



## BRIDGES FOR SOLUTIONS IN (Y)OUT(H)REACH

### PEDAGOGICAL TOOLKIT

Theory, Method & Examples

**UAB**  
Universitat Autònoma  
de Barcelona



**BOB**  
ZAVOD ZA IZOBRAŽEVANJE  
IN KULTURNE DEJAVNOSTI

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**AG**



Univerza v Ljubljani  
Fakulteta *za socialno delo*



## AUTHORS :

### Špelca BUDAL, Virginie POUJOL

(LERIS: Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur l'Intervention Sociale / Social Intervention Studies and Research Laboratory (FR), [www.leris.org](http://www.leris.org))

### Alenka GRIL, Tadeja KODELE, Klavdija KUSTEC, Milko POŠTRAK,

(UL: Univerza v Ljubljani - FSD: Fakulteta za Socialno Delo / University of Ljubljana - FSD: Faculty of Social Work (SI), [www.uni-lj.si](http://www.uni-lj.si))

### Angelina SÁNCHEZ MARTÍ

Angelina SÁNCHEZ MARTÍ (UAB: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona / Autonomous University of Barcelona (ES), [www.uab.es](http://www.uab.es))

### Andreja DOBROVOLJC, Natalija ŽALEC

(ACS: Andragoški Center Republike Slovenije / Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SI), [www.acs.si](http://www.acs.si))

### Barbara BABIČ, Sara RODMAN

(BOB: Zavod za Izobraževanje in Kulturne dejavnosti / Institute for Education and Cultural Activities (SI), [www.zavod-bob.si](http://www.zavod-bob.si))

### Tanja POVŠIČ

(MZPML: Mestna Zveza Prijateljev Mladine Ljubljana / Municipal Association of Friends of Youth Ljubljana (SI), [www.mzpm-ljubljana.si](http://www.mzpm-ljubljana.si))

### Gordana BERC, Marijana MAJDAK

(UNIZG: Sveučilište u Zagrebu - Pravni fakultet - Odjel za Socialni Rad / University of Zagreb - Faculty of Law : Social Work Department (HR) [www.unizg.hr](http://www.unizg.hr))

### Ana Maria MUNJAKOVIĆ

(Udruga Aktivni Građani / Association Active Citizens, Zagreb (HR), <https://aktivnigradani.hr/>)

### Luc HANIN

(IFME: Institut de Formation aux Métiers Educatifs / Training Institute for Educational Professions (FR), [www.ifme.fr](http://www.ifme.fr))

### Valeria FERRARINI, Giovanna MACIARIELLO

(Aretes Societa Cooperativa: Research Laboratory (IT) [www.aret.es.it](http://www.aret.es.it))

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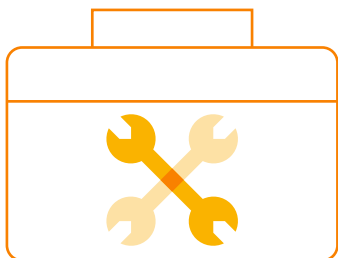
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# Introduction

This **pedagogical toolkit** was developed within the framework of a European Erasmus+ project titled **YouthReach<sup>1</sup>: Inclusive and Transformative Frameworks for All**.

The project was initially inspired by the recognition that while ‘outreach’ practices are discussed in social work training, they often present challenges when applied by social workers and volunteers working with people experiencing social exclusion and young people. These outreach practices are also not consistently integrated into the broader framework of support systems. The complexity arises from the **need to bridge the three interconnected dimensions – policy planning, institutional organisation and professional/field intervention** – which makes effective implementation difficult.

It seems to us that there are a number of unmet needs in most countries, particularly in terms of bridging the gaps mentioned above. By drawing on the experiences and practices of each country, the project enabled us to identify and assess gaps in current training, gaps between training and practice and gaps between individuals’ needs and how those needs are recognised and addressed.

Thus, **the challenge lies in bridging the gap between training and practice**, enhancing the quality of existing training content and materials, **and bridging the gap between practice and social policies** by creating a social dialogue between all stakeholders.

The pedagogical toolkit is intricately linked to the other outputs of the project:

**Training Programme: *Bridging Pathways with Inclusive and Transformative Outreach Frameworks*** aims to empower future professionals and volunteers in the fields of social work, education and other domains working with disadvantaged individuals. It provides comprehensive training to enhance understanding of outreach, its associated attitudes and strategies. The goal is to bridge gaps, promote inclusivity and facilitate transformative outcomes for all involved.

**Methodological Guide: *The Cooperative Approach for Solving the Outreach Challenges of Target Groups*** is a tool for social intermediation that analyses existing services and rights based on the input and expressions of young people within the context of professional and institutional practices. Its primary objective is to identify solutions to support service dysfunctions by incorporating feedback from outreach efforts.

The project involved **practitioners (street workers, social workers) – both professionals and volunteers, professors, researchers and decision-makers** from five different countries: **France, Slovenia, Croatia, Spain and Italy**. Based on the utilisation of training and practices in each country, the experimentation of the training programme and the methodology of support, we have created this pedagogical toolkit, which we hope will help you in your practice and contribute to transforming the frameworks for the inclusion of all.

<sup>1</sup> A contraction between Youth and Outreach.

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# Stakes of Youthreach

## What is “Outreach” for us

**‘Outreach’ questions the idea of universal access to social services and its role as an intermediary between the individual and society, aiming to transform social services<sup>2</sup>.** Therefore, ‘outreach’ provides an opportunity for practitioners, volunteers, social work students, teachers and institutional decision-makers to question conventional social work practices.

We argue that “outreach” can be broadly understood **as a methodology and a model for understanding the approach adopted to achieve comprehensive, integrated and continuous care of a person’s needs, particularly for people detached from institutional care who may be at risk of social exclusion.** This approach necessarily requires at least three levels of action – policy planning, institutional organisation and professional intervention – to be able to respond to the growing complexity of needs and the increasing professional hyper-specialisation of socio-educational care.

In our approach, we address the questions of the source of marginalisation, deprivation and discrimination on the one hand and the origins of ‘youngsters’ power on the other to create opportunities for social and youth work that involves public collaboration in problem-solving.

**‘Outreach’ goes beyond merely ‘reaching’ individuals facing social exclusion; it also involves ‘reaching’ institutions capable of influencing and changing social policies.** It encompasses the creation of spaces where dialogue among all stakeholders can occur and where collective reflections on common issues are fostered.

## The Bridging Roles of Social Workers

The mission of social work is to help all individuals in need within a social context. There are cases where individuals seek out and utilise social services voluntarily. Conversely, there are individuals or entire communities that exist in a state of social isolation, neither approaching nor responding to invitations from social service agencies. The reasons for this can be categorised into four general groups:

- 1. Beneficiaries are unable to attend**  
(e.g. due to illness, disability, are under institutional supervision, etc.).
- 2. Beneficiaries are unwilling to seek help**  
(e.g. due to bad previous experience, stereotypes or prevailing opinions about specific social service agencies or particular social workers, etc.).
- 3. Beneficiaries are unaware of the existence of social services** and social work agencies and the support they can receive.
- 4. Beneficiaries are not acknowledged or are considered ‘invisible,’** i.e. those of whom social work agencies do not keep any records or are not identified in any public documentation whatsoever.

<sup>2</sup> Lorenz, Grymonpres & Roose in De Maeyer, E., & Grymonpres, H. (2020). Using Outreach for Situations of Extreme Social Marginalisation: the Social Effects of a Field of Social Work Practices. *Revue française des affaires sociales*, 2, 117-136.  
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Several 'outreach' approaches, methods and techniques have been developed in the field of social work, but for various purposes and based on different paradigms. On one side, there is the 'outreach' approach that aims to control social relations to protect or maintain social peace, law and order, reflecting the functionalist paradigm<sup>3</sup>. In our project, instead, **we advocate for 'outreach' approaches that aim to support people by co-creating solutions with them so that they are created for them and with them.**

Social and youth workers see themselves as responsible, respectful, skilled allies and facilitators of young people who are experts in their everyday life experience, understanding their lives better than anyone else does. The young person is the master of their life, while the social worker serves as a helper and supporter in identifying and analysing situations. In this process, problems and solutions are articulated in dialogue to overcome social disadvantages.

**The social worker plays a crucial role in bridging the social and cultural gaps that young people are trapped in by helping them articulate their life's challenges and establishing a dialogue with the authorities in various institutional settings.** In these contexts, the social worker acts as an ally and supporter to co-create solutions, which empowers young people to become actively engaged in creating effective strategies for addressing life challenges together with others.



The social worker has the opportunity and responsibility to build bridges between young people in vulnerability and institutions, acting as a **'bridge-builder' who translates the perspectives of various stakeholders involved. We can refer to this role as the 'BRIDGING ROLE' of the social workers**, as they build 'bridges between society and its margins, and achieve a mutual adjustment between the target population, its network, the offer of social service and society at large.'<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Howe, D. (1987). An Introduction to Social Work Theory. Ashgate, Aldershot, Hants.

<sup>4</sup> De Maeyer, E., & Grymonprez, H. (2020). Using Outreach for Situations of Extreme Social Marginalization : the Social Effects of a Field of Social Work Practices. Revue française des affaires sociales, 2, 117-136.  
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## Why should I use the toolkit?

Being a supporter to someone who has little knowledge or experience and, among all, very little power to integrate into society might seem almost an illusion in a culture built on expertise, experience, social standing and the associated power dynamics that go with it. Yet this is precisely our greatest professional strength in our mission to empower those we seek to help.

The path that leads to this is a form of **social dialogue heavily influenced by interpersonal relationships and the social context in which it unfolds. Dialogue taps into the inner, perhaps dormant, strengths of individuals, guiding them toward choices that benefit all parties involved.** The mastery of supporters on this path can be seen in their respect, knowledge, virtues and their approach to those they wish to support.

This toolkit addresses precisely this aspect - **how to encourage individuals to think independently and consider diverse perspectives when creatively devising solutions to the challenges they face!**

Social workers possess the ability to reestablish lost connections, create opportunities for social dialogue and find a 'balance' among the different viewpoints of the parties involved. They hold the power to build bridges between society and its margins.

**The essence of aid lies in opening up social dialogue.** Getting to know people's situations and needs on the one hand and critically identifying and articulating obstacles and personal limitations on the other leads to what Paolo Freire referred to as '[naming the world](#),' a process that is never static or conclusive. This also implies the potential for different interpretations and the capacity for change. The toolkit includes chapters that provide helpers with various

**basic, universal insights into the field covered in the chapter.** It also provides **examples and proven working methods suitable for similar contexts.**

The toolkit is aimed to both i.e. to **laics and professionals in the field of social work and social learning of young adults and others.** The two are intertwined - there is no knowledge without learning and no real learning without a social context in which to make a difference. People build their reality in their relationships with other people and nature. In doing so, we must listen to others, respect them and enable their participation. This requires the knowledge, skills and attitudes that we endeavoured to cover in this guide.

We want to help all those who work with people from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those in various institutions, as well as NGOs and volunteers who dedicate their mission and work to serving these groups and individuals.

#### Examples of the target group include:

- **Practitioners:**
  - a) beginners in outreach,
  - b) experts, seeking to change their practice or explore 'new topics.'
- **Volunteers** (with a focus on direct youth work).
- **Social work students.**
- **Teachers** (both pre-service and in-service teachers)
- **Institutional decision makers** (individuals involved in assessing decision options and the decision-making process).



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We have designed this toolkit to **facilitate the direct application of its materials, considering the social context and the specific needs of the individuals you engage with.** It outlines the processes and methods we employ to connect with people, harness their inner strengths and empower them to participate actively in society.

Everything we have included in this handbook represents only a tiny portion of what can still be accomplished. Therefore, we invite you to adapt and expand upon its contents. Our primary objective is to ignite a spark that can help encourage you to find **new ways to create the conditions** for the activation and inclusion of (young) people who find themselves on the fringes of society.

## Let us embark on this journey together!



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# How to use the toolkit

The structure of the toolkit is designed to be user-friendly. It is divided into chapters, and each chapter is subdivided into themes. These themes generally consist of three parts:

- **Theoretical Section:** This section provides the main concepts and suggests additional reading for a deeper understanding.
- **Method Section:** Here, we propose a strategy for achieving the goal related to the theme (generally, only one method is suggested, but other methods can be used).
- **Practical Examples:** This section offers practical illustrations of the theme's purpose.
- Additionally, we provide **links to two other documents** developed during the project (the programme for the teachers and the methodological guide for practitioners). These resources will further enhance your exploration of each theme.

The themes cover different elements that we consider essential for outreach. Although we have organised the chapters in a particular order, it is not necessary to read the toolkit sequentially. You can navigate through the document as you wish. However, keep in mind that all these elements are essential if we aim to achieve the main objective: 'To transform frameworks for all.'



## How to Select the Appropriate Method?

When deciding on a method, several factors that determine the context in which we intend to use it need to be considered. Once we have identified our purpose, we should also contemplate the following:

- Participant recruitment and selection, i.e. who and how many people will participate?
- The available time.
- The space/room we need.
- What kind of equipment and tools do we need?
- Whether special permits are needed for the organisation?
- What skills do facilitators and mediators need to implement the method?
- Who and how many people are needed to support the implementation?
- How will we encourage people to join us?
- How will we create an atmosphere that encourages participants to participate?

By taking these factors into account, you can make a well-informed decision when selecting an appropriate method for your specific context and objectives.

The toolkit contains one or two methods described within each theme due to space limitations. However, they are not exclusive to exploring only that theme since the method is a tool containing the sequence of several techniques or procedures that could lead to the desired goal. So, you can also choose methods from almost any other theme to use in your work with young people. If you do, you will need to adapt the content to match the described procedures or techniques.

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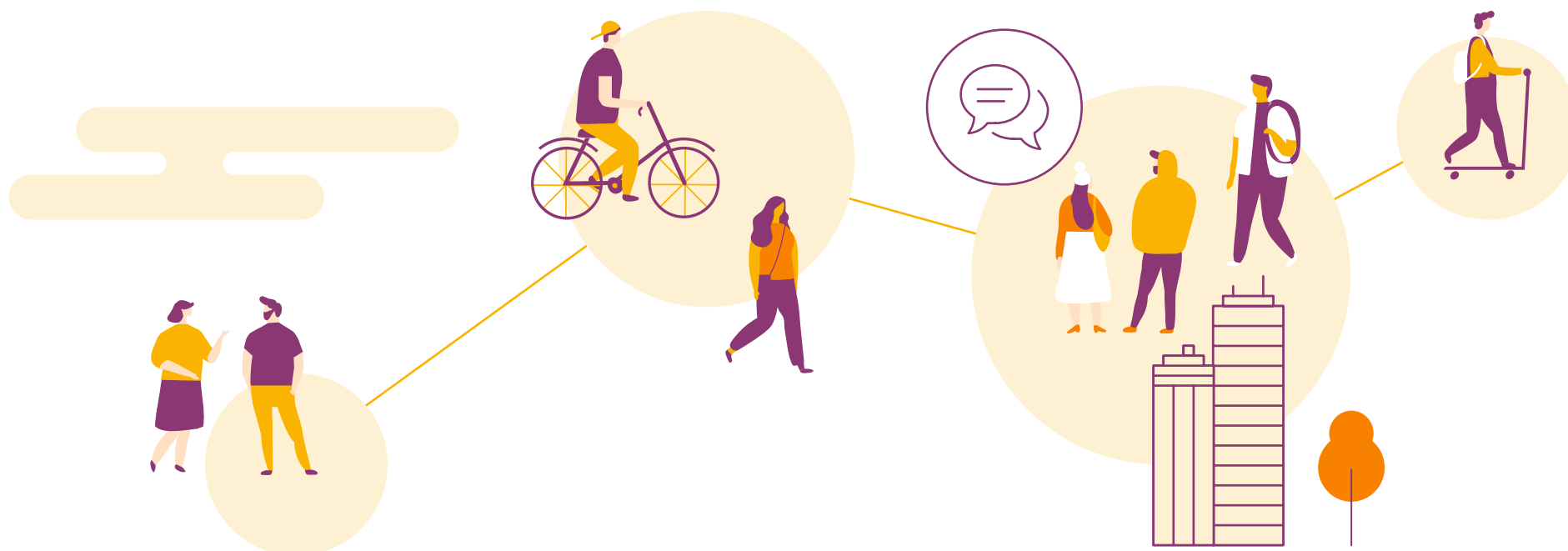
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## Group Size and Appropriate Methods

These methods can be suitable for varying group sizes, ranging from small gatherings involving just a few people, such as a [Study circle](#), to large-scale events involving dozens or even thousands of individuals from a single community, such as enterprises, schools and local communities. Examples of such methods include [Hackathon](#) or World Cafés, which promote creativity and foster connections among people in addressing everyday challenges.

Specific methods, like hackathons, require well-coordinated preparation involving various stakeholders, specific expertise among participants, adequate resources, equipment and trained facilitators who can oversee the events and steer them toward achieving the defined challenges and goals. Consequently, these methods can be expensive and challenging to organise. However, there are also effective methods that are relatively straightforward to arrange, such as the [World Cafe](#).

Additionally, some methods are designed for ad hoc implementation, which proves especially valuable when resources are limited or when the opportunity arises to discuss pressing issues or newly emerged problems within a group. The [Incidental method](#) is well-suited for these types of situations.



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<sup>5</sup> Zupančič, M. & Puklek Levpušček, M. (2018). *Prehod v odraslost: sodobni trendi in raziskave* [Transition to adulthood: contemporary trends and researches]. Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.

<sup>6</sup> Havinghurst, R. J. (1972). *Developmental tasks and education*. David McKay

## Chapter 1: Youth and society

This chapter aims to provide an **overview young people's life today**, globally and specifically in the countries of southwestern Europe. What are the characteristics of young people during the periods of adolescence and emerging adulthood? What are the main developmental tasks they must accomplish on their life path to adulthood? What problems do they face within their immediate social contexts, including family, friends, school and leisure activities? What are the institutional obstacles that hinder their positive psychosocial development and social inclusion in the society they live in? What are the current national and European youth policies? And finally, what identity issues do young people face under the pressures of globalisation and digitalisation in constantly changing socio-economic conditions and intercultural relations in society?

### 1.1: DEFINITION OF YOUTH IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Youth refers to **the young people in the life period between childhood and adulthood**. In terms of the person's age, that period begins approximately between 12 to 15 years of age, with the onset of puberty, and ends in their mid or late twenties (25 to 30 years of age), when they achieve autonomous and independent functioning (psychological, social-relational, value-based, economic) and take on adult social roles in different domains of life. There are **several criteria of achieving adulthood**: legislative (the age at which one is legally considered an adult, typically 18 or 21 years old), sociological (taking on adult social roles in areas such as work, gender, family and leisure), psychological (developing cognitive, emotional, social and moral maturity), and economic (attaining financial independence from their family).<sup>5</sup>

The **development of psychological maturity, acquisition of adult roles and gaining economic independence**, and thus fully **entering adulthood, varies individually and according to the societal circumstances and demands posed to young people**. During this period of life, young people pass through several changes concerning physical growth (including reproductive maturity) and personality developments in cognitive, emotional, social and moral functioning. They also experience changes in social relations with parents, peers and broader society. **Young individuals have to adapt to the changes in their inner and outer environment**, responding to their own needs and wishes in coordination with the demands and possibilities in society, in order to achieve personal maturity, enabling them to lead an autonomous and independent life as adult individuals.

From a psychological point of view, individuals begin the process of adapting to changes in biological, psychological and social functioning in adolescence. They **several developmental tasks**<sup>6</sup> such as exploring and defining their unique identity in relation to gender, occupation and social relationships with parents, peers and different social groups (e.g., ethnic, youth scenes). They must also define life goals, value orientation and worldviews in correspondence to the chosen lifestyle. All of the developmental tasks of adolescence are rarely accomplished in the teenage years, so young people have to continue striving for their resolutions into their twenties, during the period of emerging adulthood. This is particularly common **in Western societies, where the preparation period for adulthood is often postponed to the late twenties** due to a complex and rapidly changing socio-economic situation and loosely defined social roles (compared to traditional societies).

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### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUTHREACH

**Training Programme, Course 1:**  
Youth and Society: Definitions  
and Societal Determinants  
of Youth Life Paths  
**Methodological Guide, Step 3:**  
Understand and Analyze

For example, young people have to complete their education (with tertiary education often expected) and secure employment (in a competitive labour market) to become financially independent from their families. Only then can they address housing issues and establish their own families while independently supporting them. Achieving economic independence is more challenging and requires a more extended period in postmodern society than developing psychological maturity (such as in thinking, decision-making, emotional regulation, behavioural control, defining value orientation and living accordingly, developing social responsibility, resolving identity issues, etc.) which can often be achieved by late teen years. However, **the delayed economic independence impacts the delay in developing psychosocial independence, forming their own families and launching their careers.** Consequently, many of the developmental tasks of adolescence have to be prolonged and achieved in a person's twenties, during the period of emerging adulthood.

During this period, young people **continue to explore their identity, experience unstable life conditions** (with frequent changes in housing, romantic partnership, education and work relations), **and are relatively self-centred** (having limited social responsibilities and feeling free to fulfil their own needs). They are also **in the status of 'in-between'** (adult in some areas and still adolescent in others) and **perceive many opportunities** (express life optimism and demonstrate a willingness to explore various possibilities in changing their life paths).<sup>7</sup>

### RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

Youth in Western societies face many difficulties adapting to changes in their bodies, social relations with parents and peers, educational demands, and finding solutions to identity issues, health-related issues, job opportunities, housing, etc. The life course of young people living **in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become less predictable, more individualised** and

freely defined, also due to globalisation, which **introduces new uncertainties and risks alongside a wide variety of possibilities and ideals in various life areas.** Young people can freely choose their social roles regarding gender, family, occupation, social class and (sub)culture, etc. However, they are simultaneously exposed to high expectations for consumerism and normative behaviour, as expressed in social media, while facing more significant restrictions in the labour market. **The pressures to take personal responsibility for success in school, workplace, and social life are pretty high. These pressures can mask societal issues as if they were personal crises.**<sup>8</sup>

Individualization of life courses demands greater risk taking in individual decision-making about career and everyday life issues, also greater ability to take care of yourself and your life, without relaying to the institutions or the state. Therefore, the need to support young people (and particularly the most vulnerable) in fulfilling their needs, defining their identities and life-paths, as well as bridging their needs with the institutional support in solving their problems, is eventually increasing.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What problems are young people you are working with facing? What were the main issues of concern when you were young?
2. What are the societal obstacles that hinder young people from achieving their goals? What can individuals do to attain their desired goals?
3. How can youth workers support young people in their efforts to create a better future?



**LIST OF REFERENCES  
FOR FURTHER READING**

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<sup>7</sup> Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480.

<sup>8</sup> Nastran Ule, M. (2000). *Sodobne identitete v vrtincu diskurzov [Contemporary identities in the vortex of discourses]*. Zbirka Sofija 6/2000. Znanstveno in publicistično središče.

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## 1.2: CURRENT YOUTH POLICIES

Youth issues are addressed within various European and national frameworks. **European youth policies** provide each country with guidelines for its youth policy. The YouthReach project has allowed us to recognise **disparities in the implementation of these policies, which can be attributed to the diverse histories of each country concerning social policies and youth issues**. Based on this, we highlight five documents adopted by the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy:

### 1. European Union (EU) Youth Strategy 2019–2027

Building on the experiences and decisions of cooperation in the youth field over the past years, the European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027 aims to address the existing and upcoming challenges young people are facing all over Europe. The EU Youth Strategy provides a framework of objectives, principles, priorities, core areas and measures for youth policy cooperation for all relevant stakeholders with due regard for their respective competencies and the principle of subsidiarity.

#### The overall objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Enable young people to take charge of their own lives, support their personal development and growth towards autonomy, nurture their resilience and equip them with life skills to navigate a changing world.
- Encourage and provide young people with the necessary resources to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change inspired by EU values and European identity.
- Improve policy decisions with regard to their impact on young people across all sectors, notably in employment, education, health and social inclusion.
- Contribute to the eradication of youth poverty and all forms of discrimination and promote social inclusion of young people.

It defines **11 youth goals** which should be addressed in accordance with the national and Union legislation and adapted to national circumstances.

### 2. The European Youth Work Agenda

The European Youth Work Agenda (further referred to as the 'Agenda') is a strategic framework for strengthening and developing quality, innovation and recognition of youth work. It adopts a targeted approach to further developing knowledge-based youth work in Europe and connecting political decisions with their practical implementation. The Agenda is characterised by coordinated cooperation among stakeholders at different levels and in various areas of youth work, and it also serves to strengthen youth work as a distinct field of work that can act as an equal partner with other policy fields.

#### The Agenda comprises the following elements:

- (a) **Political basis**
- (b) **Cooperation in the youth work community of practice**
- (c) **Putting the Agenda into practice: 'the Bonn Process'**
- (d) **Funding youth-centric programmes**

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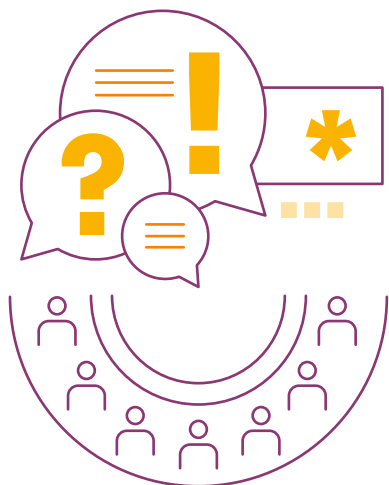
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### 3. Resolution CM/Res(2020)2 on the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030

The resolution establishes that the Council of Europe youth sector should aim at enabling young people across Europe to actively uphold, defend, promote and benefit from the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, notably by:

- Strengthening young people's access to rights so that they and all forms of youth civil society can rely on an enabling environment for the full exercise of all their human rights and freedom, including concrete policies, mechanisms and resources.
- Increasing youth knowledge so that young people's democratic engagement is supported by communities of practice that produce knowledge and expertise.
- Broadening youth participation so that young people participate meaningfully in decision-making based on a broad social and political consensus in support of inclusion, participatory governance and accountability.

#### The resolution defines four thematic priorities of the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030 and should continue its work until 2030:

1. Revitalising pluralistic democracy
2. Young people's access to rights
3. Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies
4. Youth work

### 4. Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on youth work

The document recommends that the governments of the Member States, within their sphere of competence, renew their support for youth work by:

1. Ensuring that the appropriate establishment or further development of quality youth work is safeguarded and proactively supported within local, regional or national youth policies.
2. Establishing a coherent and flexible competency-based framework for the education and training of paid and volunteer youth workers that takes into account existing practice, new trends and arenas, as well as the diversity of youth work.
3. Taking into consideration the measures and principles proposed in the appendix to this recommendation and encouraging providers of youth work to do the same.
4. Supporting the initiative of the Council of Europe's youth sector to set up an ad hoc high-level taskforce of the relevant stakeholders in youth work in Europe, which can elaborate a mid-term strategy for the knowledge-based development of European youth work.
5. Fostering national and European research on the different forms of youth work and their value, impact and merit.
6. Supporting the development of appropriate forms of review and evaluation of the impact and outcomes of youth work and reinforcing the dissemination, recognition and impact of the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio in the Member States.
7. Promoting the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres as an example of good practice.



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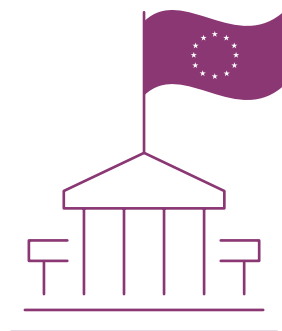
## The European Charter on Local Youth Work

The charter aims to contribute to the further development of local youth work. It does this by stating which principles should guide it and how different aspects of it should be designed in order to meet these principles. Hence, the charter constitutes a common European platform for the necessary dialogue on youth work. It is a free-to-use methodological tool, functioning as a check-list around which stakeholders can gather and discuss what measures might be needed for the further development of youth work, making sure that no aspect or perspective is left out and that youth work provision is carried out in the best and most efficient way.

## RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

Both European and national legislation **must be considered when planning measures in the field of youth outreach.** In particular, European documents adopted at the highest European level (such as the European Commission and the Council of Europe) hold validity throughout Europe.

It is, therefore, essential to stay informed about them, as they form the foundation for national legislation and policy in the field of youth work.



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Is the concept of outreach, as a method of engaging with the young people you work with, adequately defined in European legislation?
2. Are the recommendations and actions originating from the European level effectively incorporated into national legislation?
3. Are the recommendations and actions effectively implemented in practice?
4. How does your work in the field align with and respond to the recommendations at both the EU and national levels?



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## 1.3: SOCIETAL DETERMINANTS OF YOUTH LIFE PATHS

Young people develop **within social and historical contexts that profoundly influence how society perceives them**, and it shapes their paths toward autonomy. Their integration into society is often measured against the backdrop of the ‘model citizen,’<sup>9</sup> which serves as a reference point. Any deviation from this norm can result in increased scrutiny and supervision. The normative social expectation, widely accepted by society, is that individuals should ‘find their place.’<sup>10</sup> However, young people, especially the most vulnerable among them, are disproportionately affected by discontinuous trajectories in terms of housing and employment. Thus, it is essential to recognise and account for this normative dimension when examining and analysing the life journeys of young people.

We must explore and understand the lifeworld of young people. The lifeworld of a young person encompasses the daily environment in which they live and navigate. Within this world, they develop strategies for living based on their interpretations of reality, which are shaped by the symbolised content transmitted by others and internalised by the youth. The symbolised contents of others are their ideas about reality and essentially reflect the young people’s own ideas about reality. A shared interpretation of reality by the actors in a given society is what Berger and Luckmann referred to as the ‘social construction of reality.’<sup>11</sup> From the same foundation, we can derive the discourse of personal construction of reality, specifically, how a concrete youngster or a group of youths construct their self-concept and develop specific strategies of living based on that self-concept and the social context in which they live.

Many professionals have devoted significant attention to understanding young people. In their efforts to define the lifeworld of young people, various concepts have

been employed, including factors related to growing up. Professionals often refer to factors that influence a young person’s lifeworld, either in a threatening or protective manner, such as delinquent behaviour, risk factors or protective factors.<sup>12</sup> Typically, these definitions revolve around five key domains: *gender, family, school, peers and values*. Some scholars speak about only four sets of issues: individual characteristics, family, school and community,<sup>13</sup> which are reflected through micro, mezzo and macro levels of analysis. In our case, the micro level of analysis is represented by concrete forms of work with vulnerable youngsters on the one hand and the findings about the characteristics of growing up on the other. In this framework, those principles of expert work will be presented here – along with different kinds of acting, leadership styles and establishing the working relationship – which, in our view, are the most adequate and, in turn, efficient for working with young people in general and with vulnerable, endangered youth in particular. The mezzo level refers to work in the community, and the macro level involves everything that occurs at the social and national level, that is, at the level of the social policy of a country.

Society’s perspective on accepted or repressed behaviour has evolved throughout history and reflects various social concerns. Young people can be perceived as a threat to the societal balance, as victims in need of protection or as valuable resources for the development of territories. This outlook significantly influences how young people envision their future and establish their careers. The position allotted to young people in our society is under scrutiny. They often face a negative perception and are subjected to discrimination due to the common perception of them as unfit or irresponsible for public engagement. Consequently, gaining access to citizenship becomes challenging for them as, apart from directives, there are no provisions enabling them to author and participate in active citizenship genuinely.

<sup>9</sup> D'Iribarne, P. (1996). *Vous serez tous des maitres, la grande illusion des temps modernes* [You will all be masters, the great illusion of modern times]. Seuil.

<sup>10</sup> See the work of Van de Velde, C. (2008). “Se placer” ou la logique de l'intégration sociale [“Place yourself” or the logic of social integration]. In C. Van de Velde, *Devenir adulte: Sociologie comparée de la jeunesse en Europe* [Becoming an adult: comparative sociology of youth in Europe] (pp. 113-167). Presses Universitaires de France. <https://www.cairn.info/devenir-adulte--9782130557173-page-113.html>

<sup>11</sup> Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Anchor Books.

<sup>12</sup> Postrak, M. (2015). Koncepti socialnega dela z mladimi [The concepts of social work with youth]. *Socialno delo*, 54, 5, 269-280

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Concurrently, the criteria for achieving autonomy have shifted over time and vary from one country to another. For instance, the age of leaving the parental home (decohabitation) averaged 26.2 in 2015<sup>14</sup> (with substantial disparities between European Union countries and between genders. In France, job stability is typically reached at around 28 years of age, and in European countries, the average age for having the first child was 29.4 in 2019 (compared to 28.8 in 2013).<sup>15</sup> This transitional phase, as experienced by young people, has doubled in length over the last 50 years, mainly due to factors like extended periods of education and high levels of unemployment, among others.

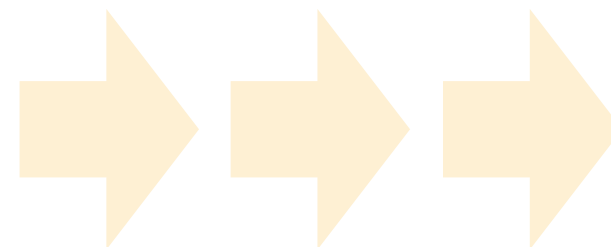
Several factors exacerbate the challenges faced by young people: while education is compulsory, it has increasingly favoured students starting from nursery school. The rate of access to the baccalaureate qualification rose from 26% in 1980 to 66% in 2009. Nevertheless, 16% of 20-24-year-olds in France left upper secondary school in 2019 without any diploma. Educational disparities are notably high and show a tendency to worsen, as indicated by the OECD Pisa survey. Independent housing is in short supply and is often contingent on the availability of family support, which is limited, particularly in financially precarious families.

Furthermore, access to employment poses a substantial challenge for young people, especially for those who already contend with inequalities stemming from their place of residence, level of education, or socio-economic background. The unemployment rate for individuals aged 15-29 is almost double in comparison to that of the entire population. Even among those who are employed, around 50% are in precarious work situations, notably among the 15-24 age group. Poverty disproportionately affects them, with approximately 20% of those aged 15-25 experiencing it, compared to 11% of those aged 30-50 and 8% of individuals aged 60-70. We are the first society that asks young people to integrate themselves to ensure they have the conditions for their own recognition. Precariousness is, therefore, a situation that affects many

young people in a more or less lasting way. For the first time in history, the precarity of some young people leads to precarious circumstances within their families. Additionally, the impact of precarity on children is substantial, with it taking six generations for a child from a low-income background to ascend the social ladder, according to OECD research. Income, occupation and educational attainment tend to be passed down from one generation to the next.

In addition to these factors, it is imperative to consider the significant disparities that exist between regions, which also impact the social resources available to young people, such as family support, social connections, infrastructure and more. 'Geographical and social determinism often exerts pressure on the career prospects of young people growing up far from the opportunities found in major cities. They must confront a multitude of obstacles that contribute to their self-censorship when contemplating their educational and professional choices.'<sup>16</sup>

**It is also crucial to view young people's pursuit of autonomy as a dynamic, ever-evolving process susceptible to vulnerabilities.** These vulnerabilities are not only characteristic of young people but also of society and its social processes, which themselves give rise to situations of vulnerability.<sup>17</sup> The interdependence of the factors that shape an individual's position in the social landscape is, therefore, of utmost significance. Every decision made will have repercussions on various aspects of their lives.



<sup>13</sup> Whyte, B. (2009). *Youth Justice in Practice, Making a Difference* (p. 46). The Policy Press.

<sup>14</sup> Being young in Europe today, 2015, Eurostat data : <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/6776245/KS-05-14-Q31-EN-N.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> With large disparities (Bulgaria (26.3 years), Romania (26.9 years) and Slovakia (27.2 years) have the youngest mothers when their first child arrives. The oldest are Italian women (31.3 years), followed by Spanish women (31.1 years) and Luxembourgers (31.1 years) Find the data here: <https://www.touteleurope.eu/societe/lage-des-femmes-a-la-naissance-du-premier-enfant-dans-lue/>

<sup>16</sup> As the POS Occitanie (2021) reminds us, <https://pos-occitanie.fr/agenda-details/2021-03-11/creer-des-opportunites-pour-les-jeunes-rurales-1161>

<sup>17</sup> Becquet, V. (2012). Les « jeunes vulnérables »: essai de définition. *Agora débats/jeunesses*, 62, 51-64. <https://doi.org/10.3917/agora.062.0051>

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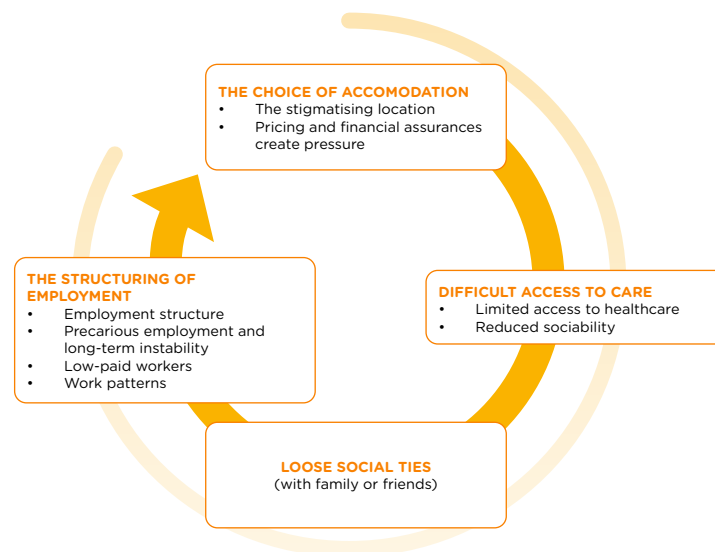
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This situation fosters a **growing distrust among young people toward institutions**, leading to 'disengagement with the voting process.' They navigate through an unstable and anxiety-inducing environment marked by **numerous economic, health and environmental crises** that complicate and postpone.<sup>18</sup>

It's challenging for young people to take risks or initiate action when this sense of insecurity is prevalent; self-censorship becomes a significant factor, especially since every decision made can have tangible consequences that may worsen not only their own situation but also that of their families and, naturally, their self-esteem – a critical element for fostering autonomy and emancipation.

## RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

When working with young people facing social vulnerability and withdrawal, it's crucial to consider all the factors contributing to their circumstances, as these are variables that social workers can address. The goal is not to limit the opportunities for action among young people but, on the contrary, to collaborate with them to identify the most accessible strategies to activate during the intervention.

Becoming aware of these determinants, which shape the lives of the most vulnerable young people, should not induce a sense of powerlessness. Instead, it should prompt an examination of how to break free from these social constraints on a global scale and encourage creativity in addressing the challenges faced by young people.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. How should we explore the lifeworld or everyday routines and social circumstances of the young people we work with? What are the most critical aspects, elements or factors in the life experiences of vulnerable youngsters' lifeworld?
2. What are the social determinants that exert the most significant influence on the young people you work with at the time of intervention?
3. What risks and challenges do vulnerable young people encounter in their daily lives?
4. What actions are the young people you work with refraining from taking due to the constraints associated with their precarious situation?

<sup>18</sup> Public Health France, November 2022

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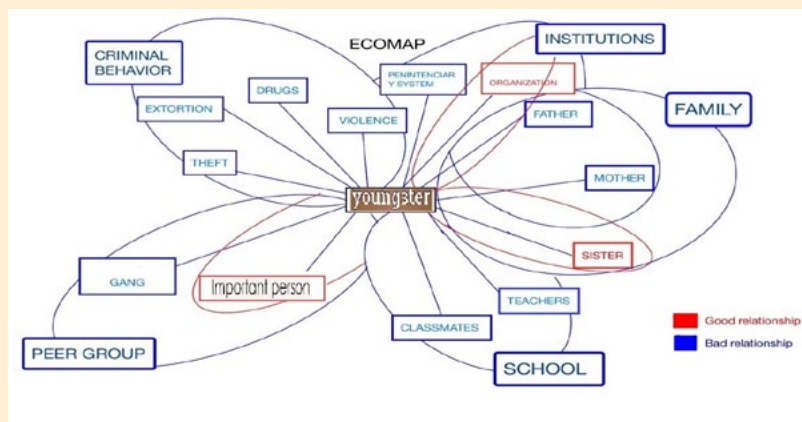
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## Research methods for identifying concepts:

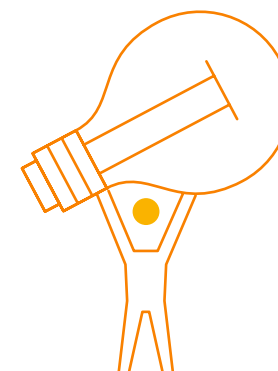
Social mapping<sup>19</sup> is a method that has evolved in connection with social movements in Latin America, proving to be a valuable tool for analysing social relations within a systemic framework. It constitutes a critical analytical tool and can also be regarded as a process that combines research, education and action with the aim of achieving social transformation. It serves as a means of contemplating emerging opportunities and challenges, establishing networks of change agents and addressing problematic situations within a specific territory. This approach recognises the significance of relationships within formal structures and the informal patterns of interaction that develop, persist or diminish.

One of the tools of social mapping is ecomaps. In our case, ecomaps can prove helpful for comprehending the relationships within a family, society, community and other aspects of a vulnerable youngster's life. Developing an ecomap with a young person can reveal the context in which they exist, helping to identify their affiliations and whether they experience isolation in particular areas. Ecomaps assist social workers in assessing whether the boundaries between the family and their surroundings are open or closed.

### An exemple :



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<sup>19</sup> IRESMO (2017). La cartographie sociale comme outil de la pédagogie critique. <https://iresmo.jimdo.free.com/2017/01/16/la-cartographie-sociale-comme-outil-de-la-p%C3%A9dagogie-critique>

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## 1.4: YOUTH IDENTITIES

When we contemplate our own identity, we often ask ourselves, ‘Who am I?’ To delve into this question, we must also consider, ‘What sets me apart, makes me unique and distinguishes me from others?’ and ‘In what ways do I share similarities with others?’ The psychological definition of identity encompasses **a comprehensive and coherent understanding of oneself as a distinct and separate individual**. It contains **various facets**, including:

- **Cognitive:** This relates to one’s awareness of personal traits, abilities and beliefs that are embedded in one’s self-concept.
- **Emotional:** It includes the significance and value one assigns to oneself, along with the positive or negative feelings that contribute to one’s self-esteem.
- **Motivational:** This involves instincts, desires, goal orientations and values that drive one’s actions and decisions.
- **Social-Behavioral:** It encompasses one’s interactions with others and their sense of belonging to different groups.

Identity also implies self-awareness that remains **consistent over time**, demonstrating the continuity of oneself across the past, present and future. Identity is **psychosocially reciprocal**, depending on the alignment between one’s self-concept, how others perceive them and the expectations they hold. Moreover, **identity can manifest in various forms, such as personal, social or cultural**, with the latter being defined in relation to group memberships within society or culture.<sup>20</sup>

Identity is **continuously evolving and changing**. It is not something fixed, established during adolescence and remaining unaltered into adulthood. Instead, it evolves throughout a person’s lifetime. **Young people must integrate the significant people and social roles they encounter, along with the self-knowledge acquired during childhood, with**

**their current desires and future aspirations as they explore new identities and make decisions.** Young people are engaged in an ongoing process of identity formation, which involves constructing and nurturing a clear understanding of who they are, what they value, what their significant future goals are and where they belong. They consciously make choices and decisions about themselves in three key areas: their choice of profession, their worldview and the values they adhere to (in alignment with social groups and ideologies they identify with) and their satisfaction with their gender identity.

Inherently, defining one’s own **identity involves the interplay** between the **social aspect** (how others perceive me, how much they value me, what expectations they have of me and how they react to me) and the **individual aspect : self-awareness** (the emotional experience of oneself), **self-image** (knowledge and ideas about oneself), **self-esteem** (how I value myself). To form an identity, a young person must define and organise their abilities, needs, interests and desires so that they can express them in a social context and receive recognition and approval from significant others, especially peers.

**By exploring different identity role models**, adolescents test typical patterns of social behaviour and symbolic expressions of values and beliefs (in terms of dressing style, behaviour, rituals) of **certain social or (sub)cultural groups they wish to belong to**. Any individual is a member of various social groups (defined by gender, age, social class, culture, occupation, etc.), and there is a need **to acquire multiple identity roles** that change across various social contexts.

<sup>20</sup> Côté, J. E. (1996). Identity: A multidimensional analysis. In G. R. Adams, R. Montemayor & T. P. Gullotta (eds.), *Psychosocial development during adolescence* (p.p. 130-189). Sage.

<sup>21</sup> Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. W. W. Norton.



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This perspective allows for fluid identities. However, a young person must form an integrative identity that encompasses all their identifications with social groups and is consistent with their subjective self-concept. Failure to successfully integrate different aspects of the self or make decisions about multiple choices can lead to the **risk of experiencing** identity confusion. This may result in **adjustment difficulties** during adolescence and potentially extend the identity formation process as a developmental task into emerging adulthood.<sup>22</sup>

**The process of exploring identity** possibilities, also known as an identity crisis, is a natural developmental-psychological tendency among adolescents. It involves comparing different identities, experimenting with various lifestyles and committing to ideals. This process is a crucial part of forming a coherent and consistent individual identity. **An achieved identity** is characterised by an individual's decision, after exploring various possibilities, to commit to a chosen identity. Some adolescents gradually explore different identity options and postpone their final decision about identity until the future, creating what is known as an **'identity moratorium'**. Others withdraw from exploration and decision-making about their identity, resulting in a **'diffused identity status'**. In this state, they may show little hope for the future, display rebellion or refuse to engage with parents and school in a confrontational manner. On the other hand, some adolescents adopt the goals, values and lifestyles of others (typically parents, cults or extremist groups) without thorough exploration, leading to a **'foreclosed identity status'**. Often, adolescents who cannot overcome a diffused or foreclosed identity status encounter difficulties in adaptation. Those with a diffused identity status may become resigned, apathetic, follow the crowd or resort to substance abuse. Meanwhile, individuals with a foreclosed identity status tend to be more inflexible than their peers, exhibit intolerance and dogmatism and adopt a defensive stance.<sup>23</sup>

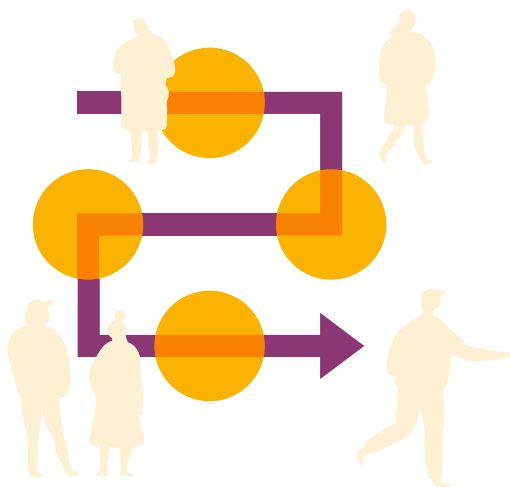
In a modern and increasingly multicultural society, **developing the identity of young people from all minorities** presents unique challenges, as they often straddle the line between

being part of the majority culture and their own minority (sub)culture. Values, norms, learning styles, communication patterns and behaviours within a minority culture can differ from what is expected in schools and the broader society. Embracing the values of the majority culture may sometimes require individuals to distance themselves from their own values. Young people from all minorities must navigate two sets of cultural values and identity possibilities to establish a solid identity. Therefore, they need more time to explore their options. It is crucial to promote a sense of national pride among young individuals from minority communities, **ensuring they do not internalise the message that their differences are disadvantages.**

## RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

In the process of forming one's identity, young people are influenced by various social environments, with the **impact of peers being particularly significant**. As they search for identities, self-descriptions and ways of being, adolescents compare themselves to peers they are drawn to, striving to gain acceptance and support from their friends. These friendships provide feedback about whether they can integrate and be accepted or excluded from peer groups. In this context, identity formation remains fluid throughout life as individuals adapt and learn from relationships and life experiences with various groups of people.

**Peer groups** tend to become more exclusive as adolescents grow older. Consequently, those who have more diverse group relationships and friendships tend to integrate better. They interact with their peers in different settings, such as sports and other group activities, where they develop a social identity and acquire an understanding of group rules and behaviour. **Friends** offer adolescents a sense of acceptance based on shared interests, granting them access to social networks and peer validation. During this phase of life, being popular among peers is of significant importance, and gender stereotypes usually influence the choice of friends.



<sup>22</sup> Zupančič, M. (2004). Razvoj identitete in poklicno odločanje v mladostništvu [Identity development and professional decision-making in adolescence]. In L. Marjanovič Umek & M. Zupančič (eds.), *Razvojna psihologija* [Developmental psychology], (p.p. 571-588). ZIFF & Založba Rokus.

<sup>23</sup> Marcia, J. E. (1989). *Identity and intervention*. *Journal of Adolescence*, 12, 401-410.

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**Parents** or other trusted adults can play a moderating role in the identity formation process, as friendships can change rapidly, and peer rejection is a shared experience.

Young people who spend their leisure time at home without peer contact often experience lower self-esteem and self-confidence and may suffer from **loneliness**. They are affected by relational deprivation, which manifests as an excessive reliance on friends (they value them highly and are emotionally attached to them). This reliance can limit their self-definition and the expression of their own identity among peers. These young people are more susceptible to **peer pressure, which can lead to risky behaviours** influenced by group norms and expectations of what is right and wrong. Young people mutually influence each other, and they tend to engage more easily in various activities when in the company of their peers, including experimenting with drugs, alcohol and sexual experiences.

**The influence of the media** on the formation of young people's identities is more significant in modern society than in the past, especially within the realm of social networks and virtual reality. The media presents both opportunities and risks. The freedom to choose a digital identity allows young people to project themselves publicly in a different light than their true selves. Simultaneously, it provides an ideal platform for experimenting with various identities, broadening their avenues for acquiring knowledge and ideas beyond their immediate surroundings. This is particularly crucial for young people with disabilities, for whom many aspects of the real world may be inaccessible. On the flip side, this exposure carries risks of harassment, extortion, ridicule and exclusion from online and offline communication for the young individual.

In contemporary society, **many facets of identity face challenges and are more malleable** than ever before. Professional identities tied to manual or intellectual work within traditional real-world institutions are diminishing. **Gender identities** are increasingly fluid. All these factors make identities more adaptable, intricate and demanding. **The mental well-being of young people** is also becoming an escalating concern, potentially arising from these social challenges. Identities are subject to negotiation, often influenced by social media. A postmodern, digital, **competitive society with lofty expectations** exerts considerable pressure on young people and their relationships (requiring specialised skills for employment and significant effort for low wages). **Young people in institutional care** tend to gain independence at a faster rate than their peers but receive less family support and have limited access to economic resources. **These conditions render young people more susceptible** to feelings of isolation and stress, fostering a sense of identity confusion.



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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What are the primary hopes and aspirations for the future of the young people you work with? What are their most significant concerns in the near future? What insights can you gain about the identity-related challenges that young people currently face?
2. What values and beliefs are evident in the everyday behaviour and symbolic expressions of young people? How do their values and beliefs align with those of their friends, family members, classmates and co-workers? What can be deduced about the ideologies they endorse as part of their identity?
3. To which social groups do the young people you work with belong? What personal characteristics do they share with other members of each of these social groups? In what ways do they differ from other members of the social groups to which you also belong?

## Research methods for identifying concepts:

### Interview on Identity with a young person:

An individual interview with a young person is structured around everyday life themes (friendships, parents, occupation and job, recreation, politics, religion, etc.) and is designed to uncover the process of identity formation, exploration and decision-making. By examining the responses, you can gain insight into the most significant aspects of the young person's life at the moment and determine whether they have reached a decision or are still in the exploration phase. You can also identify which facets of their identity are causing them concern and how they are actively or passively seeking solutions. These insights can guide your support for the young person in effectively defining their own identity. Instead of an interview, a structured questionnaire can be provided for the

young person to complete independently.

### Example: Marcia's Identity Interview

<https://faculty.weber.edu/eamsel/Courses/Applying%20Psychology/Adolescence%203140/Marcia%20Identity%20Interview.rtf>

### Modified Marcia's Identity Questionnaire:

[https://tompkinspage.weebly.com/uploads/8/6/3/9/8639873/modified\\_marcia\\_identity\\_questionnaire.pdf](https://tompkinspage.weebly.com/uploads/8/6/3/9/8639873/modified_marcia_identity_questionnaire.pdf)

### Workshops on Identity with young people:

Several techniques outlined in the provided toolkits aim to stimulate reflections on identity-related issues among young participants during workshops. This is achieved through active collaboration with peers and the enactment of prescribed scenarios. The workshops also address other subjects relevant to young people's self-reflection, reflection on interpersonal relationships and societal structural dynamics, including an awareness of human rights issues.

Council of Europe (2002). Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People.  
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass>

Gollob, R. & Krapf, P. (Ed.) (2008). Teaching democracy. A collection of models for democratic citizenship and human rights education. Council of Europe Publishing.



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## Chapter 2: Building bridges between youth and society

This chapter embodies a multifaceted journey into outreach, youth engagement and the pursuit of a more inclusive society. Within this chapter, we explore the various approaches and strategies that collectively lay the foundation for fostering meaningful connections between young individuals and the broader community. It is here that we delve into two sub-chapters, each comprising a set of themes that elucidate the framework of the youthreach approach and youth engagement while also focusing on community approaches in youthreach by highlighting intermediations to construct solutions.

### 2.1: Individual Approaches in Youthreach

Within the broader context of 'Building Bridges Between Youth and Society,' this sub-chapter is an exploration of the specific methods and strategies employed in working with young individuals. It delves into the intricacies of engaging with youth, acknowledging that **fostering meaningful connections and understanding between young people and society requires a nuanced approach.**

Specifically, this chapter aims to present a youthreach approach, the concept of youth participation and the way of establishing working relationships with youth. Youth participation is a crucial element of **youth empowerment** and their collaboration in society, ensuring them equal opportunities to participate in processes and activities that affect their lives, **co-create decisions**, and contribute to changing their living situation and the social community in which they reside. Facilitating young people's participation necessitates establishing a collaborative working relationship with them in which they participate as competent interlocutors in co-creating responses to the challenges they face.



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<sup>24</sup> Andersson, B. (2013). Finding ways to the hard to reach-considerations on the content and concept of outreach work. *European Journal of Social Work*, 16(2), 171-186. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2011.618118>

<sup>25</sup> Wakerman, J., Humphreys, J. S., Wells, R., Kuipers, P., Entwistle, P., & Jones, J. (2008). Primary health care delivery models in rural and remote Australia – A systematic review. *BMC Health Services Research*, 8(1), 276. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-8-276>

<sup>26</sup> Pian, A., & Hoyez, A.-C. (2022). Balancing local justice and spatial justice: Mobile outreach and refused asylum seekers. *Population, Space and Place*, 28(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2500>

<sup>27</sup> Payne, M. (2005). *Modern Social Work Theory*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>28</sup> Svenson, N. P. (2003). *Outreach Work with Young People, Young Drug Users and Young People at Risk*. Pompidou Group, Council of Europe.

<sup>29</sup> Hake B. J. (2014). 'Bringing Learning Closer to Home': Understanding 'Outreach Work' as a Mobilisation Strategy to Increase Participation in Adult Learning. In: Zarifis G., Gravani M. (eds.), *Challenging the 'European Area of Lifelong Learning'* (pp.251-264). Lifelong Learning Book Series, vol 19. Springer. [https://doi.org/are.uab.cat/10.1007/978-94-007-7299-1\\_22](https://doi.org/are.uab.cat/10.1007/978-94-007-7299-1_22)

<sup>30</sup> Jose, K.; Taylor, C. L.; Venn, A.; Jones, R.; Preen, D.; Wyndow, P.; Stubbs, M.; Hansen, E. (2020). How outreach facilitates family engagement with universal early childhood health and education services in Tasmania, Australia: An ethnographic study. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 53, 391-402. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.05.006>

## 2.1.1: YOUTHREACH APPROACH AND UNDERSTANDING OUTREACH

The concept of outreach in various fields has been a subject of debate, characterised by a lack of clear definition and numerous challenges, resulting in the absence of a universally accepted definition for what constitutes 'outreach,' which leads to a certain level of ambiguity. This ambiguity has been recognised in research on outreach, highlighting the myriad challenges and contradictions associated with the concept. Similarly, from a methodological perspective, the idea of outreach has been underinvestigated, giving rise to concerns about its effectiveness.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, inadequate methodological exploration has hindered a more comprehensive understanding of outreach and its practical utilisation, further emphasising the scarcity of literature on theoretical outreach models.

At a conceptual level, 'outreach' is commonly assumed **to involve providing services outside the usual location of that service.**<sup>25</sup> This approach bridges the gap between humanitarian and social assistance by focusing on reaching individuals who do not typically engage with institutions.<sup>26</sup> Its roots can be traced back to the early social services work of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in England and the United States. Thus, historically, outreach has been present since the inception of social work but has often been overlooked in basic teaching books on social sciences methods in university programmes.<sup>27</sup> Social work initially began with individuals working in the field and making direct contact with communities rather than establishing formal social service offices.<sup>28</sup>

However, outreach work's definitions are often context-specific, and it is applied differently across fields. For instance, in adult education, outreach is used to engage targeted groups at risk of social exclusion, with a focus **on making learning opportunities more accessible.**<sup>29</sup> Outreach has also been incorporated into universal services designed to meet the needs of the entire population, aiming to provide

more specialised health services to people in remote areas.

Interestingly, 'outreach' is **more commonly used in the health and social sectors**, which means that not all professionals in socio-educational interventions refer to or acknowledge their strategies and approaches as 'outreach'.<sup>30</sup> This lack of acknowledgement complicates the identification of outreach practices, manifestations and results. For example, the scarcity of literature in the education sector on services where outreach is a key strategy may explain the limited guidance available for outreach in educational practice frameworks.

The variability in how outreach approaches are implemented across different countries depends on the structure of social policies, ranging from institutionalisation to community-based or individualised approaches. Additionally, outreach is sometimes viewed as subordinate to broader categories like 'detached,' 'street-based,' or 'preventive' work, which further contributes to its relative obscurity.

Given this complexity, outreach necessitates three levels of action: (1) policy planning, (2) institutional organisation and (3) professional intervention to respond to the increasing complexity of needs and hyper-specialisation in socio-educational care. However, effectively implementing outreach becomes challenging due to the interconnectedness of these dimensions.



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## RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

Outreach work is a **dynamic and multifaceted approach** aimed at reaching individuals who are often challenging to engage with. While it faces challenges related to definition, methodology and application, it remains a critical strategy for addressing complex needs and promoting social inclusion. Here's how outreach work is related to and essential for Youthreach programmes:

- **Reaching youth:** Youthreach programmes primarily target young people who are at risk of social exclusion and do not access traditional services. Outreach workers can bridge the gap by going to the places where these young individuals congregate, such as streets, parks or shelters.
- **Building trust:** Many hard-to-reach youth may have experienced distrust or negative interactions with institutions or authorities. Outreach workers, through their consistent presence and approach, can build trust with these young individuals. Trust is a critical element in engaging and assisting youth effectively.
- **Tailored support:** Outreach work allows for a personalised and flexible approach to meeting the complex needs of youth. Each young person's situation is unique, and outreach workers can adapt their methods to address specific challenges faced by individual youth.
- **Access to services:** For many youth, accessing services like housing assistance, mental health support, or educational opportunities can be daunting or seemingly impossible. Outreach workers act as intermediaries, guiding youth toward these services, breaking down barriers and ensuring that young people can access the resources they need.
- **Preventing social isolation:** Increasingly, hard-to-reach youth often experience social isolation, which can exacerbate their difficulties. Outreach work fosters social

inclusion by providing opportunities for these youth to connect with others, access support networks and engage in positive activities. This social aspect is vital for their well-being and development.

- **Preventive and transformative approach:** Outreach work aligns with the preventive and transformative view on access, which questions not only the principle of universality but also the 'us' in universalism. By actively engaging with hard-to-reach youth and involving them in discussions about their needs and goals, outreach work empowers young people and promotes a more democratic and inclusive approach to social services.
- **Long-term impact:** Outreach work is not just about immediate assistance; it can have a lasting impact on young individuals' lives. By addressing the root causes of their situation, providing ongoing support and fostering social change processes, outreach work can help youth transition from vulnerability to greater stability and social inclusion.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. How does the lack of a clear definition of 'outreach' impact your implementation and effectiveness in the contexts in which you intervene?
2. How can outreach principles be better integrated into social work practice to address the needs of hard-to-reach populations better?
3. What distinguishes outreach as a methodology for approaching individuals' needs in your daily work, especially those detached from institutional care?
4. In what ways does outreach work open opportunities for social work students, practitioners and stakeholders to question conventional social work practices?



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## METHOD:

Outreach work encompasses a wide range of interventions, including clinical support, reinforcement of family and social ties, community experiences, risk reduction, educational work and more. Essentially, 'outreach' can be understood as a methodology and a model for approaching comprehensive, integrated and continuous care for individuals detached from institutional care and at risk of social exclusion. Achieving this necessitates action at three levels – policy planning, institutional organisation and professional intervention.

Factors influencing engagement or disengagement with outreach services vary across individual, service and system levels.<sup>31</sup> Individual factors include beliefs, psychosocial elements and perceptions of need. Service factors encompass promotion, access, staffing skills and capacity. System-level factors involve scheduling, targeting and policy frameworks.

Outreach work necessitates **the building of trusting relationships**, making contact with individuals in their environments and offering support-oriented organisational assistance. It also involves **linking individuals to services and support systems, facilitating access to societal resources and initiating social change processes**. Additionally, outreach work focuses on providing ongoing support and embedding engagement strategies within systems and programmes.

Incorporating reflexivity into outreach practices is crucial, as it requires workers to adapt and reflect on their methods and approaches constantly. While there may not be a standard way to conduct outreach work, the commitment to holistic, person-centred responses remains a fundamental principle. Outreach involves a range of approaches tailored to specific contexts, emphasising flexibility and adaptability. It requires a continuous commitment to building trust, facilitating access and supporting individuals on their path to positive outcomes.

As an example, the **'Youth Coaching'** method is an outreach approach in youth work, focused on coaching young individuals to navigate life's challenges and acquire essential life skills. The primary goal is to empower these young people, enabling them to independently confront their issues, fostering self-reflection and promoting personal growth. Below is a guide on how to implement this method:

1. **Make contact:** The initial step is to establish contact with high-risk young individuals. This can be achieved through various avenues such as street outreach, youth help services, engagement in schools or collaboration with law enforcement agencies. The aim here is to initiate a connection and build trust.
2. **Determine objectives:** Once contact is established, it's crucial to explore and identify the specific objectives that young people want to work on. These objectives should be driven by the individual's own goals and aspirations.
3. **Data collection:** To gain deeper insights into the young person's needs and aspirations, gather personal data using a variety of methods. These methods can include personality tests, SWOT analysis and one-on-one conversations:
  - a. **Personality tests:** Utilise personality tests such as the social orientation test, personal values test, self-confidence test, core typing test and professional personality test. These assessments provide valuable information about an individual's personality traits and preferences.
  - b. **SWOT analysis:** Conduct a SWOT analysis to identify the individual's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This analysis helps in tailoring support and interventions to the person's specific circumstances.

<sup>31</sup> Slee, P. (2006). *Families at risk: The effects of chronic and multiple disadvantage*. <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/FamilyNeeds/families%20at%20risk%20online.pdf>

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**c. One-on-one conversations:** Establish rapport through one-on-one conversations.

These discussions create a safe space for open and honest dialogues about various aspects of the young person's life, including challenges and aspirations.

**4. Further process:** As the young person engages with various support services such as social work, debt counselling or compulsory education programmes, the youth worker plays a role in coordinating and collaborating with relevant partners. This ensures a holistic and comprehensive support approach that addresses all aspects of the individual's needs.

**5. Suitable environment:** The 'Youth Coaching' method can be implemented in a variety of settings, depending on the preferences and comfort of the young person. This may include outdoor environments like parks and public spaces or more structured settings such as office spaces.

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE: Individual Step-by-Step Plan<sup>32</sup>

The individual had set a goal in the contract to seek assistance in dealing with their financial situation due to unpaid fees on their health insurance. They also mentioned the possibility of having outstanding debts with their phone company and the public transport provider. The intervention team acknowledged that this was an area where they could provide assistance.

Approximately a week later, while encountering the individual on the streets, it became apparent that they had received a notice from the insurance company indicating the closure of their bank account due to the outstanding debt. Feeling overwhelmed, the individual expressed uncertainty about how to proceed. During the intervention, the focus was on understanding the individual's perspective and their desired course of action.

The individual mentioned the possibility of addressing their debts but expressed uncertainty about where to begin. The intervention team positively acknowledged this initiative and discussed potential strategies. Collaboratively, they started devising a step-by-step plan to address their financial situation. Tasks were allocated among the team members, and the individual was informed that the process would be time-consuming. The initial step involved identifying all outstanding debts, including those with the insurance, phone company and public transport. Next, the team aimed to consolidate all these debts under a single creditor. Subsequently, they developed a repayment schedule and outlined the necessary actions.

Throughout this endeavour, the team meticulously documented each step, including counselling sessions and any situational interventions that were required. Detailed records were maintained within the individual's profile in the team's registry. The plan was titled 'Money He Owes,' and each step within the plan was designated a unique identifier, such as 'Money He Owes 1,' 'Money He Owes 2,' and so forth.

<sup>32</sup> Practical example from: Segulin, A. M., Vodeb, N. A., Rodman, S., Spruk, T., & Babič, B. (2021). *Magic wand*. Zavod Bob.  
<http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-RTPX6LS8>





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## 2.1.2: YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth participation is **a significant aspect of youth empowerment and their engagement in society** (e.g. active citizenship), ensuring them equal opportunities to take part in processes and activities that impact their lives, co-create decisions, and contribute to changing their living situation and the social community in which they reside.<sup>33</sup> The key conditions for participation are **freedom of choice** and **active engagement** in the implementation of activities or decision-making through dialogue, as well as ensuring equal opportunities for all without discrimination.<sup>34</sup> Equal opportunity for everyone to participate in collective decision-making concerning their lives and community issues is a core value in modern democratic societies. The right to participate is enshrined among the fundamental human rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), particularly in Article 12, which guarantees the right to freely express one's opinion on all matters related to them, Article 13, which protects the right to freedom of expression in any form and in a manner of the child's choice, Article 14, which safeguards the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and Article 31, which upholds the right of every child to free time, rest, play and the right to participate in cultural and creative activities.

Youth participation **encompasses a wide variety of types, methods and levels of collaboration and decision-making**. Today, young people are more or less considered equal partners in decisions about their behaviour and activities within the family, and school curricula also stipulate the involvement of students in joint decision-making about classes and the school community. Young people also participate in various organised leisure activities. Social work with young people is founded on ethical principles that involve respecting the voices of young people and ensuring their participation in the co-creation of solutions in all activities involving young people. This is because genuine opportunities for young people to influence their life situations are created only

through dialogue.<sup>35</sup> From the many participative experiences that young people have in various social contexts while growing up, they acquire the necessary competencies for participation in broader society, be it in political, social or humanitarian activities. Participation in collective activities enables young people to gain direct experience of interpersonal relationships and social processes, offering them the opportunity to practice the skills of cooperation in a group and strengthen communication skills (all of which are key components of civic competencies essential for democratic participation). Additionally, such participation significantly encourages young people to define their own identity and find their place in society.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the importance of participation for the psychosocial development of a young person, the actual **realisation of youth participation in practice is hindered by a wide variety of obstacles**, from the situational conditions of concrete activities (e.g. physical or cultural inaccessibility) to the ignorance, incompetence or unwillingness of adults to listen, hear and take into account the opinions of young people. This hindrance can also be influenced by cultural norms and values, as well as power dynamics and social inequalities in society and within institutional settings.<sup>37</sup>

The need to ensure **meaningful participation** for young people is evident in any social setting they are involved in. Meaningful participation should be ethical (transparent, fair and trustful, guaranteeing respect and dignity), safe (ensuring children's rights to protection), non-discriminatory (providing all young people with equal opportunities for engagement) and young people-friendly (enabling individuals to participate to the best of their abilities). Additionally, it is necessary to ensure the presence of adults who are committed to the principles of participation: young people should be informed about the aim and the process of activities and how their voices will be used, as well as any possible obstacles; they must voluntarily choose to participate without any pressure; a safe space and various possibilities for different ways of expressing ideas and

<sup>33</sup> Barrett, M. & Zani, B. (2015). *Political and Civic Engagement*, Multidisciplinary perspectives. Routledge.

<sup>34</sup> Lansdale, G. (2010). The realisation of children's participation rights, Critical reflections. In B. Percy-Smith & N. Thomas (eds.), *A handbook of Children and Young People's Participation, Perspectives from theory and practice* (pp. 11-23). Routledge.

<sup>35</sup> Čačinović Vogrinčič, G. (2013). Spoštovanje otroštva [Respecting Childhood]. In T. Kodele & N. Mešl (eds.), *Otrokov glas v procesu učenja in pomoči, Priročnik za vrtnice, šole in starše* (pp. 11-40). ZRSŠ.

<sup>36</sup> Flanagan, C. A., Lonnie, R., & Sherrad, L. R. (1998). Youth political development. *Journal of social issues*, 54, 3, 447-627.

<sup>37</sup> Rutar, S. (2013). Participacija kot pravica in pogoji demokracije [Participation as a Right and Condition of Democracy]. In, V. S. Rutar, *Poti do participacije v vzgoji*, (str. 71-97). Univerzitetna založba Annales.

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opinions and developing activities should be provided; their opinions should be listened to, heard and taken into account; and feedback on the effects of their contributions should be provided to them after the activity.<sup>38</sup> Youth participation should be conducted according to standard ethical principles in social work, e.g. showing respect to young people and ensuring their rights, promoting the well-being and safety of the youth, promoting social justice and preventing discrimination of youth and in society, ensuring dialogue, taking responsibility for a young person and recognising the boundaries between professional and private life.<sup>39</sup>

The most frequently used heuristic tool for understanding the quality of participation is **Hart's ladder of participation**,<sup>40</sup> which comprises eight levels. The first three levels are considered false participation (1 - manipulation, 2 - decoration, 3 - tokenism), and the following five levels are recognised as genuine participation (levels 4 to 8). In these genuine participation levels, the involvement of young people in decision-making and the implementation of activities increases, from being informed about participation to taking initiative and leadership by young people. This scale of participation enables us to identify the marginalisation and unethical treatment of young people in activities with adults, as well as the respect for children's rights to participate, express their opinions and have their voices heard and considered. Non-participation levels reflect a lack of trust in children's competence and a condescending attitude towards them. We can talk about **genuine participation** when young people understand the purpose of the project or activity, know who made the decisions about their involvement and why they are involved, have a meaningful role in the activity, are engaged in and comprehend the course of the process.

## RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

**Youth participation** in any action or activity concerning themselves or their lives is not just an ethical act but the **inevitable starting point for enabling their influence on decisions and changes in their lives**. It is a process through which they can express their opinions, encounter the views of others, engage in the search for mutual understanding and plan actions for change, which can be achieved through collaboration with others. By listening to young people's voices, adults can provide support in not making decisions or solutions that would be against their interests. Participation has an **impact on collaborative competencies and feelings of acceptance from peers and adults**, as well as on the individual and collective efficacy of young people, all of which are crucial for subjective well-being and for building the capacity to change one's living conditions.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION :

1. How will you encourage the young people you work with to contribute their opinions about an issue to the discussion?
2. What steps can you take to support the realisation of an idea initiated by the young people you work with?
3. In your opinion, what arguments would convince local authorities to consult with the young people you work with about the plan for the renovation of public spaces in the city before making a decision?

<sup>38</sup> Harris, P., & Manatakis, H. (2013). *Children's Voices: A principled framework for children and young people's participation as valued citizens and learners*. University of South Australia, South Australian Department for Education and Child Development.

<sup>39</sup> ACT Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice (2021). <https://www.youthcoalition.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ACT-Youth-Work-Code-of-Ethical-Practice-DRAFT-for-consultation.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Hart, R. (1992). *Children's participation: from tokenism to citizenship*. UNICEF.



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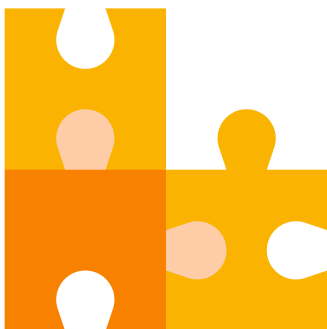
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## METHOD:

Event planning in the local community<sup>41</sup> is a participatory method aimed at empowering young people aged 14 to 29 to take an active role in their local community by planning and executing a community event. It promotes community involvement, encourages project work and builds group dynamics while enhancing social and communication skills, cooperation and initiative among participants. The level of participation in the event planning can depend on several factors, such as the trust established between street workers and young people creating the event. It also depends on whether the youngsters only provided an idea for the event or were actively involved in planning and preparation. Some parts may also take longer than described.

**This method spans several sessions, each with specific objectives:**

**Session 1: Idea Generation and Initiative Setting.** In the initial session, lasting approximately 2 hours, street workers engage with the target group to pinpoint community needs and identify gaps. Participants actively discuss potential solutions and express their readiness to take the initiative. Responsibilities for organising the event are delegated to participants while an initial conversation about event concepts and tasks occurs. Additionally, a clear schedule is established, encompassing the date for the next meeting and the event itself.

**Session 2: Detailed Planning and Task Assignment.** In the subsequent session, lasting around 2 hours more, participants convene to delve into the practicalities of event organisation. With guidance from street workers, participants allocate specific responsibilities related to content and logistics. Brainstorming sessions take place to devise strategies for promoting the event within the local community. Necessary event paperwork is handled, with street workers providing support as needed. Details pertaining to event-day coordination, including meeting times, are established.

**Session 3: Event Execution,** which marks the actual event execution, during which participants gather to carry out their designated tasks based on their roles.

**Session 4: Evaluation, Reflection, and Celebration.** Lastly, in Session 4, lasting at least 1 hour, participants engage in reflection and evaluation of the entire event planning and execution process. Each planning and implementation stage is critically assessed, and participants share their experiences. The programme culminates in a celebration of achievements and milestones, reinforcing a sense of accomplishment. Event venues may vary and can include outdoor locations such as parks, school yards or town squares, depending on the event's nature.

**Street workers play the roles of facilitators and mentors,** providing guidance and support to participants. They empower and encourage participants to take the lead and assume responsibility for the event. Street workers work to cultivate an environment of cooperation, trust-building and effective communication within the group. It's important to note that while they offer support, they do not take control of the event planning or execution.

### Key principles:

The programme emphasises guiding young participants in assessing the feasibility of their ideas within the available resources and time constraints. Fairness and respect are integral to evaluating the realism of proposals. Additionally, cooperation, trust-building and effective communication within the group are consistently underscored as essential components of the process. Achievements and milestones throughout the journey are celebrated, reinforcing a sense of accomplishment and motivation.

By applying this participatory community event planning method, street workers can effectively engage and empower young individuals to initiate positive change within their local community. This process nurtures a sense of ownership and civic responsibility among the participants.

<sup>41</sup> Segulin, A. M., Vodeb, N. A., Rodman, S., Spruk, T., & Babić, B. (2021). *Magic wand*. Zavod Bob. <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-RTPX6LS8>



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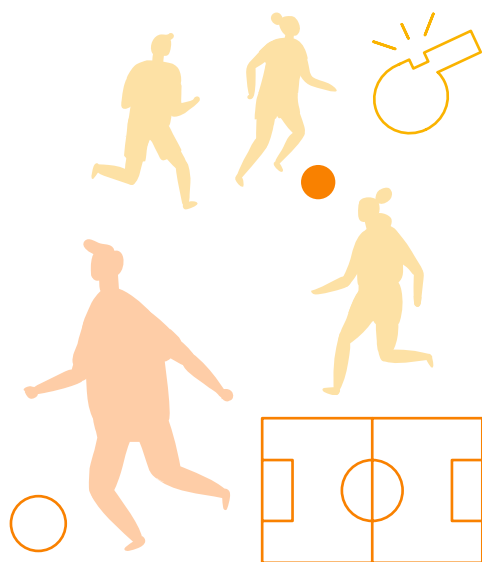
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## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

A practical example of this is the football tournament that was organised by a group of young people who were often labelled as unfavourable in the community where street workers were operating. The street workers engaged with the group and supported their idea of organising a football tournament. The street workers provided guidance and resources but allowed the group to take the lead in organising and carrying out the tournament, which was well received by the community. It also inspired younger children to express their interest in participating in similar events with the street workers in the future. This example demonstrates how participative events can empower the target group, improve their relationship with the community and create opportunities for further engagement.

### 2.1.3: THE WORKING RELATION IN YOUTH SOCIAL WORK

The **concept of co-creation** was developed in and for social work. This concept is significant for youth work because it defines **professionals and young people as collaborators** in a joint project tasked with co-creating aspects to achieve the desired outcomes.

The elements of the co-creation working relationship are as follows:

- The working relationship commences with an **agreement on collaboration** as an essential initial invitation. This ritual agreement contributes to a sense of safety in a space that is open for conversation. Professionals and young people agree on how they will collaborate and how much time they will have to work together. The professional explains their role, which is to create and protect a safe workspace where everyone can voice their opinions, and the youth's role in the project, which is described as being responsible for their part in co-creating the solution.

— **An instrumental definition of the problem and the co-creation of solutions:**<sup>42</sup> In this process, each young person contributes their definition of the problem, the professional adds their opinion, and the creation of the desired outcome can begin. It is crucial to genuinely listen to the opinions and views of the young people, take them seriously, actively listen, summarise and verify their interpretations. Professionals should use open-ended questions rather than closed-ended ones. When closed questions are inevitable, they should be followed by 'follow-up' questions to ensure that our interlocutors are not merely guessing at the answers to our questions. During the interview, professionals should also pay attention to their nonverbal communication, such as maintaining eye contact, nodding and expressions like 'mm' or 'really.' Additionally, they should observe the other's nonverbal communication, such as averting gaze, restlessness and rapid breathing. Professionals should also be attentive to the adolescents' verbal reactions, e.g., sudden silences in conversation, quick changes of topic, etc. Professionals' exclamations such as 'great,' 'awesome,' 'super,' and 'cool' may not be appropriate, as they can prevent the youth from sharing the entire story, including the less positive aspects. Often, young people may find it challenging to express in words what they want to convey. Therefore, professionals should use expressive-creative media, such as paintings, photographs, creative writing, dance, music, balls, clay, toys, etc., when collaborating with them.

— **Personal leading:**<sup>43</sup> The role of the professional is to guide the youth toward desired outcomes. In conversations, they work to formulate potential desired outcomes, provide relevant information, consider proven solutions and suggest new solutions to explore. The working relationship also entails a personal connection, where the professional responds personally, shares their own experiences or stories and demonstrates empathy.

<sup>42</sup> Lüssi, P. (1991). *Systemische Sozialarbeit: Praktisches Lehrbuch der Sozialberatung* [Systemic Social Work: Practical Textbook of Social Counseling]. Verlag Paul Haupt.

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Youth and Society: Definitions and Societal Determinants of Youth Life Paths

#### Methodological Guide, Step 3:

Understand and Analyze

<sup>43</sup> Vries, S. de, & Bouwkamp, R. (1995). *Psihosocialna družinska terapija [Psychosocial Family Therapy]*. Firis

<sup>44</sup> Saleebey, D. (Ed.) (1997). *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice*. Longman.

<sup>45</sup> Hoffman, L. (1994). A Reflexive Stance for Family Therapy. In Sh. McNamee, & K.J. Gergen (eds.), *Therapy as Social Construction* (pp. 7–24). Sage.

<sup>46</sup> Rosenfeld, I. (1993). *Abstracts*. EASSW Conference.

— The concept of **strengths perspective**:<sup>44</sup> This concept allows professionals to help young people explore their strengths, talents, skills, community support, positive past experiences, etc., to facilitate their achievement of desired outcomes.

— The concept of **the ethic of participation**:<sup>45</sup> Professionals are committed to listening to the voices of young people in the working relationship. Hoffman clearly states that the professional relinquishes a position of power that does not belong to them, including the power of possessing the truth and solutions. A delicate collaborative search, exploration and co-creation of new ideas replaces this power. By listening to others, professionals convey respect, safety, care and a genuine interest in their experiences. They refrain from passing judgment or trying to change individuals and instead focus on providing assistance.

— The working relationship is centred **on dealing with the present**. It is safeguarded due to collaboration and the uncertainty it brings, as the process does not include making suggestions or convincing people of the results we want and requires co-creation. In social work conversations, time is protected to allow conversations to unfold, evolve and conclude, thus being able to move on. While the past is acknowledged, the primary goal is co-creating a solution. When discussing the past, the focus is on exceptions and positive experiences within the helping process.

— **Actionable knowledge**:<sup>46</sup> Professionals who use the concept of actionable knowledge can establish and maintain a working relationship to co-create solutions and share their expertise with young people in ways that are understandable to them.

## RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

The concept of a co-creative working relationship is highly relevant to youthreach, as it underscores the significance of establishing a relationship with young people in which they are acknowledged as competent partners. Young individuals must be given the opportunity to express their own desires, needs and challenges while also, with respect for their inherent strengths, receiving support in identifying and working towards their desired outcomes.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What does co-creation with the young people you work with entail?
2. What aspects should be considered when establishing a working relationship with the young people you work with?
3. What sources of strength do you identify in the young people you work with, and how can you leverage them to address their difficulties and challenges?
4. How do you ensure that the young person's voice is incorporated in shaping the desired outcomes?



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## METHOD:

Using an ecomap<sup>47</sup> is a valuable method for young people and professionals to collaboratively explore and leverage the resources and opportunities in their living environment to achieve specific goals. This approach becomes particularly relevant when both parties have established an explicit agreement on the objectives of their collaborative efforts.

The ecomap is used as a tool to help young people achieve set goals by exploring the potentials and resources in their living environment. An ecomap is employed when young people and professionals have reached an explicit agreement on the purpose of their joint work. **The process of creating the ecomap:**

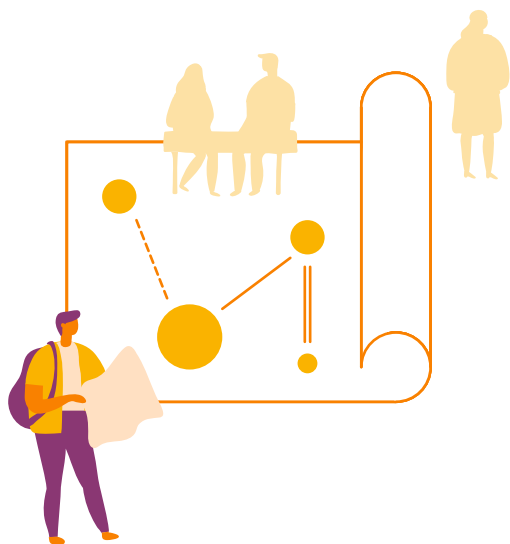
- 1. An agreement on collaboration:** The professional and young person accept the agreement on collaboration, and the professional explains the purpose of the ecomap.
- 2. Working method and tools for co-creating the desired goal:** Who creates the map is a matter of agreement; it can be done by the young people themselves, the professional or together. To make a map, you need a large sheet of paper and pens in (at least) three different colours. It would help if you also had a prompt for exploring the young person's living environment (see below). Start by writing the young person's goal in the centre of the paper; this will be the basis for exploring the potential and resources in their life. Let the young person discover and identify the available resources. Only when they have exhausted their ideas about the available resources should you assist them with questions to jog their memory, if necessary.
- 3. Assess the youth's goal attainability and strength:** Once the map is created, participants look together and assess the situation presented. They use a new colour to indicate significant potential and resources in the youth's life and then use another contrasting colour to highlight or reconsider unused or unnoticed resources and alternative possibilities.

- 4. Action plan:** The action plan must detail each task, specifying what needs to be done, who will do it, how they will carry out this task, what kind of potential or resources they will use in doing it, who will assist them (if necessary) and when the task must be completed. The plan should also address who, when, where and how to review the implementation of the agreed activities. If necessary, the ecomap will be reviewed and marked jointly after a certain period, which includes the evaluation of the changes needed to complete the action plan.

- 5. Legend for the initial marking of relationships or the availability of resources in the young person's life:** Relationships between the youth and people, potentials, resources, services, groups in their living environment or the availability and access to potentials and resources can be marked by the following symbols. These can be supplemented, if necessary, with arrows to indicate the direction of the relationship. One-sided arrows or orientation show that the youth has an interest in the relationship with the source. In contrast, two-sided arrows indicate mutual interest, with the source also being interested:

- less important relationship, potential or helpful resource for the young person(s)
- meaningful relationship or important, accessible, valuable resource
- stressful, conflictual relationship or access to service, potential, resource

The ecomap can be created in various ways. In our work, we use the method that feels most suitable or useful at a given moment. Both professionals and young people can be highly creative in developing an ecomap. It is crucial to ensure that the map is transparent and understandable.



<sup>47</sup> Šugman Bohinc, L., & Rapoša Tajnšek (2007). *Življenjski svet uporabnika*. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za socialno delo. (Summarized and adapted by Tadeja Kodele and Klavdija Kustec.)

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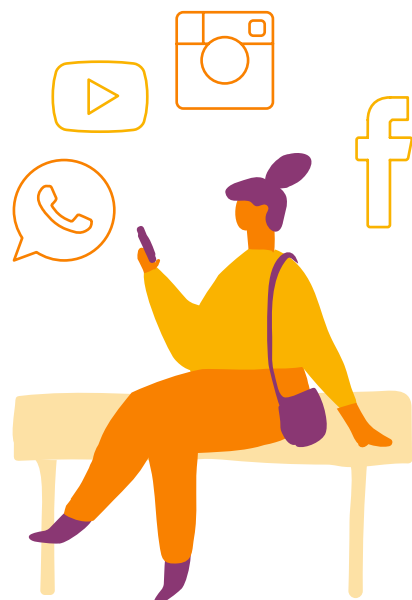
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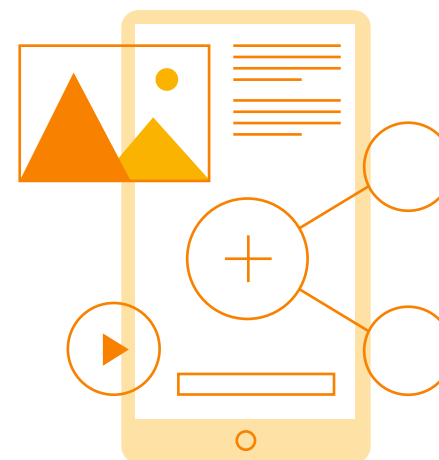


## Reminder to Explore Resources in the Adolescent's Life

We do not employ reminders in the form of interview questions or pre-written questions. Instead, we encourage young people to identify and explore the potential and resources in their lives. We use the reminder only towards the end when we contemplate if we may have overlooked something important.

- Basic material resources: Where and how the young individual lives and what they do (housing; income – money, work, informal work, scholarship, financial and social support, etc.; food and clothing; mobility).
- Social roles, status and skills (education; interests and hobbies; knowledge, skills and abilities they have or wish to acquire; personal and social skills, such as time management, stress management, the ability to seek help, self-control, reaching out to others, effective and sensitive communication, humour; self-esteem (self-respect, self-esteem, self-assessment); typical past approaches to dealing with problems and solutions.
- Help and support in social networks: *Informal social networks* (family, extended relatives, friends, neighbours, co-workers, roommates, other significant contacts): who the adolescent lives with and spends time with; on what occasions they meet; how they feel about these contacts; what they offer them (money, material goods, advice, relaxation, emotions); what they provide to these contacts; do they feel constrained in any way in these contacts.
- *Formal and semi-formal networks* (public and private services that provide services in social security, health, education and other areas, NGOs and other formal organisations to which the youth is connected, semi-formal support groups, etc.).

- Access to rights, assets and services (related to the social, political, economic, organisational and cultural environment).
- Life events and behaviour patterns, visions: What is important to them in life, what they desire; how they envision their life over several years (one, three, five, ten, etc.); life history; positive and negative past experiences: what brings happiness, pain or sadness.



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## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

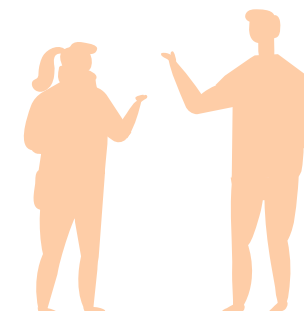
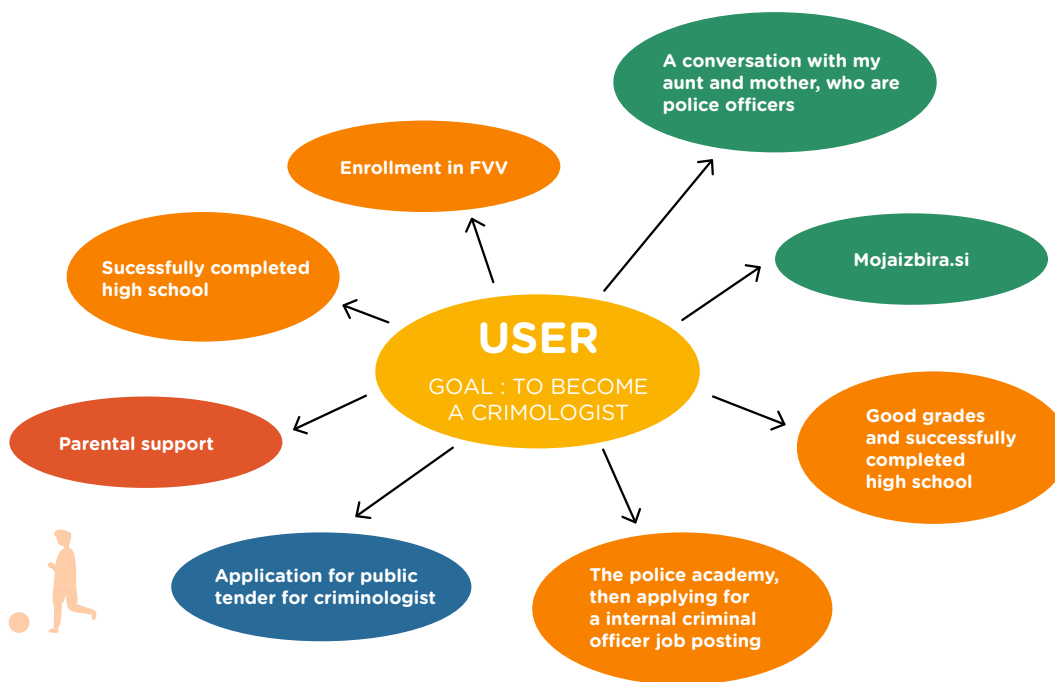
A young woman who is on the verge of graduating from high school aspires to become a criminal investigator. Therefore, after introducing the ecomap, explaining its purpose to her and reaching an agreement on collaboration, we examined the opportunities and resources available to her and created an ecomap.

### Legend:

- Orange – major steps
- Red – sources of strengths
- Green – actions I can take today
- Blue – potential but not guaranteed developments

### Plan:

1. Complete high school.
2. Hold discussions with my mother and aunt, both police officers, to learn about their professions.
3. Gather information about the criminal investigator role on the website Mojaizbira.si.
4. Enroll in and successfully graduate from the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security (FVV).
5. Apply for an internal criminal investigator job posting and complete the criminal investigator course.



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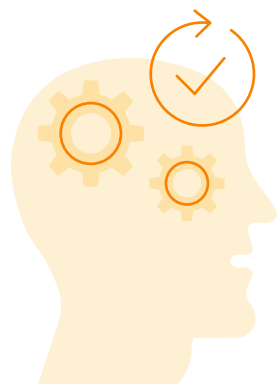
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<sup>48</sup> Freire in his *Pedagogy of Oppressed* (2019, pp. 67– 69) argues the following: ‘When we discover the word, the means that enables dialogue, we must consider more than just this when analysing dialogue, we must look for its other constituent elements. (...) Because in dialogue we perceive two dimensions: action and reflection. (...) There is no real word that is not a practice at the same time. (...) If people change the world by saying the word they use to name it, dialogue is established as a way for people to make sense of themselves as people. That is why dialogue is a necessity. (...) Naming the world as an act of “creation” and “recreation” is not possible if there is no love to inspire that act.’

## 2.2: Community Approaches in Youthreach

As mentioned earlier, this subchapter delves into community approaches in youthreach. It examines and highlights the significance of community approaches in youthreach, which can aid young people in cultivating critical thinking skills, enhancing resilience and fostering stronger relationships with institutions and policies. In essence, these approaches aim to **bridge gaps** between them, **facilitating the discovery of solutions and the resolution of existing challenges**.

### 2.2.1: FOSTERING CRITICAL THINKING IN YOUTH AND PROMOTING PUBLIC ADVOCACY

Critical thinking is, on the one hand, a **cognitive process that necessitates acquiring skills**. On the other hand, it is **intertwined with attitudes, principles, values and beliefs**, which are aspects of our social-emotional behaviour that have already become ingrained. The latter aspects also require contemplation, recognition and, if necessary, alteration. Let’s consider an example to clarify this concept.

*‘Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas. It involves the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue or situation in order to form a judgement. Critical thinkers are able to discern between valid and invalid arguments, recognise logical fallacies and make decisions based on evidence and reasoned argumentation.’*

ChatGPT generated the above definition. What were your initial thoughts upon reading it? Did any uncertainties arise? Would you prefer to deconstruct this intricate explanation into more digestible components or compare it with your

prior understanding of critical thinking and other definitions? Perhaps you’d like to engage in discussions with colleagues or friends? All of these dimensions are critical in the context of critical thinking. However, they are not the only aspects to take into account. Would your reaction be the same if you were not aware that ChatGPT was responsible for the definition? Undoubtedly, your response is influenced by your existing knowledge of critical thinking, personal viewpoints and any prior interactions with ChatGPT. Your level of trust may vary depending on whether ChatGPT’s definition aligns with your understanding or deviates from it.

The literature does not offer a single definitive answer to the question of what constitutes critical thinking. However, among the various conceptualisations, there are some commonalities shared by different authors, allowing us to categorise them into a few theoretical perspectives. Given the limited space here, we will focus on two particularly relevant perspectives: critical pedagogy and the self-reflexive approach.

**Critical pedagogy:** Authors following this perspective offer a **socially engaged interpretation of critical thinking**. They place it within the context of educating (young) individuals for dialogue, democratic citizenship and constructive participation in a diverse society. In this view, **dialogue** encompasses more than mere verbal exchange or attentive listening; it also **involves critical reflection and subsequent action**.<sup>48</sup> According to Freire, one of the key issues imposed on the oppressed by dominant ideologies is their passivity. This ideology often approaches the education of the oppressed in a lofty and doctrinaire manner, which is usually destined to fail. Freire argues that it is crucial to begin with the perspective of the oppressed themselves, bridging the gap between active teachers and passive learners or between active decision-makers and passive executors. The questions they raise have **the potential to challenge the institutional norms and free social workers from subservience to the institution and hierarchy**. However, for this to occur, the institution must be open to embracing independent and autonomous thinking.



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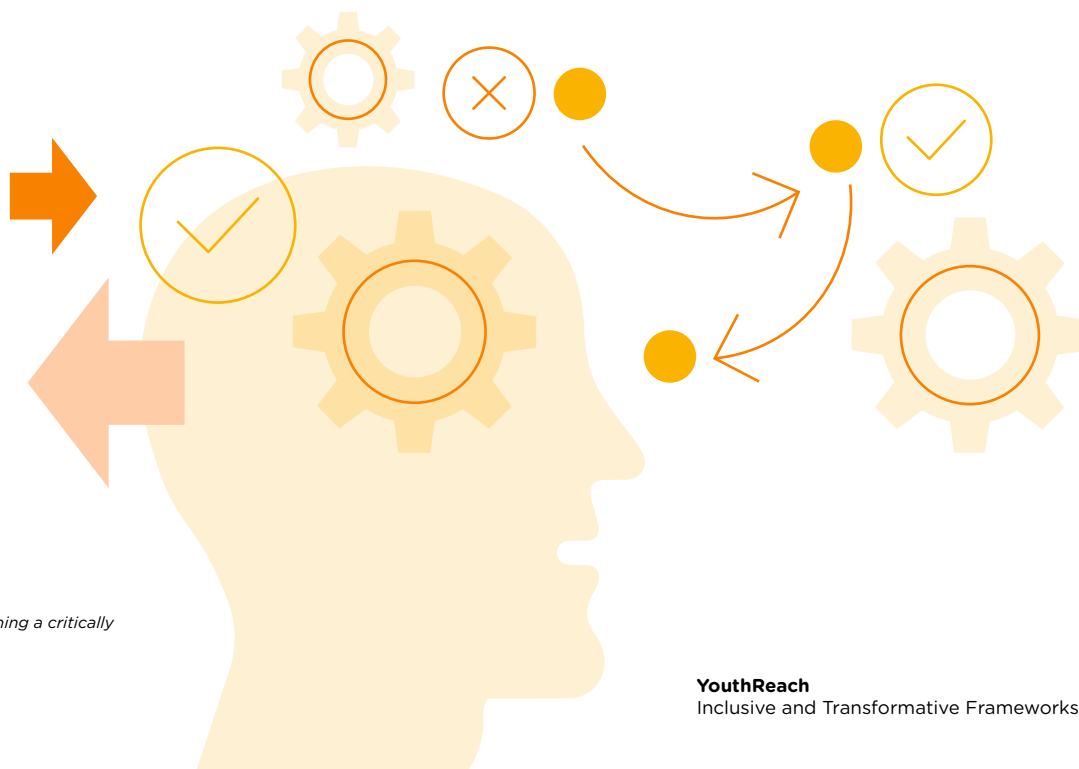
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Critical thinking is a **process of self-reflection**. According to these scholars, self-reflection and the examination of one's assumptions and values lie at the heart of critical thinking. Self-reflection involves a **conscious and systematic exploration of personal beliefs and values**. This process allows individuals to delve deeply into their personal values, beliefs and assumptions that underlie their thoughts, experiences and actions. It also encourages contemplation of the moral and ethical implications of one's actions, aiding in understanding one's role in the encountered issues and facilitating well-informed decision-making. It involves examining positions that are not necessarily agreed upon a priori without presupposing either agreement or disagreement. However, this process **involves challenging and destabilising** apparent and obvious truths and relies on individuals in a training position **being capable of independent thought, free from influence by established models or instructions**.

## The Characteristics of Critical Thinker

Critical thinkers develop **attitudes and skills that enable them to make decisions or take a stance on a problem**. They are aware that various perspectives and solutions exist for a given issue. The following characteristics can identify critical thinkers: they ask questions to verify and comprehend their own and others' claims, systematically investigate reality, weigh evidence for claims, identify and challenge assumptions (both their own and others), evaluate events, processes and phenomena, make informed decisions, explore different perspectives, use clear and precise language, are aware of their own values and beliefs, recognise cognitive biases (cognitive fallacies) that might affect their thinking, reflect on their thought processes, self-correct, distinguish between facts and interpretations, and lean towards dialogue and action after reflection.



<sup>49</sup> See e.g. Brookfield, S. D. (2017). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Jossey Bass.

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## RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

In the modern world, where diverse and conflicting views and perspectives exist on common problems, it's challenging for (young) individuals to form their own opinions and take action. The overwhelming amount of information, along with its temporary nature, leads to feelings of insecurity and a sense of powerlessness in forming authentic viewpoints and making autonomous decisions. To attain peace and confidence, we need an environment, along with the skills and attitudes, that allow us to explore the world from multiple perspectives while remaining aware of our interconnectedness within it. No one exists in isolation, so we must create a safe space for shared reflection on everyday issues, involving as many people as possible who are affected by these concerns.

To transform the frameworks for inclusion for all, we believe it's essential to begin with the perspectives and contributions of the human and social sciences, critical sociology, psychoanalysis and institutional analysis. These disciplines can help us critically examine the reality in a given social context on the one hand and reflect on ourselves as individuals aspiring to think independently on the other. Although a certain level of freedom of speech and thought is encouraged during initial or ongoing training, we must consider how we can genuinely enable others to think for themselves. How can we avoid conditioning them to think like us within a predefined framework? It seems imperative that if we aim to train practitioners to be outward-looking, we must empower them to think independently. The leitmotif 'instead of giving me the fish, teach me how to fish' should guide our approach.



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. How can we integrate critical thinking skills into our outreach programmes to empower young people to analyse and evaluate the information they encounter in their lives?
2. Do our outreach efforts cultivate a culture of open inquiry, encouraging young people to ask questions, challenge assumptions and think critically about the world around them?
3. Are we offering guidance on how to navigate and critically assess information related to important topics such as mental health, relationships and career choices?
4. How can we adapt our outreach strategies to address the unique needs and interests of different groups of young people, recognising that the development of critical thinking may vary among individuals?



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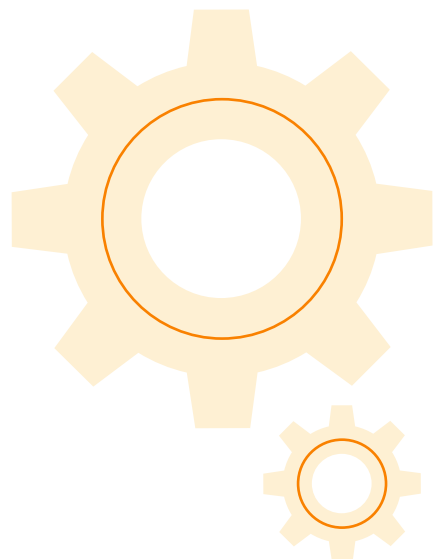
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## METHOD:

Often, methods that foster critical thinking and support public advocacy centre around promoting reflective practices, typically within group settings. One such method is the Critical Incident Analysis Method (Incident method), which aims to engage participants in meaningful reflection<sup>50</sup>. This method is beneficial when we want to engage the thinking, knowledge and experience of the event participants through spontaneously expressed problems. These can be purely spontaneous events, occurring in small, closed groups or planned events where individuals raise their own issues and seek the views of other participants. In the context of the YouthReach project, this method is applied to address issues voiced by young people, as well as concerns expressed by institutional staff. Importantly, this method is accessible and user-friendly, requiring no specialised knowledge or prior experience. Materials required for this process are minimal, consisting of paper (post-it notes) and pencils.

### Methodology

1. Grouping: a maximum of 7 people in each group (facilitator + 6 members; one of the members has a case).
2. In the preliminary plenary phase, the facilitator briefly raises the issue related to the topic, i.e. the actual problem, and invites the group's (table) members to share a case from their own practice in a couple of sentences.
3. Each group selects one case.
4. The group's facilitator leads the process according to the phases outlined in the framework below.
5. The group agrees on what to report to the large group.
6. The experiences and conclusions are shared plenary with the large group. The event's facilitator summarises the findings of all the groups into a synthesis conclusion that can be used as a basis for action to solve the problem at hand.

## The framework of group reflection

### Phase One: Information (10 min)

- The individual with the problem offers a concise introduction to the issue, including the circumstances in which it arose.
- Other group members contribute by formulating questions that aim to enhance the understanding of the problem. Each member can write up to three questions on a post-it note.
- These questions are provided to the individual with the problem, who offers brief responses.
- Discussion must be prohibited during this phase.

### Phase Two: Formulating an opinion (10 min)

- Participants individually articulate what they believe to be the core essence of the problem, being mindful to express their viewpoints as personal interpretations rather than presenting them as irrefutable truths.
- Each member verbally shares their perspective without engaging in discussions.

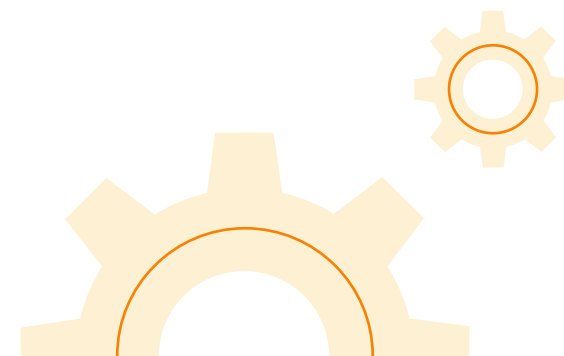
### Phase Three: Problem-solving (15 min)

- Group members individually propose their solutions to address the presented problem.
- They verbally express their proposed solutions.
- The person with the problem shares how they would personally approach the issue, delineating what is acceptable to them and what is not.

### Phase Four: Evaluation (15 min)

- Each group member reflects on how they can personally relate to the presented problem.
- Participants share their emotions, insights gained during the process, and what they intend to communicate during the larger group's plenary session.

<sup>50</sup> The methodology presented here was used in a seminar for PLYA mentors in September 2023 by Dr Tanja Rupnik Vec; see more in [Critical Incident Analysis Method \(Incident method\)](#)



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## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

In the regular in-service training of PLYA<sup>51</sup> mentors, we addressed the topic of social-emotional learning and how mentors can approach it. We wanted to create an experience of this learning with the mentors, so we chose the incident method.

### Phase One

The mentors split into two smaller groups. In one of them, one of the mentors described her current problem with one of the PLYA participants. She described her feelings towards the participant. The girl had left vocational school to train as a hairdresser. As she told her mentors, this is the only profession she wants to pursue, but she did not give any reasons for dropping out. When they went to the school together for a discussion to inquire about the possibilities of re-enrolling and completing schooling, the mentor got the impression from the conversation with the counsellor that the school was not interested in the girl re-enrolling.

She has atopic dermatitis, which would certainly be aggravated by working in a hairdressing salon, as the work involves water and chemicals. According to the mentor, atopic dermatitis has also always been the girl's excuse when she had to do something in the PLYA programme that did not suit her. She always started scratching and showing pimples that appeared on her skin. The girl said that her father is violent towards her at home. Her father and mother are separated; she lives with her father and on weekends with her mother, who lives in another village. Her mother allows her freedom and does not stop her from having fun, which includes taking drugs. However, she does not want to move in with her mother.

The girl's friend from the PLYA told the mentors that her father is strict but not violent and that the girl often makes things up. The mentor said that when she arrived, all the mentors encouraged her and tried to create an environment where she would fit in. However, she refused most of the things but did an excellent job with some of the administrative work

where she had to enter data accurately. The mentor sees the possibility of her enrolling in an administrative school instead of a hairdressing school. However, the girl does not want to discuss this at the moment. The mentor does not know how to approach it. She thinks the girl needs professional therapy, which she refuses, saying that 'she is not mad.' The mentor does not know what to believe anymore; the girl is looking for excuses, and she notices that the girl responds in a commanding tone, which does not give the mentor any satisfaction, as she feels that she is building on an argument of strength, not on the strength of the argument. She finds working with the participant tiring and loses patience, as she often feels that the girl is not being sincere with mentors. She asks what action should be taken to encourage at least a little motivation in the girl to work.

The peer mentors wrote out **different questions:** e.g. how old is the girl? Have you contacted the parents? Is any of the three female mentors more sympathetic to the participant? Do they understand her better? Does the participant have friends in the group? What hobbies does the participant have? What do you like about her? How long has she been involved in PLYA? Does she cut hair or do hairdressing in her spare time, or does she cut hair/do hairdressing for her peers in the PLYA programme? What would the mentors consider as progress in her case? Have you discussed her case in the mentoring group, etc.?

**Answers:** She is 19 years old and of legal age, so she must agree to contact her parents. For the time being, she refuses to do so. She is new to the programme (approximately one month). She prefers to spend her time on social networks, where she also has friends; she also has friends in the PLYA group, but these do not seem to be genuine friendships. She does not do hairstyles for friends or PLYA participants. Yes, mentors discussed her case, but so far, no one has managed to get close to her and establish a genuine interpersonal relationship with her. The one who came the closest to that is an adult education advisor in our organisation, who suggested that she join the PLYA programme. Mentors shall reflect on what would be considered progress as we didn't ask ourselves about it.

<sup>51</sup> Project Learning for Young Adults

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### Phase Two

The co-mentor's reflection went in the direction that the girl does not feel belonging or responsibility because, in reality, no one needs her and does not count on her. Her father may be giving her orders, so she obeys orders even with mentors. Probably, her self-awareness, self-image and mission are undefined, so she clings to the hairdressing profession and, at the same time, refers to her atopic dermatitis as an excuse when something does not suit her. Atopic dermatitis can also be a psychological reaction. The girl does not know what makes her happy because maybe she has never tried anything like this – she has no hobbies. The parenting model of her father and mother is different; she does not have a clear idea of what her parents expect from her. She also had no support from the teachers at school. She has no support from friends, so she does not feel wanted among her peers; social networks on the internet do not require deep relationships, but they enable communication. She is unconsciously afraid of changes in her life because she is afraid that they will be painful for her while she has gotten used to the life she is currently living. She may refuse therapeutic help because she doubts herself or accepts the 'guilt' that others have probably put on her – laziness, lack of interest, maybe somebody says to her she is 'crazy' or 'mad,' etc.

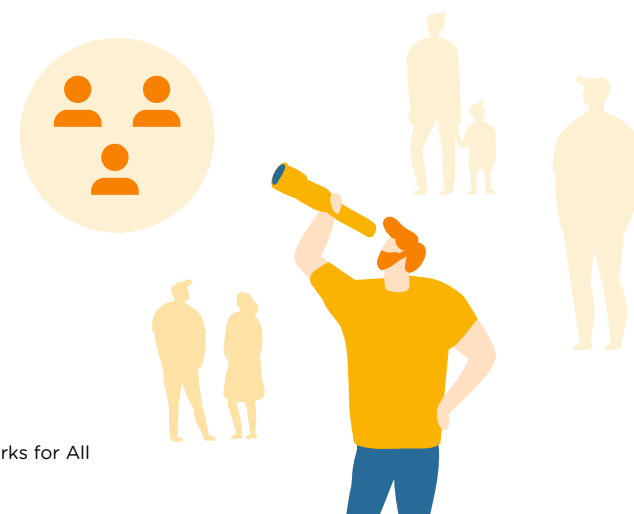
### Phase Three

The peer mentors have had different opinions – in the sense that if I were in this situation, I would try, etc. The reflection went towards creating a stimulating and, more importantly, a safe learning environment – a learning project where she could use her skills, knowledge and creativity to create hairstyles (e.g. learning projects: making a fashion show, theatre, movie, etc.) but also in the direction of occasionally asking her for help with administrative tasks within the organisation, assigning her an occasional mentor, e.g. a secretary whom she could accompany and learn from (shadowing method) and including the adult education advisor in an enhanced expert team. In that way, she might get to know administrative professions better and connect with someone who does this profession – strengthening her social network

and earning more trust in others. Another line of reflection was to talk about her hardships – talking about who is 'crazy/mad' and what it means to her to be a bit of a 'crazy/mad' person (e.g. discussing who is 'crazy/mad'). A therapist could be invited who would do an interesting workshop with all the participants, where she might be able to open up more easily and accept therapeutic help as well. They suggested an intervention and supervision to the mentoring group, etc.

### Phase Four

In the last phase carried out in the group and also at the plenary session, both groups made similar findings. Important insights went in the direction that mentors face similar problems; sometimes, the mentors project their needs and expectations onto the participants. It is necessary to systematically observe the participants, listen to them carefully and also ask structured questions. Above all, they should approach students with respect, affection (be empathetic to them) and trust. Using a personal learning-action plan together with the student is valuable for every mentor to reflect on their work, write down their thoughts and feelings and think them over with fellow mentors and in supervision. Also, accept the fact that mentors cannot get to the bottom of all situations, that they can make mistakes too and, after reflection, forgive themselves (be empathetic towards themselves). It is necessary to establish a network with other experts and institutions that can help them and their students, etc.



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## 2.2.2: STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The resilience presented here does not hide the importance of social dynamics. The individual autonomy that is valued by resilience must be understood as part of the expected transformations, the other being social transformation.

Resilience is the **ability to 'bounce back' during or after difficult times** and get back to feeling as good as before. It's also the **ability to adapt to challenging circumstances** that you can't change and keep on thriving. In fact, when you're resilient, you can often learn from difficult situations. A child's resilience can go up and down at different times. And your child might be better at bouncing back from some challenges than others. All teenagers can build resilience by developing personal attitudes like self-respect and self-compassion, social skills, positive thinking habits and skills for getting things done.

**The term resilience refers to various aspects:**

- Good development outcomes despite the high-risk situation (e.g. *overcoming cumulative risk*).
- Maintaining competence in threatening situations or crisis events (e.g., *effectively dealing with a parent's divorce*).
- Successful recovery from trauma (e.g., *in cases of abuse*).

Resilience is the **result of interactions between risk and protective factors and their relative balance in a multi-level system**. Distant factors, i.e. those further away from the child/adolescent, influence them less than those close to them. Thus, *poverty is a distant risk-maker, but it can lead to risk factors closer to the child, such as the irritability of parents, conflicts between parents or the exhaustion of a single mother*. We should always keep in mind a **multi-layered environmental perspective** when looking at the child's situation. Today, we know that factors contributing to resilience development include:

- Stable emotional relationship with at least one parent or another significant person (emotional worry and warmth).
- Social support inside and outside the family (openness and acceptance).
- Emotionally positive, open and supportive climate at school.
- Availability of social models that encourage constructive coping.
- Balance between attainment requirements and social responsibility (attainment orientation).
- Cognitive competence.
- Characteristics of temperament that contribute to effective coping.
- Experience of personal effectiveness corresponding to a positive self-concept (independence, but with the structure and observation of parents/guardians).
- Self-confidence.
- Active coping skills with stressors.
- Sense of meaning and structure during personal development (development of appropriate norms and values).



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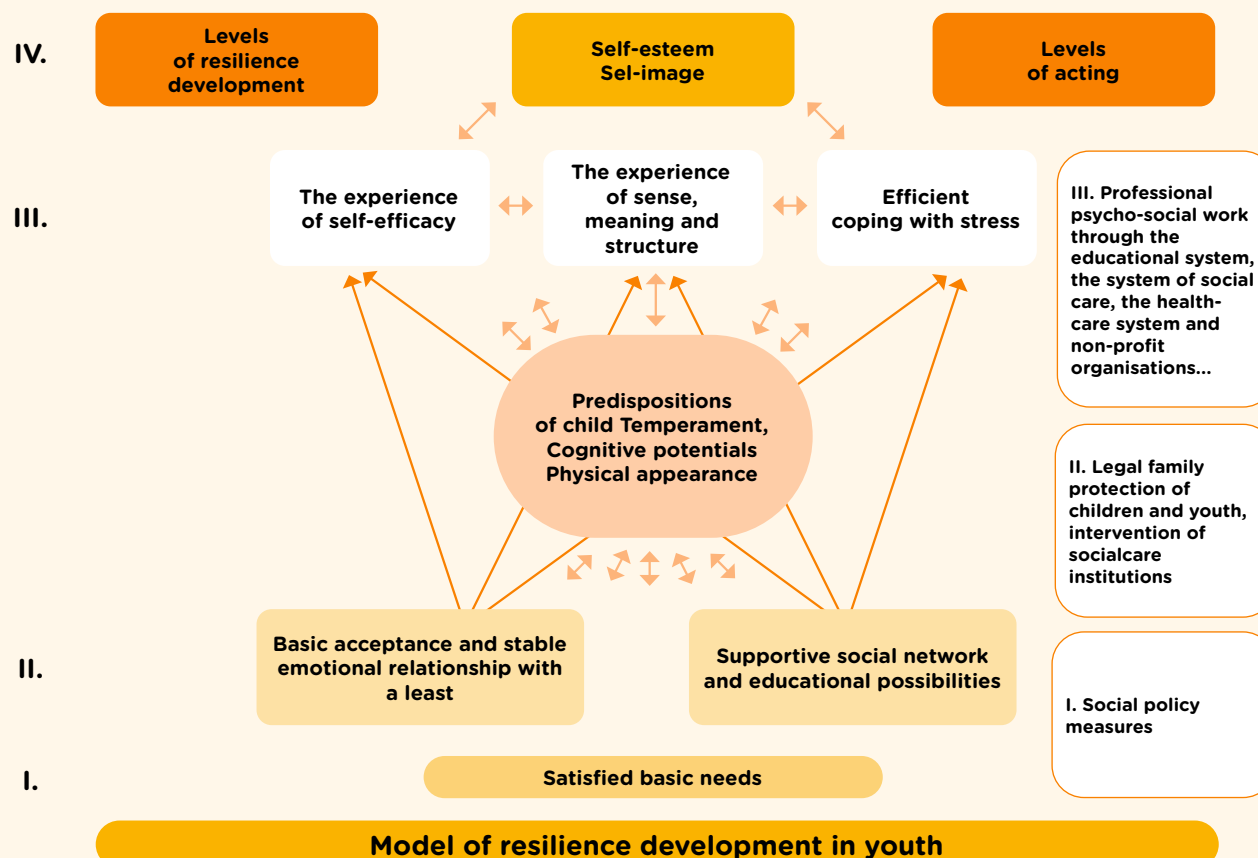
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What follows is a schema of the Model of resilience development in youth:



<sup>52</sup> Losel, F., Bender, D. (2001) Resilience and protective factors. In: Farrington, D. P. and Coid, J. (Eds) Prevention of adult antisocial behavior. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Losel, F., Bender, D. (2001) Model of resilience development in youth <sup>52</sup>

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### The contribution of the concept of resilience in the planning of preventive and treatment programmes is reflected in:

1. Providing hope to both experts and users – the focus on what is good and healthy in the child and their environment (developmental consideration of risk factors and protection factors shows that it is possible to act in later periods of the child's life).
2. The optimal process of socialisation does not mean that the child should be protected from all problems, difficulties and losses but should be taught how to deal with them using their own resources and environmental resources.
3. We learn not only from families and children who manifest behavioural problems but also from those who have managed to preserve mental health despite difficulties.
4. The challenge, together with the child or their family, is to expand the range of strategies for dealing with difficult situations and problems and develop new skills, but at the same time, move from what the child and family already know and want.
5. The concept of resilience encourages us to effectively harness the potentials of the child's immediate and broader environment to understand better the network of cooperation and support that can develop in the child's environment.

### RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

Professionals who work with youth have to be able to detect and estimate the level of risk, as well as protective factors and the level of resilience. This is necessary for the whole process of work and treatment, which will, among environmental factors, depend also on the level of resilience.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What social policy measures are available in the 1<sup>st</sup> level of the Model of resilience for coping with the problems related to the satisfaction of the basic needs of youth?
2. What legal family protection measures and interventions in case of problem occurrence on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of basic acceptance and stable emotional relationship are available in your country?
3. What are the possibilities for professional psychoactive measures in your country in case problems on the 3<sup>rd</sup> level regarding self-efficacy and coping with stress are present?

### METHOD:

In youth work, it is necessary to create a list of risk and protective factors for the young person at different levels of their surroundings. Therefore, the list should consist of three indexes:

1. **Risk factors due to the family environment and characteristics of parents** (family context, objective limitations of parents, parental competencies, mental health difficulties/mental disorders, socially unacceptable risk behaviours, unfavourable parent history).
2. **Risk factors due to the characteristics of the child and their behaviour** (physical and cognitive development, attachment, internalised and externalised problems, difficulties in education, communication and social skills, etc.).
3. **List of family strengths.**



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## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

The following example delves into the crucial task of assessing situations, particularly within the family and school environments, to determine the safety and well-being of youth. The assessment process revolves around gauging the presence or absence of threats to a person's security and the sufficiency of protective measures within the family context.

### Assessment of the situation in the family:

- The first task of the assessment in protection is to determine whether the child is safe or not safe.
- Security or insecurity is a condition in which there is (no) threat to safety (danger) or the protective abilities in the family are (not) sufficient to protect the child.
- The child's well-being includes many elements, with safety being one of them, but the child's well-being and safety are not synonyms.
- The traditional attitude was that if the child is not safe, he should be separated from the family. Still, given the known consequences of separating children from the family, such thinking is to the detriment of the child and the family.
- In the environment in which it is estimated that the child is not safe, something dangerous to the child's life and health does not necessarily have to happen, and it is, therefore, estimated that the child is safe today; however, it cannot be known in advance that something dangerous to the life and health of the child tomorrow will not happen.
- Based on the assessment of the indicators, it is necessary to determine the safety of the child at a particular time on a specific date and accordingly act towards minimising the risk within the possible and probable.
- A professional procedure is documented on a single safety assessment list.
- In the first place, yes or no determines the existence or absence of a particular threat to security.
- Threats to safety or well-being of a child can vary

across different family environments. They are particular and suggest concern for the child's life; in the family environment there is no third party to oversee the treatment of the child, and without intervention, serious harm to the child is likely to occur. The family has, to some extent, the right to choose a way of family life as long as it does not include issues of child safety, meaning that the child's life is not at risk.

- When there are one or more security threats, and the parent is not protecting the child, the child is considered not safe, and analyses are conducted to determine which interventions are necessary and possible to eliminate the threat or protect the child when it occurs (according to the Ontario Safety Assessment Tool, 2007).



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### Assessment of the situation related to the school:

- Poor school performance and risky behaviours of children.
- Non-involvement of parents in the education of the child, insufficient hygiene and poorer social inclusion of children.
- Long-term unresolved conflicting relationship between parents, repeated addresses of the Centre for Social Welfare due to difficulties in terms of contact with the child.
- Domestic violence (between parents or family members).
- Neglecting the emotional needs of the child.
- Violent educational actions.

### What an expert needs to know:

- If one or two risk factors are present, their effect on the development of the child is small and can be more easily compensated for by protection factors.
- By increasing the number of risk factors to three or four, the risk rises rapidly. However, a further increase in the number of risk factors over five only slightly contributes to the complexity and severity of the manifestation of child/adolescent behavioural disorders.
- No single adverse circumstance in itself leads to a negative outcome, but the process of interaction shapes behaviours and creates problems over time.
- It is used by an expert team when they have the impression that the overall risk assessment for the parent/family or child factor does not reflect the actual level of risk.
- It can go in the direction of a lower level of risk if it is estimated that the protective factors or strengths of parents and the environment significantly compensate for the risk.
- It can go in the direction of a higher level of risk if the expert team assesses that there is some key watershed circumstance whose presence in itself is hugely endangering the child.
- A justification or reason is necessary for the numerically obtained level of risk to be corrected.



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<sup>53</sup> De Maeyer, E., & Grymonprez, H. (2020). Using Outreach for Situations of Extreme Social Marginalization: the Social Effects of a Field of Social Work Practices. *Revue française des affaires sociales*, 2, 117-136. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rfas.202.0117>

<sup>54</sup> Marchand, A. (2002). L'intermédiation sociale, complexité et enjeux [Social Intermediation, Complexity, and Challenges]. *Journée du Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées (DESS)*. Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier 3. [Unpublished text].

<sup>55</sup> Lorenz, Grymonprez & Roose in De Maeyer, E., & Grymonprez, H. (2020). Using Outreach for Situations of Extreme Social Marginalisation: the Social Effects of a Field of Social Work Practices. *Revue française des affaires sociales*, 2, 117-136. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rfas.202.0117>.

### 2.2.3: INTERMEDIATION – BRINGING TOGETHER THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS

The primary goal of social intermediation refers to the process of **bridging the gap between public policies, service providers**, such as social workers or outreach workers, **and the individuals or communities they aim to serve**. We can talk about the 'bridging role' of social workers, which means that they have the role of building bridges between society and its margins and '*achieve a mutual adjustment between the target population, its network, the offer of social services and society at large*'.<sup>53</sup> They act as a 'translator' of different points of view of the actors involved. Alain Marchand proposed the concept of social intermediation.<sup>54</sup> He raised several questions for reflection that can help us better understand its purpose (the evolution of the public construction of responses to social needs):

- **A desire to seek union in the treatment of the social question:** to remedy shortcomings, to unite what is disintegrated and fragmented, individualised and antagonistic, whether at the level of populations in the various modalities of tears and ruptures, social ties, or at the level of public and private, collective and individual actors.
- **It is part of the invention:** The construction of the object 'intermediation' can be based on etymology: to imagine, invent, frame and have designs and thoughts.
- **A return to a certain order:** It is about identifying, problematising and remedying the manifest disorder and finding the 'right measure' of things from the points of view and strategies of actors involved in intermediation.
- **Intermediation is not mediation:** More than temporary arrangements, it aims to refund a social pact on a concrete object by inscribing it in a device, transcending the initial interests and postures of the actors. It is not simply about renewing broken ties and restoring social networks but about building a community.

- **The posture that defines the intermediation professional:** Neutral (in the middle ground), third-party position, mediator (can be built internally in the organisation – the tutor, the referent, or in outsourcing (audit, advice, mediator), med-'measure,' of moderation (suitable to ensure or establish order, it is one of those 'leaders and moderators' who in all circumstances know how to take the proven measures that are necessary, not a third-party instructor (necessarily involved as an actor) who inscribes its action in invention, in design, in experimentation, like any social worker at heart, a revealer of the invisible, a teller of the unspeakable without being a spokesman. It presupposes a reflection on the ethics of the person who makes it his profession, who makes the link and gives meaning to the sphere.

### RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

**The systems approach** is required to develop an innovative and creative resolution **to explore alternative service strategies and approaches offered to the most excluded**. 'Outreach' embodies *the idea of universal access to social services and its role as an intermediary between the individual and society, with the aim of transforming social services*.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, rehabilitating the function of social intermediation for social work professionals is now essential to ensure the evolution of the public construction of responses to social needs.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What conditions are necessary to bring together all stakeholders and foster a common culture?
2. What is the shared subject that can facilitate the gradual convergence of cultures?
3. How can we work on embracing the change in the social worker's posture?



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## METHOD:

### SocioBridges: observation and facilitation for engaging with dropouts

**SocioBridge** aims to foster the establishment of 'bridges of connection' with individuals who are distant from services, support networks and institutions. This is achieved through observation and facilitation sessions between individuals facing difficulties and the ways in which these difficulties are resolved by the institutions or services concerned. The aim is not to reintegrate them into the system but to build appropriate solutions for 'universal access to social services' together.

### APPLICATION

The method involves implementing a gradual series of steps that engage all potential participants within the network of contacts or actors present in the outreach context. Before commencing contact and youth engagement actions, operators undergo training. During this training, they discuss how to conduct participant observation and establish contact as well as relationship strategies with young people, service providers and institutions.

Participant observation is a crucial initial phase of the operators' work, during which they practice describing the various elements at play in the specific 'situation' where they have chosen to intervene (such as a square, a street, or a particular location in the city) to understand the issues of different stakeholders and what is at stake when the objective is to find common solutions. Employing empathy as a methodological tool<sup>56</sup>, they ensure a description that is free from interpretation.

The 'situation' comprises three key components: (i) the action space of the actors involved (territory mapping), (ii)

the actors themselves and (iii) recurring phenomena that characterise the specific situation.

By engaging in participant-action-observation, practitioners immerse themselves in the situation while simultaneously reflecting on their actions. This approach requires operators to set aside their personal biases, suspend judgment and utilise a rigorous, non-interpretive method to describe what they observe.

The analysis of the situation entails describing the various representation systems involved in the action. These systems include those young people with whom contact has been established, significant adults who are somehow connected to them, individuals present in the action's context, institutions involved and the operators gradually engaging with the young people.

The complexity of these stages necessitates **continuous supervision** by specialist figures (supervisors) who assist practitioners in deciphering the diverse observed aspects. They help identify potential strategies to achieve intervention objectives and facilitate self-analysis during the process.

### WORKING TOOLS

To promote effective 'outreach actions', practitioners must develop at least two competencies<sup>57</sup> to be used as working tools: **empathy and facilitation**.

**Empathy**, as a methodological tool, was developed by Prof. Leonardo Benvenuti, the founder of the socio-therapeutic approach. The core idea is that in an empathic-instrumental relationship, the practitioner or therapist sets aside their knowledge, both cognitive and emotional, so that the person in front of them is not judged as likeable or unlikeable, nor is their gender considered. The fundamental concept is that empathy enables the operator or therapist to understand the person's distress from their perspective.

<sup>56</sup> Benvenuti L. (2018). *Lezioni di socioterapia* [Lessons in Social Therapy.]. Baskerville

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This understanding is based on a professionalised approach to listening techniques, which can be passive, such as silent listening, or active, where the operator fully grasps the other person's verbal and non-verbal cues. The method involves creating a framework that helps the operator or educator accurately comprehend the other person's representation. This understanding then informs the design of a socio-therapeutic intervention that is inclusive and aligns with the principles of outreach to build bridges and achieve a common understanding between society and its margins.

**Facilitation** involves creating a communicative channel (linguistic, visual, written, etc.) that can convey the needs, thoughts, wishes and feelings of one individual to another, thus restoring 'clear and effective communication.' This aspect does not necessarily lead to the 'resolution of the problem' but serves as a precondition for each actor to refrain from asserting themselves as 'unique,' 'infallible,' or 'on the right side.' Instead, it encourages them to be open to listening to the other's perspective and considering different strategies to achieve their own goals (in the case of young people, for instance) or professional objectives (in the case of institutions). Facilitation facilitates communication between actors who are distant from each other, experiencing challenges in relationships, or who have severed their connections.



## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

During the COVID pandemic, the youth workers of 'Cantiere Giovani', a social cooperative in Frattamaggiore, modified their role as youth workers assigned to work in a Territorial Social Centre. They became active, flexible and mobile antennas on the territory, tasked with following young people at risk of school dropout, abandonment, isolation and socio-cultural marginalisation in some metropolitan areas of Naples, including Frattamaggiore, Frattaminore and Caivano. These operators went out to seek these boys and girls in the hidden corners of urban areas, such as alleys, closed roads, abandoned building sites, basements and quarries, where they often sought refuge to evade police surveillance. They fostered a connection between young people and worlds that were not easily accessible during the period of forced closure through street activities and informal ways of approaching youth groups.

The youth workers acted as antennas, links and bridges, strategically oriented to prevent young people from losing contact with the opportunities in the area, which often constituted the only possible solutions to situations of crisis and marginality. They facilitated access to socialisation centres, sports and psychophysical health, help and support spaces, and assisted boys and girls in retaining these opportunities despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. After the COVID-related closures, the Cantiere Giovani team conducted a physical reconnaissance of popular socialising spots for young people. They created a map of these places and identified key stakeholders using participant observation and context analysis (through the construction of an eco-map). As a team, they devised strategies, timelines, methods and specific actions to build relationships with these contexts, taking into account the mistrust, closures and fears experienced by young people due to the pandemic's social and cultural climate.

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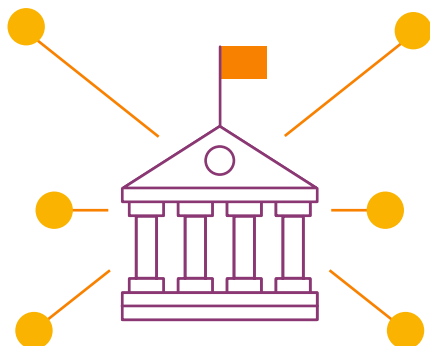
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### The operators have taken several steps to engage with the young people and their community:

- They have created informative leaflets that were distributed in the streets on topics of interest to the youth.
- Furthermore, they have established relationships with key stakeholders in the area to increase citizen interest in youth welfare and possibly provide resources for educational activities.
- Additionally, the operators have formed informal and non-formal connections with the young people in order to better understand their needs, emotions and mental state.

Meanwhile, the YW team, along with professionals who are not directly involved with young people on the streets, reached out to representatives from Social Services, Socio Health Services for Adolescents and Young People and certain school officials. Their goal was to identify the youth most at risk, share their contact information and establish effective ways to connect them with the key institutional figures who play a role in their growth and development.

### 2.2.4: COOPERATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUTH POLICIES

Youth policies encompass a wide range of areas, including education, employment, health, social inclusion and participation in decision-making processes. Cooperation for the development of youth policies is crucial for ensuring that young people have access to opportunities, resources and support to thrive and contribute to society. Collaborative efforts among governments, civil society organisations, youth organisations and other stakeholders are essential to creating effective youth policies.

All these areas are significant for developing the institutional network and collaborative activities between institutions in

different sectors to reach the youth who are not involved in the educational system, training, or employment, making youth policies possible and supportive for them.

The theory of **institutional cooperation** in general<sup>58</sup>, as well as youthreach policies, refers to the concept of **collaboration and coordination among various institutions and organisations** to address the needs and concerns of youth populations. This theory recognises that the well-being and development of young people **require the collective effort of multiple stakeholders**, including governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), educational institutions, community groups and other relevant actors<sup>59</sup>.

Institutional cooperation on youthreach policies aims to create a **comprehensive and holistic approach** to youth development by pooling resources, expertise and perspectives. The theory emphasises that no single organisation or sector can adequately address the diverse challenges faced by young people, such as education, employment, health, social inclusion and civic engagement.

This theory suggests that effective institutional cooperation is essential to design and implement outreach policies that are comprehensive, integrated and sustainable. It involves establishing collaborative networks, partnerships and mechanisms for information sharing, joint decision-making, and resource allocation. By bringing together different actors with diverse knowledge and capacities, institutional cooperation can enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of youth policies.

Moreover, the theory recognises the importance of youth participation in decision-making processes. It emphasises that young people should have a voice in shaping the policies that directly affect their lives. Institutional cooperation on youthreach policies strives to include youth perspectives and actively involve them in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes.

<sup>58</sup> Glaser-Segura, D., & Anghel, L. D. (2002). *An institutional theory of cooperation*. 11th IPSE conference 2002, University of Twente. <https://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/9158/>  
Dai, X., Snidal, D., & Sampson, M. (2010). International cooperation theory and international institutions. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*.

<sup>59</sup> Mack, J., Wanderer, S., Kölich, M., & Roessner, V. (2019). Come together: case specific cross-institutional cooperation of youth welfare services and child and adolescent psychiatry. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 13, 1–13.



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<sup>60</sup> Bütow, B. (2012). Cooperation as Border-Work. The Example of Social Work Praxes Between Youth Welfare Services and Youth Psychiatry in Germany (East/West). *Social Work & Society*, 10(2).

<sup>61</sup> Atabekova, A. (2020). Language representation of youth health concept in international institutional discourse. *Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy*, 11(12), 1417-1427.  
Krutko, I. S., Masalimova, A. R., Ponomarev, A. V., Popova, N. V., Senuk, Z. V., & Osipchukova, E. V. (2019). International cooperation in training personnel for work with youth. *Proceedings of SOCIOINT*, 113, 1159.

Overall, the theory of institutional cooperation on youthreach policies highlights the significance of collaboration, partnership and inclusivity in addressing the complex challenges faced by young people<sup>60</sup>. It promotes a coordinated and multi-dimensional approach that recognises the interconnectedness of various domains, such as education, employment, health, social welfare and civic engagement, in facilitating positive youth development.

International cooperation contributes to policy development by sharing best practices and learning from the experiences of other countries and international organisations. Collaboration on regional and global initiatives that support youth development is an additional level that is important in terms of implementing youth policy as useful and applicable as possible<sup>61</sup>.

Cooperation for the development of youth policies should be an ongoing process, with regular reviews and updates to adapt to changing circumstances and evolving needs. By working together across sectors and involving young people in this policy development process, societies can create inclusive and effective policies that promote the well-being and empowerment of youth.

### RELEVANCE TO YOUTHREACH:

**Institutional cooperation is essential in working with youth and in the field of outreach** to regulate and plan activities needed for youth reconnection to education, training and work. Without institutional cooperation, youthreach is not possible, especially in terms of collaboration between NGOs and centres for social welfare. Also, analysis and research on youthreach are essential to develop the impact on stakeholders in order to change or improve youth policy on the local and national levels. Therefore, cooperation between academics and practitioners can have an impact on

understanding the NEET population status and enhance the youthreach approach.

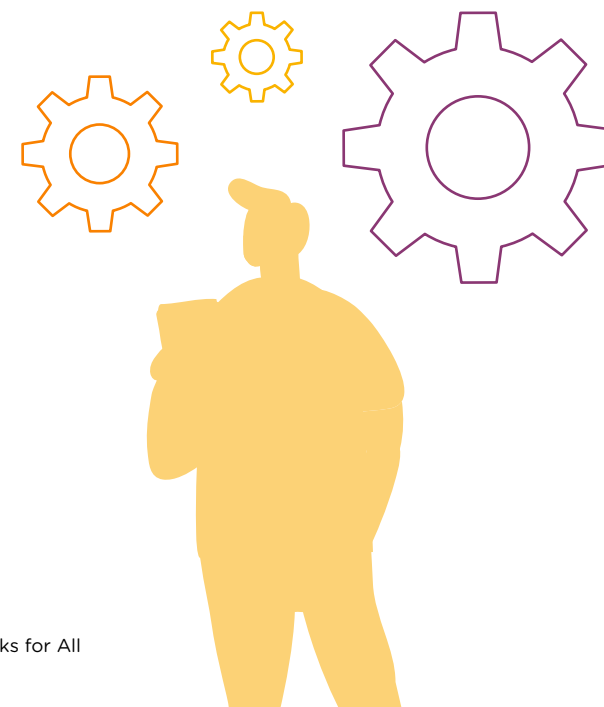
### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What is the basic foundation for establishing and maintaining institutional cooperation in working with youth?
2. How can institutions improve their work to motivate youth to start retraining/reeducation programmes and support them until they complete the programme?
3. How can institutions work on youthreach, and what should the activities' structure look like? Which institution should be the one that connects them all?



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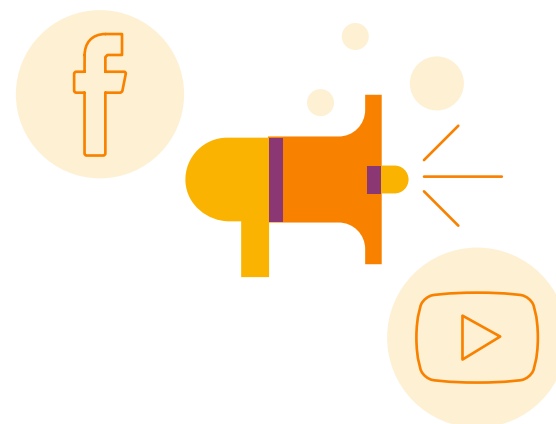
**There are several methods for cooperation to change youth policies. Here are some commonly used approaches:**

- 1. Advocacy and Lobbying<sup>62</sup> :** Youth organisations and activists can engage in advocacy and lobbying efforts to raise awareness about the need for policy change. This can involve organising campaigns, meeting with policymakers and mobilising public support to influence decision-making processes.
- 2. Research and Data Analysis:** Gathering data and conducting research on youth-related issues can provide evidence to support policy changes. Collaborating with researchers, think tanks and academic institutions can help in generating reliable data, conducting policy analysis and presenting recommendations to policymakers.
- 3. Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging with various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society groups and youth representatives, is crucial for effective policy change. Collaborative dialogues, consultations and partnerships with stakeholders can foster a better understanding of the challenges and develop inclusive policy solutions.
- 4. Capacity Building and Training:** Building the capacity of youth organisations and activists is essential for effective advocacy. Providing training, workshops and resources on policy analysis, communication skills, and strategic planning can empower young people to engage in policy discussions and promote change effectively.
- 5. Networking and Alliances:** Collaborating with other organisations and forming alliances with like-minded groups can amplify the impact of advocacy efforts. Building networks at local, national, and international levels can facilitate knowledge sharing, resource mobilisation, and coordinated action to influence youth policies.

**6. Participatory Approaches:** Encouraging youth participation in policy development processes is crucial. Governments can establish mechanisms such as youth councils, advisory boards, or consultations to ensure young people's voices are heard and considered in decision-making.

**7. Media and Communication:** Effective communication strategies, including social media campaigns, press releases and public events, can help raise awareness, mobilise support and shape public opinion on youth-related issues. Engaging with the media can also facilitate the dissemination of information and garner attention for policy change.

The specific methods for cooperation may vary depending on the context, available resources and the specific policy issues being addressed. It's essential to tailor strategies to local circumstances and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to maximise the chances of success in changing youth policies.



<sup>62</sup> A detailed method has been created as part of the European CETAL project: <https://www.leris.org/?cat=26>

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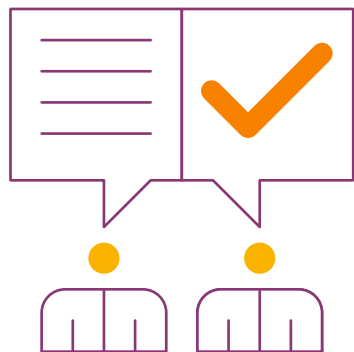
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## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

**In Croatia, there have been several examples of good practices in cooperation to change youth policies. Here are a few examples:**

- **National Youth Council of Croatia (NNVH):** The NNVH is an umbrella organisation representing youth associations and organisations in Croatia. It works to ensure the participation of young people in decision-making processes and advocates for youth-friendly policies. The council engages in regular dialogue with government institutions, organises consultations and provides input on policy development.
- **Youth Participation in Local Governance:** Many Croatian municipalities have implemented mechanisms to involve young people in local governance. For example, the City of Zagreb established the Youth Council of the City of Zagreb, which serves as an advisory body to the city council. It enables young people to express their opinions and ideas, influencing local policies and initiatives.
- **Youth Policy Development:** Croatia has a National Youth Strategy that provides a framework for youth policies and programmes. The development of the strategy involved extensive consultations with young people, youth organisations and experts. This participatory approach ensured that the strategy reflected the needs and aspirations of Croatian youth.
- **Youth Centres:** Croatia has a network of youth centres that serve as hubs for youth activities, education and engagement. These centres provide a space for young people to gather, participate in workshops and events, and express their opinions on various issues. They often collaborate with local authorities and youth organisations to address youth concerns and advocate for policy changes.
- **Youth-led Advocacy Campaigns:** Croatian youth organisations have initiated successful advocacy campaigns to raise awareness and promote policy

changes. For example, campaigns focused on mental health, education reform and youth employment have gained significant attention and influence. These campaigns utilise social media, public events and collaboration with experts and stakeholders to advocate for change effectively.

These examples highlight the importance of youth participation, collaboration between youth organisations and institutions, and the use of various advocacy strategies to bring about policy changes in Croatia. It's worth noting that the landscape of youth policies and practices can evolve over time, so it's essential to stay updated on the latest developments and initiatives in the country.

## 2.2.5: BRIDGES FOR SOLUTIONS

*'A world that makes emancipation possible is not a world without rules. But it is a world in which the rule is constantly open to interpretation and discussion.'* <sup>63</sup>

Today, there are many tools available for outreach that can support those who want to get as close as possible to people who are invisible to social services and associations. The goal is not to provide more tools to meet this need but to find ways, based on these outreach practices, to renew our responses to these needs. This means **starting with the expression of needs by the people themselves and working towards shaping public policies and changing responses**. The 'outreach' approach is therefore not limited to 'reaching' socially excluded individuals; it also involves 'reaching' the institutions capable of influencing and modifying social policies.

To do this, we need to harness the institutional and technical processes that can drive the transformation of public policy based on insights from the outreach process. The aim is to equip professionals with the skills to engage in the 'art of disputation' with the institutions overseeing them. In fact, it is a question of **intermediation**, which we aim to develop through various approaches **so that social work professionals can regain their ability to act**.

<sup>63</sup> Boltanski L., 2009, De la critique. Précis de sociologie de l'émancipation Gallimard, 2009, p. 50

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### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUTHREACH

**Training Programme, Course 1:**  
Youth and Society: Definitions and Societal Determinants of Youth Life Paths  
**Methodological Guide, Step 3:**  
Understand and Analyze

<sup>64</sup> [La disputatio : une méthode intellectuelle pour notre temps](#), 2022

<sup>65</sup> Benasayag, M., del Rey, A. (2012). *Éloge du conflit*. La Découverte. <https://doi.org/10.3917/dec.benas.2012.01>

<sup>66</sup> [La disputatio : une méthode intellectuelle pour notre temps](#), 2022

<sup>67</sup> 'a person who lives in the city.' Definition: in the primary sense, a citizen is someone who belongs to the city, recognises its jurisdiction and is entitled to enjoy the right of citizenship within its territory. Website available at [http://lettres.tice.ac-orleans-tours.fr/php5/coin\\_eleve/etymon/hist/citoy.htm](http://lettres.tice.ac-orleans-tours.fr/php5/coin_eleve/etymon/hist/citoy.htm) (page consulted on 3 September 2023)

<sup>68</sup> Douard O., 2014, « L'émancipation comme condition du politique », Séminaire de LERIS.

Given the sense of powerlessness and loss of meaning experienced by many social workers, the public construction of responses to social needs must evolve.

Social workers often find themselves at an impasse when it comes to supporting the people they meet due to the standards and rules that structure their work. These standards are, in turn, dependent on the frameworks proposed by national and European public policies. The development of public policy and its implementation on the ground is often compartmentalised and sector-based, making it challenging to respond adequately to people's needs.

Common law serves as an inescapable standard, but it is a product of history and, as such, evolves over time. **Systems are nothing more than tools in the service of the population and can be adapted as necessary.** Numerous examples demonstrate that for the same case within the same country, different treatments can occur depending on the prevailing rules in a particular location, such as differing implementations between departments or regions.

The fear of questioning, sometimes viewed as a challenge, often underlies many obstacles. However, questioning can open up new possibilities, enhance and reinvent existing practices, and untangle the 'knots' that hinder us from working towards the primary objectives of our missions. To this end, the **'art of disputation'** is a tool that enables us to **'cultivate doubt in the face of certainties and to value the freedom of each individual to think differently, without any point of view being presented as definitive.'**<sup>64</sup>

Given the various challenges we face today, it is essential **to create spaces that encourage the discussion of 'irritating subjects' without the fear that expressing an opinion will question one's character.** In essence, this means viewing conflict as an opportunity to resolve unsatisfactory situations.<sup>65</sup> These spaces enable 'reflection, analysis, deployment, or contradiction of ideas. The aim is to formulate questions and seek different ways of answering them and even to open up

new avenues of inquiry. **The goal is not to find the truth, but to seek the common good through the goodwill of the participants.'**<sup>66</sup>

A new approach, which we will describe as the **'translating intermediary,' is required to establish these spaces. The aim is to gradually bring cultures closer together and share a common basis for action to build bridges and find collective solutions.** It enables the realities and constraints of each party to come to light and be taken into account. We must work on each other's values, as this forms the basis for cooperation and helps identify mutual expectations. Cooperation defined in this way puts the meaning of the action back at the heart of the projects, with the administrative and technical mechanisms being no more than supports. This work does not eliminate the identities and modes of operation of each entity but, while specifying them, allows them to be shared and a common goal to be put back at the centre.

At the same time, the aim is to make the institutions' discourse comprehensible to the associations (by helping them to understand the foundations of decisions, for example, or the imperatives of administrative formalism). Conversely, this intermediation makes the associations' discourse not only comprehensible to the institutions but 'acceptable.'

**The transformation of frameworks for the inclusion of all now seems to be imperative if the people furthest from the mainstream are to regain their citizenship** and the right 'to live in the city.'<sup>67</sup> It is important to find a joint public action that will be co-constructed with the people primarily concerned. Sociologist Olivier Douard sums up the problem well: 'There is a major challenge here: shaping a social intervention that is relevant to the difficulties of the people it is aimed at while recognising them first and foremost as citizens already involved in social transformation.'<sup>68</sup>

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## METHOD:

### Bridges for Solutions: a cooperative approach to solving the outreach challenges of target groups

It's a step-by-step approach for engaging with both young people and institutions. The overarching objective is to identify and address unsatisfactory situations affecting young people by collaboratively crafting appropriate responses to their needs or enhancing existing ones. This approach is designed to provide support to young individuals and public as well as private institutions operating in this domain. It represents not only a methodological framework but also an ethical standpoint, one that has received endorsement from all the partners of the YouthReach project. Central to this ethos is the emphasis on equitable access to rights and social justice. Moreover, it empowers young people to comprehend and influence the systems that envelop them.

**This process unfolds through five steps, each with its specific objectives, which are:**

#### STEP 1: Select a Target Group and Identify Gaps and Actors

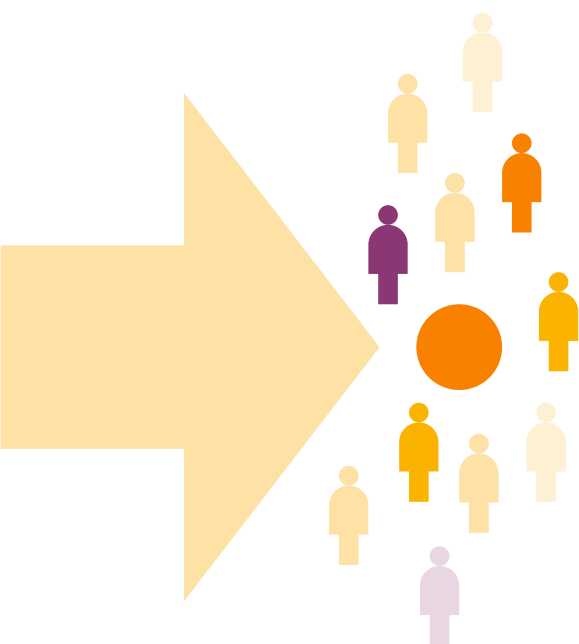
1. Choose the target group.
2. Identify unmet needs, gaps, difficulties in accessing social services and rights, and levers to access them.
3. Identify actors (young people, youth and other organisations, decision-makers, researchers, elected officials, etc.).

#### STEP 2: Outreach to Assess Identified Gaps with Young People and Mobilise Stakeholders and Decision-Makers

1. Assess the identified gaps, stakeholders and decision-makers with young people.
2. Objective for the young people: encourage them to take an active role, promote awareness, teach them how to decipher information, understand an ecosystem of actors.
3. Build an argument and strategy for mobilisation.
4. Mobilise the stakeholders and decision-makers and clarify the role and expectations of each.

#### STEP 3: Understand and Analyse: Analyse the Situations and Unmet Needs

1. Develop a reflective approach focused on the problem (and not on people) according to a sociological approach.
2. The objective for decision-makers and stakeholders: analyse and deliberate around awkward situations.
3. Share problematic situations (they do not only belong only to professionals who work with youngsters or to young people).



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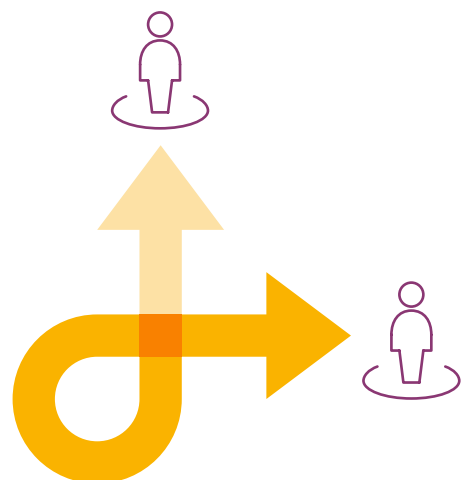
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### STEP 4: Intermediate, Cooperate and Design: Bringing Together and Cooperating with Institutions around 'Problematic Situations' and Creating Common Working Foundations

1. Create a space for cooperation and determine its contours.
2. Define the content and form of the action.
3. Build bridges between different actors.
4. Create an action plan.

### STEP 5: Implement, Observe and Expand: Implementing New Initiatives, Reflective Analysis and Expansion Strategy to Ensure Continuity

1. Implement and observe the chosen action.
2. Recognise lessons learnt from service change and sustain these changes.
3. Know the impacts observed on young people and support practices.
4. Create an expansion strategy to ensure continuity.



### PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

#### STEP 1: Select a Target Group and Identify Gaps and Actors

This step was important for understanding the target group of young people that the actors involved in the experimentation would like to work with, as well as to understand the issues addressed regarding existing services. The professionals involved in the experiment possessed a good understanding of potential target groups and the challenges they faced. This knowledge facilitated the identification of unmet needs and gaps in existing services. A good understanding of the target group by practitioners is crucial to building trust with youth to be able to identify the real needs and gaps in the accompaniment of the most disadvantaged people. But this knowledge must be rooted in the primary expressions of young people themselves (e.g., the example of choosing mental health from the youth parliament in Slovenia) rather than being interpreted solely from the perspective of social workers. Knowing that you trust the practitioner's posture is essential because this method requires a critical and ethical approach and should not take prior knowledge for granted.

Once the target group and gaps in support were identified, we then identified the key local actors (stakeholders and decision-makers) who could be interested in addressing the problem. We studied their area of intervention to understand their potential motivations for participating in the process. Identifying the right actors to engage with is crucial, as it can significantly impact the approach's success. In this step, a detailed timetable for implementing the experiment was also established, including the dates of all planned meetings and workshops, which proved to be highly effective.

#### STEP 2: Outreach to Assess Identified Gaps with Young People and Mobilise Stakeholders and Decision-Makers

The objective of this step was to test the identified gaps, stakeholders and decision-makers with young people. After identifying a group of interested youngsters, workshops were scheduled to define unsatisfactory situations related to services, both existing and non-existing, from the young people's perspective. This process involved working on identifying the young people's concerns, aspirations and potential solutions for addressing unsatisfactory situations.



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To be able to mobilise the stakeholders and decision-makers identified in the previous step, we needed to build an argument and strategy to enable their support of the approach and find their interest for them. In the project experiment, various public and private organisations were involved. The most important thing is that all the stakeholders and decision-makers that are concerned about the issue are involved to be able to have all the keys for finding the solutions.

After that, we contacted the stakeholders and decision-makers to explain our approach and invited them to collaborate with us by participating in the different workshops. The objective is to examine together the interests of each organisation and institution that operate differently to co-construct solutions to the situations encountered and identified by young people. Clarifying the roles and expectations of each actor involved is also fundamental. One of the groups that implemented the experimentation was afraid that the already existing cooperation that they had with institutions would be jeopardised if a third party (the researchers involved) were introduced. For this, it is essential to explain at the beginning the role and posture of the people who lead the workshops. It is about questioning the functioning of existing services and not the organisations and institutions involved. This is essential to be able to establish common bases for effective cooperation and has the function of working on issues without taking sides.

### **STEP 3: Understand and Analyse: Analyse the Situations and Unmet Needs**

In this step, we involved the stakeholders and decision-makers. We decided not to involve the youngsters in this part but to work on the basis of what was identified by them. The objective was to share concerns about problematic topics identified by youngsters with stakeholders and decision-makers. The process began with the presentation of issues and unsatisfactory situations identified by youngsters, as well as the mapping of actors and identification of levers and brakes worked with them. Participants were encouraged

to reflect on the presented issues and the challenges in the current resolution processes. After that, we tried to understand the existing leeways. For this, we first worked on deliberating around awkward situations for the decision-makers. This required observing what works and what doesn't in the fieldwork, starting from the 'arrangements' that can be built into action.

The executives of the Department of Hérault (a public institution) who were involved helped to understand the problems identified from their point of view. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the limitations in supporting young people and the existing services, as well as identifying existing levers within institutions that were not necessarily known to field professionals.

The risk in this step is that we change the problematic topics compared to what had initially been identified by the young people. It is important to be vigilant to keep the initial red thread so that the 'outreach' stays the translator and intermediation between young people and institutions.

### **STEP 4: Intermediate, Cooperate and Design: Bringing Together and Cooperating with Institutions around 'Problematic Situations' and Creating Common Working Foundations**

The objective of this step was to engage in collective questioning: What practical perspectives can be identified to improve the system and practices? What adjustments should be made to practices and tools to empower professionals, volunteers and the public? What changes should be made to enhance them? How can we ensure that the system fosters the development of citizenship, skills and autonomy of the public? How can the system be further integrated into its territory? How do we promote the adoption of tools and initiatives by the people?

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During the previous step, difficulties in freely expressing oneself in the presence of different hierarchical levels within one of the institutions were identified. To address this, we organised peer groups to facilitate open communication and then cross-referenced the results, ultimately leading to the same conclusions. Following this, we proposed a joint meeting where everyone continued to collaborate. Creating spaces for better dialogue where everyone feels free to express themselves sometimes involves 'separate' spaces as an intermediate step, ultimately leading to effective cooperation.

Afterwards, we began working on designing the content and form of the action as well as the action plan. The group decided to focus on creating a new service that provides comprehensive support for young adults leaving the Children's Social Aid system as they transition towards independence. This involved setting up a platform for personalised global support. Once the action was chosen, we assessed its feasibility, considering the available resources. The challenge lay in the importance of developing it collectively with the stakeholders and decision-makers to ensure that it could be implemented by mutual agreement.

## STEP 5: Implement, Observe and Expand: Implementing New Initiatives, Reflective Analysis and Expansion Strategy to Ensure Continuity

The implementation of the action took three months, during which the action plan and necessary arrangements were regularly reviewed.

Following the completion of the action, a meeting was organised with all involved actors, including stakeholders and decision-makers. This step was critical for understanding the obstacles and opportunities related to the implementation of the action, as the objective was its permanent establishment as a new service. The lessons learned helped us to develop a strategy for its continued implementation, and all actors involved participated in this process. There has to be some commitment from all actors involved who agree with the strategy's implementation. For this purpose, a mutual agreement can be established.



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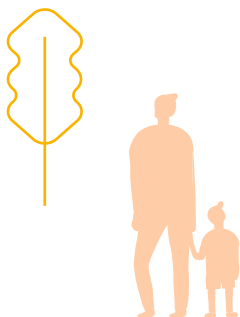
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<sup>69</sup> Iaving, D., & Whitmore, S. (2013). On the street: A practical guide for new social street workers. Retrieved February 8, 2014, from <https://www.socialstreetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/On-the-Street.pdf>

## Chapter 3: Challenges for youth workers and how to face them?

This chapter aims to focus on different challenges that social workers face in their work with youth in the context of outreach.

### 3.1: WHAT TO DO IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG AND HOW TO PREVENT IT?

Working on the street as a social outreach worker can be both rewarding and challenging. We have exciting moments meeting new people and helping them. However, there are also times when we feel concerned about the challenges we might face. Based on the Practical Guide for New Social Street Workers by Iaving and Whitmore<sup>69</sup>, we will further describe the most common fears and concerns that new street workers may encounter.

One significant reason for our concerns is that we work outside of our office or organisation. To perform our job effectively, we need to discuss our concerns and seek support. This involves talking with our colleagues, learning from those with more experience and obtaining additional training.

**Here are some common concerns we might have:**

- **Fear of Being Rejected:** Sometimes, the people we want to help may not want it. This can make us feel as though they don't like us.
- **Upsetting People:** We might worry that we will say or do something that upsets the people we are helping.
- **Forgetting Names:** It's normal to forget people's names, but it can still worry us.

- **Not Having the Right Skills:** We might feel like we don't know enough or possess the necessary skills to provide assistance.
- **Not Knowing How to Act:** Appropriately acting whilst working on the street can be challenging. We might be unsure of what to do in certain situations.
- **Dealing with Illegal Stuff:** If we encounter something illegal, we might not know how to respond.
- **Feeling Alone:** Sometimes, it can feel like there's no one around to assist us.
- **Talking to Young People:** Initiating a conversation with young people might be intimidating.
- **Afraid of Aggressive Reactions:** We might worry that young people will react aggressively.

We aim to make a positive difference in the lives of people who live or spend time on the streets, even though it can be risky. Our job may involve assisting drug users, sex workers, young people in gangs, homeless individuals and many others in public places.



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## METHOD:

**No matter where we work, safety is crucial. Here are some practical tips to stay safe:**

- **Work in Pairs:** Don't go alone; always have a colleague with you.
- **Know Your Limits:** It's okay to leave situations that feel dangerous, such as fights.
- **Keep Your Distance:** Avoid physical contact with the people you're assisting to prevent misunderstandings.
- **Check for Hazards:** Be vigilant for potential dangers in your work area.
- **Stay Together:** Always remain within sight of your colleagues.
- **Have an Exit Plan:** Plan with your colleagues how to leave if situations become difficult.
- **Emergency Contacts:** Keep significant phone numbers handy for emergencies.
- **Plan for Different Situations:** Consider and discuss appropriate responses to various scenarios with your team.
- **Carry ID:** Ensure you have your ID badge with you at all times.
- **Inform Authorities:** Notify the police and community groups about your work.
- **Regular Training and Education:** Attend frequent training sessions to enhance your skills and stay updated with best practices. Proper safety training, protocols and equipment are crucial, such as using a buddy system, implementing check-in procedures and carrying safety items like whistles or pepper spray.

**Besides physical safety, we also face challenging moral and ethical questions due to the complexity of our job. Here's how we address them:**

- **No Judging:** We don't pass judgment on the people we assist.
- **No Secrets:** We maintain transparency with our organisation.
- **Follow the Rules:** We adhere to our organisation's rules, including the confidentiality of information.
- **Avoid Conflicts:** We exercise caution regarding conflicts of interest, especially when working in our own community.
- **Online Safety:** Be mindful of what you share online, as individuals on the street might see it.
- **Respect Cultures:** Show sensitivity to different cultures and religions when providing assistance. Also, be mindful of the language you use.
- **Duty to Care:** We have a responsibility to care for everyone we assist.
- **Be Consistent:** Always uphold reliability and perform your job diligently.

In any case, one of the most important things to remember is this: if you're ever unsure about a situation, don't keep it to yourself. Talk to a colleague or your manager. One concern we often overlook is the risk of burnout, stress and compassion fatigue, which can affect the mental and physical health of outreach workers. We can prevent this by prioritising self-care and seeking professional help when needed. This includes setting boundaries, time management, practising relaxation techniques and joining a peer support group, interventions, supervisions, etc.

Outreach work can be rewarding, but it also comes with risks. Staying safe and professional is essential.

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## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

Before commencing street work practice or introducing new personnel to outreach work, it is advisable to take into account the fears and methods mentioned above. In Slovenia, for example, this topic is addressed with street workers during basic training in street work. Basic training comprises both theoretical and practical components. In the theoretical section, we explore the theory behind street work. In the practical segment, we focus on how to make contact with young people and address the fears and concerns of participants. Trainers are available to participants even after the training, offering a mentoring process where participants can discuss their situations and learning moments. Twice a year, a network of organisations organises interventions for street workers of network organisations, providing a platform for sharing experiences and concerns. Intervention within organisations is also a common practice in Slovenia among street-based youth workers. Outcomes from interventions and challenging situations often serve as the basis for thematic education in street-based youth work (e.g. identifying relevant psychoactive substances among young people, addressing issues like sexual harassment, police jurisdiction, etc.).

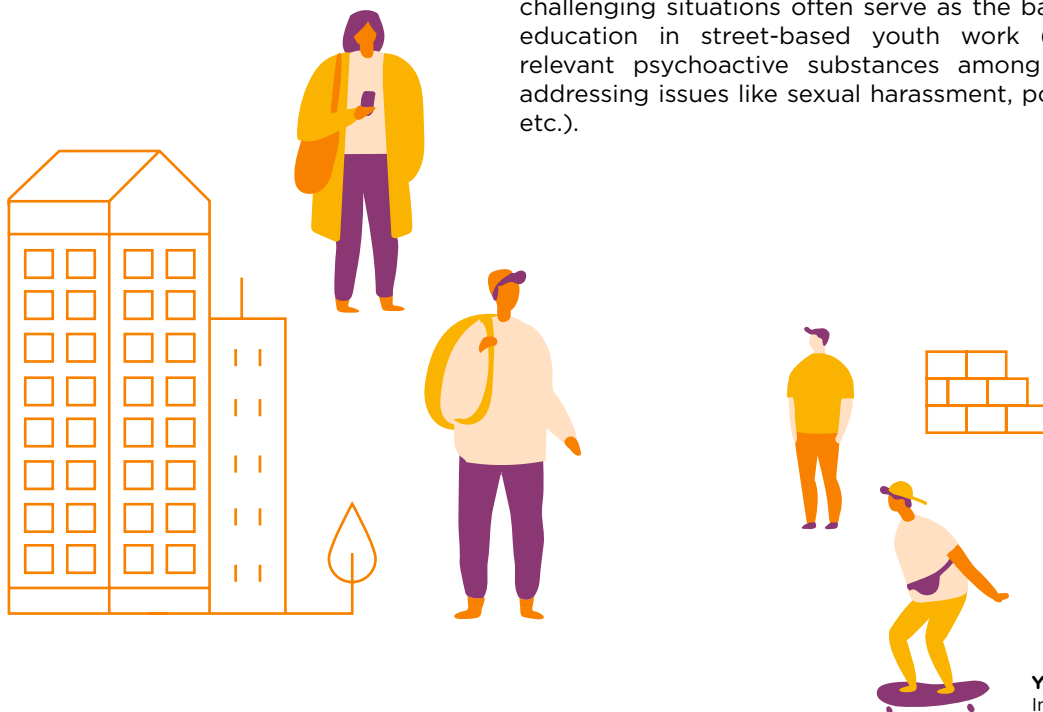
## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. How do the rewards and challenges of working as a street outreach worker influence your motivation and commitment to the job?
2. Consider the concern about potentially upsetting people while offering assistance. What strategies do you employ to ensure your interactions are respectful and sensitive to the needs of those you're helping?
3. Reflect on the fear of feeling isolated in certain situations. How can you establish a support network or access assistance when required, especially when operating in public places?
4. Contemplate the challenges of initiating conversations with young people during your outreach efforts. What strategies can you utilise to establish rapport and engage with them effectively?



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## 3.2: NON-FORMAL SUPPORT

Outreach workers are professionals who assist individuals with social or psychological challenges by facilitating lifestyle programmes and offering them the support they need. Non-formal support for outreach workers refers to the **learning opportunities and resources that help them develop their skills and competencies, as well as improve their well-being and resilience.**

**Non-formal support** is crucial for street social workers **to ensure that the support they offer to young people is effective and successful.** Therefore, it is necessary for street social workers to feel supported, and this support should be ongoing and available when needed. This is especially important for the new street social workers due to their lack of experience in the field.

‘Whatever environment you work in, your safety is paramount. Ensure that you have read and understood your organisation’s safety policy and procedures. Inform the manager of any changes to your working patterns. Always ensure that you work with another colleague; try to avoid working alone.’<sup>70</sup> When working in pairs, you can reflect at the end of the street work with a colleague and talk about potential dilemmas, improvements, specific moments and conversations you had with the participants. It is crucial to have boundaries to avoid possible unprofessional situations.

Street outreach workers should have **non-formal support to be able to do their work effectively.** This can include training, resources and collaboration with other organisations. Street outreach workers should receive regular training in evidence-based practices, including trauma-informed care. In addition, they should have access to resources such as survival aid, individual assessments, as well as trauma-informed treatment and counselling.

Street outreach workers must understand the needs and challenges of the people they are working with and the resources and services that they have access to. This can be achieved through collaboration with other organisations and agencies.

**Some of the necessary non-formal ways of support for outreach workers are:**

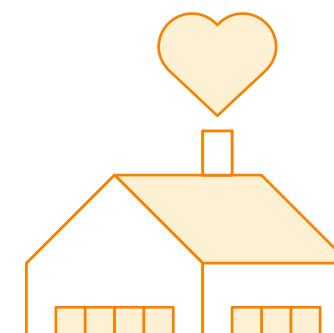
- **Mobility Projects:** These projects offer outreach workers the opportunity to participate in learning activities abroad. Examples include training courses, seminars, job shadowing, or study trips. Mobility projects may help outreach workers gain new knowledge, exchange good practices, network with other professionals and enhance their intercultural awareness.<sup>71</sup>
- **Non-formal Education Programmes:** Programmes that offer non-formal education are designed to equip outreach workers with essential life, work and educational skills that are relevant to their field of work. These programmes can help outreach workers improve their formal education, acquire transferable skills and enhance their employability.<sup>72</sup>
- **Psychosocial Support:** This support programme is designed to address the emotional, social and mental health needs of outreach workers experiencing stress, burnout or trauma in their work. Psychosocial support can help outreach workers cope with their challenges, improve their self-care and access professional help when needed.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Irving, D. & Whitmore, S. (2013). *On the street: A Practical guide for new social street workers.* European union. <https://dynamointernational.org/en/publication/on-the-street-a-practical-guide-for-new-social-street-workers/>

<sup>71</sup> Mobility projects for youth workers | Erasmus+. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/mobility-youth-workers>

<sup>72</sup> Non-formal education and training (IPEC). <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Action/Education/Non-formale-educationandtraining/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>73</sup> How to Become an Outreach Worker. 2023. Degree Guide. <https://www.psychologyschoolguide.net/social-work-careers/outreach-worker/>





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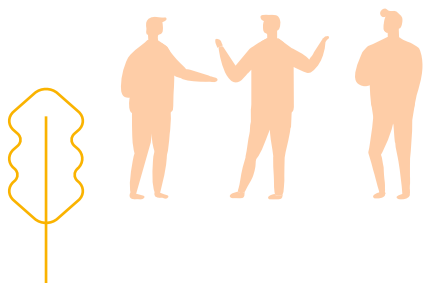
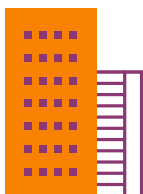
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## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

Although support mechanisms differ from one organisation to another, it is widely accepted that there are some minimum standards which need to be in place in order to provide adequate support to street workers. These include:

- Having the opportunity to shadow more experienced colleagues and ask lots of questions!
- You should not be expected to suffer in silence; thoughts and concerns should be shared with colleagues.
- In the case of an emergency when you are working, ensure that you can quickly contact your manager.
- Always be on the lookout for appropriate training and development opportunities.
- Be sure to take time to reflect on your practice and review your performance. Ask yourself, 'What could I do better or differently?'
- Ensure that you have office space and administrative support where possible.
- Ask your manager to accompany you when you are out on the street. This will give them a better understanding of what you are doing on a day-to-day basis.
- Take the opportunity to attend local and national street work events whenever possible.
- Ensure that you maintain a healthy work/life balance.
- It would be best if you discussed the need for flexibility in your work. For example, you may be delayed due to dealing with a crisis in the community or with a person you are working with. In this case, your manager should ensure that you are given time off or are reimbursed in another way.
- Use your supervision or intervision session to discuss your work on the street.

The suggestions highlighted above are not new, but they can help organisations provide a framework for supporting their workforce on the street. Social street work for the new worker can be a lonely place, leaving them with a sense of isolation. Your manager must do everything possible to support, reassure and show you that you are a valued member of the team.<sup>74</sup>

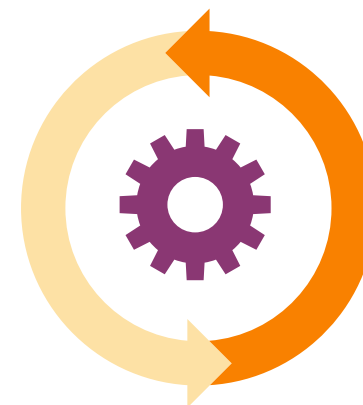
## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What are the responsibilities and safety considerations that you take into account in your daily work?
2. What are some potential challenges or barriers that you may face in accessing non-formal support, and how can these challenges be addressed?
3. In what ways can collaboration with other organisations and agencies enhance the knowledge and resources available to you?



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<sup>74</sup> Irving, D. & Whitmore, S. (2013). *On the street: A Practical guide for new social street workers*. European union.

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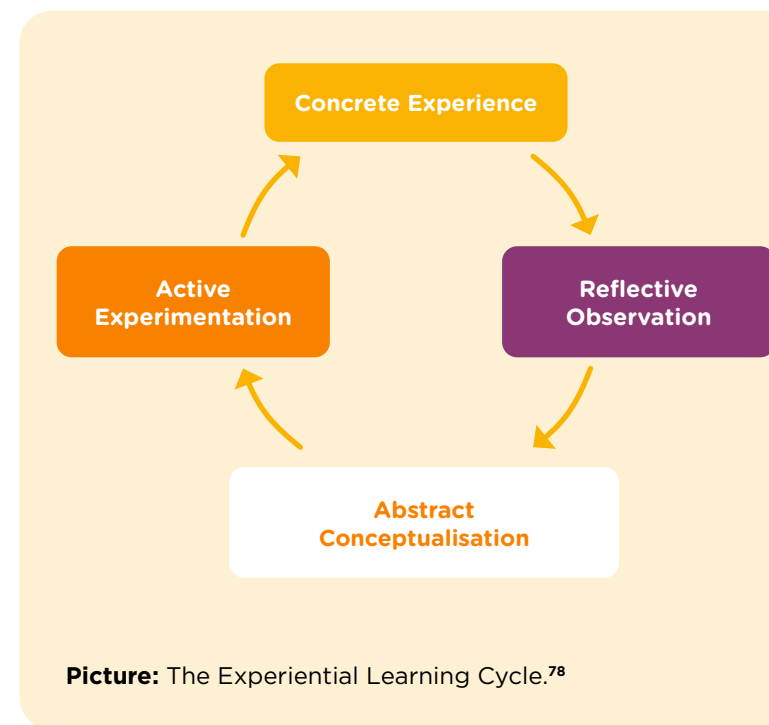
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## THEME 3.3: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT: INTERVISION, SUPERVISION

In outreach work, as in all social work practices, it seems essential that social workers should be able to benefit from opportunities to analyse their practices and receive supervision. **Professional practice analysis groups are a way of developing the reflexivity of professionals.** Groups of this kind have been set up since the early 1970s and have gradually developed in initial and in-service training for professionals in the human and social sciences. These groups are all the more prolific for the fact that it is the practitioners themselves who express their views from within the reality of their practice. They are not limited to simply putting into practice theories, rules, models, or even recipes but rather fall somewhere between 'regulated improvisation' and 'bricolage' in the sense of Lévi-Strauss.

We also feel it is important to note that in these groups, it is not the intention to provide theoretical input that is paramount, but rather the **co-construction of group analyses of the situations presented.** According to Claudine Blanchard-Laville in her chapter entitled *Psychoanalysis and Teaching*, the aim is, above all, to 'mobilise trainers so that they can think about and support this passage through a supportive environment where psychological suffering can be said, heard and transformed.'<sup>75</sup>

Supervision can also be defined in terms of experiential learning, where one of the most frequently cited authors is Kolb with his model of experiential learning. According to him,<sup>76</sup> any learning is a circular process in which the individual acquires knowledge through the transformation of experience. Experience alone is, therefore, not sufficient for learning, but the appropriate processing of these experiences is also necessary, which begins with the perception of the experience and its reflection, leading to the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations. This is followed by the testing of these concepts in new situations, leading to new experiences.<sup>77</sup>



**Picture:** The Experiential Learning Cycle.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Blanchard-Laville, C. (2014). Psychanalyse et enseignement. In *Traité des sciences et des pratiques de l'éducation* (pp. 121-133). Dunod.  
<https://doi.org/10.3917/dunod.beill.2014.01.0121>

<sup>76</sup> Kolb, D. A. (1981). Learning styles and disciplinary differences. *The modern American college*, 232-255.

<sup>77</sup> Vec, T. (2021). *Supervizija v svetovalni dejavnosti v izobraževanju odraslih [Supervision in Counseling Services in Adult Education]*. Andragoški center.  
<https://www.acs.si/digitalna-bralnica/supervizija-v-svetovni-dejavnosti-v-izobrazevanju-odraslih/>

<sup>78</sup> Kolb, D. A. (1981). Learning styles and disciplinary differences. *The modern American college*, 232-255.

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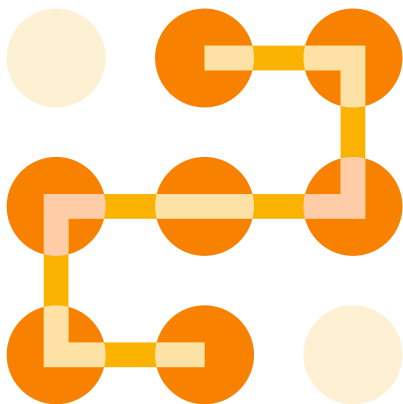
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<sup>79</sup> Vec, T. (2021). *Supervizija v svetovalni dejavnosti v izobraževanju odraslih [Supervision in Counseling Services in Adult Education]*. Andragoški center.

<https://www.acs.si/digitalna-bralnica/supervizija-v-svetovalni-dejavnosti-v-izobrazevanju-odraslih/>

<sup>80</sup> *ibidem*.

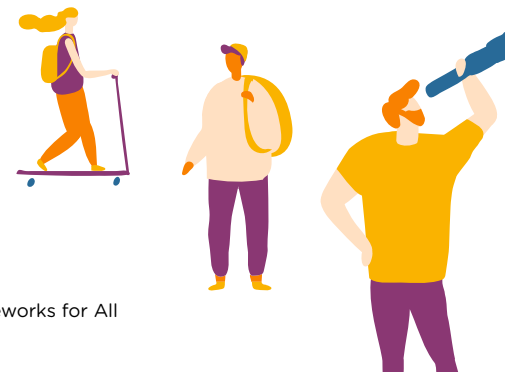
**Transferring this model to supervision gives us the following stages of supervision:**

- **Concrete Experience:** The learning process in supervision should generally start with the practical experience that the practitioner has gained in their work. For the supervision session, the supervisee chooses and prepares a concrete experience from their professional life that they cannot explain, that occupies them mentally or emotionally or that they want to learn from. It is essential for the supervisee to think carefully about what the underlying problem in the experience is and to ask a relevant supervisory question about it, which they will try to answer in the course of the supervision.
- **Reflection on the Experience:** In this phase, the supervisor helps the supervisee to reflect on the material and the supervision question. The supervisee observes their experience and tries to take an appropriate distance from it. They reflect on the causes and circumstances that led to the experience, learn about the background of their behaviour and discover what they were trying to achieve and why they acted in a certain way.
- **Abstract Conceptualisation:** This phase is characterised by looking at the experience from a more abstract and theoretical level. We interpret the experience and look for links between the reflected experience and experiences the supervisee has had in the past. There is also a comparison of the experience with the experience of other participants in the supervision. In this phase, it is important to look for connections with the existing knowledge, theories, attitudes and values of the supervisee. In this way, the supervisee comes up with new insights, which they have to integrate into their cognitive structure and reorganise that structure at a higher level.
- **Practical Experimentation:** In this phase, the supervisee looks at a past experience from a new perspective and determines what they have learned from it and how they could have acted better in a given situation. In future work situations, the supervisee may also try out

new forms of action. This completes the circle, as the experimentation provides a new experience that can be the material for the following supervision process.<sup>79</sup>

- Supervision has different definitions and is implemented in different models, but its functions are uniformly defined. Among other functions, these two are most relevant for the supervision intended for outreach workers:<sup>80</sup>
- **Educational or Formative:** developing the supervisee's skills, understanding and abilities through clarifying and studying the supervisee's work with people. It is, therefore, oriented towards lifelong professional development and increasing professional skills and knowledge, which is why it is considered by some to be one of the core functions of supervision. The above is related to the supervisor's help in raising awareness of the supervisee's personal characteristics and the characteristics of their actions and reactions.
- **Supportive or Restorative:** focusing on the emotional aspect of working with people, allowing the supervisee to evaluate their own cognitive and emotional responses to professional problems. Through this, the supervisee establishes professional distance, analyses the relationships established, as well as critically and analytically assesses their own actions.

Supervision in one of these two functions is essential for practitioners working with young people. It is also necessary for youth outreach workers to develop their skills and abilities and to lighten and evaluate their work and reactions.



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## METHOD:

**We have several types and forms of supervision.<sup>81</sup> They are listed below.**

- **Individual Supervision (dyadic supervision):** In this type, the supervisor (expert) and the supervisee are present. The advantage of this type of supervision is that it can be more intensive, personal and revealing, as the supervisor focuses on only one person. However, this can also be its weakness, as the supervisee does not have the opportunity to learn and share experiences with other supervisees.
- **Group Supervision:** This is the most common type of supervision involving professionals in the same or different fields who do not have a relationship with each other (work, friendship, etc.). The supervision group should be small (up to six participants according to the developmental-educational model). It is the most common form of supervision because it is economically attractive for employers, but also because it offers high-quality results, especially for those who themselves work with groups (because it gives, among other things, direct insight into the experience of group dynamics).
- **Team Supervision:** This is a form of group supervision that is designed for teams. The specificity of this type of supervision is that, unlike other forms of supervision, it more often aims to work directly on relationships, roles, communication, conflicts, etc., within the team (i.e. not necessarily only on cases arising from working with people). This is why the implementation of team supervision requires a very experienced supervisor.
- **Organisational Supervision:** This is the supervision of an organisation, trying to work at all levels or subsystems of the organisation – partly in separate supervisions, partly together with all of them.
- **Intervision:** It is actually a form of supervision<sup>82</sup> that takes place as an intercollegiate discussion learning method in a group with peer members, led (in turn) by one of

them. It is aimed at the personal performance of staff or the general improvement of treatment/care at work.<sup>83</sup> The advantage over supervision is its economy; potential weaknesses are related to the fact that it can easily stray into friendly chatter and unprofessional approaches (especially if they have no previous experience with the supervision process).

- **Meta-supervision:** It is supervision focused on supervision situations, i.e., it is designed for supervisors to process their experience of running supervision groups.

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

### Developmental-educational model of supervision (Slovenia)<sup>84</sup>

Supervision in the developmental-educational model is usually a longer process (up to 15 sessions if it is a group supervision of three hours). Supervision is most often conducted in a small group (up to six participants) and tries to help the individuals identify some recurrent patterns of less effective functioning by linking them to experiences. This insight is not always pleasant, as the individual has to confront their own understandings and subjective theories that they have formed and also face their own behaviours and feelings that they have not thought about in the last period. In this way, they critically re-examine their views within the group, which for them means – in a safe and understanding environment – re-experiencing the uncertainty and specificity of the situations in which they have acted and continue to act. The supervision group helps the individual by problematising and reflecting on actions and decisions and by constantly questioning and illuminating situations from different possible angles. Only in this way can they rethink their approach and thus find new challenges and opportunities for professional development in their work. Supervision thereby focuses both on the individual's goals in the 'here and now' and, to an even greater extent, on pre- and re-framing professional concepts and strategies and reflecting on the underlying personal and collective beliefs that influence professional work.

<sup>81</sup> ibidem.

<sup>82</sup> Žorga (1999), cited in Vec, T. (2021). *Supervizija v svetovalni dejavnosti v izobraževanju odraslih [Supervision in Counseling Services in Adult Education]*. Andragoški center. <https://www.acs.si/digitalna-bralnica/supervizija-v-svetovalni-dejavnosti-v-izobrazevanju-odraslih/>

<sup>83</sup> Trautmann (2010), cited in Vec, T. (2021). *Supervizija v svetovalni dejavnosti v izobraževanju odraslih [Supervision in Counseling Services in Adult Education]*. Andragoški center. <https://www.acs.si/digitalna-bralnica/supervizija-v-svetovalni-dejavnosti-v-izobrazevanju-odraslih/>

<sup>84</sup> The pedagogical-educational model of supervision in Slovenia is developed by the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana (<https://www.pef.uni-lj.si/studij/studijski-programi-druge-stopnje/soos/>)

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In this way, supervision pursues a very basic objective: it enables the development of a more integrated personality. The higher the degree of integration of the professional, the higher the levels of professional responsibility that someone can assume and the greater the satisfaction with the professional work itself. When practitioners have professional skills and knowledge that are appropriately integrated with their personality traits, abilities and sensitivities, this enables them to respond to professional situations in a tuned manner, i.e. to act in accordance with their thoughts, feelings and preferences, while also taking into account professional doctrine and requirements and the actual opportunities offered by a specific, unique situation.

In the process of the developmental-educational model of supervision, the supervisee has the opportunity to examine and learn about their personal strengths and weaknesses as well as the possibilities and responses that can enhance their professional competence or diminish it and hinder their professional development. Thus, supervisees learn new patterns of professional behaviour by reflecting on their own work experiences in the safe environment of a group of colleagues and a supervisor. Van Kessel (1994) defines the ultimate goal of supervision as a 'two-dimensional integration' in which the professional can effectively reconcile the functioning of the self as a human being with their own personality characteristics (first dimension) and the characteristics of their professional functioning and demands (second dimension) in such a way that the outcome can be referred to as the professional self.

It is recommended that one supervisor carries out up to three cycles of supervision, after which it makes sense to get another professional to carry it out.

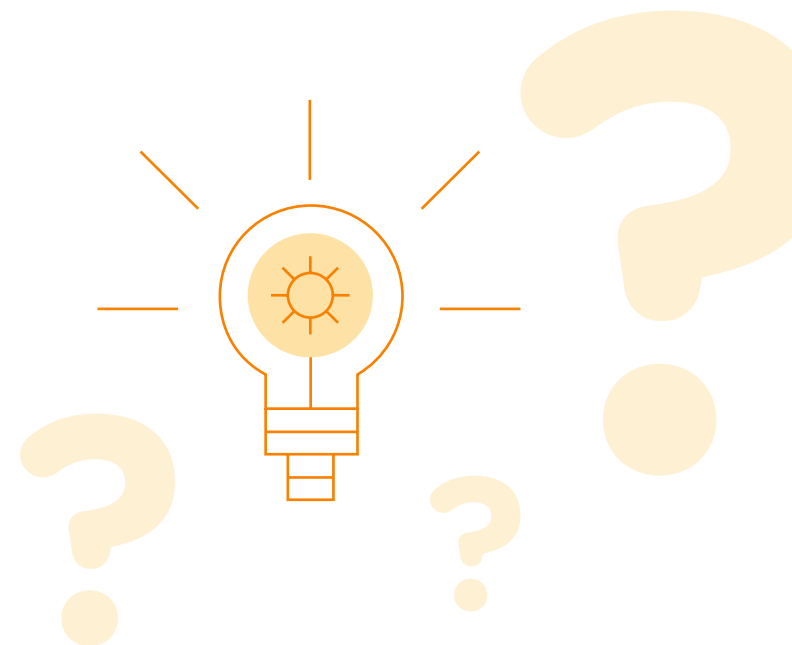
## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. In what ways can you apply the insights gained from supervision and analysis groups to address the situations you encounter in your practice?
2. How do you envision the future of supervision and professional practice analysis groups in the field of social work, especially for professionals who are working with young people?



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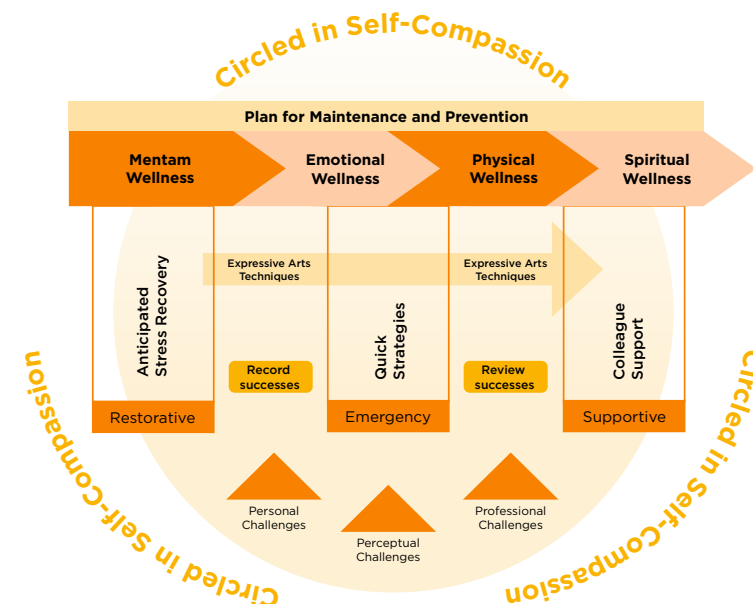
## 3.4: SELF-CARE

The concept of self-care represents an **important aspect of the ethical practice of professional helpers**. Due to its complex meaning and application, it requires special attention and clarification. There is an ethical framework consisting of six principles that aim to provide clear guidance on what self-care represents and how to implement it to make self-care as well-known and as straightforward as possible to the helpers themselves. Among the ethical principles mentioned, the most important is **the self-respect of the helper, which implies encouraging self-knowledge, introspection, nurturing one's own integrity and taking care of oneself**. This principle enables the helper to apply the other five principles, which are aimed at preserving their well-being.

Firstly, there is (a) **self-confidence**, i.e. trust in the effectiveness of one's own resources and the knowledge that the helper can count on them, for example, in situations of active self-support and self-evaluation. This also includes principle (b) of **personal autonomy**, which implies that a person can make decisions in their professional work that are good and correct for them, including those related to the rejection of certain business offers and relationships, all to protect their professional and personal well-being. Additionally, there is a principle that refers to the multi-level benefits of work, i.e. (c) **the beneficence of work**, i.e. the helper's awareness of how much good the work brings to them for a sense of professional fulfilment and self-actualisation. In addition, this group of principles also includes the principle (d) of **non-harmful work**, which implies that the helper can assess as realistically as possible whether their work is so strenuous that it affects their private or family life. The last but not least principle refers to (e) **fairness**, which implies a fair attitude of the helper towards themselves in such a way that they honestly admit to themselves whether, during their work, they provide service according to regular standards for very little income.<sup>85</sup>

**Thomas and Morris offer a model of creative self-care that consists of seven parts:**

1. Creating a consistent plan for engaging in mental, emotional, physical and spiritual activities.
2. Planning relaxing activities in situations where it is possible to predict increased work obligations and stress.
3. Preparing a list of strategies for unforeseen stress.
4. Regularly meeting with peers or colleagues for support.
5. Assessing the challenges of professional, perceptive and personal self-help.
6. Recording and analysing success.
7. Self-esteem as an essential element of healthy self-care.



Thomas and Morris (2017) Model of creative self-care (according to Berc, Šadić, 2021).

<sup>85</sup> British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, BACP (2018). *Ethical framework for counselling profession* <https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/>



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Street workers find themselves in different roles and situations, defined by the needs of paramount importance. It is essential that they are able to identify and perceive their own needs and values, which serve as their guiding principles in the way we work. The value of continuous lifelong learning is one of the key values of learning skills. Staying in touch with it is a challenge, as it means constantly putting oneself from the realm of comfort into the realm of learning. Situations that are unknown to street workers (which often happen in street work, as it is formed where the environment or our users set guidelines for work) are a much greater challenge in the learning process as they go further out of their comfort zone. Street workers can make it easier for them to operate in these situations, at least in part, by establishing a structure that offers them extra security. Own structure can be a plan of preparation, rituals of reflection, withdrawal, use of tools to monitor their operation, record personal processes and so on. Every street worker is being affected by different things. The range of possible situations or activities that help them grow and develop is inexhaustive, and here, we will focus only on a few of them.

## METHOD:

**Some techniques can be used to meet the basic criteria of self-care:**

1. Self-perception of one's own exposure to stress, meaning where the impact of work is seen as stress caused by work on different spheres of life of helpers.
2. Structuring time - defining the main areas and ranking them by priorities, with the proposal of looking at solving situations defined as the most urgent.
3. Setting boundaries - refers to many things, whether in interpersonal relationships or related to business obligations.
4. Observing the inner dialogue - to become aware of the thoughts that are running around in our head, categorisation as positive or negative and (re)formulation of affirmative sentences.
5. Self-encouragement technique - setting up positive and (self-)helping attitudes and awareness of symptoms and causes of stress.
6. Recreation - renewing energy through different leisure activities or hobbies; it is considered an essential maintenance tool for stable mental health.
7. Relaxation techniques - the author gives examples such as meditation, yoga, mindfulness, massages, acupuncture, exercise, breathing techniques and the like by acting on different systems in the body.



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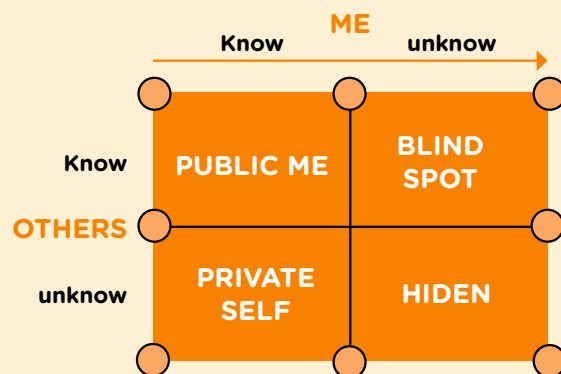
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## 1) MAP OF THE WORLD – AN ALBUM OF IMAGES IN OUR HEAD

Throughout life in the world, people create their own image. We draw events, experiences, knowledge and skills into our map of the world, which shapes our beliefs. It's the only way to shape our behaviour. The more knowledge we have of the world, the broader and more expansive our map becomes. However, often, challenges in forming relationships occur because each of us is convinced that our map of the world is the most accurate. In doing so, we forget that each individual is a modeller of their own map of the world, which is just as accurate to them as ours is to us. In the 1950s, American psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham developed a model called JoHarri's Window that deals with our perceptions of ourselves and the world and how others see us in these areas. In this respect, the second quadrant (blind spot) is the most important for us. This is an area where each individual has the potential for further development. Raising awareness of our blind spots is the only way we can move forward and develop, and as a result, we improve our communication and relationships with others.



## EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITY:

Invite your users (those you have worked with for a long time and who know you better) or your family members, friends or other people who know you. Ask them to make two plaques for you – one for RECOGNITION (what you would like to highlight as well) and one for WARNING (what they think has room for improvement, something they don't like). Of course, they should only focus on your performance/behaviour.

Let them pass their plaques to you, and use the information for your growth and thank them for their sincerity.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. In which areas do I have a lot of knowledge and skills?
2. Which areas of self-operation find themselves in a 'blind spot' – how do others see/experience it?
3. How do I get feedback on myself? How do I react to it?
4. What feedback has surprised me the most lately?
5. How do I distinguish between substantiated and unfounded criticisms or feedback?
6. What was the last important picture for me to draw on my map of the world?



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## 2) MY VALUES ARE MY GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Part of discovering yourself as a street worker is also finding one's values and beliefs. As we grow up, through education, we receive them, and with our activity, we shape them. They give us guidance on how to live and work in the world. When we work and live according to our beliefs and values, we usually feel happy, fulfilled and satisfied. Recognising our values is so important because it makes our lives easier. Despite being relatively stable, values are not permanent. They change according to our own map, which we constantly update. Therefore, exploring our values is a lifelong task.

### EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITY:

From the list below, select the ten values that you think are important to you, and look at the last month and analyse your behaviour. Where did you invest your time and money? It will quickly be clear which values play an important role in your life.

Job	Hobbies	Power	Freedom	Morality
Comfort	Personal safety	Reputation	Creativity	New experiences
Social life	Power	Coexistence with nature	Knowledge	Kindness
Diligence	Long living	Respect	To have good relations	Principle
Purposeful	Being successful	Sport and recreation	Personal growth	Comfortable life
Respect the law	Solidarity	Sex	Beauty	Parents
Enjoying	Peace in the world	Successful	Exciting	Religion
Being better than others	Inner peace	Fairness	Good food and drinks	Friendships
Wisdom	Equality	Love	Glory and admiration	Joy and fun
Hope	Self-image	Honesty	Order and discipline	Self-care
Humour	Political success	Safety	Culture	Influence
Money and possessions	Progress	Loyalty	Free time	Healthy
Personal attractiveness	Happiness	Relationships	Spirituality	Resting

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What values am I striving for? What's the most important thing in my life? Write down all the emotions and conditions you aspire to (e.g. love, passion, happiness, success, health, strength, influence, growth, etc. and things (tools) like money. If you think you want money, ask yourself what it would mean for you (happiness, strength, reputation, satisfaction, etc.).
2. How do I incorporate values into my work?
3. Have my values changed in the last five years? How? What are the causes of the changes?
4. How do I work when my values don't align (or only partially match) with the values of others who surround me at any given moment?

## 3) STRESS - WHAT FILLS ME UP AND WHAT MAKES ME EMPTY

With the values that guide our actions, we are also guided by the needs that we are driven by through our actions. Along with physiological needs (food, sleep, water, breathing, comfort, sexuality, movement), significant psychological needs come into play (the need for belonging, safety, satisfying relationships, self-respect, the feeling of being appreciated, seen, heard, understood, respected, the need to learn, explore, express ourselves creatively, have the opportunity to make decisions, choose, control our own lives, achieve our desired goals, etc.).

If only one of these needs is not met, we do not feel well, and we cannot act productively. Some external stimuli and responses cannot be influenced, but much can be done for our well-being by observing and learning about ourselves and by identifying the needs that are currently undernourished in our lives. Many times, however, we push ourselves into passionate situations because we do not allow ourselves to take care of ourselves first. Yet, it's challenging to offer water from my glass to another if my glass is empty. I have to fill it up first so I can share its contents.

Therefore, it is vital that we consistently take care of our well-being and allow ourselves to retreat when we need it; ensure adequate and healthy nutrition and sufficient rest, care for our physical and psychological condition, make time for our spirituality, nurture deeper and emotional relationships, maintain friendly and partnership relationships and engage in regular physical activity (just 20 minutes of moderate physical activity can help us feel better; physical activity releases endorphins - happiness hormones that act as natural painkillers, and it increases the presence of neurotransmitters that lower stress levels). And let's not forget the importance of humour, as laughter brings serenity and joy into life, making it easier to cope with problems that may lead to stress.

## EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITY:

### A) MY TRIGGERS

#### I am worried when:

	YES	NO	MAYBE
I have too many obligations			
I have a feeling that I am not up to the task			
I do not receive recognition for the work I have done			
I feel helpless			
I feel overwhelmed			
I feel that I have no control			
I have a feeling that the established rules do not apply equally to everyone			
I'm afraid I'll lose my job			
We don't get along with each other at work			
Users ignore me			
I have problems at home			
Something else:			

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## WHEN I WAS STRESSED/WORRIED:

<b>TRIGGER</b> - the event that triggered me:	...
<b>THOUGHTS</b> - what was I thinking about then:	...
<b>EMOTIONS</b> - how I felt about it: <b>BEHAVIOUR</b> - what did I do:	...
<b>CONSEQUENCES</b> - what was the result of my behaviour:	...
<b>WHAT/ CAN I DO, HAVE CAN I BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME:</b>	...

## B) MY OPPORTUNITY

<b>1. What can I change/improve in my way of dealing with stress?</b>	...
<b>2. Why do I want that?</b>	...
<b>3. How can I do that?</b>	...
<b>4. What do I gain from that?</b>	...
<b>5. My first step will be:</b>	...

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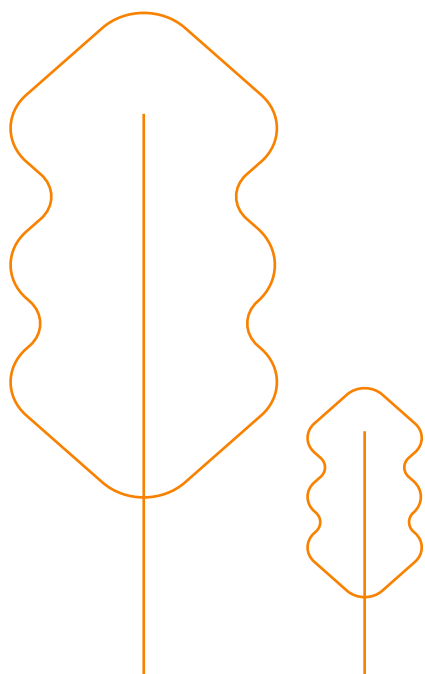
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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What fills me explicitly, and what empties me?
2. How do I take care of my inner balance?
3. What is the most significant stress at the moment?
4. What methods have I successfully used to overcome stressful situations in the past?

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

At the beginning of her career, the social worker worked in a family counselling centre with families facing difficult situations, which caused her insomnia. She felt powerless and desperate, incompetent and without the support of colleagues at work. At the same time, her family obligations, with two small children, left no time for her needs. The feeling that she was not good enough at work, and even less so as a mother and wife, made her desperate. After much thought, she decided to make a change. Since her duties did not leave her with free time, she decided to wake up very early and go for a walk. That required great determination and persistence. She started with shorter walks and increased their length over time. She tried to return home before the children woke up, then prepared breakfast and dressed them for kindergarten. After a certain time, she began to feel that she had more energy and was happier.





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<sup>95</sup> Winnicott, D. W., Monod, C., & Pontalis, J.-B. (2002). *Jeu et réalité: L'espace potentiel [Play and Reality: The Potential Space]*. Gallimard.

<sup>96</sup> Abraham, A. et Amiel, R. (éd). (1984). *L'Enseignant est une personne*. Les Editions ESF.

## 3.5: : CREATIVITY APPROACHES

Creativity, often defined as the **ability to generate original ideas, solutions, or products that are both novel and valuable**, has been identified as a key ingredient for success in various domains of human behaviour.<sup>87</sup> Creativity has the potential to be **transformative and to promote positive change on multiple levels**.<sup>88</sup> By integrating creativity into their approach, practitioners create an environment that encourages users to think beyond conventional methods and techniques and explore new possibilities. Incorporating creativity into work is not only desirable but also essential to address many of the challenges that professionals face today effectively.

One of the main benefits of creative problem-solving in social work is that it can lead to the development of more effective and personal interventions. Because social work users come from diverse circumstances and face different challenges, there is no one-size-fits-all solution.<sup>89</sup> Creative problem-solving **allows social workers to think outside the box, to consider the specific needs, strengths and resources of people and to develop interventions that are best suited to each individual situation**.<sup>90</sup>

One way in which a creative approach can enhance the care environment is through the use of a variety of creative techniques and strategies such as role-play, reflective journaling, or the use of art and multimedia to explore thoughts and feelings.<sup>91</sup> These methods can help users express their experiences, concerns and insights in a safe and non-judgmental space, enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of themselves.<sup>92</sup> By using creative techniques and activities that encourage self-expression, reflection and dialogue, professionals can create a safe space for users/youth to discuss their thoughts, feelings, concerns and achievements without fear of judgment or criticism.<sup>93</sup> This open and honest communication can contribute to a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives and experiences, ultimately leading to a stronger and more trusting relationship.<sup>94</sup>

## METHOD:

It, therefore, seems essential to support creativity as part of the initial and ongoing training of social workers who practice outreach, but also as part of their professional practice. According to Winnicott, there is a close link between the notion of creativity and professional identity, which he calls the Self. In fact, Donald Woods Winnicott wrote in 1971 in his book *Play and Reality* and, more specifically, in Chapter IV entitled *Play: Creative Activity and the Quest for the Self*: 'It is only by being creative that the individual discovers the self.'<sup>95</sup> Based on Winnicott's conceptualisation, we could develop two ideas.

The first is that if creativity is the expression of our 'self,' it is, therefore, potentially the expression of the *professional self*.<sup>96</sup> It, therefore, seems necessary to support the creativity of trainee social workers to support their professional self, in other words, their professional identity. If it seems necessary to support creativity, it is also because social workers will have to deal with unique and sometimes complex situations in their practice. It will not be a matter of applying a recipe or a single method, even if certain universal principles or values are, of course, necessary, but instead of finding within themselves the answers that they feel are best suited to the situation, they are encountering their answers.

The second idea concerns trainers, in particular, as it is a question of them being in a creative position so that the 'trainees' can identify with trainers who fully express their creativity and, therefore, by extension, their professional self. Indeed, if the trainers are creative, they will fully express their *professional self*. Through the 'subjective transmission of gesture,'<sup>97</sup> they will support the learner in the construction of their *professional self*. It's a question of being in a creative position to invite others to do the same. Isn't it by being creative ourselves that we can best transmit creativity?

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To conclude, we could also put forward the idea by Marie Pezé that under-utilisation of the personal potential for creativity is a fundamental source of destabilisation of the ‘psychosomatic economy’ and that fatigue can also originate in the ‘repression of the imagination.’<sup>98</sup>

### PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

Guillaume is an experienced street worker. His knowledge of the local area and his length of work in the institution helped him to respond quickly and creatively.

During his fieldwork, the local police told Guillaume that a young man was living alone in an abandoned squat deep in the countryside. The police described the young man as fearful and potentially aggressive. He was the subject of eviction proceedings initiated by the landlord. The address was approximate, but Guillaume decided to go and see him after informing his institution and his superiors. He brought with him a young colleague, Elodie, as pairs are the rule in the institution.

Guillaume followed the indicated paths, and at the bend in the road, he spotted a young man alone tending a fire in front of a seemingly abandoned house. Guillaume opens the car window. The young man calls out to him.

“Are you looking for someone?”

“I’m lost. Well, I think I am,” replies Guillaume.

The young man asks again.

“Who are you looking for?”

“No one in particular. I’m a social worker, and I’m here with my colleague. We meet people who need information.”

“I might be interested!”

“Really?” says Guillaume.

Guillaume’s cunning and creativity at that moment really got the ball rolling. The rest remains to be written. The step aside. Not asking and allowing the other person’s request to emerge seems to have worked. Perhaps another social worker would

have introduced himself first, saying that it was the police who had told him that he was isolated. One wonders what the young man’s response would have been.

What seems necessary to highlight here is that Guillaume’s response is a singular response linked to a particular situation experienced at a given moment and that it cannot, therefore, be formalised or generalised. Another social worker using the same response might not have the same effect. It’s up to each individual to find the answers that seem best suited to the situation and, in doing so, to demonstrate their creativity to the full.

This presupposes that the institution provides the means (time, human resources) to reach out and encourage creative practices. Creative practices cannot be initiated by social workers alone; they must be allowed and encouraged by the institutions.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. How can creativity enhance problem-solving in social work, especially when you are dealing with diverse and unique person’s situations?
2. What creative techniques and strategies are you using to facilitate open and honest communication between social workers and youth?
3. How does creativity contribute to the development of your professional identity as a social worker, and why is it important to nurture this aspect during training?

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- [The European Youth Work Agenda](#)
- [Resolution CM/Res\(2020\)2 on the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030](#)
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work](#)
- [Youth Wiki: Europe Encyclopedia of National Youth Policies](#)

#### Legislation in France:

- [Minister for National Education and Youth](#)
- [Objective and Management Agreement for the Family Allowance Fund / Convention d'Objectif et de Gestion de la Caisse d'Allocation Familiale 2023 - 2027](#)

#### Legislation in Slovenia:

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- [Zakon o javnem interesu v mladinskem sektorju](#)
- [Zakon o mladinskih svetih](#)
- [Resolucija o nacionalnem programu za mladino 2017-2023](#)

#### Legislation in Italy:

- [Department of Youth Policies of the Italian Government -Youth Policies Governance](#)

#### Legislation in Spain:

- [National Youth Strategy \(Estrategia Nacional de Juventud\)](#): This document outlines the government's strategic priorities and initiatives for youth development and engagement in Spain
- [Youth Law \(Ley de Juventud\) and Regional Youth Laws](#): Spain has specific legislation addressing youth issues and youth policy, with differences among autonomous communities that have their own regional youth laws and policies complementing the national framework and catering to specific regional needs They are supervised by the Consejo de la Juventud de España
- [Action Plans](#): Various action plans and programs are developed by different government departments or organizations within Spain to address youth issues, employment, education, and social inclusion, among others
- [Municipal Youth Plans \(Planes Municipales de Juventud\)](#): Municipal youth plans are typically available on the websites of individual municipalities or city governments. Visit the website of the specific municipality you're interested in and look for youth-related documents or plans

#### Legislation in Croatia:

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## BRIDGES FOR SOLUTIONS IN (Y)OUT(H)REACH

**PEDAGOGICAL TOOLKIT**

Theory, Method & Examples