to show creative leadership in online civic participation. Each of the tools have instruction to help organisation apply them, that provides contextualization of the tool, the main aims, time to fill the tool, additional tips and materials that the organisation or participants will need. It's recommended to apply the tools in the order that they are presented throughout this methodology, nevertheless, the tools can be used in a random order or separately.

Language of the course: English

Detailed content for the topic/subject: In this module, potential learners will understand how to apply the tools proposed in the methodology in their CSO or with youngsters in a step by step process.



Topic/Subject

- Methodology to mobilise disadvantaged youth's online civic participation
- Civic participation and digital engagement
- Digital citizenship
- Why is digital engagement by youth important?
- Step by step process and tools to engage youth
- Stage 1: understand
- Stage 2: mobilize
- Stage 3: engage
- Stage 4: sustain

Recommended or required reading:

- World Youth Report (2016). Youth Civic Engagement. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. United Nations. Available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/un_world_youth_report_youth_civic_engagement.pdf
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- Barrett, M. and Pachi, D. (2019). *Youth Civic and Political Engagement*, Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429025570>
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- UNICEF (2020). *Digital civic engagement by young people*. UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy.

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- Middaugh, E., Clark, L.S. and Ballard, P.J. (2017). Digital Media, Participatory Politics, and Positive Youth Development. *Pediatrics*, 140 (Supplement 2), S127–S131.

Module 4

Course title: How to create a Virtual Community for youth

Planned types, learning activities and teaching methods: theoretical framework. Introduction to how to establish a Virtual Community for young people,

Assessment methods: questions to be asked during the Teaching of the Module

Learning outcomes of the course unit:

The learner will be able to :

- How to choose the type of virtual community
- Platforms
- Develop a framework
- Topics and values of the VC
- SWOT Analysis
- Team building
- How to kick-off the VC
- How to promote the VC

Language of the course: English

Detailed content for the topic/subject:

To establish a Virtual Community for young people, it's essential to take a methodical approach. Begin by identifying your target audience and selecting a platform that suits their needs. Develop a brand and guidelines that reflect your values and vision for the community. From there, you can build and launch the community, ensuring that you have systems in place to moderate and track activity. By fostering an environment that facilitates interaction and engagement, you can create a safe and supportive space where young people can share their experiences and ideas. Through your efforts, you can promote personal growth and development, empowering young people to pursue their ambitions and aspirations with confidence. With strategic planning and implementation, you can create a virtual community that positively impacts the lives of its members.

Topic/Subject

- How to create a Virtual Community for youth
- Target audience
- Purpose of the community
- Format of the community
- Define the Purpose
- Set Rules and Guidelines
- Foster Engagement
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Contents
- Kick-off and Promote

Recommended or required reading:

- "The Art of Community: Building the New Age of Participation" by Jono Bacon: This book offers practical advice and strategies for building and sustaining vibrant communities. It covers various aspects such as community organizing, governance, and measuring success.
- "Online Community Management for Dummies" by Deborah Ng: This beginner-friendly guide explores the fundamentals of online community management. It covers topics like creating a community plan, nurturing engagement, handling conflicts, and leveraging social media.
- "The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier" by Howard Rheingold: This classic work examines the dynamics of virtual communities and their social impact. It delves into the ways people connect, share knowledge, and collaborate in online spaces.
- "Engagement Communities: Creating Content with Those You Serve" by Jono Bacon: This book focuses on building engagement communities where users actively participate in content creation. It provides insights into fostering collaboration, creating compelling content, and developing a thriving community ecosystem.
- "Connected Learning: An Agenda for Research and Design" by Mizuko Ito et al.: This book explores the concept of connected learning, which emphasizes the integration of formal and informal learning through social connections and digital technologies. It offers valuable insights into designing virtual communities that promote meaningful and relevant learning experiences for youth.
- "The Social Media Handbook for Churches" by Terrace Crawford: While this book specifically targets churches, it offers practical advice on leveraging social media and digital tools to engage and connect with youth. It covers topics such as online safety, community building, and effective communication strategies.

3.3 PILOT

According to the G-Lab timeline, the IO2 - Methodology to mobilize disadvantaged youth's online civic participation and IO3 - Virtual Laboratories for disadvantaged young people - A Guide for Community-based Organisations were developed and structured to be piloted at the same time. Meaning, while the participants learned more about online civic engagement and how to set up a virtual community, they would also experiment and learn how to apply the 15 tools created within the IO2 methodology. Therefore, all partner countries organized sessions targeting Young Civil Society Organizations and other types of Community-based organizations to provide them with training on how to mobilize youngsters to participate in online civic activities.

All partners delivered national reports summarizing the results from the IO2 piloting. The main conclusions and details on these sessions are described in the next section.

Description of the piloting sessions

United Kingdom (LBU). LBU emailed organisations they have worked with over the last 5 years, all of which are in the Youth Work and Youth Support field. Prior to the meeting with Youth Professionals, they had already piloted some of the modules with students, who fit the demographic of young people in the project. They agreed that these were useful tools, to help with the development on on-line groups. Therefore, in UK the piloting activities run over a period of time and were designed to fit in with students' other commitments.

Ireland (I&F Education). After a thorough review of the methodology document, I&F assessed which materials would be most appropriate for the Irish context. Some of these materials were already familiar to for them as they had used them during a previous training in Paris, allowing them to gauge their impact and potential as a means of understanding the mindset of young people. Civic engagement was discussed and how young people in Ireland, especially those from immigrant backgrounds in suburbs, often feel powerless in the face of social policies. It was explained that we were interested in understanding the role of online communities in the lives of young people and how to communicate with them effectively to help them develop a civic consciousness. On the second day, they explored issues affecting disadvantaged youth's online civic participation in Ireland as such.

Portugal (Aproximar). The events were prepared by contacting a student's association of a high school that Aproximar had contacted before in other initiatives. It was explained how they could engage in the activities, and together decided to divide the workshop in two sessions: one online and one face to face (one more introductory to the topic and one more practical where students could experiment the tools).

First, Aproximar conducted the online session used it to present the G-lab initiative, to explain the main aims, tackle online civic engagement, discuss forms of civic participation and its benefits, virtual communities as well as presented the tools developed under the IO2 methodology. The second session was implemented face to face in the high school, during English class, with a larger group of students in classroom context. The tools that were presented in the online session were piloted and experimented using group exercises.

Turkey (K-GEM). The methodology prepared for IO2 was highly scrutinized and the work was carried out accordingly. The most appropriate tools and methods were determined in line with the needs and mentality of the young people. Activities were shaped in line with the potential of young people. Participants were selected after a suitability and potential assessment within the scope of the project. The selected materials were presented to the participants and their comments were received verbally and evaluated positively.

Consultations were held with young people on active citizenship, civic engagement, identifying and overcoming disadvantages. They explained the role of online communities in young people's lives and the roles and support they can provide to help them develop civic awareness. The participants were presented with the main target group, aim and objectives, intellectual outputs, materials and methodology of the project.

France (Synergia Puglia). They explored the tools with different categories of people: to some CSO, strong social impact non-profit association's professionals and social workers; Deputy Mayor of Aulnay-sous-bois and Asnières-sur-Seine (located in Paris suburbs) in charge of youth policies in suburbs area; and youngsters. They decided to realize some face-to face sessions on appointment adapting our schedule and meeting places to the availability of the people concerned. 2 videoconferences were arranged with the Deputy Mayor in charge of youth policies. The meetings were held in different places, mainly spaces of coworking. They briefly introduced G-Lab project identity, main objectives, and partners. Then talked about the civic engagement definition and its importance and introduced the internet communication and online communities' topic.

Italy (Artemus and Prometheus). They agreed to hold the piloting phase as an activity to implement the virtual community that they have created. To build it, they have first created a WhatsApp group that includes 30 participants and after they moved to a Facebook page that is now a space for youth and youth workers. Based on what they created previously, in the month of march and April, following the results of the project, they have defined the objectives and purpose of the pilot. Based on the pilot objectives, they have prepared the necessary materials, such as presentations, handouts, signage, name tags, and promotional materials. To recruit participants,

they have sent invitations via email, social media and also physical mail. They have also promoted the pilot through off line channels. A total of 5 piloting sessions were delivered, following the contents of the modules. During these sessions, they thoroughly tested the methodology of IO2 and reviewed the modules of IO3.

All partner countries piloted the methodology with both professionals that work with youngsters as well as with youngsters themselves. The tools were piloted with a total of 134 people. The table bellow show the number of participants per country (Table 1.).

Country and participants

UK	39
Ireland	14
Portugal	35
Turkey	15
France	16
Italy	15
Total	134

Main Piloting feedback & conclusions

During the piloting activity, we could collect feedback, especially youngsters' feedback, get in touch directly with our target group, and better understand their heterogeneous mentality, their use of the internet, and their way of communicating. Some conclusions can be summarised as follows:

- ✓ Online communication may have an important role in getting people to integrate and participating in civic life;
- ✓ Creating online communities is a very useful and powerful tool and a valid support but in most cases, it's not enough;
- ✓ To create a significant change in our target group it is essential to develop a relationship of trust in real life and to support youngsters during this process.
- ✓ The most effective online communities are the ones that use: simple language an attractive interface and inspiring #hashtags and encourage youngsters to express themselves and their talents with, music, artistic works, etc.;
- ✓ Deliver more events and develop more frameworks to gather social workers coming from different organizations and associations, who usually don't have chance to meet, since they are very busy responding to urgent needs. Getting them together exchanging and reflecting about their mutual experiences, the effectiveness of their methods and on how improve online communication to

enlarge their community and get even better results, was something very important;

- ✓ The response from the youth workers was overwhelmingly positive as they found the provided tools and clear guidelines to be extremely helpful in managing the topics. Furthermore, the youth participants were enthused to discover that their interests and hobbies could be utilized as a means of self-expression;
- ✓ Feedback from students about the online modules was good, they felt that the modules were relevant, could be easily followed, and offered a degree of interactivity, which they benefitted from;
- ✓ The overall feedback from the Youth Professionals was that this project was very timely and a necessary addition to the profession, as despite no longer having to adhere to Covid restrictions, many organizations had found an online presence beneficial to their previous ways of working;
- ✓ Interesting discussions were held on how the methodology could be used in the partner countries' context (e.g., in the university – UK, or in the high school by the students association to engage more students in their activities during the next school year);
- ✓ Public institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector representatives need to further support young people's active citizenship, civic engagement, digital skills, and artistic activities;
- ✓ The discussion during the piloting allowed us to identify issues affecting young people such as:
 - ✓ Lack of representation: many young people feel that they are not well represented in the political system, and this can be particularly acute for those from immigrant backgrounds.
 - ✓ Language barriers: for some young people from immigrant backgrounds, language can be a major barrier to engaging with civic life. They may struggle to understand political discourse or to communicate their own ideas and concerns effectively.
 - ✓ Cultural differences: Young people from immigrant backgrounds may also face cultural barriers to civic engagement. For example, they may come from a culture where political participation is not encouraged or may have different expectations about how political issues should be addressed.
 - ✓ Discrimination and prejudice: some young people from immigrant backgrounds may experience discrimination or prejudice, which can make them less likely to engage in civic life.
 - ✓ Lack of access to technology: disadvantaged youth may not have access to the necessary technology, such as computers and smartphones, to engage in online civic participation.
 - ✓ Limited Internet connectivity: disadvantaged youth living in rural areas may experience limited internet connectivity, which can hinder their ability to engage in online civic participation.

- ✓ Digital skills gap: some disadvantaged youth may not have the necessary digital skills to navigate online platforms, which can make it difficult for them to engage in online civic participation.
- ✓ Although the objective was to create online civic communities, partners verified that a lot of youngsters already had some kind of community where they discussed these kinds of issues. Therefore, a useful recommendation for the future is to collect and analyze their experiences and develop indicators about what works and what doesn't work to create a sustainable online community.
- ✓ Regarding the tools, the tool that students found more difficult to use was the "civic persona", because the tool was built to be filled individually (and during the pilot it was experimented in group). The groups had difficulties finding attitudes, values, skills, and motivations in common. The "civic issues analysis" was the tool that promoted more interesting discussions;
- ✓ The methodology can be used in school context since it allows students to focus on issues that affect their school community and suggest and pitch solutions to solve them.

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G-LAB



Involvement in
communitarian
laboratories

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