



Research report: Informal Groups in the Youth field

Barcelona, June 2020



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1. INTRODUCTION

Groups could be understood as the adequate context in which informal learning take place (Green, 2008). Some of the benefits of informal learning are: developing competences and updated personal and specific knowledge, promoting knowledge creation (Paavola, Lipponen, and Hakkarainen 2004), facilitating changes in attitudes and professional values and direct transfer to the job context (Burke and Hutchins 2007; Enos, Kehrhahn, and Bell 2003) providing more confidence to participants and higher levels of satisfaction, among others (Bednall, Sanders, and Runhaar 2014).

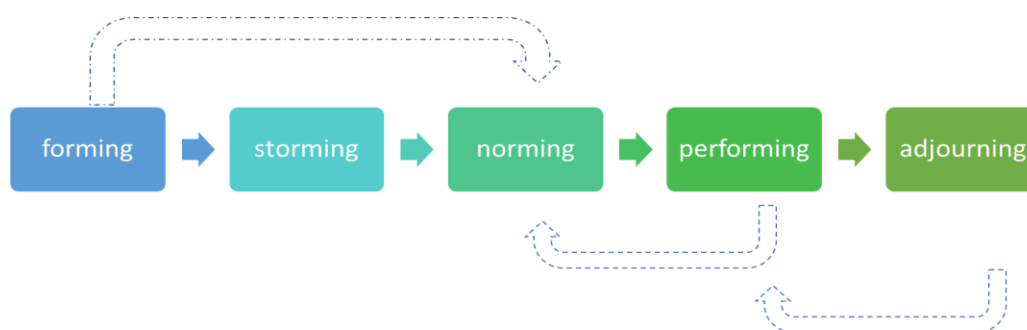
Some of the characteristics of informal groups are: (1) companionship; (2) a sense of belonging; (3) a guide to correct behaviour (i.e. social standards, social norm); (4) a means of solving work problems — teamwork can get the job done more easily and enjoyably; (5) protection for their members (i.e. socio-emotional security); (6) a natural forum for making decisions and judgements about work — it provides an atmosphere for testing new procedures and creates standards of conduct for its members; and (7) a means of opposing management — (i.e. social demands).

Informal groups emerge for different reasons, among others, because they mitigate large-system failure (i.e. the system doesn't fulfil expectations), because of people's consensus on a particular topic, or because of common interests. Also, physical proximity and common work / life/ personal experience are relevant.

In this research, the social dynamics of the informal groups are studied from an evolutionary perspective. We assume that the evolution of the informal groups can be characterised by a series of strategies and organisational configurations adopted to tackle their creation and development. During their evolution, groups can pass through different stages as explained by Tuckman's model, i.e. forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning (Tuckman and Jensen 1977; Rickards and Moger 2000), although it has its own characteristics and stage labels.

The stages in the group development are illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1. Group development stages according to Tuckman & Jensen (1977).



As a research group, **we understand the informal group as a dynamic independent group, which is not seeking any legal form, composed by at least three people driven by common interests and causes and acting around a common goal.**

This report presents a research focused on the knowledge of informal youth groups located in Europe. Specifically, the focus of the research is to analyze how informal groups are formed, how they evolve and how they transform over time. We are interested in investigating the evolution of informal groups as a social movement and their impact on the community.

The main aim of the research is to: (1) define which is the meaning of informal group; (2) identify the forms of creation and the types of motivation that the members of the group have when they unite and work as a team; (3) know about the functioning of these groups and how they are organized and work; (4) identify what types of relationships groups have with their community and (5) know what are the main barriers that informal groups face to be sustainable.

The research represents a starting point for making suggestions at national and international level on how policies can be improved to favor the growth of informal groups and the impact they have upon youngsters and the community they are based in.

The results of the research will be useful to youth centers, NGOs, public institutions engaging young people in their activities as volunteers, interns or beneficiaries. They will give a clearer view of what the needs are of young people with regards to affiliation, uniting for a cause, taking responsibilities for their views and actions and having (or not) a sense of initiative. Thus, they will be able to adapt their engagement and communication strategy, as well as their management style.





2. RESEARCH INQUIRY

The inquiry addressed in this research looked into the social dynamics of informal groups located in Europe. We considered the following research question: what aspects of the trajectory of the analyzed groups are relevant in order to understand the phases acknowledged groups follow in order to formalize? We consider the study both of conditions in which such groups are formed and developed and their trajectory as well as the aspects of social relationships among its members and the way social knowledge and informal learning are developed internally and shared with others (Whitley et al. 2010; Hoffman et al. 2014).

The study adopted a mixed methodology by which informal groups from different typologies were chosen. The rationale for this was that we anticipated it would allow us to improve our knowledge base of the evolution of such groups and, particularly, their idiosyncratic ways of responding to both external factors derived from their specific contexts and the internal dynamics that arise during such a process.

The research inquiry is derived from and closely linked to the project objectives:

1. To increase the capacity and professionalism of youth workers in managing informal groups by understanding, adapting and implementing of existing EU tools for assessment and development of youth work competence and management competences.
2. Mapping the existing legal framework and practices that focus on informal groups, through research and analysis of the evolution of informal groups as a social movement, aiming to making suggestions at national and international level on how policies can be improved to favour the growth of informal groups and the impact they have upon youngsters and the community they are based in.





3. METHODS AND PROCESS

The research addresses an inquiry developed in specific European countries (mainly, Spain, Romania, Portugal, Hungary, Belgium), about organisational characteristics and social dynamics of informal young people groups. In a preliminary phase we started with some desk research conceived to collect relevant data about the state of play of informal groups across European countries. With the information collected during this previous phase we got the basis to develop the research instruments (see annexes) to collect useful data to achieve the objectives of the project. It's important to note that the instruments were designed by UAB's partners and validated by the other project partners as they are experts in the area of youth work and youth groups.

In the **first phase**, the research used a **survey** to identify the general features and problems facing these groups. This first phase, quantitative and extensive, aimed to achieve a general view of our research object. The survey has been answered by 156 members of informal groups located in Europe (*see Chart 1*).

As the purpose of the inquiry was to get an in-depth understanding of informal young people groups' social dynamics, from the point of view of their members, the **second phase** of the study adopted an ethnographical perspective. Our approach focused on how people make sense of their everyday life and, especially, the mechanisms—i.e. shared assumptions, conventions and practices—by which they achieve and sustain interactions (Cohen et al. 2008).

Ethnomethodology is also consistent with the standpoint of cultural analysis, the purpose of which is to understand human constructed realities at different levels of meaning and relationships—social, institutional and individual (Daniels 2012).

The second phase of the study has been supported by **in-depth interviews**. The election of in-depth interviews, as ethnography-based strategy, corresponded to our assumption that the analysis of social dynamics required in-depth analysis on the group in action, in addition to the members' shared meanings about themselves as a group, their field of intervention and their behaviours in order to illuminate broader comparative questions (Armstrong 2008).

Figure 2. *Phases of the research.*



It should be noted that the interviewees in phase 2 have participated by answering the questionnaire of phase 1, so they had prior knowledge of the object of study. Table 1 shows the profile of these 37 interviewees. The role of the participants emerged during the interviews.

Table 1. Profile interviewees.

COUNTRY	ROLE OF THE INTERVIEWEE IN THE GROUP
Spain (n=9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 members 1 managers
Romania (n=9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 members 5 managers 2 administrators
Portugal (n=10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 members 4 founders 1 manager 1 manager - cultural promoter
Hungary (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 member 1 manager and administrator 1 manager 1 manager 1 youth worker
Belgium (n=1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 founder
Belgium and France (n=1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 manager and co-founder
Belgium and Italy (n=1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 member
Belgium and Albania (n=1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 former general secretary

We consider as **founders** those that were in the group creation, **managers** as those that are coordinating or are responsible for a specific area or topic, **members** when they do not play any specific role within the group, beyond being just another member and **administrator** when they manage the group funds.



4. AREAS AND ELEMENTS OF STUDY

Table 2 presents the relationship between the areas and the elements of study that have guided the research process and that have supported the construction of the instruments for the information collection.

Table 2. Areas and elements of study.

	AREAS	ELEMENTS
	Previous questions and demographic data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Name of the group, country and city ▪ Average of the members. ▪ Informal group focus ▪ Role in the group ▪ Number of members
	Group creation and establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Years of the creation of the group ▪ Previous experience as an informal group ▪ Main motivation ▪ Changes in group objectives ▪ Modification of the number of members

Survey		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation of the founders of the group
	Characteristics and group management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work within the group Periodicity of meetings Communication between members Communication channels Decision process Role of leader/s conflict management Biggest challenge Financial source Public Administration Funding
Interview	Group creation and establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group creation moment Main expectation and/or aspirations/objectives Lines of action in order to achieve these objectives
	Consolidation and group internal regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sociodemographic profile of the group members Values Team building activities Process of integration of new members and process of leaving Normative documents
	Group operation, leadership and knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main scope of the meeting and organization process Time and space to create knowledge together Typology and organization of activities Tools to share information about the activities you organize and evaluation Changes in the functioning Decision-making process
	External relations and group projection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Channels to project the group Relation of the group with the exterior



5. RESULTS

This third section presents, at first, the analysis of the information compiled during the desk research process, secondly the quantitative results and, subsequently, the qualitative results obtained from the application of the survey and the interview. The presentation of the results is organized based on the areas and elements of study (*see Table 2*).

5.1. Desk Research

At the beginning of the project a desk research template was developed in order to get data about the different countries where the partner institutions are implementing their activities. The main objective was to get insights about the definition, regulations and main characteristics of informal groups in order to design the survey and the interview.

We present the results following the same structure of the template. It's important to note that for each section we firstly introduce the European context and then, if exists, some national or regional specificities.

Definition of informal youth groups

European context

The term “informal groups” **is not defined in any European legislation**, but is most often mentioned in the context of EU informal and nonformal learning and youthwork funding programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.

- **The Erasmus+ programme:** “groups of at least four young people active in youth work but not necessarily in the context of youth organizations.”
- **The European Solidarity Corps:** “a group of minimum five young persons” committing themselves to bring positive change in their local community.

National context

No explicit definition is found. However, when countries refer to IG, they mention the following characteristics:

- Constituted exclusively by young people (at least 5 members) with 30 years old or less.
- Established with the purpose of acting.
- Not registered legally by the court/ Youth group lacking recognition of legal personality.
- Sometimes, with a legal representative with power to act on behalf the group (Spain).

Legislation and policy regarding the status of informal youth groups (regulation, functioning system, strategies of creation, transition to formal group/ organisation)

European context

There are no European legislative acts explicitly regulating IGs, as this domain would primarily be a member states competence. The term does appear in several legislative documents

- Article 2, European Parliament legislative resolution of 28 March 2019
- Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+
- Regulation (EU) 2018/1475 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 October 2018

The European Commission has several supportive measures that can help foster the creation and development of IGs through financial and human capital support. These include the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps initiatives. However, to access much of this available support, some level of formalization is necessary.

The European Solidarity Corps directly promote the creation or development of IGs. Solidarity Projects, for instance, can be set up by any group of five or more young participants, seeking to address key challenges within their communities with a clear European added value. The projects should last between 2 and 12 months, with reflecting on the future continuation and follow-up measures highlighted as an explicit part of the project process. While young people who want to run such a Solidarity Project do need to register in the European Solidarity Corps portal, no further formal recognition is required. One of the participants assumes the role of legal representative and submits the funding application on behalf of the group.

- The regulation and the support strategies for these groups are related to their formalization.

Local context

Some laws have been found at the national level that refer to informal groups (Portugal: Law 23/2006, article 2; Hungary: Civil Code, original version from 1988, modified in 2013), but IG are generally not regulated by law. In Spain, there are no local acts especially aimed at regulating IG. However, some Autonomous Communities' local acts do mention them as beneficiaries of services provided by local or regional bodies.

In Romania, there is no specific piece of legislation to regulate informal groups, this legislative vacuum representing the main source of issues they face. Somewhat surprisingly, even Law No. 350/2006, also known as The Youth Law, lacks any mention of informal groups. However, Ministry of Youth and Sport's National Strategy in the Field of Youth Policy for 2015-2020, under objective 3.5. "Improving the system of certification and public recognition of volunteering activities" states "encouraging informal groups as volunteering promoters" as one of its lines of action.

Normally, there are no specific local policies for informal groups. In general, there are more facilities and grants if the group is formalized. For example, in Portugal the municipality is able to help informal groups to become formal. By doing this, it becomes easier to ask for support and be recognized.

In Spain, depending on the region, you can find "one-time grant calls" to projects developed by informal groups, thus supporting the creation of informal groups.

In relation to the **IG funding**, there are no specific policies or funding system for informal groups in the countries analyzed. Only for legal registered association/foundation. In Hungary, in case of contracting or funds, they must cooperate with other partner organizations with legal personality. In Romania, as far as funding initiatives go, most of them come from private sources (e.g. FITT's Com' On Timișoara initiative, the late YouthBank fund which has unfortunately died down over the years, as well as some students' councils creating funds for projects initiated by high school students), although a few public initiatives do exist, for instance the The National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training, which encourages informal groups to apply for funding from the European Solidarity Corps.

In relation to **IG status and transition to formal group/organisation**, the formalization of the group involves a whole regulated procedure. The groups must present a series of documents to finally be registered. The steps or requirements may vary between countries.

Type of informal groups

European context

IGs seeking funding or other support at the EU level need to consist of at least 4 or 5 members, but can have a range of focus areas, coverage, or years of experience. In fact, the framing of Erasmus+ and Solidarity Project application criteria suggests that they are geared not just to existing or long-running IGs, but also encourage the formation of IGs specifically to set up a project and apply for this funding. The coverage can vary, and even local groups can enjoy EU support as long as they demonstrate a “European added value.” This added value is defined as reflecting “a common concern for issues within the European society, such as for example integrating third-country nationals, climate change or democratic participation,” and appears to have a great deal of flexibility.

In terms of the IGs that actually operate at the European level, some notable ones appear to be those geared toward climate and environmental concerns, like **Fridays for Future or Ende Gelände**. These groups often engage in high profile, high publicity protests and actions, and are made up of local chapters or groups that can vary greatly in size and level of organisation.

The more ad hoc and **project-based European IGs** also emerge from initiatives like FutureLab Europe. The participants come together transnationally for a set period and purpose, but these groups rarely last beyond the project end date.

Another type of group that we may deem to fall under the European IG category are **large-membership Facebook groups**. These form around shared interests or experiences such as Erasmus and other exchanges, or aspects of identity like religion. While they may not fit traditional conceptions of IGs, their members share resources and ideas based on common binding factors, and their administrators tend to be fellow young people with no formal affiliation.

Local context

Most participants do not have this information. However, some features stand out:

- IG's are small, not more than 10 people.
- IG's do not function for long periods, due to the lack of support for financing their activity from public funds. Some groups do not last more than two years because they choose to become a youth association. This happens because it's so much easier for them to ask for support.
- IG focus /area of intervention depends on the type of municipality (if it's touristier, if there is more immigration...). For example, in Spain, the informal groups vary from municipality to municipality, as in the big and/or touristic cities most of the IG's initiatives are related with free time activities and parties. However, in the small cities/villages, they are more oriented towards developing competencies in youth (workshops on different topics) and helping the community.

1. Creation and development of IG

European context

IGs seeking funding or other support at the EU level may form specifically to develop a project/initiative. Once the specific project has been completed, they are encouraged to reflect on future steps, and some may continue to exist and develop further but others may disband immediately.

Local context

Informal groups are formed to meet collective needs or to share common interests or concerns. Some groups seek help or participate from local and/or regional organizations to develop as a group. For example, in Romania, schools, universities, academies and other education providers usually represent great civic engagement incubators, which also makes them favorable environments for the formation and development of informal groups. Students' council, NGOs, volunteering activities and other forms of participation can also give birth to informal groups.

Motivations to form as informal groups

European context

IGs tend to form around a common interest, whether this is solving a shared problem about the community they live in, addressing a form of experienced discrimination, or simply seeking an outlet for time and energy. At the European level however, additional motivations may come into play like an interest or experience in cultural/language exchange or traveling. Moreover, IGs seeking to address big picture problems like climate change or refugee support may form more frequently at the European level.

Local context

The motivations are many and diverse, from wanting to be part of a community with similar characteristics to wanting to change or improve some personal and/or local aspect.

Main legal aspects which need improvement in order to facilitate the creation and development of IG

European context

While the EU-level does not have much legal reach regarding IGs in member states, it could fulfil an exemplary and conditioning role in the way it incorporates and engages IGs in initiatives like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. By ensuring it remains open and accessible to these groups, it may help legitimize and empower them at the national and local levels too, encouraging national and local governments to ensure a sufficiently supportive legal or another framework.

Local context

Participants consider the need to regulate and legally support informal to informal groups, both nationally and locally. These groups, on many occasions, feel unprotected and need greater support in terms of financial and informational resources and general advice.

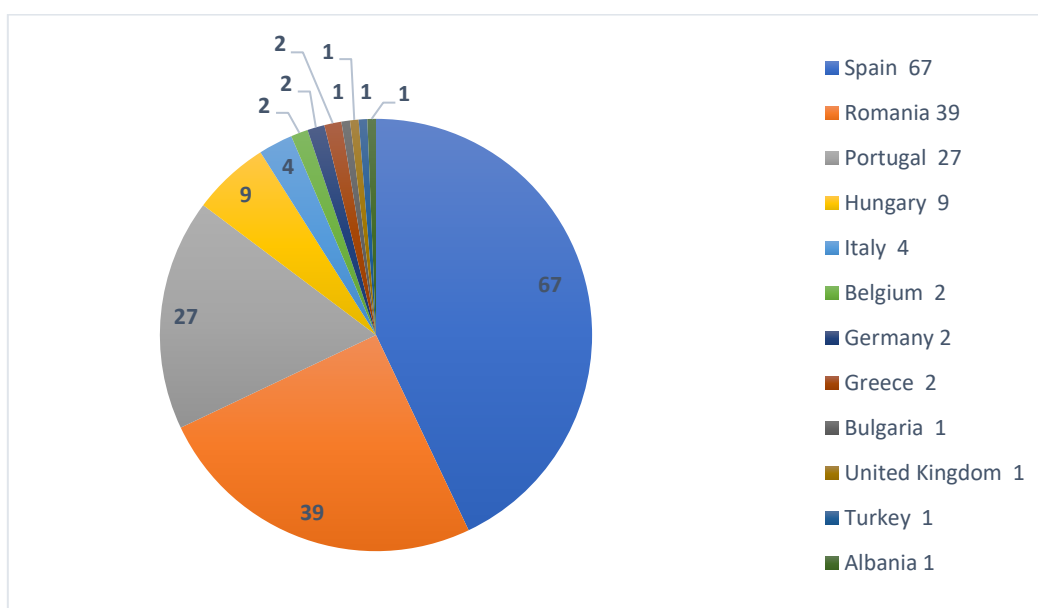
5.2. Quantitative results

The quantitative results, obtained with the application of the survey, are a first approximation to the object of study. In other words, these results identify the general characteristics of the informal groups and some of the problems that these groups face. Specifically, the presentation of these results includes the following study areas: (1) Previous questions and demographic data; (2) Group creation and establishment and (3) Characteristics and group management.

Previous questions and demographic data

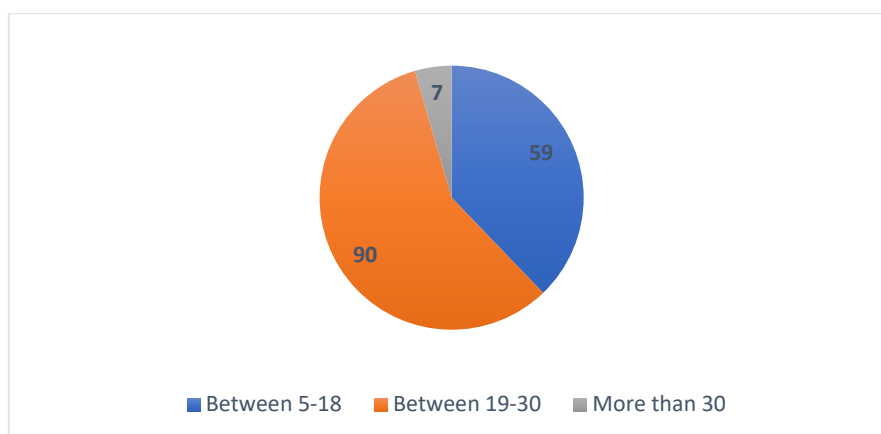
The following chart shows the relationship of the informal groups that answered the survey with their country of origin. The three countries with the highest representation of groups are: (1) Spain; (2) Romania; (3) Portugal. Specifically, 67 groups from Spain, 29 from Romania and 27 from Portugal. At the other end of the sample, there are countries to which only one or two groups responded to the survey: Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Belgium, Germany, Greece and Albania

Chart 1. IG countries.



Taking into account the **average age of the members** of the informal groups, Chart 2 shows that the members of most of the groups, specifically 90, have an average age between 19 and 30 years. However, there is also a high representation of groups in which its members have an average age between 5 and 18 years. Finally, there are only 7 groups with members with an average age of over 30 years.

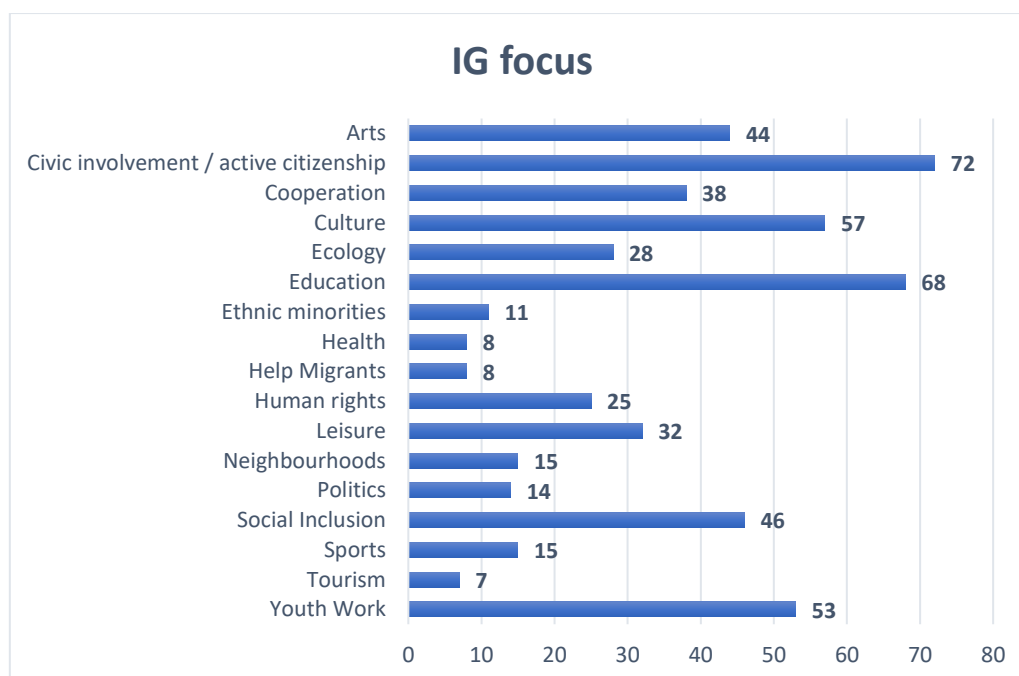
Chart 2. Average of the members.



The majority of the groups focus on more than one **area of action**. There are even groups that identify more than four areas of action. As can be seen in Graph 1, the most represented areas in the groups are: Civic involvement (72), Education (68), Culture (57) and Youth work (53). On the contrary, the least represented areas in the groups are: Tourism (7), Help migrants (8), Health (8) and Ethnic minorities (11).

The health area was not initially considered in the study. However, eight groups mentioned health as an "other" option. These groups are mostly dedicated to issues related to drug use prevention and sexual health.

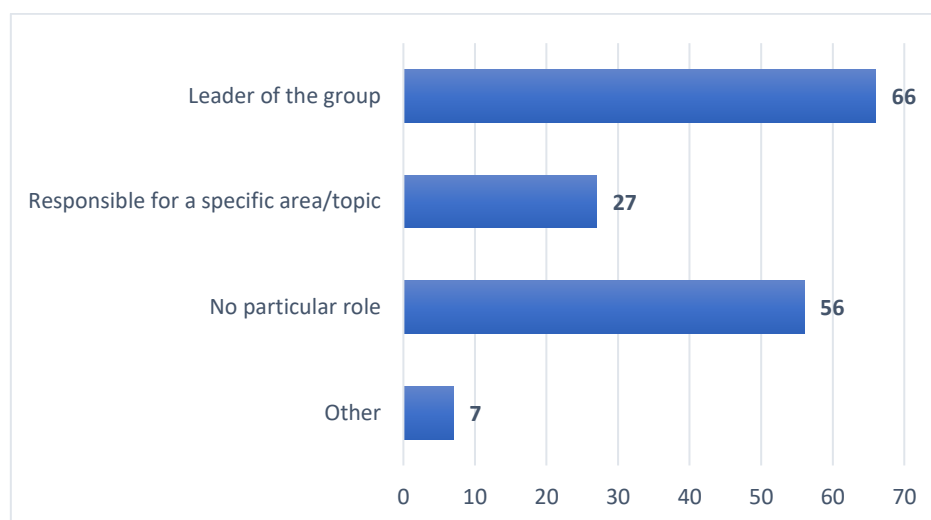
Graph 1. IG Focus.



Graph 2 shows that 66 of the 156 people who answered the survey **play the role** of leader within their group. On the other hand, 56 people stated that they don't have a particular role in the group and 27 people reported being responsible for a specific area or topic. It should be noted

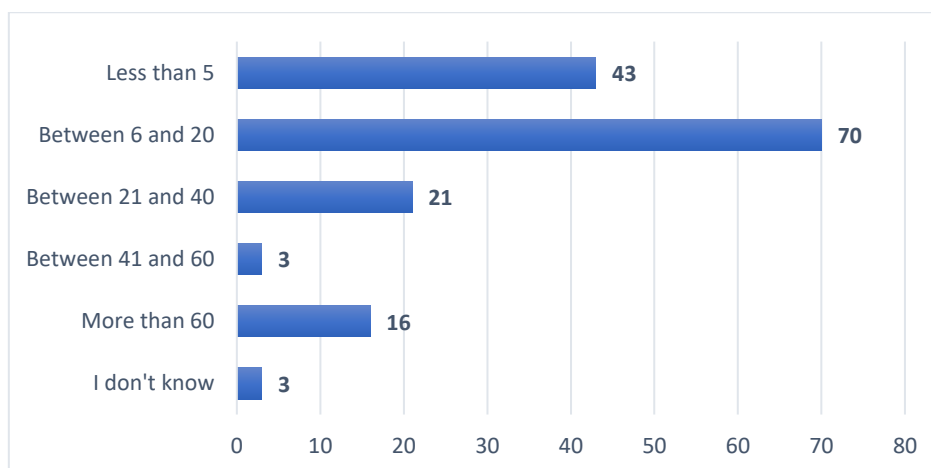
that among the 7 people who checked the "other" option, some of them specify that they are presidents or founders of the informal group.

Graph 2. Role in the group.



Regarding the **number of members** that form informal groups, as shown in the following graph, the majority of groups have between 6 and 20 members (70). Another big subset are groups made up of less than 5 members (43). At the other extreme, there are three groups that have between 41 and 60 members.

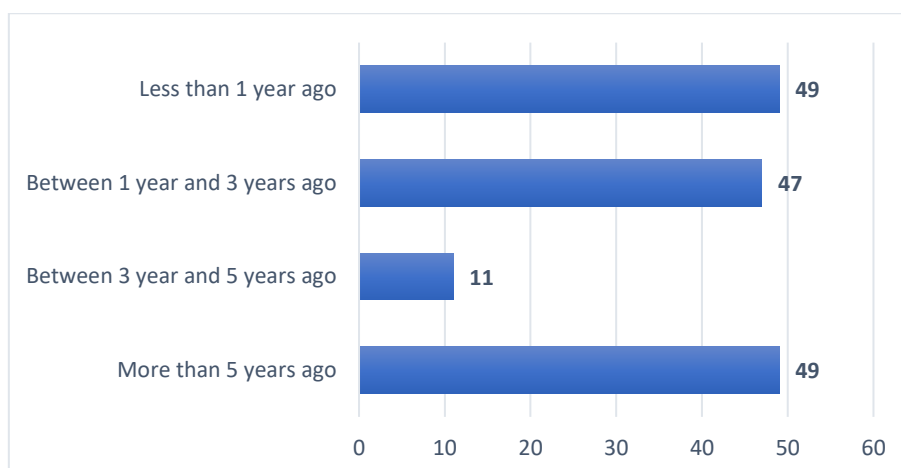
Graph 3. Number of members.



Group creation and establishment

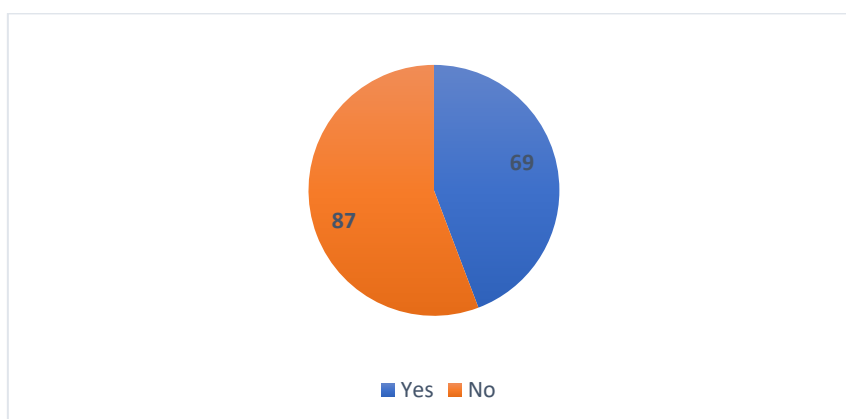
Figure 4 shows the years since the creation of the informal groups. Only 11 groups were created between 3 and 5 years ago. However, most groups have been created less than a year ago (49), more than five years ago (49), or between one year and three years ago (47).

Graph 4. Years of the creation of the group.



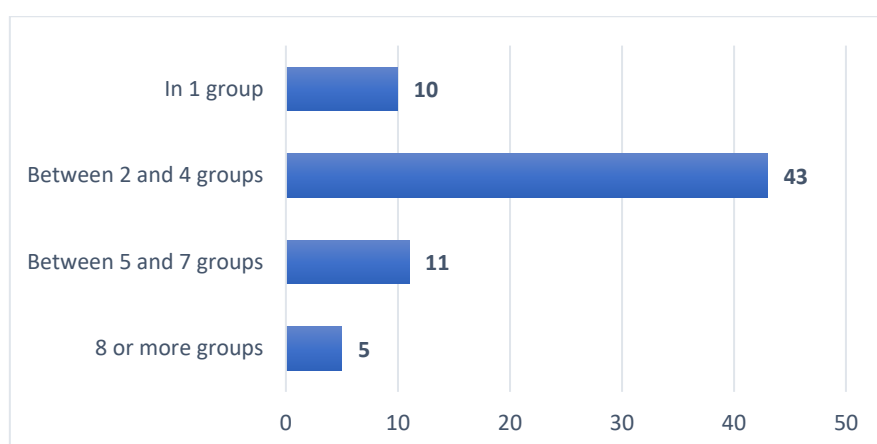
Another question in the survey refers to **previous experience** of the members, who answered the survey, in other informal groups. As can be seen in Chart 3, 87 members answered that they had no previous experiences in other groups, while 69 members did have previous experience.

Chart 3. Previous experience.



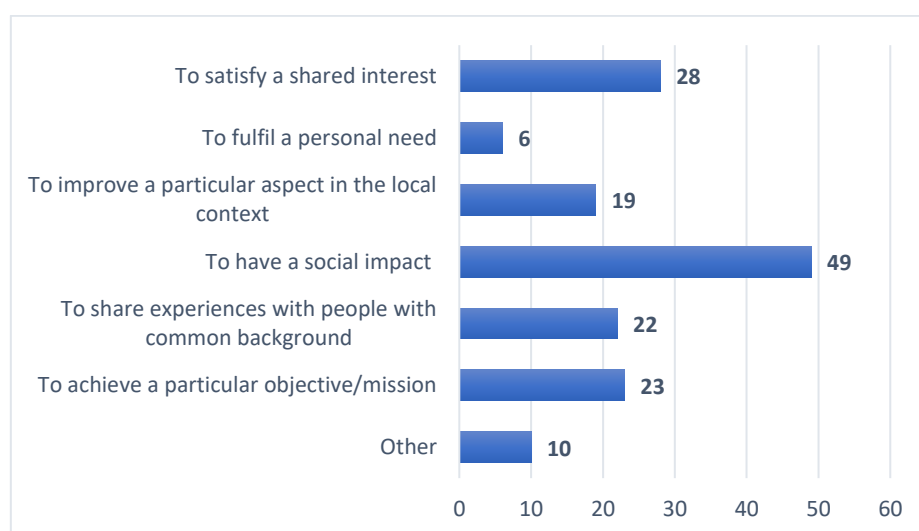
When asking these 69 members who reported to have previous experiences in other informal groups, it was found that 43 of these members had been part of between 2 and 4 groups. In contrast, only 5 people reported to have participated in more than 8 informal groups.

Graph 5. Previous experience-number of groups.



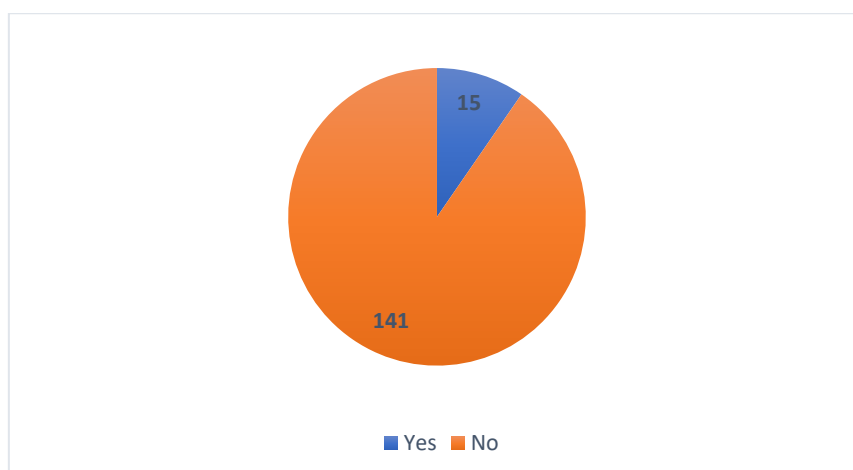
Graph 6 shows which were the **main motivations of the informal groups** for its creation. Most groups reported "to have a social impact" as the main motivation (49), followed by "to satisfy a shared interest" (28), and "to achieve a particular objective/mission" (23) as the third motivation. Only 6 groups indicated "satisfying a personal need" as motivation to form the informal group.

Graph 6. Main motivation to create the IG.



When asked if the groups changed their main motivation or initial objective over the years, most groups, 141 in total, stated that they did not. Only 15 groups stated that they made changes in their initial goals. The reasons expressed by these groups for changing their goals were changes in the environment that forced them to adapt their goals.

Chart 4. Changes in main motivation to create the IG.



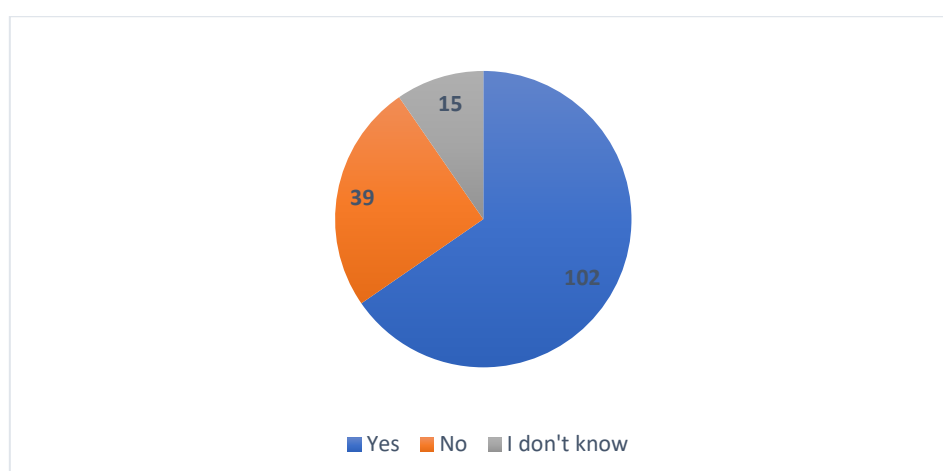
It is also interesting to know if the **number of members of informal groups has changed** since the groups were created. In general, the members did not decrease, only 18 groups have decreased their members. As shown in Graph 7, group members remained stable (68) or increased (70).

Graph 7. Modification of the number of members.



As can be seen in the following chart, most of the **founding members** of the groups continue to participate in the groups (102). The most common ways in which they participate are: organizing and leading activities, contributing ideas and opinions, attending meetings and offering guidance.

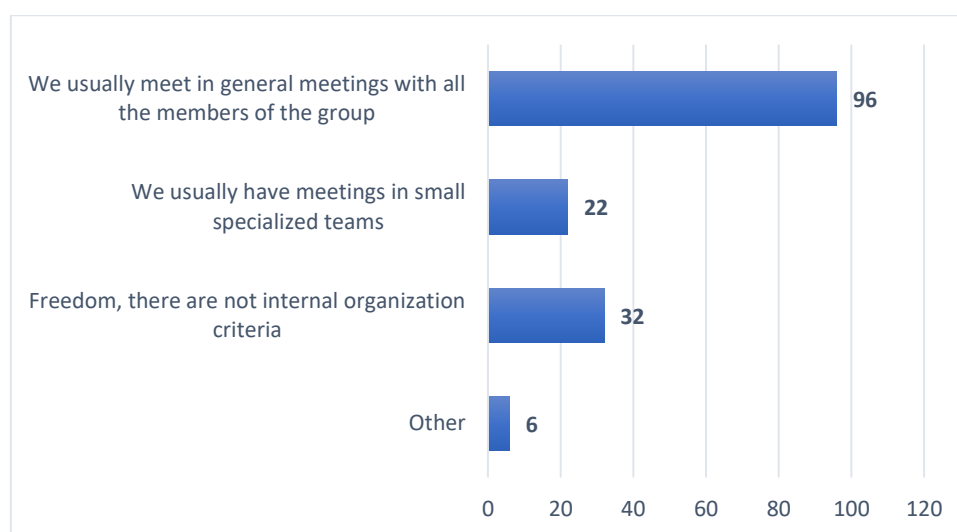
Chart 5. Participation of the founding members.



Characteristics and group management

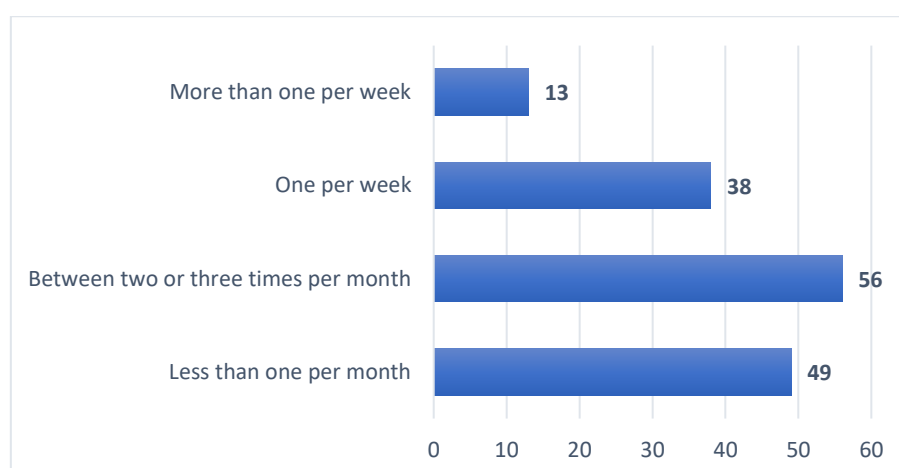
Regarding how **informal groups work**, the results show that mainly groups work in meetings with all the members of the group (96). On the contrary, 32 groups indicated that they do not have internal organizational criteria and 22 groups noted that they usually work in meetings in small specialized teams.

Graph 8. Internal work.



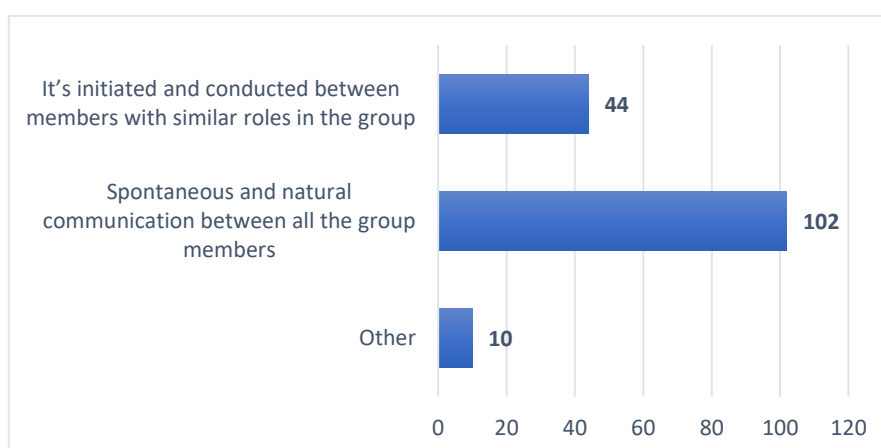
Graph 9 shows the **periodicity of the meetings** of the informal groups. The trend is that informal group meetings are not very frequent. Specifically, 56 groups reported to meet between two or three times a month and 49 groups less than once a month. Only 13 groups meet more than once a week.

Graph 9. Periodicity of meetings.



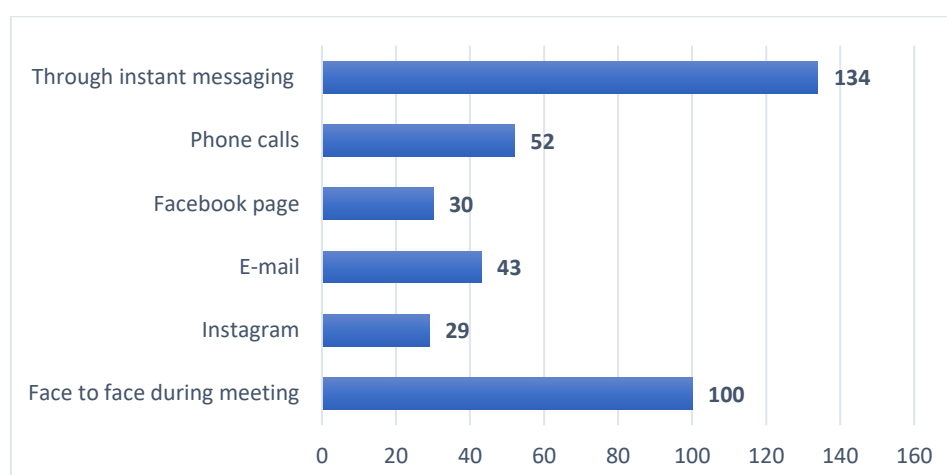
Regarding **communication**, as can be seen in Graph 10, the members communicate spontaneously and naturally among all the members of the group (102). 44 groups stated that communication is initiated and conducted between members with similar roles within the group instead. Generally, the groups that checked the "other" option indicated that they communicate through applications or that the communication is spontaneous and also directed.

Graph 10. Communication.



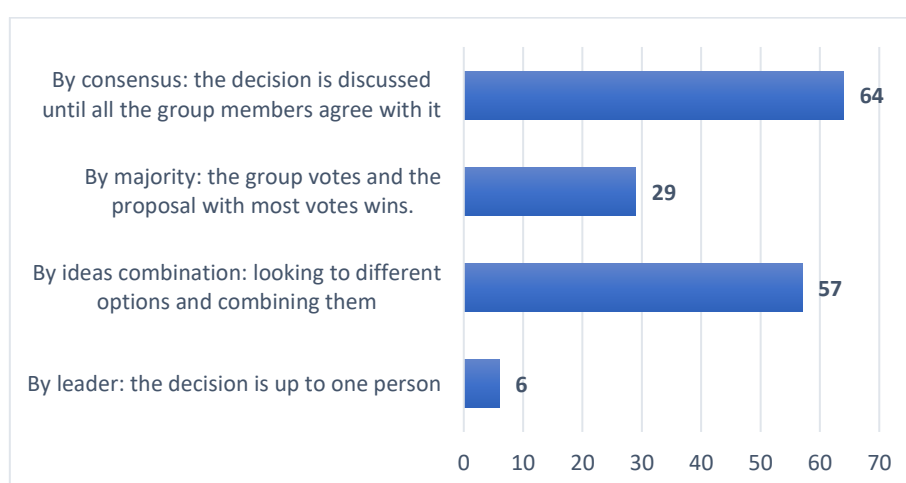
The **communication channels** used by the groups are shown in the Graph 11. A first aspect to point out is that the groups identified more than one communication channel. The two communication channels most used by the groups are: "Through instant messaging (WhatsApp, telegraph, messenger, etc.)" (134) and "Face to face during meeting" (100). The least used channels are: "Instagram" (29) and "Facebook page" (30).

Graph 11. Communication channels.



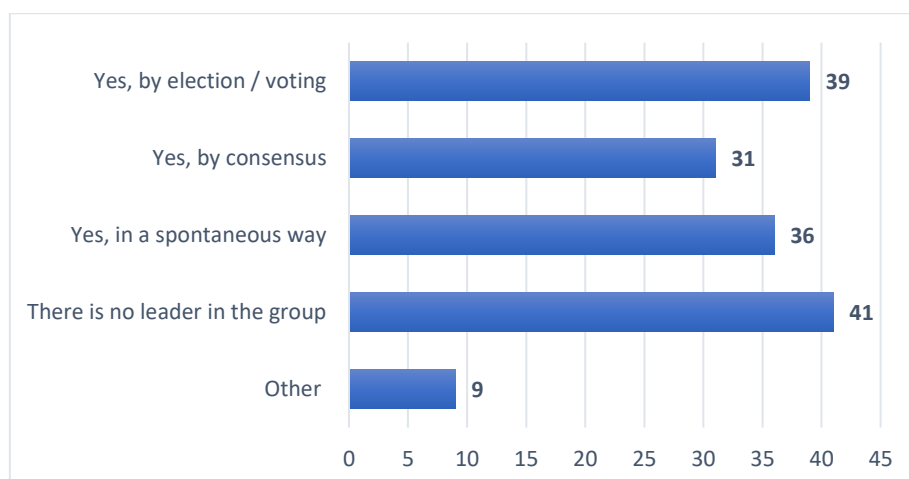
Another aspect to analyze is how **decision-making** is carried out within informal groups. Graph 12 shows that the majority of decisions are made by consensus (64) or by a combination of ideas (57). However, 29 groups stated that decisions are made by voting and only in 6 groups are decisions made unilaterally by the leader.

Graph 12. Decision-making.



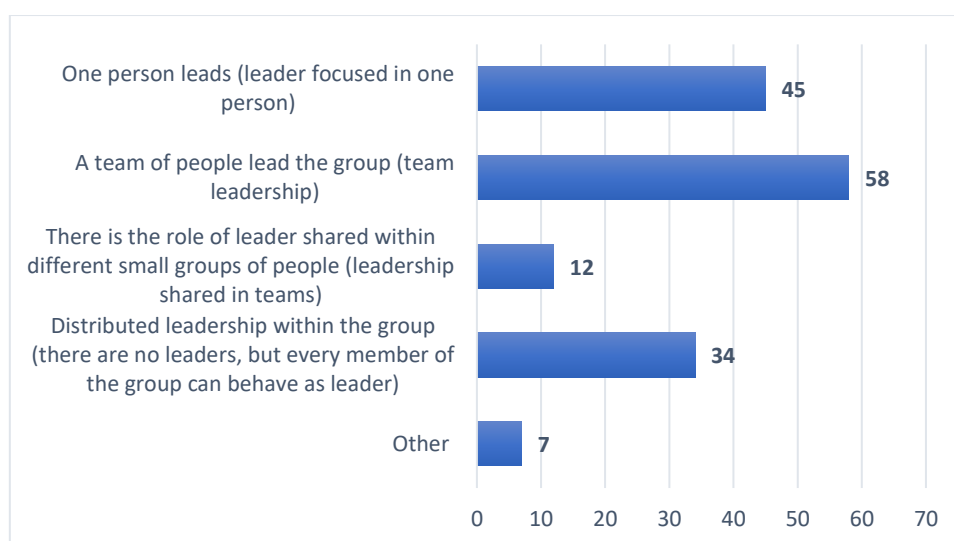
The results in relation to **leader recognition** within the group are similarly distributed among the different response options. Specifically, the leaders in 39 groups were elected by vote, in 36 groups they were spontaneously recognized, and in 31 groups the leaders were chosen by consensus. However, 41 groups recognized that there was no leader within the group. It should be noted that there were groups that responded that the role of the leader was not that of a leader as such, but rather as a manager.

Graph 13. Leader recognition within the group.



More specifically, and in relation to the **typology of leadership**, as can be seen in Graph 14, informal group leadership is basically focused on team leadership (58) and one-person leadership (45). However, the leadership in 34 groups is distributed. Regarding the "Other" option, there are groups that indicated that the leadership of their group was the combination of the different forms. That is, there may be team leadership in small groups, but the final decision is made by the leader.

Graph 14. Leadership typology.



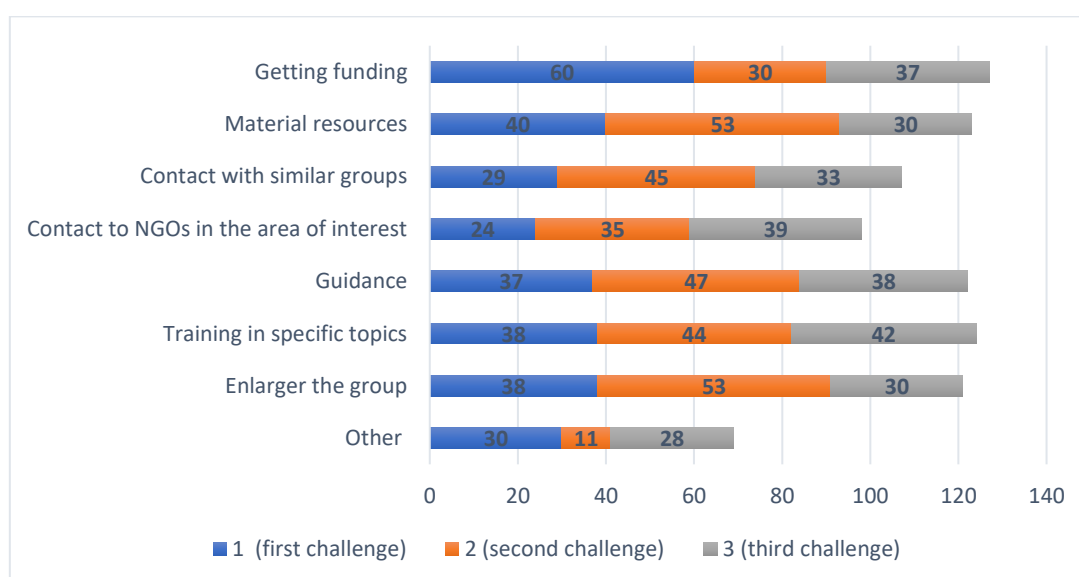
We also surveyed **conflict management** within the group. As shown in Graph 15, the main way to resolve conflicts in informal groups is to negotiate between the parties (86). It should be noted that 35 groups reported that they solve conflicts by avoiding them. There are groups that checked the "other" option and they indicated that they do not have conflicts or that they solve conflicts between all group members.

Graph 15. Conflict management.



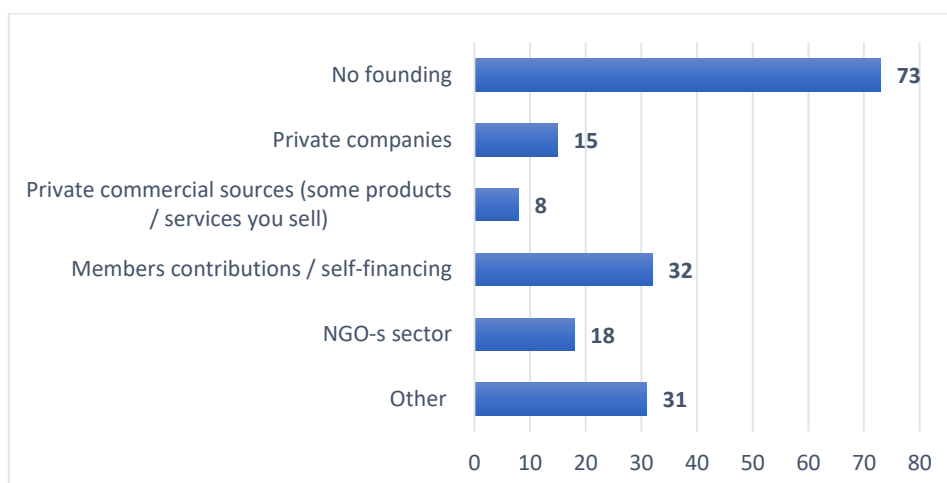
Graph 16 shows the **main challenges** that informal groups identified for their development. As can be seen, the main challenges are: (1) “Getting funding” (127); (2) “Training in specific topics” (124); (3) “Material resources” (124); (4) “Guidance” (122) and (5) “Enlarger the group” (121). Other challenges that some groups identified are, for example: to have an own space where we can make our activities or time for meetings.

Graph 16. Main challenges.



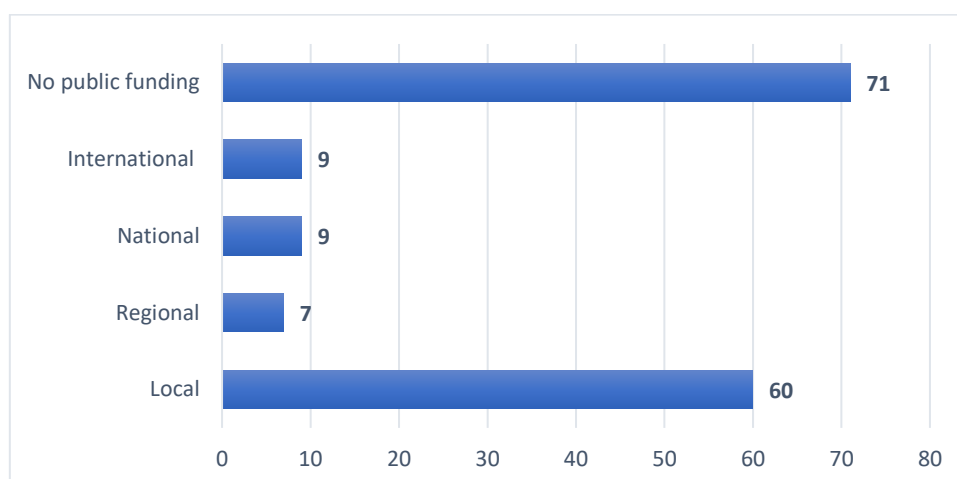
Regarding the **sources of financing**, Graph 17 shows that almost half of the groups reported not receiving any financing (73) or that it is the group members themselves who contribute with self-financing (32). A considerable number of groups (31) indicated that they receive funding from other sources, such as the European Solidarity Corps or through municipal support.

Graph 17. Financial source.



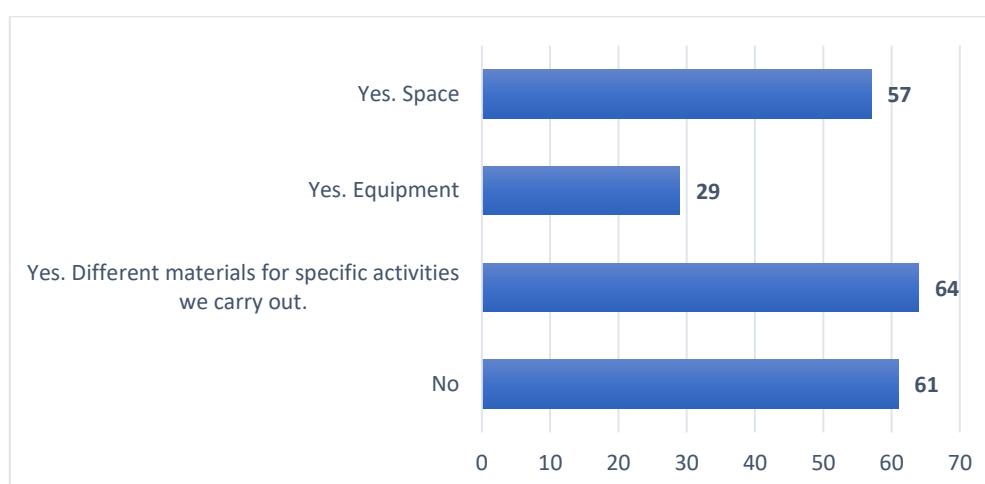
The final results refer to the **Public Administration Funding** that the groups receive. Graph 18 refers to the funding level. According to the previous graph, almost half of the groups do not receive public financing (71), but another large group reported receiving local funding (60). In specific cases, some groups receive funding at the international, national or regional level.

Graph 18. Public Administration Funding-Level.



The last graph already shows what kind of help they receive from Public Administration. The resources are mostly destined for different materials for specific activities (64) and for space (55). However, 61 groups reported not receiving any kind of help from the Public Administration. These final results highlight a main challenge for informal groups: obtaining funding.

Graph 19. Public Administration Funding-Help type.



5.3. Qualitative results


Now that the quantitative results are presented, this second section shows the qualitative results. These results, derived from the analysis of the 37 interviews (*see Table 1*), evidence aspects related to the creation and consolidation of the informal group, the internal dynamics of these groups, the relationships they maintain with the exterior, etc. Specifically, these results are based on the opinions and perceptions that these interviewees have in relation to the different elements of analysis. Thus, presentation includes literal quotes from the interviews. To maintain the anonymity of the interviewed members, any information that allows their identification has been removed.

The presentation of the qualitative results includes the following areas of study: (1) Creation and establishment of the group; (2) Consolidation and internal group regulation; (3) Group operation, leadership and knowledge management and (4) External relations and group projection.

Group creation and establishment


The beginnings of the informal groups considered in the study are diverse, although some of them have similar **forms of creation**. They are mainly groups formed in the last 10 years. The main ways of creating the groups are: (1) by initiative and/or proposal of some public or private organizations; (2) by individual or collective personal initiative.

Some groups reported that the group was created as a result of the proposal of a project or initiative by: The City Council, its school, an NGO or a foundation. These groups were originally born as projects and, from here, some ended up deriving or following up on their own as an informal group.

 *The group started around 10 years ago after a proposal from the La Orotava Town Hall, the name of the group was “corresponsales jóvenes juveniles”. The initial group was active for a few years, but then the members of the group, led by the youth house,*


continued with the activities. So, at the moment, in La Orotava, the group is not linked with the Town Hall.

(S_1)


 *Our umbrella NGO Útilapu Network was part of an international research project called Open Doors among 5 countries of Service Civil International network in 2012.*

(H_4)

Regarding the creation of the group on personal initiative, two main ways are identified. On the one hand, some groups were created because one or more people intended to meet other people to exchange opinions and act together. Specifically, these people, through contacts, look for other people with the same interests or, rather, they decide to attend courses or formal sessions to find people with the same interests.


 *One of the guitar players contacted the vocalist via Facebook in 2014, because he saw him once performing at a live gig with his former band and thought if they could start something together. The guitar player knew a friend from college who also played the guitar and the three of them started playing together and writing some songs.*

(P_8)


 *In March 2012, an enthusiastic little team visited the Arche Noah, organized by Csilla Kis, where they looked at the seed bank, the demonstration garden, listened to the history of the organization, the support system they operated, and took part in practical sessions. As a result of the visit, some people wanted to establish a similar organization in Hungary, and the team gathered several times during the summer, they talked a lot about the goals and the operation of the group.*

(H_2)

On the other hand, there are also informal groups that arise on personal initiative, but spontaneously, without previous intention. In this case, by chance, several people coincide at local parties, concerts or other types of events and at that very moment, when sharing opinions, they decide to meet up from now on.


 *What they do is Calestenia-street urbano, which is a type of exercise practices out-doors and that mainly works with the body weight. There was not a specific creation moment, they spontaneously started to practice sports together in the street.*

(S_4)


 *All the members had the same desire and the idea was born one night, when everyone was together drinking a beer.*

(P_2)

For the creation and establishment of informal groups, some interviewees considered that it was key to have an institutional support to push the group idea forward. This institutional support allowed the groups to start different activities.


 *And that's really how everything started, because once I got this kind of institutional back up, then it was just a matter of organizing ourselves and then of course I was already friends with a lot of people in a lot of organizations...*

(B_1)


 *Our informal group was therefore created at the end of 2018 with the support of Subjective Values Foundation.*

(H_1)

Mainly groups have **aspirations** aimed at helping or influencing the improvement of some aspect or social group. The interviewee expressed that they intend through their actions to contribute, in a certain way, to the improvement of society. To do this, some groups pointed out the need to create joint workspaces to organize activities and events. Specifically, the level of action of these groups is mostly community or local.


 *As a group, we want to make people more aware of what they really need to change, what they really have to do.*

(B_3)

 *Their main expectation is to change the mentality of the people regarding using textile bags over plastic ones, as well as educating as many children as possible on bullying.*

(R_7)

However, other groups recognized that their aspirations are focused on improving the group itself. That is, in this case, the focus is on the informal group itself. They are groups that share the same interest and purpose, that affects them personally and they work collectively to achieve it. Finally, one of the informal groups indicated that their main aspiration is to become a formal group.

 *Their expectations and aspirations are to make new friends and get to know new people, organize activities, be more active, have fun, and developed their personal growth.*


(S_5)

 *To become legal as a formal NGO.*


(P_2)

Regarding the **lines of action** to achieve the objectives, disparate situations arise between the groups. Most groups do not have clearly defined lines of action. However, some of these groups hold strategic meetings to decide what their next actions will be. On the other hand, some

groups indicated that they have lines of action, but that they are very flexible and change them according to the needs of the moment and of the members. Only a small part of the groups made explicit reference to their lines of action.

 *Three main lines of work: 1) to find a space 2) to use creative communication 3) to create a regular program of activities.*

(P_1)


 *There are 3 pillars: community and community space open for public; creative workshops, exchange of knowledge and education; design studio.*

(H_4)

Consolidation and group internal regulation

The predominant **profile** is young people between 18-28 years old, men and women without distinction, who are currently studying and/or working and have medium or higher education.

Groups recognized some **values** that identify their groups and that are necessary for the common good of the group and for the pursuit of its objectives. The most common values in groups are, in this order: (1) solidarity, (2) mutual aid, (3) cooperation, (4) social activism, (5) inclusion and (6) freedom. Other values more specific to certain groups are related to feminism, anti-fascism, among others.

 *Living together, solidarity, to promote the youngest to be active citizens.*

(S_5)


 *Solidarity, democracy, active citizenship, understanding and supporting each other.*

(H_1)

Generally, the groups do not carry out any specific activity to strength **group cohesion**. The reasons they mentioned were that the members have a friendly relationship or that the meetings already allow members to communicate and get to know each other better. However, some of these groups organize excursions or cultural events to meet in more relaxed spaces where they can discuss other more personal topics. Precisely this question turns out to be a handicap for those groups where its members cannot meet in person.

 *Yes, like going to the cinema or having lunch together.*


(P_10)

 *Yes, we have annual excursions and smaller events more often during the year.*


(H_3)

Most groups are receptive to **welcoming new members** into their groups, as long as these new members share the values of the group. In turn, there are also some groups that recruit new

members through a selection procedure, which responds to a prior identification of needs by the group. At the opposite extreme and being specific cases, there are closed groups that do not plan to add new members to their group.


 *Everyone is welcome as long as they value the same values. Integration happens without realizing how, it comes somewhat naturally.*

(R_1)


 *We do not plan to add any new members to the group.*

(P_8)

The tendency in the groups is not to apply any strategy to welcome new members and facilitate **integration into the group**. Mainly, the incorporation of new members is carried out as a natural and spontaneous process. Despite this, some practices in groups for the reception of new members are identified, such as: (a) knowing the reasons for joining the group; (b) explaining the history of the group and its rules; (c) completing an application form with personal data; (d) adding the new member to the WhatsApp group.


 *Anyone who wants to join the group can do it. Just need to fulfill an application form with personal data. (...). The new members that joined the group later were added to a WhatsApp group that is used for communication and started to be part in that process.*

(P_2)


 *Then they proceed to tell them about the goal of the group and they are welcome to join if they resonate with it.*

(R_9)

In the same way that there is no procedure for the integration of a new member, there is also no procedure for when a member decides **to leave the group**. Furthermore, groups recognized that people are free to leave the group and even without notice. Only one group recognized the importance of knowing the reasons that lead people to want to leave the group, since may be a tool to evaluate the group's procedures and values.

 *People are free to leave the group anytime without telling anyone.*


(P_3)

 *In case of leaving, if it's due to incompatibilities with the group it can be a tool to reevaluate the group procedures and values.*

(P_4)


When considering whether the groups have any **normative documents**, there is a discrepancy between the groups. On the one hand, there are groups that reported not having them and, on the other hand, groups that reported having them. Regarding the groups that said that they do not have normative documents, they specified that these documents are not necessary for the

group to function properly, since all members know the rules. However, some of these groups reported having online documents recording their important activities or decisions.


 *We don't have any specific document. We do have a task list and Google drive where we keep our ideas, photos, etc. It's shared with all the members and easily accessible for everyone.*

(H_1)

And with regard to the groups that reported to have these documents, they also referred to platforms such as Google Drive to share these documents online, since, in this way, are easily accessible by all their members. However, some of these groups recognized that these documents are not updated frequently.

 *Yes, the forum has a regulation, posted online on the forum platform. It has been realized and is updated by the administrators. The update takes into account the suggestions of the members.*

(R_2)

 *No one had time to redo those guidelines, and that's an issue, but that's because of lack of time.*


(B_1)

Group operation, leadership and knowledge management


The nature of the **meetings** organized by informal groups are different according to the groups. At one extreme, there are groups that do not have a regular time frame for holding meetings, that is, members meet when they need it or consider it appropriate. At the other extreme, there are groups that have a set schedule with meetings. Normally, it is these latter groups that, on the one hand, prepare an agenda in advance with the topics to be discussed at the meeting and, on the other hand, make and share the minutes with the decisions agreed at the meeting. However, some groups indicated that they combine more formal, pre-planned meetings and informal meetings subject to current needs.

 *The meetings don't happen with a regular schedule, it happens whenever we need.*

(P_1)


 *We normally have an agenda and we follow those points. We try to find dates for the meetings that are working for all of us, although not everybody would join all the meetings. We take notes that is circulated, so everyone gets informed.*

(H_1)

 *There are formal meetings with an agenda, but sometimes also more informal meetings.*


(B_3)

The objectives of these meetings are different, but mainly, the members of the informal groups meet to: (a) share information and/or ideas of interest to the group (b) discuss and generate debates about any news of interest to the group and (c) organize and plan new activities.

 *We are also held meeting in order to discuss how to organise activities, plan new activities, etc.*


(S_6)

Many groups recognized that due to the impossibility of holding face-to-face meetings (members live in different parts of the country or in different countries), these meetings are held virtually or through some platform that allows them to generate forums. And finally, regarding the mandatory nature of these meetings, only one group recognized that they are mandatory.

 *We rarely meet each other in person, as we live in different parts of the country (there are also people who do not live in Hungary), so we keep in touch primarily online (Skype conversations, discussions by e-mail or messenger).*


(H_2)

Some groups have **physical spaces** to meet, but many other groups made reference to **virtual spaces**. However, virtual spaces are also used by groups that can meet in person. These virtual spaces allow groups to share information and materials, discuss ideas, create new knowledge, etc.


 *We do not have a physical space; all meetings are held in the virtual space.*

(R_6)

Specifically, groups feel that they **create knowledge** when they have the opportunity to start new projects and meet physically or virtually to decide together how to work. Members characterize these spaces, both physical and virtual, as collaborative, open and relaxed, where any member feels the freedom to express their ideas and present proposals.

 *In general, there is an open, collaborative atmosphere where everyone is welcome to come with proposals.*


(B_3)

 *If there is a chance for applications, new projects, we sit down, brainstorm and decide together.*


(H_4)

The groups participate in a wide variety of **activities** (workshops, seminars, shows, concerts, events, etc.), well promoted and organized by themselves as a group or by other local organizations with which they collaborate or depend on them. Most of them are activities aimed at the community and open to the public. These are activities with a high content of social

awareness and/or contribution towards the improvement of some community and/or social aspect.

 *Some of the activities are proposed by the youth house, but other are initiatives of the young people that forms the group. In this second type of activities, the youth house supports them and help them with anything they could need (especially financial matters).*


(S_1)

 *At our community space we also provide yoga classes, intercultural events/cooking, presentations, handcraft workshops and language classes for refugees and migrants to help out at school.*


(H_3)

A very common activity in groups is the organization of open debates/talks to share opinions on a topic of social interest. In addition, to make these activities more attractive to the community, they invite experts on the topics to discuss.

The groups recognized that they **share information** before and after their activities through their Facebook and Instagram pages, or even on their YouTube channels. In addition, some groups create posters that they distribute throughout their city to inform the population about the activities they organize. On the other hand, a couple of groups mentioned the use of other channels to report of their activities, such as their city's radio or local magazines and newspapers.


 *The activities are announced on servers, on the forum, on the Facebook community page, the Youtube community channel.*

(R_5)


 *Mainly social media (facebook and instagram), but also sending emails to cultural magazines/sites. Posters and flyers around the city created by them.*

(P_5)

Groups do not usually develop an **evaluation** process or apply instruments to evaluate their activities, with the exception of one group that reported to use online forms to evaluate each of their events. However, informally, all groups hold discussions among their members to assess their activities and thus draw conclusions for the organization of future activities.


 *We discuss the activities afterwards, draw lessons, and shape subsequent events in the light of these.*

(H_2)


 *We have an evaluation form online and offline after all of our events. We take the feedbacks and try to implement them the next time We discuss the activities afterwards, draw lessons, and shape subsequent events in the light of these.*

(H_4)

Groups generally did not identify major changes in the group's inner workings. Specifically, the changes that some groups perceive are related to the **group's own development**. A first change is the gradual transition of some groups from their original state to the formation and consolidation as an informal group. Many groups were originally born as projects dependent on organizations or the city council and when the project ends, they become an informal group.


 *We first started as a proposal from the Town Hall, but now we are not coordinated by the Youth House anymore, just supported when asked or the Youth House needs volunteers from the members.*

(S_1)

 *The main change was the transition from a big Facebook group to the active core group, which occurred quite automatically between those who were willing to commit more.*


(B_2)

Another change, associated with group development, is the **distribution of tasks and responsibilities** among group members. Some groups indicated that when group members begin to know their respective skills and qualities, these skills and qualities are recognized by their members and they spontaneously, and almost unconsciously, assume the tasks and responsibilities that must be carried out.


 *So far, there have been no defined roles, it has formed organically who came and went in the organization.*

(H_2)

Regarding the **decision-making process**, most groups characterized this process as democratic, where all the members can contribute their opinion and between all they try to reach a consensus and decide as a group. However, some groups recognized that this process is not as democratic as it seems, since sometimes they vote and decide what the majority votes.


 *By consensus. All decisions are made by the whole group, when everyone present in the meeting agrees. Everyone contributes with opinions and suggestions, there's no leader.*

(P_5)


 *Also, everyone can suggest new ideas and the rest can vote.*

(S_2)

In addition, on the one hand, certain groups recognized the existence of more experienced or committed members, who have a more active role and who take the initiative in this process. And, on the other hand, there are groups that directly referred to the group leader as the person who proposes the possible alternatives to decide and also has the last decision.

 *Artistic decisions are made in consultation with the actors, while administrative decisions are made through consensus among the leader/ “president” and “vicepresident” of the group.*


(R_8)

 *The leader takes into account the group opinion but has the last word.*


(P_7)

External relations and group projection

Most groups reported having one or more channels to **project the group outside** the group, mainly Facebook and Instagram. One of the groups also mentioned having a Newsletter. As exceptional cases, there were two groups that commented on their intention to build their own website or digital platform. In addition to using these channels to make visible what they do as a group, they also use them to communicate with each other.


 *We have a YouTube channel where we share our work, and a Facebook and Instagram pages to share our activities.*

(P_8)


 *Yes, we are actively communicating on Facebook, our website has now been renewed and is still under development, but it will also have a blog section and we will gather the seed exchanges on a map.*

(H_2)

However, a few groups indicated that they had no group channel to project the group in society. The reasons they present are different in the groups, but mainly related to not having the intention of being known or, at the moment, using the personal channels of the members.

 *We don't pretend to be known externally.*


(S_7)

 *No social networks or website, at least yet.*


(P_2)

The groups generally valued very positively maintaining **relationships** with other informal groups, public or private organizations or nearby educational centers, since they are defined as groups open to the community. However, the vast majority of groups do not maintain stable

and lasting relations with the exterior, with the exception of some groups that are related to or depend on certain organizations or NGOs.


 *Yes, we do cooperate with other groups as the whole background project is a partnership between 3 NGOs.*

(H_1)


 *In Belgium, the informal group is linked to and uses the facilities of the NGO Toestand vzw.*

(B_4)

Specifically, the relationships that the vast majority of groups establish with the exterior are, on the one hand, limited to the use of spaces and/or materials and, on the other hand, based on participation in activities organized by other groups or organizations. Only a few groups mentioned organizing activities jointly with other groups and maintaining frequent contacts with them.

 *We collaborate with venues and other organizations, because we don't have our own space and we need a place for the events.*

(P_4)

 *They have collaborated with the city hall to grant the space in the city centre needed to organize the activities, and with local schools to allow them access to high school students, both being collaborations based on mutual respect and earnestness.*

(R_8)

 *Once, they organized an activity together with the Red Cross.*

(S_1)



6. CONCLUSIONS AND IDEAS FOR THE INTERVENTION

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results of this study allows us to have information about how these groups are, how they work, how their members relate to each other and how they relate to the exterior. The conclusions that we present below are a descriptive synthesis based on the contributions of the members of the informal groups that have participated in the study.

Specifically, we organize the conclusions in relation to the main areas of the study (general characteristics, creation, consolidation and evolution, operation and management of the group and projection of the group abroad and relations with the exterior). From these conclusions we suggest some ideas for the intervention with these groups.

About the general characteristics

- The members have an average age between 18 and 30 years approximately, with medium or higher studies, who currently study and/or work. The gender is not a defining variable of the groups, since women and men are distributed interchangeably in the groups.
- Groups have between 6 and 20 members or less than 5 members.
- Focused on more than one area of action, such as civic participation, education, culture and youth work.
- They do not have defined lines of action to work their areas of action.
- The main values shared by the members of these groups are solidarity, mutual aid, cooperation, social activism, inclusion and freedom.
- They are groups that do not receive any funding or where the members finance themselves.
- The main challenges facing these groups are: (1) Getting funding; (2) Training in specific topics; (3) Material resources and (4) Guidance.



Proposals

- Jointly set among all members lines of action, according to the areas of action, that guide the actions and activities of the group. The lines of action can be flexible, but they must be known by all their members.
- Collect and organize the different elements related to the identity of the group (ideals, values, areas of action, etc.) and make them available to all members of the group. Idea: Create a group identity document that is easy to access and update.
- Explore ways or strategies that allow groups to have resources or supports to face the main challenges.

About the creation, consolidation and evolution of the groups

- Most of them have been created in the last ten years.
- Two main forms of creation; by initiative and/or proposal of some public or private organizations or by individual or collective personal initiative.
- The motivations and aspirations to create the groups are related to the improvement or impact on some aspect or social group. These motivations and aspirations do not change over the years.

- They do not carry out activities to improve group cohesion, with the exception of some groups that hold meetings in more relaxed spaces to get to know each other better personally.
- They do not apply strategies to welcome new members and facilitate integration into the group, beyond some isolated actions.
- They do not pay attention when a member decides to leave the group.
- While some groups do not have regulatory documentation, others do, but not always updated.
- Since the groups were created, the number of their members remains stable or increases slightly.
- The founders of the groups continue to be involved in the group.



Proposals

- Carry out actions to improve group cohesion. For example: leisure activities, group dynamics, collaborative relationships, etc.
- Identify, recognize and value the qualities and abilities of all group members to improve the feeling of belonging to the group.
- Create profiles for each member: a photograph or avatar, description, reasons why they are part of the group, what they can offer the group, etc. Incorporate these profiles in some virtual platform shared by the group.
- Develop strategies for accompanying and welcoming new members who join the group. For example: assigning a referring member for the first months, access to all the group's documentation, creating your member profile and incorporating it into the platform, etc.
- Know the reasons why members decide to leave the group. If they are reasons related to the group, use these cases as a mechanism to evaluate the group.

About the operation and management of the group

- The groups work through general meetings with all their members. These meetings may be planned in advance or, conversely, be more informal and subject to the needs of the moment. Some groups make minutes of their meetings and share them.
- The frequency of the meetings is between two or three times a month or less than once a month.
- The objectives of these meetings are different, but mainly, the members of the informal groups meet to: (a) share information and/or ideas of interest to the group (b) discuss

and generate debates about any news of interest to the group and (c) organize and plan new activities.

- The meetings take place in physical and/or virtual spaces. Virtual spaces allow groups to interact, share information and materials, create new knowledge, etc.
- The communication of the members is natural and spontaneous between all the members of the group. Face-to-face communication and through instant messages are the main communication channels.
- Groups organize activities, but they also collaborate and participate in activities organized by other local groups or organizations. These activities are aimed at the community with a high content of social awareness and/or contribution towards the improvement of some community and / or social aspect.
- The evaluation of activities is limited to discussion among group members.
- The groups share information internally and externally. Internally, they share their documents and materials through a platform (e.g. Google Drive) and externally, they publicize their activities through Facebook, Instagram or YouTube.
- Groups create knowledge when they have the opportunity to start new projects and meet physically or virtually to decide together how to work. Members characterize these spaces, both physical and virtual, as collaborative, open and relaxed, where any member feels the freedom to express their ideas and present proposals.
- The distribution of tasks and responsibilities among the members is carried out through a spontaneous and almost unconscious process, where the members recognize their respective abilities and qualities and assume the tasks and responsibilities.
- Decisions are taken mainly by consensus, although some groups indicate that they are voting or the leader has the last decision.
- There are groups that do not recognize the leader figure as such. However, the groups recognize the existence of more experienced or committed members, who have a more active role in proposing ideas or making decisions.
- The recognition of the leader is lived as a natural and spontaneous process or, on the contrary, it is the result of a vote.
- The management of possible conflicts is carried out mainly through negotiation between the parties, but also avoiding them.



Proposals

- Guarantee the holding of periodic meetings (face-to-face or virtual), even if they do not have a “meeting nature”, so as not to lose union as a group.

- Create figures with rotating responsibilities and distribute them among the members. For example: preparing the meeting agenda, making the minutes, moderating the meetings, etc.
- Promote an interactive web/platform among the members and that allows collaborative work.
- Create a documentary base that allows the consultation and dissemination of all the documentation related to the group.
- Evaluate and document the activities carried out. For example: knowing the degree of satisfaction of the members with the organization of the activity and the degree of satisfaction of the attendees with the activity, considering and evaluating possible suggestions for improvement by both members and attendees, etc.
- Create a virtual documentary space as a mechanism to institutionalize learning. This space may collect the evidence of the different activities carried out, of important decisions taken as a group, etc.
- Hold specific meetings for self-assessment as a group. These self-evaluations may be more or less formal, but must end with final commitments as a group. For these self-evaluations, the groups may use group diaries and notebooks, previously designed rubrics, assessment scales, non-formal and interactive methods, etc.

About the projection of the group and relations with the society

- The groups are projected as a group to the exterior, mainly through their Facebook, Instagram and YouTube pages. In some cases, the groups use other external channels such as local newspapers, local radio, etc.
- The relations that the groups maintain with the exterior are incidental, with the exception of some groups that are related to or depend on certain organizations or NGOs. These relationships, for the most part, are limited to the use of spaces and/or materials and participation in activities organized by other groups or organizations.



Proposals

- Contact other informal groups with the same interests or who share the same areas of action.
- Seek opportunities for collaboration with other groups or organizations.
- Seek institutional supports based on mutual aid. For example: organizing talks/workshops for school students in exchange for using their facilities and materials.

- Use institutional support to spread the activities of the at local or regional level.
- Find other groups, may be formal ones, which are working in the same area of interest at regional, national or international level in order to collaborate and find synergies.

7. REFERENCES

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8. ANNEXES

8.1. Annex 1: Desk Research Template

Desk research template to collect data:

In order to fill the template, the following sources of information can be used:

1. European regulations regarding the status of informal youth groups
2. National regulations regarding the youth groups
3. Local norms
4. Personal knowledge

Country:
Respondent:
Topics
How “informal groups” are defined in your national context?
Name the local legislation acts regulating the IG
Name a local policy affecting the creation and development of IG
Based in local legislation, provide information related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- IG funding- IG functioning system- IG strategies of creation- IG status and transition to formal group/ organisation

What type of informal groups are functioning in your local context ¹ IG size IG years of experience IG focus /area of intervention IG coverage: local, national, international
Based on you personal knowledge describe briefly how groups are formed and developed
According to your personal knowledge: which are the motivations groups are formed
Based on your knowledge, which are the main legal aspects which need improvement in order to facilitate the creation and development of IG

¹ We understand by “local context” the administrative unit with certain level of autonomy defined by each partner

8.2. Annex 2. Survey

The present survey is part of the project: “Empowering the Informal (2018-3-RO01-KA205-061362)”, funded by the European Commission Erasmus + programme, aims to understand the functioning of informal youth groups in Europe, as well as propose support measures to these groups to improve their development and functioning.

In the framework of this project, we understood informal group as a dynamic independent group, which is not seeking any legal form, composed by at least three people driven by common interests, causes and interests and acting around a common goal.

By completing this survey, you will be providing key information about youth informal groups across Europe, which may help to facilitate a more accurate alignment between youth centers, youth policies, administrations and the youth’s needs.

No personal information will be shared or disclosed in analyzing the data.

Completing the full survey takes around 10 minutes.

A. PREVIOUS QUESTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

I agree to participate in the project. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty or consequences.

☐ Yes

☐ No

1. Name of the informal group (if any):

2. City where the group is based:

3. Country where the group is based:

4. Average age of the members:

5. Informal Group Focus:

☐ Arts

☐ Civic involvement/active citizenship

☐ Cooperation

☐ Culture

☐ Ecology

☐ Education

- ☐ Ethnic minorities
- ☐ Help migrants
- ☐ Human rights
- ☐ Leisure
- ☐ Neighborhoods
- ☐ Politics
- ☐ Social inclusion
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Youth work
- ☐ Other

6. Which is your role in the group?

- ☐ Leader of the group
- ☐ Responsible for a specific area/topic
- ☐ No particular role
- ☐ Other

7. How many members are currently making up the group?

- ☐ Less than 5
- ☐ Between 6 and 20
- ☐ Between 21 and 40
- ☐ Between 41 and 60
- ☐ More than 60
- ☐ I don't know

B. GROUP CREATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

1. When was the group created?

- ☐ Less than 1 year ago
- ☐ Between 1 year and 3 years ago
- ☐ Between 3 years and 5 years ago
- ☐ More than 5 years ago

2. Do you have any previous experience as an informal group member?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2.1. If is yes, in how many informal group(s) have you been a part of?

3. What was the main motivation behind creating the group?

- ☐ To satisfy a shared interest
- ☐ To fulfil a personal need
- ☐ To improve a particular aspect in the local context
- ☐ To have a social impact (through projects and social programmes)
- ☐ To share experiences with people with common background
- ☐ To achieve a particular objective/mission
- ☐ Other

4. Did you change the group's objective or topic across the time?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4.1. If is yes, why? What is the current objective?

5. Has the number of members been modified since the group was created?

- ☐ Yes, there are more members now
- ☐ Yes, there are less members now
- ☐ It's more or less the same

6. Are the members that founded the group still actively participating in it?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

6.1. If is yes, how are they participating?

C. CHARACTERISTICS AND GROUP MANAGEMENT

7. How do you usually work within the group?

- ☐ We usually meet in general meetings with all the members of the group
- ☐ We usually have meetings in small specialized teams
- ☐ Freedom, there are not internal organization criteria
- ☐ Other

8. With which periodicity are you having meetings?

- ☐ More than one per week
- ☐ One per week
- ☐ Between two or three times per month
- ☐ Less than once per month

9. How does communication usually occur between the group members?

- ☐ It's initiated and conducted between members with similar roles in the group
- ☐ Spontaneous and natural communication between all the group members
- ☐ Other

10. How do you usually communicate with each other?

- ☐ Through instant messaging (WhatsApp, telegraph, messenger, etc.)
- ☐ Phone calls
- ☐ Facebook page
- ☐ E-mail
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Face to face meeting
- ☐ Other

11. How do you make decisions within the group?

- ☐ By consensus: the decision is discussed until all the group members agree with it
- ☐ By majority: the group votes and the proposal with most votes wins.
- ☐ By ideas combination: looking to different options and combining them
- ☐ By leader decision: the decision is up to one person

12. Is the role of leader or leaders recognized within the group?

- ☐ Yes, by election / voting
- ☐ Yes, by consensus
- ☐ Yes, in a spontaneous way
- ☐ There is no leader in the group
- ☐ Other

13. Who leads the group?

- ☐ One person leads (leader focused in one person)
- ☐ A team of people lead the group (team leadership)
- ☐ There is the role of leader shared within different small groups of people (leadership shared in teams)
- ☐ Distributed leadership within the group (there are no leaders, but every member of the group can behave as leader)
- ☐ Other

14. How are the conflicts within the group managed and solved?

- ☐ Avoiding the conflict
- ☐ Negotiation between the parties in order to achieve an agreement
- ☐ An external person guides us to solve the conflict
- ☐ Leader decision, which gives a solution after the analysis of the conflict
- ☐ Another member of the group, different from the leader, decides
- ☐ Other

15. What is the biggest challenge in your group? (choose the first 3 by priority order)

	1 First challenge	2 Second challenge	3 Third challenge
Getting funding			
Material resources (space, etc.)			
Contact with similar groups			
Contacts to NGOs in the area of interest			
Guidance			
Training in specific topics			
Enlarger the group			
Other			

16. Do you have any financial source or income?

- ☐ No funding
- ☐ Private companies
- ☐ Private commercial sources (some products / services you sell)
- ☐ Members contributions / self-financing
- ☐ NGO-s sector
- ☐ Other

17. Do you receive Public Administration funding? In which level?

- ☐ No public funding
- ☐ International
- ☐ National
- ☐ Regional
- ☐ Local
- ☐ Other

18. Do you receive Public Administration funding? In which level?

- ☐ Yes. Space
- ☐ Yes. Equipment
- ☐ Yes. Different materials for specific activities we carry out.
- ☐ No

If you want to receive information about the project, please leave your e-mail below

If you want to participate in the next phase of the project, giving us an interview, please leave your e-mail below

Thank you so much for your participation!

8.3. Annex 3. Interview script

Role of the interviewee in the group:

A. GROUP CREATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

1. How was your group created? Could you describe that moment?
2. Which is the main **expectation and/or aspirations** that you have as a group? Which are your **objectives** to achieve it?
3. Have you got any **lines of action** in order to achieve these objectives? If yes, which ones?

B. CONSOLIDATION AND GROUP INTERNAL REGULATION

4. Which is the **sociodemographic** profile of the group members? (*age, gender, educational level, labour activity...*)
5. Considering the focus of your group, which values do you think are important for your group?
6. Do you do any team building activities to strength group cohesion?
7. When a new member arrives, how do you integrate it in the group? Which strategies do you implement to incorporate new members? (give examples of activities that become useful as a process to socialize new members) How open are you to receive new members? Which is the procedure to join the group? Is there any integration process? And to leave it?
8. Do you have any **normative documents** where the guidelines of participation, action strategies, responsibilities, etc. are stated? If yes, these documents are easy to find and accessible to all the members? Are these **documents being updated**? **Who participate** in the updating process? If not, **how do you transfer the normative** and rules of functioning to new members?

C. GROUP OPERATION, LEADERSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

9. Which is the main **scope of the meeting** you organize? Could you describe how are these meetings? Is there any talking points/agenda informed previously? Are all the members attending the meetings?
10. Do you have **time and space** to create knowledge together (i.e. create new materials, activities, projects, etc.)? If yes, how are these spaces (relaxed, collaborative, informal, etc.)
11. Regarding the **activities** you organize: which type of activities are? How do you organize them? Who participates in the activities? How they participate (as organizers, participants, collaborators, etc.)?
12. Do you have tools to share information about the activities you organize? Do you evaluate the activities? Do you use the information to create/design new activities?
13. Have any changes in the functioning occurred? If yes, how do you managed the changes and adjustments on the rules, roles, normatives, etc.)

14. How is the decision-making process? How do you come to decisions as a group? (*is anyone giving always ideas? Do you have different people which is more active than others?*)

D. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND GROUP PROJECTION

15. Do you have any channel to **project your group outside the group**? (*Twitter, Facebook, etc.*)
16. How do you describe the **relation of your group with the exterior** (other groups, associations or local entities, etc.)? Do you participate in activities organized by other groups or associations? Have you ever organized activities in collaboration with others? Do you offer services to the community? Do you use exterior (from other institutions, groups, associations, ...) resources or equipment?

OTHER COMMENTS

Thank you so much for your participation!