

# T-KIT 3

## Project management



The training kits series

### Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



EUROPEAN UNION

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# T-Kit 3

# Project management

Second edition

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### **Welcome to the T-Kit series**

Welcome to the T-Kit series and this latest publication on project management. Some of you may have wondered: what does “T-Kit” mean? There are two answers. The first is that it is a simple abbreviation of the full version in English, “training kit”. The second has more to do with the sound of “T-Kit” and its resemblance to the word “ticket”, one of the travel documents we usually need to go on a journey. This T-Kit was designed as a manual for young people and for inexperienced youth workers and youth leaders that seek guidance for implementing their own first projects. It offers them short and applicable theoretical tools, as well as ready-to-use or adaptable tools, templates and frameworks.

The T-Kit series is the result of a collective effort involving people from different cultural, professional and organisational backgrounds. Youth trainers, youth workers, youth leaders in NGOs, youth policy experts and professional writers have worked together to create high-quality publications that address the needs of the target group while recognising the diversity of approaches across Europe to each subject.

This second edition of the T-Kit series of 15 titles, first published in the year 2000, brings together a wide range of new resources and guidance for project managers in the field of youth. It was created by an editorial team, with the support of project management practitioners specialised in different fields. We would like to thank the contributors and peer reviewers whose input greatly improved the quality of this T-Kit.

T-Kits are a product of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth. To find out more, visit the website: [pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership](http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership).

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# Introduction

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Welcome to the second edition of the T-Kit on project management.

Since it was first published in 2000, the first edition of “T-Kit 3 – Project management” has served as a tool for youth work in Europe and has supported project managers involved in international youth projects. In 2024 the European Union–Council of Europe Youth Partnership launched its revision in view of the emerging societal concerns, the growing number of opportunities for young people to implement youth projects and the fact that project management practices in the youth sector as well as the approaches of funding institutions expanded and diversified.

The revised version of this T-Kit was conceptualised as a manual comprising short, applicable theories, accompanied by ready-to-use or adaptable tools, templates and frameworks, as well as questions for reflection and tips. With a strong hands-on emphasis, it was specifically designed for young people, for newcomers or early career youth workers and youth leaders that seek guidance for implementing their own first projects. It is also meant for trainers and facilitators involved in youth projects and for young activists, youth groups, community self-organised or school groups that wish to design and run youth projects. Consequently, its content focuses on local, national or international youth projects with a limited scope and complexity. At the same time, it may be used by anyone interested in managing youth projects, experienced youth workers included, given that its content is generally applicable to the project management processes of youth projects. It can also serve to refresh the readers’ knowledge and to provide inspiration for their own daily practice. With this being said, the T-Kit is written with the assumption that the project managers are often young people themselves. Despite this, the readers will encounter a strong emphasis on youth participation; this is meant to highlight the fact that even if the project manager is a young person, this does not exclude the possibility and even the necessity of involving other young people from the community in the management of the project, making it as participatory as possible.

Furthermore, this second edition could not ignore the recent challenges affecting young people, the youth sector and European society at large, including the shrinking spaces for civil society and democratic backsliding, the reduction of funding for youth work and youth organisations on a global scale, the multiple crises in societies, the war in Ukraine and the decline in mental health. Therefore, the T-Kit was designed to highlight the basics of youth work and youth projects, underlining their value-based approach, their social change orientation and the features that enable youth projects to stand out. As youth projects cannot be disconnected from growing environmental concerns, from struggles concerning the mental and physical well-being of young people or from the implications of the expansion of digital technology, these factors were considered at each project management stage.

The T-Kit is structured into three chapters. Chapter 1, “Framing project management – The essentials”, as its title suggests, has a strong theoretical focus and discusses the main concepts related to project management. It clarifies the concept and characteristics of youth projects and proposes a project cycle model. The chapter also presents the elements that set youth project management apart from regular project management, notably the value-based approach, the active participation of young people and learning with both its non-formal and informal dimensions. Finally, the complexity of the role of a manager of youth projects is examined and a task-based model is proposed.

Chapter 2, “The wider youth project management context”, looks at the wider context in which youth projects are managed and zooms in on factors that influence the quality and impact of youth project management. Each of the six factors is put under the magnifying glass separately. Their definition is followed by a reflection on their relevance and the challenges they pose to the management of youth projects. The analysis ends with the exploration of specific practices and considerations for each of the factors, providing project managers with ideas they could use in their work.

Chapter 3, “Managing the youth project cycle”, takes a detailed look at each stage of the project cycle. In a similar way to the previous chapter, each stage is first defined before challenges and common tasks and considerations are further explored. With the exception of the project implementation stage – where many tasks must be carried out simultaneously – all other stages are presented using a step-by-step approach, offering guidance for addressing responsibilities and tasks in a logical, sequential order.

The T-Kit can be used in different ways, depending on the specific need of each reader. Those who require more knowledge can rely on the theoretical part as well as on the sections that provide clear definitions of the different terms and concepts used in the manual. Key concepts are usually highlighted through the use of specific text boxes. There are several “Food for thought” elements that support those that favour reflection in order to process the T-Kit content. Similarly, the editorial team made the choice of using as many visual elements and figures as possible to support those that require a visual display of information and to help them retain that information better. The manual can also be used as a toolbox as it contains a series of examples and practical tools meant to inspire everyone and give them a head start in managing youth projects.

With all this being said, despite the complex concepts, tasks, roles and tools described, the manual does not suggest that managing a youth project is only possible by a “super” project manager. Instead, the T-Kit reflects on as many elements as possible and gives each reader the freedom to choose what they need in order to improve their management capabilities. Last but not least, it highlights the importance of approaching the management of youth projects from a collective perspective because even though it may seem impossible for one individual to carry out all the described tasks, it is certainly possible for a team to perform them.

We hope that going through this T-Kit will provide the readers with inspiration, some pointers and support to shape their ideas and implement them and to make a difference in their communities and beyond.

Your T-Kit editorial team,  
Sergiu-Bogdan Imre  
Sebastian Schweitzer

## Chapter 1

# Framing project management – The essentials

This chapter serves as an introduction to the project management framework used in this T-Kit. It will explore key terminology and essentials to be aware of when managing youth projects.

The reader will find the following information in this chapter:

- ▶ the origin and understanding of the term “project”;
- ▶ the definition, scope, format and characteristics of youth projects;
- ▶ the project cycle and its implications for managing youth projects;
- ▶ understanding management and project management;
- ▶ project management and its key features of managing youth projects;
- ▶ the responsibilities and tasks of a project manager in youth projects.

### 1.1. Youth project – A working definition

A good starting point for exploring the fundamentals of youth project management is to develop a good understanding of what a project is.

#### Origins and definition

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), the word “project” was first used in the 15th century, borrowed from the Latin word *proicere* (*prōiectum*, *prōiectus*) meaning to throw forth.

With the term evolving over time, the Cambridge Dictionary defines a project as “a piece of planned work or an activity that is finished over a period of time and intended to achieve a particular purpose” (Cambridge University Press n.d.).

#### Terminology

The Latin term *proicere* implies a process that involves:

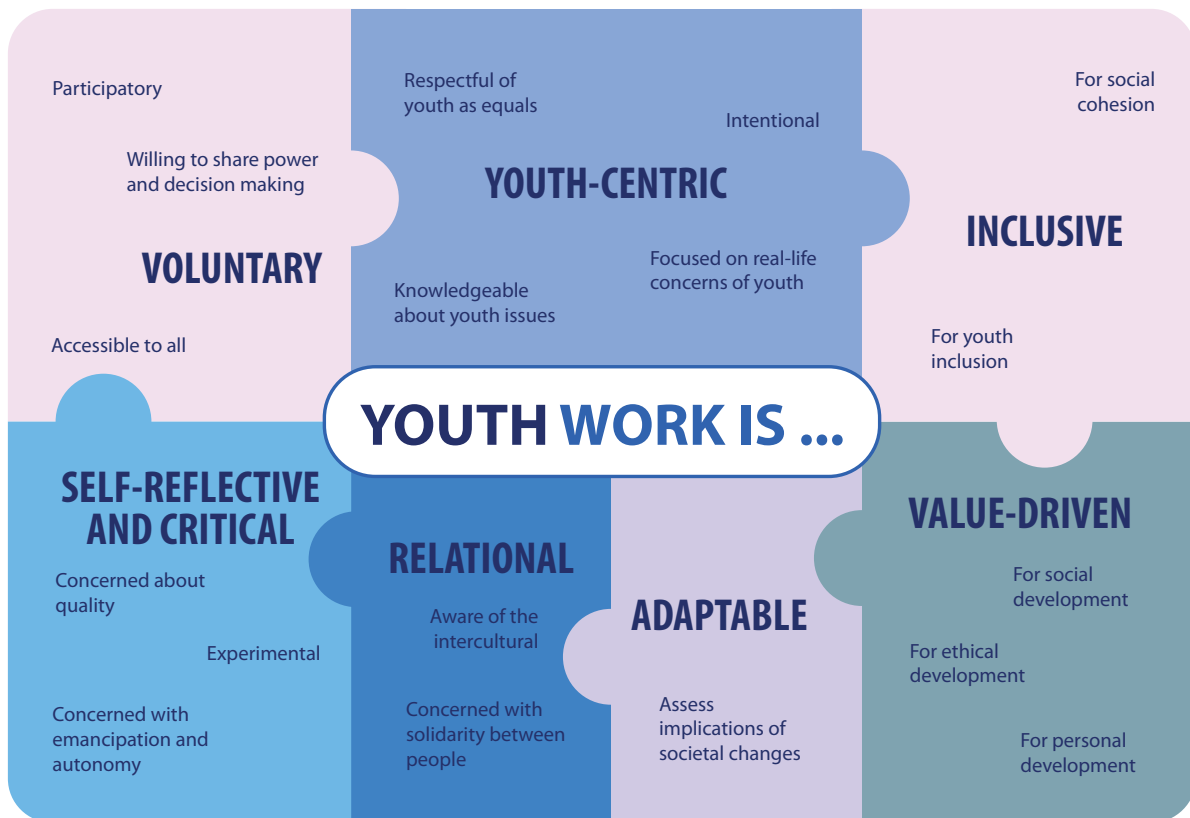
- ▶ a point of departure ...
- ▶ used as a base from which ...
- ▶ one throws oneself forward ...
- ▶ towards a goal.

(EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership 2000: 28)

While this definition is generic and applicable to many different contexts and fields of work, for civil society and educational projects the following represents a better understanding of what a project is. In the context of this T-Kit, the term “project” refers to a series of collective activities designed to achieve specific objectives that translate into social and political change within a defined time frame and budget.

#### Specificities of youth work

While every institution, organisation and youth worker use their own understanding of youth work, most definitions of youth work feature similarities.



**Figure 1. Characteristics of youth work (Council of Europe 2015b: 9)**

Inspired by a description by Peter Lauritzen and based on the publication “Youth work essentials” (Basarab and O’Donovan 2020), common aspects defining youth work for the European Commission and the Council of Europe underline that youth work:

- ▶ is a term encompassing many different types of activities of a cultural, educational, environmental, political and social nature by, with and for young people;
- ▶ aims at active participation and inclusion of young people in community life and decision making;
- ▶ is based on the voluntary participation of young people and a non-formal learning process;
- ▶ is implemented by professional or voluntary youth workers.

Therefore, youth work with its characteristics (see Figure 1) is a tool that aims at the personal development of young people, their social integration and active citizenship so that young people can contribute to social and community development. Within this context youth projects are a widely used format to turn youth work into practice.

### **Distinguishing youth projects**

What distinguishes youth projects from other projects is their focus on and involvement of young people. Thus, drawing from the European Commission’s and Council of Europe’s understanding of youth work, a youth project is best described in the following terminology box.

Terminology

A youth project is a project designed and implemented for, with or by young people for the immediate or long-term benefit of young people, their organisations and their community.

Youth projects are varied and can take many different forms and formats. Accordingly, they differ from one another according to the following aspects:

- ▶ project purpose;
- ▶ duration;
- ▶ target group;
- ▶ geographical scope;
- ▶ project theme;
- ▶ activities;
- ▶ level of youth participation;
- ▶ sector involvement;
- ▶ source of funding;
- ▶ budget.

Table 1 illustrates a few examples of the great variety of youth projects.

**Table 1. Examples of possible youth projects**

<p><b>Youth-led community action on environmental protection</b> A group of young people initiate and implement an environmental awareness-raising activity in a local park in their city that includes information stands, a green area clean-up and organic coffee and cake selling to raise funds.</p>
<p><b>Empowering youth through digital skills development</b> Funded by the local municipality, a youth centre offers regular workshops to young people to improve their employability through digital skills development. The workshops are implemented in co-operation with private-sector companies operating in the IT sector.</p>
<p><b>Internally displaced youth for peace initiative</b> Funded by the Council of Europe's European Youth Foundation, a six-day summer camp provides young internally displaced people with key competences for interpersonal conflict management and non-violent communication for the realisation of small community initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Youth worker competence development training programme</b> A partnership of five youth organisations from different countries realise a 12-month youth worker qualification project funded by EU Erasmus+, featuring blended non-formal educational training composed of a preparatory online course, two residential training courses and an accompanying mentorship programme on inclusive youth work practices.</p>
<p><b>Promoting good practices for youth entrepreneurship</b> Funded by public and private sources, an international consortium composed of youth organisations, public bodies, civil society organisations and research institutes develops a range of resource materials for building local and regional ecosystems for youth entrepreneurship in rural areas and advocates their practices to public and private stakeholders through a variety of local, national and international promotion activities and by piloting innovative entrepreneurship hubs in five rural areas.</p>



**Tip**

Visit the websites of the European Youth Foundation, the Erasmus+ Programme and the European Youth Portal to explore the wide range of youth projects that have been and are currently being implemented across Europe.

## Characteristics of youth projects

Besides all the differences, distinct characteristics (adapted from EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership 2000: 29) are shared across youth projects. These distinguish youth projects from other activities or operations.

### Youth projects have a purpose

- ▶ They aim to produce results beneficial for young people and their community; for example, to enable young people to demand, establish and engage in a shared decision-making process with adults via a youth advisory board for municipal participatory budgeting on youth issues.

### Youth projects have a learning dimension

- ▶ They support young people to develop their competences and grow their capabilities; for example, young people learn how to use advocacy techniques to demand participatory municipal youth budgeting from their municipality.

### Youth projects are realistic

- ▶ Their aims must be achievable and take into account the capacities of the project partners and the opportunities existing in the community; for example, to create a youth advisory board for municipal participatory budgeting for youth issues instead of establishing a youth advisory board for the entire municipal budgeting process.

### Youth projects are limited in time and space

- ▶ They have a beginning and an end, and are implemented in a specific place and context; for example, to enable young people to co-create a youth advisory board for municipal participatory youth budgeting in a specific municipality from 1 February 2025 to 31 December 2025.

### Youth projects are complex and made up of stages

- ▶ They require a variety of competences for mastering all the four project stages – planning; resource mobilisation; implementation; and evaluation and follow-up. For example, the ability to design a consistent set of activities leading to the establishment of a youth advisory board for municipal participatory youth budgeting must be combined with the capacity to lead teams and manage time, tasks and resources.

### Youth projects can be assessed

- ▶ They are planned and broken down into measurable aims which can be evaluated; for example, the youth advisory board for municipal participatory youth budgeting is composed of at least 10 young people representing youth organisations from the local community.

### Youth projects are collective

- ▶ They are the product of collective endeavour run by teams and involve various partners and stakeholders; for example, young people co-operate with youth organisations, NGOs and public authorities to establish a youth advisory board for municipal participatory budgeting.

### Youth projects are unique

- ▶ They use an innovative response to the problem they address or apply proven practices in a new context, for example, participatory municipal budgets are a well-developed practice for increasing youth participation but have not been established in the targeted municipality.

### Youth projects are an adventure

- ▶ Every project is different and involves some degree of uncertainty and risk; for example, the commitment of the municipality to establish participatory youth budgeting alters following a change in the person responsible within the municipal youth department.

## 1.2. Youth project cycle and implications

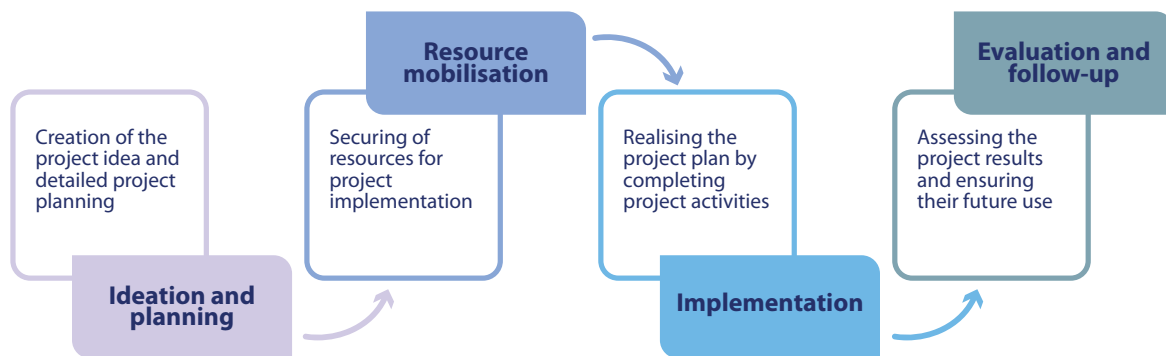
Managing youth projects requires understanding which tasks need to be performed to realise the planned activities and to achieve the intended results. Various tools and means exist for generating such an understanding and everyone is free to choose the instrument that suits them best.

Many project managers use a project cycle or project stages to help them structure their project and identify the tasks at hand. Different terminologies and levels of complexity can be found in plenty of existing models. However, most of the models share a similar structure and divide projects into clearly defined stages. It is up to the project manager and the team to agree on a unified and shared understanding as guidance for their collective project implementation.

### A suitable project cycle

When selecting a suitable project cycle the team should consider a model that suits their needs and own practices best. The model presented in this T-Kit is one of many options and every user is invited to modify it to better match their contexts and projects.

This T-Kit's project cycle consists of four interconnected stages and unfolds as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Youth project cycle**

When using this model, it is good to be aware of the following key considerations.

- ▶ Each stage is part of the project and it is not only the implementation stage that constitutes the project.
- ▶ A project starts with developing the project idea even though at this stage no funding or any other resources may have been secured for the project.
- ▶ The project's stages build upon each other, therefore decisions made at the planning stage affect all the following stages. For example, the project objectives identified at the ideation stage frame the resource mobilisation and guide the implementation as well as the evaluation.
- ▶ Consider that depending on the scope of the project and its budget, resource mobilisation differs in complexity and the time required.
- ▶ During project implementation it might appear necessary to introduce modifications and adjustments to the planned project activities.
- ▶ Evaluation and follow-up are an opportunity for extending the project or starting a new project cycle depending on the evaluation findings and the suggestions for follow-up.



### Food for thought

- ▶ Are you usually involved in all stages or are you getting involved only in some of them?
- ▶ At which stage do you feel the most comfortable as a manager, and why?
- ▶ Which stage creates the most trouble for you personally, and why?
- ▶ What support can you secure to navigate through the more challenging stages?

The distinction between the stages becomes clearer when taking a closer look at each stage. Table 2 provides such an overview by looking at purpose, relevance and activities for each project cycle stage.

**Table 2. Project cycle phase overview**

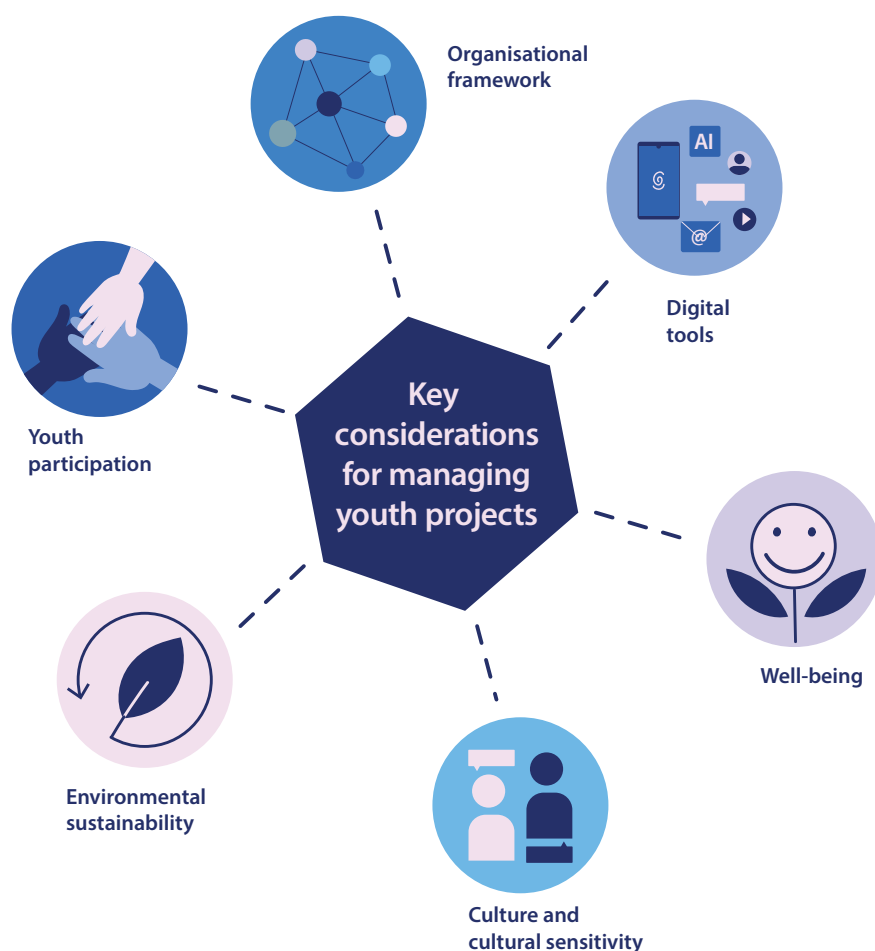
Stage	Ideation and planning	Resource mobilisation	Implementation	Evaluation and follow-up
<b>Purpose</b>	To develop project ideas and a detailed project plan, including objectives, partners, target groups, timeline and required resources	To ensure all necessary resources including material, financial and human, are in place to carry out the project	To carry out the project activities following the project plan, creating the expected results	To assess project achievements and explore follow-up activities for the sustainability of the project results
<b>Relevance</b>	Project ideation and planning are the foundation of the entire project, giving it direction and guidance by defining all key aspects of the project	Resource mobilisation is essential for realising the project plan and putting it into action; without the needed resources no project can be implemented	The project moves from idea to action by realising the planned activities, producing results and contributing to the desired social change	At this stage it is determined whether the project has met its objectives, which lessons can be learned for future initiatives and how to build upon the results of the project
<b>Activities</b>	<p>Identifying problems, analysing context and assessing needs</p> <p>Identifying stakeholders and forming partnerships</p> <p>Defining project objectives, activities and results</p> <p>Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework</p> <p>Conducting risk assessment</p>	<p>Defining resources required for the project implementation</p> <p>Identifying potential sources for the needed resources including one's own assets and funding sources (such as funders or grants)</p> <p>Developing and implementing a strategy for mobilising resources</p>	<p>(Co-)leading the project team, tasks and time management</p> <p>Collective decision making and team meetings</p> <p>Monitoring, controlling and documenting activities, results and budget</p> <p>Ensuring project visibility and external communication</p> <p>Troubleshooting and project adjustments</p>	<p>Conducting project evaluation to assess project achievements</p> <p>Identifying and documenting the lessons learned</p> <p>Compiling reports and/or project information materials and dissemination work</p> <p>Planning follow-up activities and potential follow-up projects</p>

### The wider project management context – Six factors

The quality and impact of youth projects do not depend only on how projects are managed but also on how important factors are reflected and focused on through the project structure, approach and practice. While there might be more, the following six factors (see Figure 3) require consideration when managing a youth project:

- ▶ organisational framework;
- ▶ youth participation;
- ▶ environmental sustainability;
- ▶ culture and cultural sensitivity;
- ▶ mental and physical well-being;
- ▶ digital tools.

Chapter 2 details each factor by exploring common challenges, approaches and practices and further resources.



**Figure 3. Factors that influence the youth project cycle**

### 1.3. Project management

Having defined the concept of “project” and having clarified the specificities of “youth projects”, it is time to move on and explore the second key term of this T-Kit.

#### Defining “management”

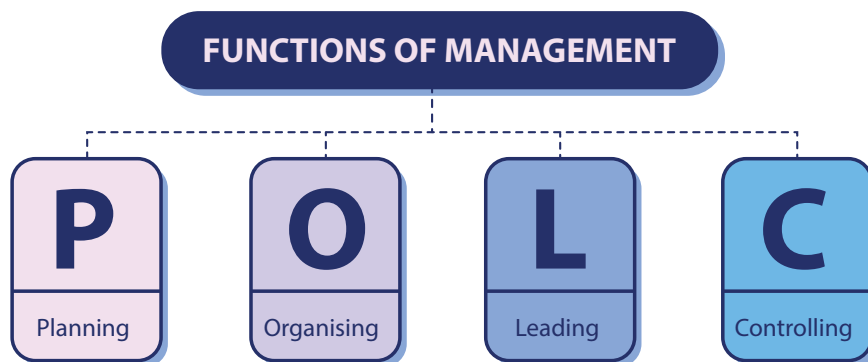
“Manage” and “management” have their origin in the Latin *manus* that means “hand”. In the 1560s, *maneggiare* was used in Italian and referred to working with or handling fragile materials, holding and manipulating an object or touching an animal. Similarly, *manège* was used in French to designate the art of horse training or horsemanship (Online etymology dictionary n.d.). These two approaches reinforced the meaning of “manage” as controlling something with one’s hands. It was later in the 1570s, 1650s and the 1900s that the term broadened its sense in order to refer to controlling, leading or conducting a business or affair (Online etymology dictionary n.d.).

#### Defining “project management”

When combining the two terms into “project management” the meaning evolves. A simple browse through the literature allows the following interpretations to emerge:

- ▶ leading a team in order to improve something or promote innovation in a specific field (Stewart-Mailhiot and Ryan 2015);
- ▶ a set of tools for organising tasks and pursuing concrete objectives (EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership 2000);
- ▶ a sequence of careful planning, organisation, co-ordination, control and evaluation of a set of activities that have a common goal (Council of Europe 1999).

A common element of these different interpretations is that they highlight one or more of the four functions of management (see Figure 4): planning, organising, leading and controlling.



**Figure 4. Functions of management adapted from “Principles of management” (2015)**

In short, those are defined as follows.

- ▶ Planning is about determining what needs to be done and envisaging a way to achieve that.
- ▶ Organising refers to considering who should be involved and what support is needed to achieve the objectives.
- ▶ Leading is about inspiring others to join and take action.
- ▶ Controlling focuses on ensuring each individual activity results are aligned with and will lead to the achievement of the objective.

### **Project management in the youth sector**

While some of the elements above are applicable to the business and the youth sectors, for the purpose of this T-Kit, it is necessary to agree on a definition for project management that reflects the specificities of youth projects. As seen earlier in this chapter, youth work is diverse and features distinct characteristics that make management of youth projects unique.

#### **Project management as a means to promote the active participation of young people**

- ▶ Learning responsibility and influence – involving young people in managing youth projects helps them understand their power to influence and take responsibility for decisions that affect their lives.
- ▶ Participation as a right – youth projects are the perfect means for young people to exercise their right to participate and should ensure the space for their involvement either in the project teams or as regular participants.
- ▶ Support for participation – young people may need advice, mentoring or coaching support from youth workers and project managers and/or financial support to benefit from meaningful participation in the project.
- ▶ Opportunities for participation – each youth project should be seen as an opportunity for young people to participate either in project teams or as regular participants.

#### **Project management as a non-formal or informal learning experience for the young people involved**

- ▶ Project management as a learning experience – the involvement of young people in the management of projects that concern them should be seen as an opportunity for them to learn, to make mistakes, to take responsibility, to adapt, to be supported by more experienced youth workers, to become autonomous and to be able to set their own goals for their own development.
- ▶ Involvement and participation in learning experiences – youth projects are considered of high quality when they are designed to involve young people in non-formal and informal learning experiences that valorise their strengths or allow them to address and improve their weaknesses.



**Figure 5. Features of youth project management**

**Project management takes a value-based approach, with inclusion, cohesion and environmental responsibility at the core of its processes**

- ▶ Youth projects usually reflect values such as democracy, inclusion, cohesion and environmental responsibility as their *raison d'être* and to ensure that these values are practised on a daily basis, they must be reflected in the management of projects.

**Project management is a means to ensure the compatibility and coherence between the processes and the content of the projects**

- ▶ Values translated in practice – starting from the premise that youth work is value-based and that youth projects serve to promote positive values such as protecting equality and human rights or fighting bullying or discrimination, their implementation should take into account these values and provide young people with concrete examples of what they look like in practice.
- ▶ Living democracy – the management of projects should ensure that democratic principles are at the core of the management practice. In this way, project management becomes a way to practise democracy and young people have direct experience and understanding of how democracy looks in practice.

**Food for thought**

- ▶ Which of these approaches do you actively use or encourage in your management practice?
- ▶ Are some of them easier to put in place than others? Why?
- ▶ What difference does their implementation make for your organisation?

Table 3 presents how these youth projects' characteristics are practically integrated into the common practice of project steering teams.

**Table 3. Example of a practice that highlights the characteristics of youth projects**

<b>Project steering teams</b>
<p>Steering teams are tools for illustrating how the characteristics of youth project management are put in practice. Such teams are often used to implement international youth projects, but also apply to local projects. They consist of young people that are selected based on an open call and that have complementary skillsets in the overall management of projects (such as involving people that have facilitation skills along with those that are good managers, bringing both beginners and experienced team members together) and often include the project managers themselves.</p> <p>They allow organisations to put into practice the four characteristics that make youth projects unique.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <b>Promoting the active participation of young people</b> by providing them with the opportunity to be responsible for projects. They work in a team, co-operate and implement decisions they make together. They experience successes and failures and discover how it feels to be in a position of responsibility and how to handle positive or negative outcomes and the results of their own actions. Often, senior members offer support and coaching to less experienced ones, ensuring they are confident and feel ready to participate.</li><li>▶ <b>Providing young people with non-formal or informal learning experiences.</b> Steering teams are ideal for practising and learning communication, decision making, problem-solving and other project management-related skills. Peer learning is a strong feature of steering teams and team members learn from each other at different levels. For example, an experienced team member may be a good learning source on time management for a less experienced team member, while the latter may specialise in the use of a specific online tool that the experienced team member is not aware of.</li><li>▶ <b>Providing an example of how value-based approaches are applied in youth projects.</b> Steering team members discover tools and approaches that they can apply in order to ensure their projects are inclusive, cohesive and environmentally responsible. For example, they learn how to ensure that the project's environmental footprint is as low as possible and discover various dimensions that need to be considered to achieve this result.</li><li>▶ <b>Ensuring the compatibility and coherence between the processes and the content of the projects.</b> As members of steering teams, young people experience the connection between organisational values, practices and the content that is promoted by youth organisations. When implementing a project that promotes democratic values, they are able to compare how these are explained and how they are put into practice in their own team. As such, they see how this connection is made in practice and understand the difficulties of ensuring these connections and they can learn how to ensure this coherence in their future projects.</li></ul>

## **A working definition for youth project management**

The Project Management Institute (1996) defines project management as “the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities in order to meet or exceed stakeholder needs and expectations from a project”. Given the complexity of youth project management, an adaptation of the existing generic definitions, including the one above, is required. For the purpose of this T-Kit, youth project management refers to the use of competences, tools and techniques throughout the various stages of a project in order to successfully reach its objectives and contribute to social and political change, while empowering young people to participate and ensuring their continuous learning and development.

The suitability of this definition derives from the fact that it highlights competences, tools and techniques and their application, along with the learning and development of young people as key factors that lead to societal change.



## Terminology

**Youth project management** – The use of competences, tools and techniques throughout the various stages of a project in order to successfully reach its objectives and contribute to social and political change, while empowering young people to participate and ensuring their continuous learning and development.

**Competences** – The ability to lead, co-ordinate and manage different aspects of a project.

**Tools** – Specific instruments, software or systems used to plan, execute and monitor project activities.

**Techniques** – Methods or strategies used to carry out tasks effectively throughout the project's life cycle.

### 1.4. Project managers, their tasks and the team

Given the key activities of each stage of youth projects and the six factors that require consideration, it is obvious that project managers should master a complex set of competences. These include, but are not limited to, communication skills, negotiating and problem-solving skills, leadership, analytical skills, adaptability and collaboration.

There are several existing competence models or frameworks that analyse each competence in detail, providing those interested with a complete picture of the competences required for managing projects. Examples include the project manager competency development framework developed by the Project Management Institute (2017) or the APM Competence Framework created by the Association for Project Management (2023).

These frameworks are well designed, have a strong emphasis on business-related project management characteristics such as performance and “outcomes that project professionals need to achieve” (Association for Project Management 2023) and can, of course, easily be adapted to the reality of youth projects. Capitalising on these, this section will highlight the complexity of a project manager's role by approaching it through a task-based lens.

#### Project managers and their “outfits”

Those responsible for managing projects are called project managers. While this sounds fairly simple, in practice, a wide range of roles is assigned to them. Using outfits as a symbol of these roles, one could say that the “outfit” of a project manager is pretty diverse or, better said, a project manager has a wardrobe full of outfits that include but are not limited to the following.



- ▶ The organiser outfit – understanding, planning and co-ordinating efforts and resources to meet the objectives.



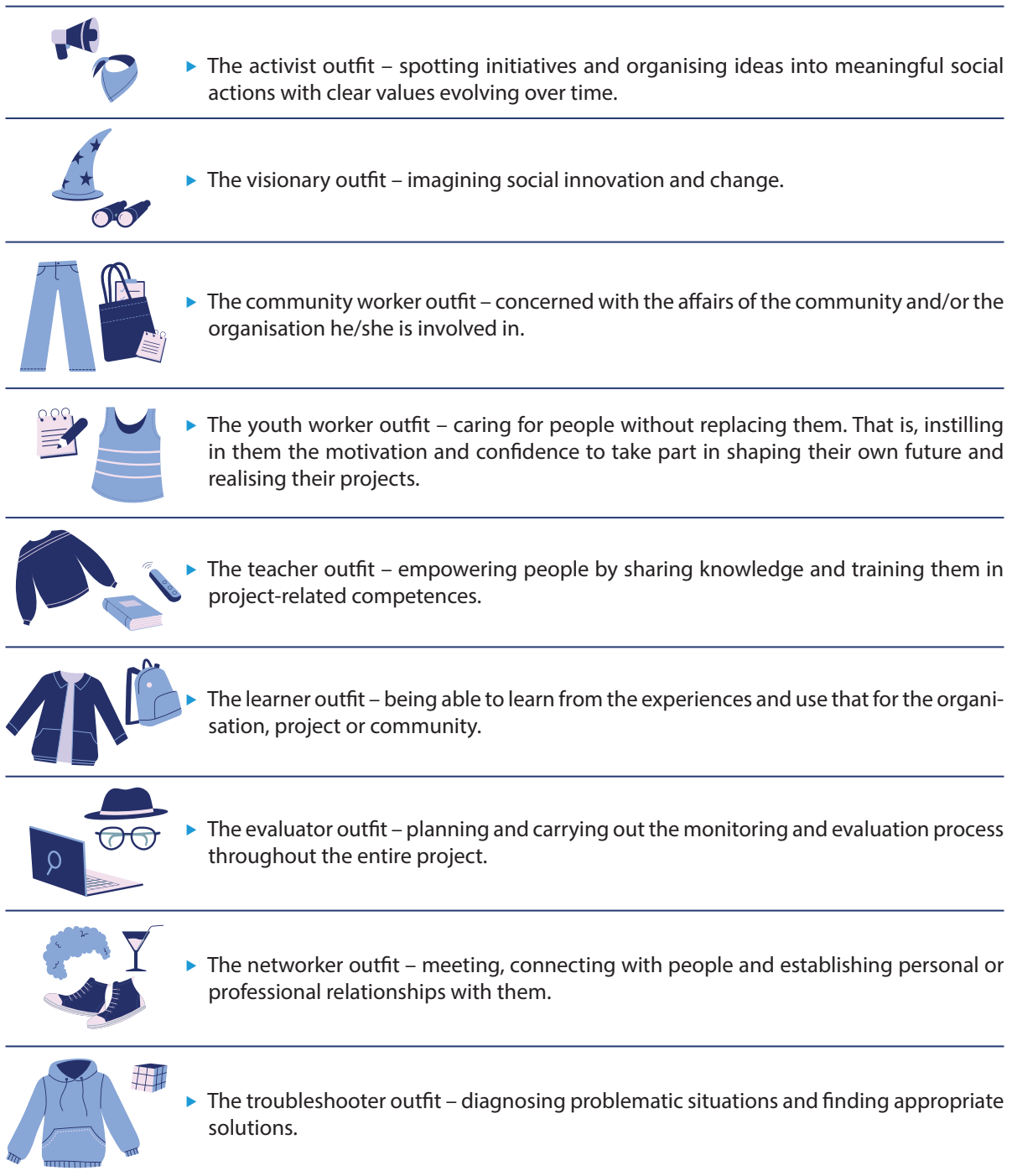
- ▶ The strategist outfit – setting clear long and short-term objectives, keeping these in mind together with the reasons for the project's existence.



- ▶ The motivator outfit – motivating and committing people to the project or to participate in it (workers, volunteers, young people).



- ▶ The resource mobiliser outfit – ensuring resources, applying for funds, administering and accounting for them with integrity and competence.
-



**Figure 6. The “outfits” of project managers adapted from the first edition of the T-Kit (EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership 2000: 39)**

### **Project manager v. youth worker – A distinction to be made**

Despite the fact that all of these “outfits” hint at complex roles, it is important at this stage to clarify that not all project managers are youth workers and, vice versa, not all youth workers are project managers.

Generally speaking, youth workers are tasked with supporting young people in their personal, social and educational development (National Careers Service n.d.) and their main role is to “facilitate young people’s learning, motivate and support them in becoming autonomous, active and responsible individuals and citizens” (Basarab and O’Donovan 2020). Occasionally, they may also play an administrative role, performing certain tasks related to “programme and project management, funding, resources and the physical environment as well as being responsible for the creation of a safe and protective environment for young people” (Basarab and O’Donovan 2020).

Depending on each organisation's reality, youth workers may find themselves in the position of managing projects or qualified project managers may be hired to run projects that employ youth workers who ensure the grassroots work with young people in the community.

For the purpose of this T-Kit, the term "project manager" refers to the individual that is responsible for the overall management tasks that need to be performed throughout the four interconnected youth project stages as presented in the previous section.



- ▶ Are you a youth worker, a project manager or both? What is the situation in your organisation?
- ▶ What are you expected to do as a project manager?
- ▶ What are the management tasks that you perform on a regular basis?
- ▶ How many of these tasks are you actually performing?

### **A tasks model for managers of youth projects**

In her book *Just about managing? Effective management for voluntary organisations and community groups*, Sandy Adirondack (1998) proposed a model of what (organisational) managers do. This model has been adjusted for the purpose of this T-Kit, focusing on project-related tasks, and is presented in Figure 7.

This model provides a structure that may help both a beginner and an experienced project manager understand the fundamentals of their tasks and what may be expected from them by other team members or partners. However, depending on the scope, type and format of the project, some tasks might not need to be performed in all projects. For example, managing finances does not apply to small-scale local projects that rely entirely on in-kind contributions.

The model also connects with the previously presented "outfits" metaphor. For example, the first layer of strategic management tasks is related to the "strategist outfit" mentioned earlier, whereas the project manager operates with direction and long-term goals and oversees the alignment of projects with, and their contribution to, the vision of an organisation. The central layer of tasks refers to several other "outfits" (such as the "networker" or the "motivator" outfits) and covers various dimensions related to the management of youth projects.

### **Project manager and the team**

As all previous sections point out, the management of a project is seldom a solitary job and often involves a common effort of teams. Given the importance that teams have in the life of a project, it is relevant to have a look at a few key ingredients for successful teamwork in project management settings.

#### **Inspiration and shared ownership**

Starting from Grace Murray Hopper's principle: "You manage things, you lead people" (Russell 2017), project managers should aim to inspire and act as role models for team members and to create a sense of shared ownership where everyone has a key role to play in contributing to the success of the project. Being courageous and involving young people in decision-making processes, creating spaces for them to express and learn are key actions that any project manager should master.

#### **Expectations, expertise and task match**

Clarifying each team member's expectations and needs provides everyone with a sense of openness and sets the ground for healthy learning processes. A project manager can then identify opportunities for those that wish to practise their expertise and those that want to learn something new. When creating small teams that include these two approaches, it is important to ensure a good match between peers.



**Figure 7. Tasks model for managers of youth projects, adapted from Adirondack (1998)**

### Clear roles and procedures

Providing clear and detailed role descriptions and outlining objectives and related responsibilities are healthy and transparent ways to involve team members. Understanding procedures – knowing what to do, the steps to follow and how to co-operate – acts as a safety net when things do not go as planned and enables team members to focus on their roles and tasks, knowing they can always rely on clear procedures.

### Creating safe spaces

As team leaders, project managers are also responsible for the mental health and well-being of their team members. When project managers create safe working environments for everyone, team members feel respected, listened to or free to express themselves. This leads to an enhanced feeling of satisfaction and to teams being dynamic, creative and productive.

## Facilitating personal development and learning of young people in the team

Applying the principle of active youth participation is more than a goal, it is a process. In most cases, involving young people in projects implies that project managers or other team members need to assume the role of coaches and support young people in understanding their capabilities, identifying their learning needs regarding project management, team communication and decision making, and engaging in a proactive learning process.

## Intercultural communication

When implementing international or intercultural youth projects, managers should ensure that the composition of their teams also reflects the international or intercultural dimensions of their projects. In this regard, besides the geographical scope, managers and their team members should possess intercultural communication competences that enable them to navigate the complexity of working with intercultural groups.

### 1.5. Further resources

APM competence framework - 3rd edition (see Further reading)

- ▶ A framework containing 29 competences that can be used by project managers as a reference for assessing and improving their performance. It allows individuals to rate their performance against the relevant competences, rate them according to a provided chart and thus identify gaps or further development needs.

Youth work essentials (see References)

- ▶ An introductory resource to youth work exploring the essential features of youth work that are necessary to generate a wider and enduring impact on the lives of young people across.

Youth work portfolio (see References)

- ▶ An online tool for youth workers and organisations working in the youth field to understand and develop their competences. The web page contains information about youth work essentials, youth work competences, recognition of youth work and spaces for sharing practices.

Project results platform (see References)

- ▶ An online database of (youth) projects funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission that provides a good overview of the diverse formats of youth projects and can serve as a source of inspiration.

European Youth Portal (see Further reading)

- ▶ An easy guide to the European Commission's international volunteering programme for young people covering information on how to participate as a young person or organisation and providing a database of funded volunteering projects.

Examples of supported projects (see References)

- ▶ Examples of supported projects – online information about youth projects previously funded by the European Youth Foundation disaggregated by priorities, themes and type of grant (pilot activities, international activities, annual work plans), which serves as a good source of information on the different types of youth projects and possible fields of action.

Project manager competency development framework - 3rd edition (see References)

- ▶ This framework identifies key knowledge and skills, performance and personal behaviour and attitudes that successful project managers should be able to display.

ETS competence model for youth workers to work internationally (see Further reading)

- ▶ A competence model developed to support youth workers that want to successfully network and co-operate on an international level and young people taking part in learning mobility projects.



## Chapter 2

# The wider youth project management context

In chapter one, six factors that influence effective youth project management have been introduced:

- ▶ organisational framework;
- ▶ youth participation;
- ▶ environmental sustainability;
- ▶ culture and cultural sensitivity;
- ▶ well-being;
- ▶ digital tools.

This chapter explores these factors in more detail. The project manager and the management team are invited to take a closer look for their own considerations when managing a youth project.

## 2.1. Organisational framework

### 2.1.1. Defining an organisational framework

In the context of youth project management, the organisational framework refers to the culture, structures and practices that organisations or groups have already established before engaging in a specific youth project. It includes the organisation's vision, mission, procedures, structures, culture and ways of working.

The organisational framework affects youth projects by influencing the following key aspects of project management:

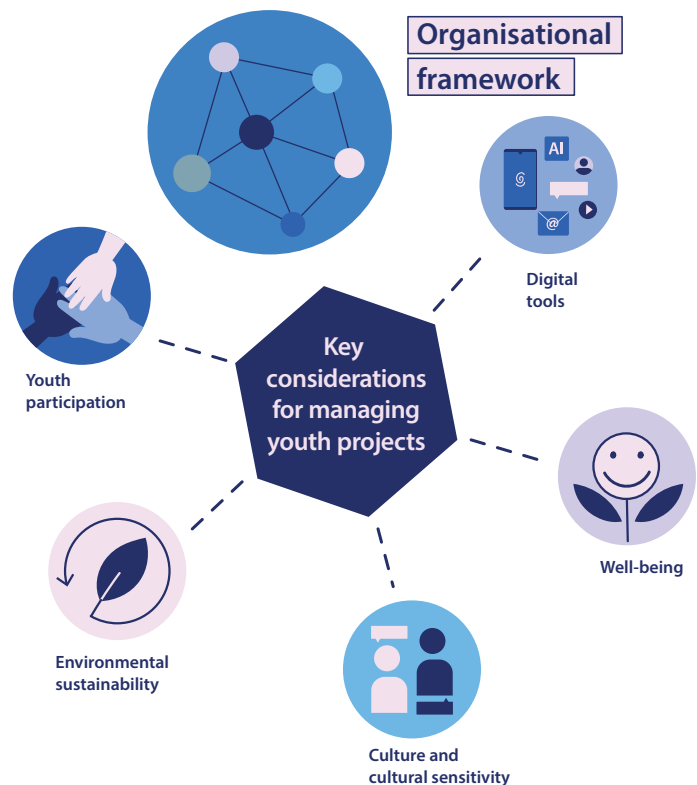
- ▶ setting of project objectives and activities;
- ▶ leadership and decision making;
- ▶ management and operational procedures;
- ▶ team culture, attitudes and practices.

### 2.1.2. Importance and relevance for youth project management

The majority of youth projects are implemented by formally established organisations. This means that their organisational frameworks influence the management of youth projects and thus need to be considered by the project manager. They offer a framework and guidance for effective youth project management.

Also, for informal groups of young people, it is beneficial to be aware of organisational frameworks for two reasons:

- ▶ informal groups of young people also develop an informal framework of values, structure, practices and ways of doing;
- ▶ informal groups of young people often co-implement projects with formally established organisations that operate with such frameworks.



In practice, this means that organisational frameworks are important because they influence youth project management. The most crucial influences stem from three factors (see Table 4):

- ▶ vision and mission of the organisations and groups that guide the wider impact of the project;
- ▶ organisational structures and procedures for decision making and accountability that provide templates and models for effective management and leadership;
- ▶ organisational culture, including operational values, principles and practices of doing that the project can draw from.

**Table 4. Effects of the organisational framework on project management**

Organisational framework	Effects on project management
<b>Vision and mission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Give direction and purpose</li> <li>▶ Ensure alignment of project with organisational long-term goal</li> </ul>
<b>Organisational structures and procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide proven blueprints, templates and rules for management</li> <li>▶ Offer support by sharing experiences and expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Organisational culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provides values and practices for co-operation and communication</li> <li>▶ Provides a framework for a team's code of conduct</li> </ul>

### Vision and mission

Organisations and organised people usually begin with a vision for change, a shared dream in which people believe. A vision is commonly accompanied by a mission explaining what the organisation or group is doing and why it is doing it. In short, a vision inspires people to dream; a mission inspires them to action (Center for Community Health and Development n.d.).

Together vision and mission influence youth projects by giving direction and purpose and ensure alignment between an organisation's long-term goal and a project's objective.

### Organisational structures and procedures

Every organisation or group of people creates internal processes and ways of doing. In organisations this is usually more codified and formalised while in informal groups it is less so. However, in both cases structures, rules and procedures are established to support the functioning of the organisation or group. This can include structures establishing responsibilities and accountability, procedures for decision making or task division and rules for managing expenditure or working with young people.

Organisational structures and procedures influence youth projects by providing already proven blueprints for leadership (decision making, communication, collaboration), information and knowledge management, and rules for financial management (see Figure 8). They also offer support in the form of mentors, coaches, advisers or consultants sharing experiences and expertise.

### Organisational culture

Organisations and groups of people develop an internal culture, a way of doing things together. As with culture in general, an organisational or group culture refers to a "set of values which are collectively shared by the members of the organisation" (Coskun and Metin 2016). For Hofstede it includes symbols, attitudes and beliefs, and differences in organisational cultures manifest most visibly in organisational practices (Waisfisz 2015).

Thus, an organisational culture influences youth project management directly through the values and practices of the involved project manager and their team members. Established organisational practices will find

their equivalent in how the project manager and its team co-operate, interact, communicate and address their problems and conflicts.



**Figure 8. Organisational influences on youth projects**

### 2.1.3. Challenges

While the organisational framework is a fruitful resource for the project manager to tap into, it can also be the source of challenges for youth project management. Some of the most common challenges in youth project management are listed below.

#### **Inflexible organisational frameworks**

In some organisations a strict organisational framework leaves little room for innovation. In this case, leadership practices, decision making and administrative procedures prevent creative project design appealing to young people. Alternative project ideas are not getting created because of unchallenged outdated assumptions or hierarchical decision making. Likewise, innovative practices are being opposed by administrative or financial protocols.

#### **Bureaucratic organisational frameworks**

Administrative protocols might not only impact project planning and block innovative project design but also impose complicated and complex bureaucratic procedures on project management. This can slow down project implementation and consume a lot of the time and energy of the project management team. Examples are often unnecessary complex requirements for the purchase of services and goods.

#### **Limited organisational frameworks**

Smaller organisations and informal groups often do not have an extensive organisational framework. This might mean that for larger or more complex youth projects they cannot rely on already established practices. In this case, the project management team needs to dedicate work to creating unique procedures, templates and practices for the project. This is not only a time-intensive endeavour but often includes frequent revision and fine-tuning.

#### **Conflicting organisational frameworks**

The bigger the partnership managing a project, the more likely it is that the partners’ organisational frameworks conflict with each other. This might result in conflicting assumptions about how decision-making processes are organised within the team, which documents are required for documenting project expenses or how binding deadlines are for the team members. Unaddressed conflicting organisational frameworks have the potential to disrupt co-operation and endanger project partnership.

## Lack of awareness of organisational frameworks

Not knowing about existing organisational frameworks, specifically procedures, protocols and practices is another obstacle for youth project management. Not all organisations inform project managers systematically about their binding procedures. Thus, during project implementation new procedures may be developed despite templates for reporting or for service contracts already existing within the organisation. This causes not only frustration but also means double work. Knowledge and information management systems and project steering groups are recognised instruments for preventing such inefficiencies.



### Food for thought

- ▶ Which practices in your organisation can support your current youth project?
- ▶ How do you ensure effective knowledge and information transfer within your organisation?
- ▶ Have you encountered different practices in the partner organisations you collaborate with? If so, how did you facilitate mutual learning and adaptation? How did you decide which approach to use?

### 2.1.4. Practices and approaches

Effective use of the organisational framework can be a game changer for youth project management. It provides guidance for project design and offers ready-to-use and proven procedures, practices and templates for many aspects of project management such as decision making, reporting and financial management.

In order to be able to utilise the existing organisational framework, the project manager needs to be aware of it. A well-established information and knowledge management system does ensure such learning within an organisation. If such a system does not exist, a more proactive approach has to be applied by the project manager.

The very least to consider are the questions below.

- ▶ Does the organisation have an explicitly formulated vision and mission statements and a strategic action plan underpinning the organisation's operation?
- ▶ If so, do these documents provide direction for project design? Is the planned project in line with the organisation's vision and mission?
- ▶ Does the organisation have information from previous years or projects that might be helpful for the project that I am working on? For example, does the organisation have a list of reliable partners, donor programmes, best practice projects or thematic experts?
- ▶ Are there any procedures, internal policies, practices or protocols that my organisation has established – binding or not binding – for different stages of project management, including project ideation, finances, monitoring and evaluation, project reporting and documentation, visibility and dissemination? If so, what are those and who can instruct me on their use?



### Tip

Do not reinvent the wheel. Check within your organisation and among your partners for established and proven practices and procedures for decision making, project planning, monitoring and evaluation, reporting and financial management.

In a second step, if the project is realised in co-operation with other organisations or informal groups, the project manager is advised to check against conflicting organisational practices to avoid surprises and difficulties. One might be surprised how differently the daily project management routines are handled across organisations and teams.

The richness of organisational frameworks is a resource that should not be missed for partnership projects. Therefore, the project management team should take the time to agree together with the partners on the very organisational practices and procedures to use within the project. This is best done at the beginning of a new co-operation period when the partners engage in a new project. The most common points of concern for youth project management are often related to:

- ▶ youth involvement (participation, inclusion, methods);
- ▶ environmental sustainability (travel policies, green equipment and consumables, waste reduction, recycling);
- ▶ team management (hierarchies, decision making, accountability);
- ▶ organisational culture (leadership, communication, collaboration);
- ▶ finances (remuneration, payments, accountancy).

Addressing these aspects within the partnership can be a productive moment of shared learning in which one's own practices can be reviewed and ways of doing are improved.

Last but not least, even after having successfully integrated the good practices of the organisations involved, project management needs to be flexible and ready to adapt to the context. This might include restructuring team processes, adapting the approach to young people in the project or adjusting project monitoring and documentation.

In this case, the project manager should respond immediately and embrace changes. Feeding these newly developed procedures and practices back into the project's partner organisations is an invaluable contribution to their organisational development.

### **2.1.5. Further resources**

Community tool box (see References)

- ▶ A step-by-step online guide on key competences, practices and toolkits for community development, including on topics such as strategic planning and organisational structure and leadership and management.

Financial management essentials – A handbook for NGOs (see Further reading)

- ▶ An introduction to financial management for NGOs covering a wide range of topics such as financial planning, accounting, financial reports, auditing and malpractice.

Organizational development for NGOs – Toolkit (see Further reading)

- ▶ The toolkit outlines essential steps for organisational development by addressing topics such as vision and mission development, organisational statutes, ethics and accountability, human resource development, and management.

Constructing the best culture to perform – A manual by Bob Waisfisz based on research by Geert Hofstede (see References)

- ▶ A handbook on organisational culture and change management exploring a research-based model of strategy, culture and change.

## 2.2. Youth participation

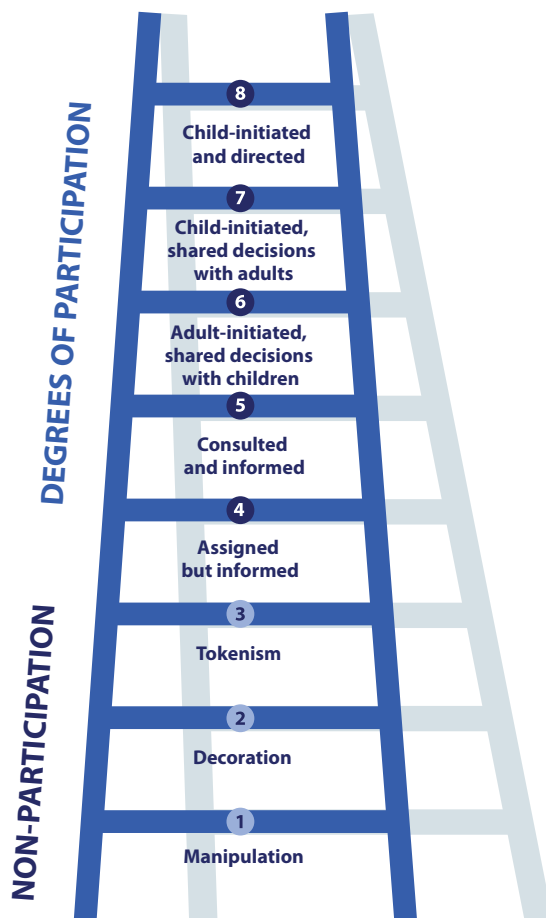
### 2.2.1. Defining youth participation

According to the various strategic youth policy and youth work documents developed by the European Commission and the Council of Europe, youth participation is crucial not only for the personal development of young people but also for the development of society as a whole. It refers to the involvement of young people as active citizens influencing decisions that affect their lives (Council of Europe 2015a).

Youth participation happens at many different levels ranging from families, schools and youth councils to local, regional, national and international levels, but also within civil society and youth organisations and in youth projects.



## The Ladder of Children's Participation



Thus, the term “youth participation” covers a wide range of different forms of youth involvement. In this T-Kit, the term “youth participation” will be used to specifically refer to the participation of young people in managing youth projects.

While many models exist to conceptualise youth participation, a common starting point is Roger Hart’s ladder of children’s participation (Hart 1992) based on the ladder of citizen participation by Sherry Arnstein (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Visual representation of Roger Hart’s ladder of children’s participation (Hart 1992)



**Figure 10. Degrees of participation according to Treseder (1997) (Source: Karsten (2012))**

Phil Treseder's Degree of Participation (Treseder 1997) (see Figure 10) goes beyond Hart's model:

- ▶ by removing any implied hierarchy, sequence or optimal levels of participation;
- ▶ by highlighting that without adequate youth empowerment young people will not be able to fully engage in youth-led projects (Karsten 2012).

Accordingly, there are different suitable forms of youth participation in youth projects. None of the different forms are better than the other, they just have different characteristics and foresee different roles for young people in the project.

### **Young people are assigned but informed**

All decisions are made and projects are designed by adults – youth workers or project managers – and young people are assigned to and informed about their specific role within the project. For many young people, this is a good way of getting involved in youth work and youth initiatives.

### **Young people are consulted and informed**

The project is created and implemented by adults but young people are being consulted and influence the shape, format and development of the project. Young people learn here the essentials of a youth project cycle and what important decisions need to be taken.

## Adult initiatives and shared decision making between young people and adults

While adults initiate the project idea young people share decision-making powers with them regarding the design and the implementation of the project. In this process, young people gain experience and expertise of how a youth project is designed and implemented.

## Young people initiate and share decision making between themselves and adults

Young people develop the project idea and the project design while adults provide advice, support and expertise. Young people develop a wide range of project management competences, responsibility for their own action and confidence in their own abilities.

## Young people initiate and direct

Young people are fully in charge of the project from the idea to the implementation. Adults might or might not get involved. Similar to the degree of participation before, young people develop their competences and self-confidence as well as the understanding that they can impact their communities.

Therefore, projects with a participatory approach are initiated, designed, implemented and managed by young people, or at least developed based on consultations with them.

A participatory approach also includes the fact that a youth project is open to the involvement of various types of young people independent of their diverse backgrounds and capabilities. This means that project managers need to be sensitive to all forms of exclusion and to ensure their projects are accessible and inclusive for young people.



### Tip

SALTO Participation and Information has published two interesting resources:

- ▶ The Youth participation toolkit (2021) is a good read about youth participation, exploring how young people can lead and be included in youth projects and how to prepare for youth participation in projects.
- ▶ The Youth participation strategy (n.d.) is a strategic framework that offers youth work stakeholders guidance on engaging young people in decision-making processes and applying a quality-driven approach to youth participation.

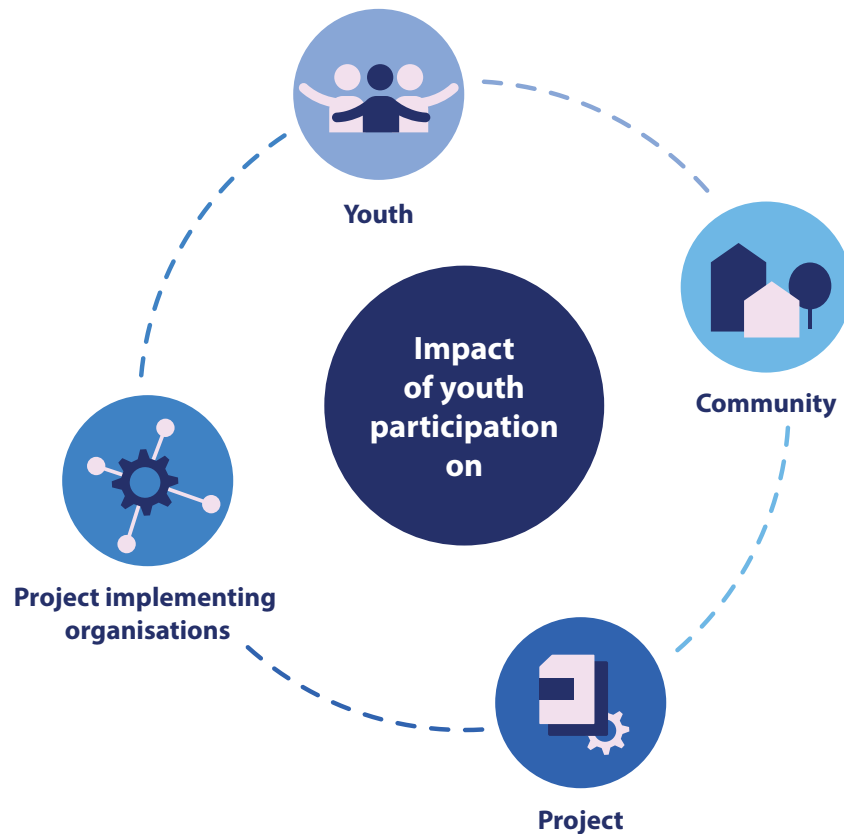
Developed for the European Youth Centres, the publication "Promoting accessibility of the training and education programme at the European Youth Centres" (Council of Europe 2015c) provides a wide range of advice on youth project accessibility applicable for project managers and educators alike.

## 2.2.2. Importance and relevance for youth project management

Youth participation is crucial for the success of a youth project. The involvement of young people makes a difference not only for the young people but also for the implementing organisations, the project itself, and its impact on the community and the needs and social issues it intends to affect positively (see Figure 11).

Therefore, young people need to be involved in a youth project, and youth project management needs to be accessible, inviting and supportive for young people.

With the different degrees of youth participation possible in a youth project, project management needs to be responsive and adapted accordingly. Ensuring young people are consulted on a youth project or sharing decision making with young people in an adult-initiated project requires different competences, approaches and measures.



**Figure 11. Impact of youth participation on project management**

For the project manager this means considering at the very least the following questions when managing a youth project.

- ▶ What is the role of young people in the project?
- ▶ At what stage are the young people involved in the project?
- ▶ Do young people have the competences to perform their role and tasks?
- ▶ What support do young people require to fully participate in the management of the project?
- ▶ What obstacles might there be for the participation of young people?
- ▶ Does the degree of youth participation change my own role, and if so how?

For the project manager this requires specific competences to ensure the project provides a safe space for young people to learn, make mistakes, discover the importance of participation and their potential as valuable members of society.

Therefore, implementing a participatory youth project goes beyond just managing the project. It implies the integration of elements of non-formal and informal learning into the project management cycle to support the learning and development of young people. The role of the project management team would extend in many cases to coaching or mentoring, providing young people with the space to develop their own ideas and initiatives, without interfering in the decision-making process, and trusting the journey. Moreover, this inclusive approach also demands the ability to consciously create opportunities for reflection throughout the project, focusing on the personal achievements of the young people.

### **2.2.3. Challenges**

For the implementation of a participatory youth project, it is advisable to learn the most common challenges that the project management team might meet throughout project realisation. Anticipating these challenges allows the team to be alert and to design their own responses and measures.

## **Absence of relevant experience and competences**

A lack of experience and competences of young people is one of the most common challenges and obstacles. Young people are often unfamiliar with youth projects, so it is quite difficult for them to go through all stages of the project management cycle on their own. Developing the project idea and leading it through the entire project life cycle is a challenge if one has never participated in a project before. Additionally, monitoring and evaluating project results without the right tools and techniques and adequate support in the form of training and capacity building may be difficult.

## **Keeping motivation up**

It is also challenging to maintain motivation and empowerment among young people throughout the entire project cycle. If they do not feel that it is their right and not a privilege to participate in decision-making processes, they may struggle to own the project. Young people often feel discouraged and tend to disengage if they feel powerless to contribute their ideas and influence the project activities and timeline. Due to the fact that they have rarely seen anything different, young people may find it difficult to identify their needs or the societal issues they wish to address and change. Interactive and youth-appropriate working methods help address motivational challenges.

## **Organisational barriers**

Sometimes the structure of the organisation implementing the youth project can pose a barrier to meaningful youth participation. Some organisations apply processes that do not allow young people to become involved in the creation of project ideas or in the decision making during project implementation. Often organisational decision-making processes might be too complex and time-consuming, which also negatively impacts the interest of young people in engaging in a youth project. This might result in the perception that it is unrealistic and out of reach for young people to contribute to project ideation and implementation, not to mention participating in project management in a leading role.

## **Inclusion of diverse groups of young people**

Reaching diverse groups of young people, particularly those at risk of exclusion or already excluded from community life, can be difficult. Youth organisations often work with established groups of young people and do not reach beyond their usual target groups. Often information about youth projects tends not to reach all young people equally due to the limitations of the chosen communication channels. In addition, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are often discouraged because they have difficulty believing in their ability to contribute to a project and have limited time for something that does not support their income.

## **Biases towards young people**

The perception of young people by external stakeholders can also be an obstacle to inclusive youth participation in youth projects. Public bodies, civil society organisations and community members may prefer interacting with adults and neglecting the role of young people in community development. The ideas, thoughts and perspectives that young people can bring to the decision-making processes are often downplayed and their contributions ignored. In such a scenario, young people's role in a project may not be taken seriously by the wider community, leading not only to opportunities for community development being missed but also to further resignation of young people.

## **Relationships inside and outside the project group**

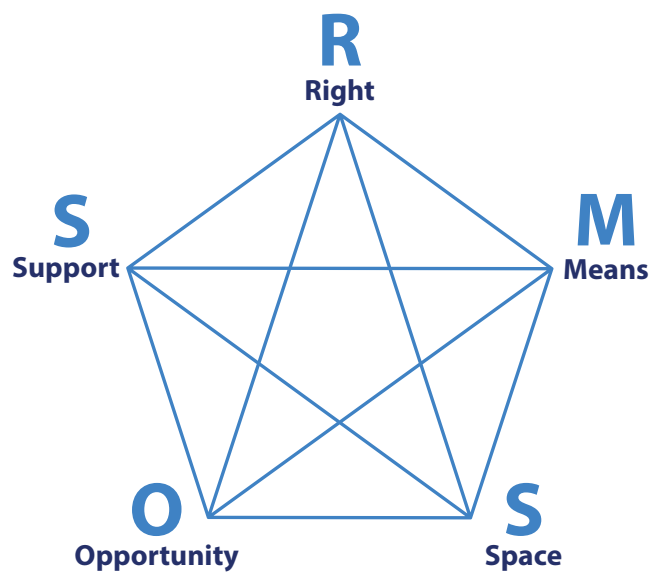
Keeping young people engaged throughout the entire project cycle might be difficult. External factors such as studies, family responsibilities, hobbies and other interests may take a lot of their time and attention and might be prioritised at different times by young people. Internal factors such as negative group dynamics caused by misunderstandings and conflicts, diverging understandings of the project's purpose and perception of an unequal workload might also lead young people to disconnect from the project and gradually drop out.

## Food for thought

- ▶ How do you help young people to develop their own project ideas and gain experience and expertise in project management?
- ▶ How do your organisational structures and procedures prevent or support young people to engage in youth projects?
- ▶ How do you involve young people in the decision-making process during a youth project?
- ▶ How do you reach and support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in your community?

### 2.2.4. Practices and approaches

To ensure an appropriate degree of participation, the RMSOS model (Council of Europe 2015a) – rights, means, space, opportunity and support – offers a good starting point (see Figure 12). This model outlines the conditions necessary for youth participation and serves as a useful tool for encouraging youth participation in youth project management.



**Figure 12. RMSOS approach to young people's participation (Council of Europe 2015)**

From the perspective of youth project management, the model's five elements refer to the following.

- ▶ Rights mean ensuring that young people have the right to participate in the decision-making process and are actively involved in the project. Their role should be framed as a right not a privilege. It is also important to ensure that young people are aware of this opportunity so that it is not limited to privileged groups or remains just a formal statement.
- ▶ Means refers to providing the necessary resources, such as training and tools, to enable young people to lead effectively. Ensure that they are equipped with the required competences and have sufficient authority within the organisation to become project initiators or key participants. It also means that the project manager needs to be conscious about young people's living conditions and how those might influence their ability and willingness to participate.
- ▶ Space refers to creating a safe and inclusive environment where all young people feel empowered to contribute. This includes a physical space available for meetings, preparation and celebrations, but also

requires the project manager to reflect on how to reach young people from diverse backgrounds and to make sure the project and its spaces are accessible and inclusive.

- ▶ Opportunity refers to giving real opportunities for leadership and decision making at every stage of the project. Additionally, it is about providing young people with opportunities for learning and growth, while paying special attention to ensure that those opportunities are accessible to young people with fewer opportunities.
- ▶ Support refers to offering ongoing mentorship without overshadowing the leadership of young people. Guidance should enhance, not control, their decision making. For the project manager this also means considering that some young people may need more support than others and adapting the kind of support to the needs of the individuals.

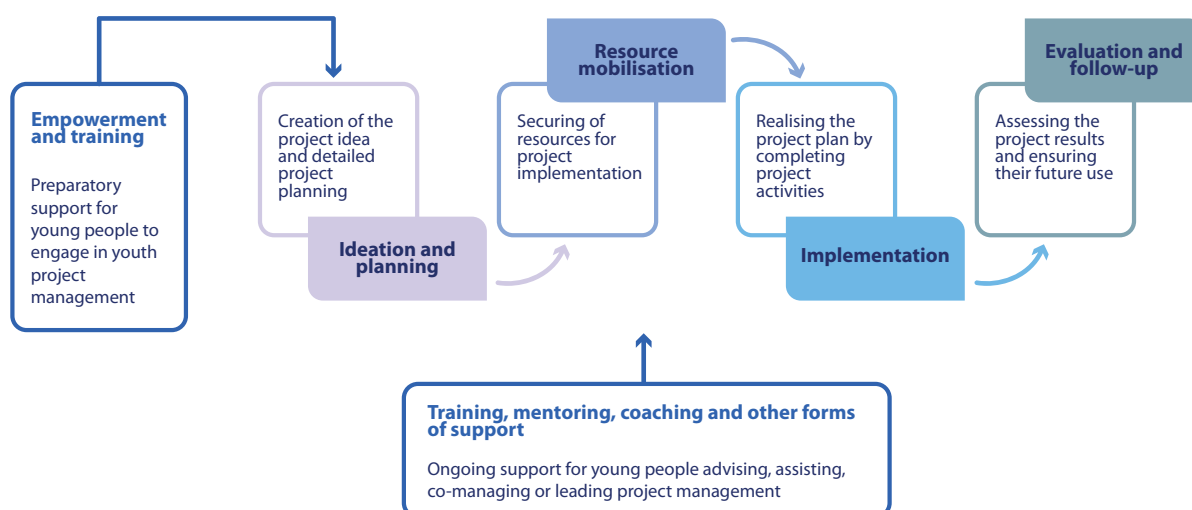
The RMSOS model highlights the fact that for participatory youth project management to be effective there must be dedicated support for young people to ensure that their interests and ideas are taken into consideration and that they can fulfil their role in project management.

Therefore, it is essential to ensure that young people have all the competence they need to participate in project management. In order to define which support is needed for young people in a youth project, the project management team should, early on in the project, take care of the following:

- ▶ clarify the role of young people within the project and their specific tasks and responsibilities;
- ▶ assess young people's competences;
- ▶ consult the young people regarding their learning needs;
- ▶ support young people in identifying their ideas;
- ▶ provide training on specific project management-related competences.

Young people involved in managing a youth project often need the guidance and support of youth workers throughout the entire project cycle. For this reason, it is essential to integrate elements of empowerment, training, coaching and continuous support into each phase of the youth project management process.

In the final stage – evaluation and follow-up – it is equally important to include a strong focus on guiding young people's reflection on the overall experience. This means supporting them to recognise their achievements, learning and competence development. Celebrating these successes reinforces the value of their contributions and builds confidence. Additionally, youth workers should assist young people in setting future goals, discovering new opportunities for engagement and developing greater autonomy in both their personal and professional lives.



**Figure 13. Support for young people to engage in youth project management**

For supporting a group of young people involved in managing a youth project from the beginning to the end it is good to be aware of the group development model of Tuckman (Tuckman 1965). It helps to understand the specific challenges that might occur within the project team during the project and provides guidance on how to address them.

According to Tuckman a group undergoes different development phases (see Figure 14) and each requires specific actions to support the group's performance. Project managers supporting young people in managing a project should adapt their actions to the group phases.

► **Forming**

Initiating team-building exercises and establishing roles, rules and goals for the project.

► **Storming**

Supporting conflict resolution and encouraging open communication. At this stage, enthusiasm for the project may diminish and disappointment or tension within the group might arise. Help the group get to know each other better, identify commonalities and leverage the strengths of the project team.

► **Norming**

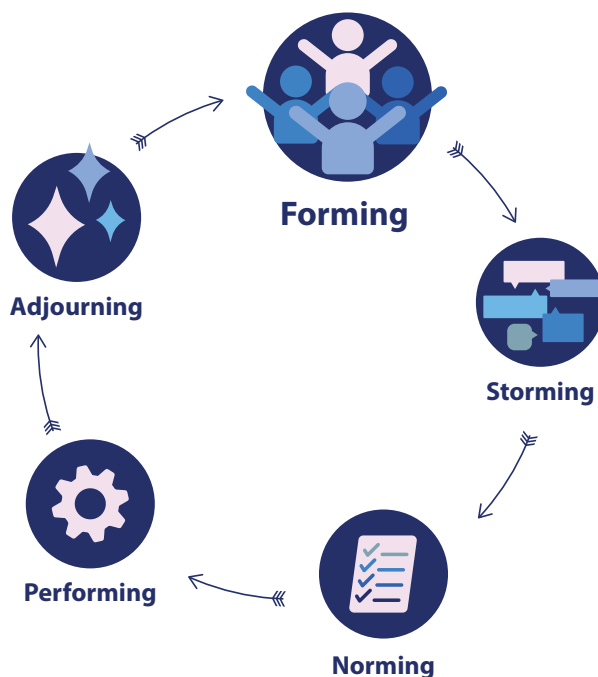
Assessing the group's ability to establish clear norms and effective collaboration methods. Help them build solid communication channels, clarify their roles within the team and reaffirm the goals and objectives of working together.

► **Performing**

Providing space to the group to act autonomously, but remaining available for support when needed.

► **Adjourning**

Encourage reflection throughout the project on the project's process and outcomes, celebrate the team's achievements and facilitate learning from the experience.



**Figure 14. Adapted from Tuckman (1965) (Council of Europe and European Commission 2021: 107)**

One of the most challenging aspects of youth project management is truly giving power to young people. Giving power means not only allowing young people to participate in decision making but also creating the conditions for them to meaningfully influence outcomes. This involves empowering young people to take the lead in developing their own initiatives and shaping the political, social and economic contexts around them.

### 2.2.5 Further resources

T-Kit 8 Social inclusion (see Further reading)

- A training kit to help youth workers develop a better understanding of social exclusion and the related youth policy developments. The publication also offers educational activities and inspiring projects on social inclusion.

SALTO-Youth Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre (see Further reading)

- ▶ A resource centre providing resources (training tools, publications, information and more) for people (inclusion workers, youth workers, social workers), organisations and agencies supporting young people with fewer opportunities.

SALTO Participation and Information (see Further reading)

- ▶ A resource centre dedicated to participation and information. It provides resources like training materials, tutorials, research, articles and videos on these two topics designed for educators, youth workers and youth leaders in its Participation Resource Pool.

Implementation guidelines Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (see Further reading)

- ▶ The guidelines provide shared definitions, practical measures and guidance to improve accessibility and support for participants with fewer opportunities taking part in the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes.

Inclusion toolbox – A guide on inclusive practices (see Further reading)

- ▶ The guide provides tips, approaches, actions and checklists for the integration of inclusive practices into six areas of youth projects, namely finance, participants, logistics, online activities, team and atmosphere, programme and content.

## 2.3. Environmental sustainability

### 2.3.1. Defining environmental sustainability

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges for the world today and many young people engage with this issue through movements, organisations and projects. It forces humans to rethink how they live, work and make decisions. That makes environmental sustainability a top priority nowadays in many areas, including when implementing youth projects. It is not just a buzzword – environmental sustainability is a principle that should guide every step of a project.

Sustainability, at its core, is about ensuring that human needs are met today without taking away the opportunities of future generations to do the same. When organising youth projects sustainably, it is important to look beyond just immediate goals and consider the long-term impact of the projects as well. A key question for a project manager is: Does my youth project heal the future or steal from it? In short, sustainable project management means making youth work future-proof.

Environmental protection is one dimension of sustainability (see Figure 15). It focuses on the planet and the ecosystem(s). The general aim is to work with nature rather than against it by trying to minimise a project's negative impact on the environment. This can involve practical steps like reducing waste, choosing green ways of transportation or using eco-friendly materials.

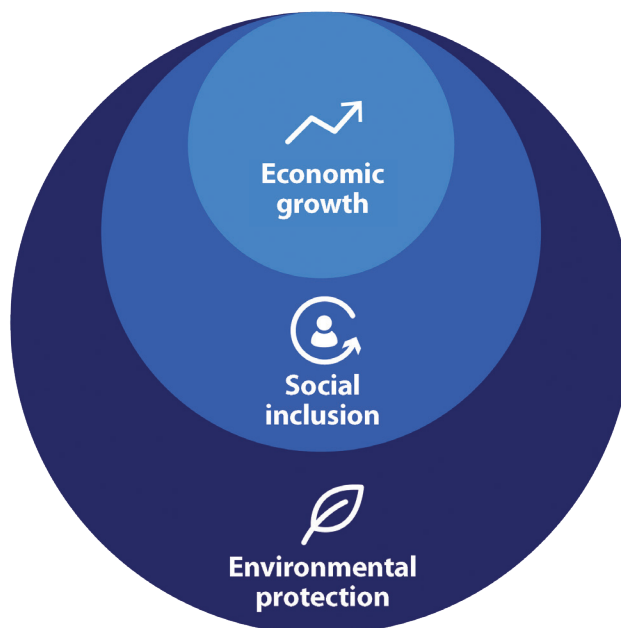
Another aspect of sustainability is the social dimension. This evolves around values of equity, social justice and inclusion. To be socially sustainable, it is important that a project addresses the needs of all people involved: from participants, team members to any other collaborators and suppliers. In this way, youth activities can promote collaboration, create meaningful communities and strengthen networks that support the transition to more sustainable social systems.

The third pillar of sustainability is the economic dimension. This is about making a youth project financially viable in the long term without stumbling into the pitfall of the current economic system that demands continuous



economic growth while ignoring the often disastrous environmental and social costs. In practice, this could mean supporting local suppliers, only buying what is really needed and reusing materials as much as possible.

The primary focus of this section is the environmental dimension of sustainability.



**Figure 15. Dimensions of sustainable development (Council of Europe 2018: 8)**

### **2.3.2. Importance and relevance for youth project management**

Sustainability is crucial in youth project management. Not least because it directly impacts the same future these projects aim to shape. As the next generation inherits the environmental legacy of today's choices, integrating sustainable practices into youth projects fosters a culture of responsibility and long-term thinking.

The urgency of this approach is underscored by alarming environmental statistics. Earth Overshoot Day, tracked by the Global Footprint Network (n.d.), marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources surpasses what the Earth can regenerate within a year. In 2024, it fell on 1 August, highlighting humans' unsustainable consumption patterns.

Fortunately, there are many youth projects designed to foster youth empowerment and youth participation at local, national and international levels. In 2022, under the Erasmus+ programme alone learning mobilities were offered to more than 200 000 young people and youth workers (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission 2023: 71).

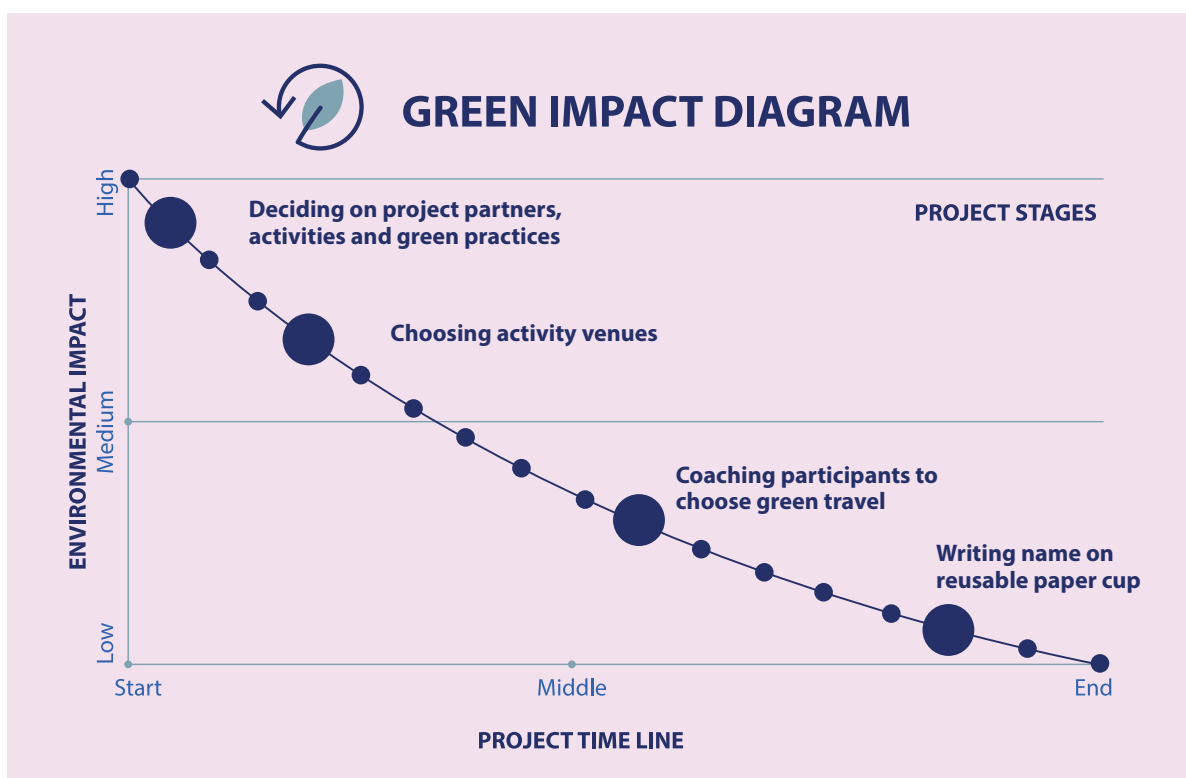
Unfortunately, the majority of international, national and local youth projects have an enormous environmental impact. Millions of kilometres are still travelled often by plane despite the fact that, for example, the Erasmus+ programme encourages green travel. The thousands of tonnes of food consumed, plastic bottles bought, showers taken and materials used. What if these projects are managed and implemented in a sustainable and green manner? It would make a difference not only for youth work and young people, but also for the planet.

Within a youth project, the choices for means of travel, type of accommodation and food, materials and equipment can all be positively influenced by strongly embedding environmental sustainability into youth project management practices. While a difference can be made anytime, the decisions taken in the ideation and planning phase of a project impact the level of the sustainability of a project the most as the green impact diagram illustrates (see Figure 16).

In short, sustainability is important in the context of youth project management for four reasons.

#### **It is the challenge of our era**

Given the realities of pollution, such as plastic islands in the ocean, massive waste production, global warming, and climate change, it is essential for youth work to prioritise sustainability in its projects.



**Figure 16. Green impact diagram (designed by J. H. Mostert and J. Stollenwerk)**

### Many young people find it highly important and take action

Young people have been at the forefront of calling for policies to address climate justice. Think of initiatives like Fridays for Future. Young people have time, passion and the motivation to be perfect partners in making a positive impact to mitigate the effects of climate change and fighting for a better environment.

### Governments and intergovernmental institutions and other benefactors find it important too

The EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership offers resource material on environmental sustainability such as “Greening the youth sector – Sustainability checklist” (2021a) and T-Kit 13 on sustainability and youth work (2018). In the European Commission’s Erasmus+ programme the environment and the fight against climate change is one of four priorities.

### It is “up or out” for youth organisations and project managers

Giving sustainability serious thought and acting upon it is the only way to go if an organisation or project manager wants to stay credible as an organiser. Have a policy, show results and keep improving your sustainability skills as a manager and an organisation. Formulating it positively, environmental sustainability is paramount for future work.

Integrating principles of sustainability in youth projects is not only a responsibility but also an opportunity to inspire young people, youth organisations, youth stakeholders and other collaborators to create lasting positive change.

Youth events are often organised as eye-openers that broaden the horizon of young people. Therefore the first impression of participants – especially the first-timers – should be as positive as possible and in the best case a lasting one, particularly when it is about sustainable behaviour. This means embedding the care for planet Earth in any aspect of a youth project.



## Food for thought

- ▶ With what ecological experience, thoughts and feelings do you want young people to go home after your youth project?
- ▶ How do you guarantee environmental standards are met and lived throughout your entire project?
- ▶ Which impactful environmental practices have you seen or experienced yourself but not applied in your own projects, and why?

### 2.3.3. Challenges

Although many people recognise the urgent need to change their habits, it often seems incredibly challenging to put good intentions into meaningful actions. This struggle can be observed on every level: from global climate agreements that fall short of their targets, to individuals who find themselves slipping back into old routines.

Organising youth projects in a sustainable way faces similar obstacles. Here are some of the key challenges to be aware of.

#### Green mobility

While air travel is hugely polluting, it is still often taken for granted in international youth projects. The transition to greener modes of transportation implies various challenges. It begins with a careful choice of the location and partner countries at the planning stage and involves navigating through Europe's often unco-ordinated and insufficient train and bus network. Additionally, a larger budget must be allocated for sustainable travel, while saying "no" to tempting cheap flight tickets. Finally, participants need proper preparation and assistance to fully embrace green travel options.

#### Managing expectations and habits

Sometimes shifting to eco-friendly alternatives can lead to discomfort or resistance from project partners, team members and participants who are not used to these changes. A meat lover might be frustrated with a mostly plant-based menu. Or an organiser might feel constrained when single-use plastics are no longer an option. Expectation management, thorough needs assessments of participants, organisers and partners to meet them with the best ecological alternative and a good dose of patience are important here. Addressing concerns early and finding creative solutions eases the transition and helps everyone adapt to more sustainable practices.

#### Lack of organisational commitment, know-how and experience

In many organisations, sustainability is still not a priority. Strategy papers, action plans and management guidelines do not include environmental sustainability and green practices. This results in a lack of sustainability goals for projects not to mention clear sustainability indicators that allow the tracking of green progress. What is more, the limited commitment to environmental sustainability prevents building up organisational experiences and know-how for the implementation of environmentally responsible youth projects. Clear guidance, training, resources and support are crucial to overcome this challenge and empower project managers and their teams to make sustainability a core part of their projects.

#### Lack of infrastructures and facilities

Although a project idea might appear sustainable on paper, its implementation in real life is often more challenging than expected. Many structural barriers exist: green venues are scarce, public transportation is limited, perhaps there is no proper waste management available, and so on. Often this calls for compromises and putting some extra effort into logistics. However, advocating eco-friendly infrastructures – whether in conversations with the venue host, within the team or through public petitions – can help trigger the change needed to make sustainable options available for future projects.

## Greenwashing and misconceptions

Sometimes apparent “green options” are not sustainable but rather a marketing strategy. This requires the project manager to critically assess purchases or services used by the project and to carefully look at their own practices. Due to misconceptions and misleading information about sustainability, there might also be different points of view within a team about what green practices actually are. For example, while some might see recycling as the ultimate eco-friendly solution, others will state that recycling is still a costly energy-intensive process. Sustainable consumption starts much earlier with refusing, reducing and reusing resources before recycling actually comes into play.

## Higher costs

Organically grown food, fair-trade products or eco-friendly materials often come with a higher price tag. This can be challenging when working with tight budgets. One approach is to prioritise and invest in those areas where sustainability will have the most impact, while finding cost-effective alternatives in others. This might mean spending more on sustainable food but reducing costs by reusing materials, sourcing second-hand supplies or partnering with local organisations that support green initiatives.

## Lack of acknowledgement and incentives

There are limited external incentives that motivate project managers to implement projects in a greener way, beyond perhaps extra funding for green travel. Neither is there much recognition for improvement of the level of sustainability within an organisation. This can lead to frustration and a lack of motivation to continue pursuing eco-friendly approaches, especially when faced with other competing priorities. To address this challenge, it is important to advocate more recognition of green practices and build a culture that celebrates and rewards green initiatives.



### Food for thought

- ▶ How much time do you dedicate to planning how to make your youth project greener?
- ▶ How do you choose the location of your residential youth activities?
- ▶ What do you do to support participants of your youth activities to choose green travel?
- ▶ How can you motivate yourself, your colleagues and partners to try out new green practices in the upcoming youth project?

### 2.3.4. Practices and approaches

Many practical initiatives can make youth projects more environmentally sustainable. For a project manager this might feel overwhelming at times, because learned habits and grown practices will be challenged and ways of doing will have to be changed.

The following principles might help to ease this adaptation process and serve as initial guidance for engaging in the environmental transition in youth projects.

- ▶ **Think before you start:** before engaging in a new youth project, reflect on the expectations and define sustainability boundaries. Saying no is a big part of the deal. If a project makes everybody use air travel a lot and does not spark a whole lot of green joy, ditch it immediately. Those times are over.
- ▶ **Consider starting small, grow and learn organically:** when realising youth projects the green way, there is plenty to do. Doing it all at once might prove impossible in the beginning. Thus, select for each project a realistic number of practices to be changed. Communicate and celebrate small achievements, institutionalise the changes made, then step up your game.

- ▶ Do not do everything on your own: working for a sustainable future is teamwork. You are not responsible alone. Invest in building up partnerships and green networks. Colleagues and like-minded people are the biggest asset for success and continuous learning.
- ▶ Allow space for imperfections: making youth work future-proof and trying to implement fully sustainable youth projects is a tough job and bears the risk of burning out. Allow yourselves and others not to be perfect.

### Tip

Consider these four principles for greening your youth projects.

- ▶ Think before you start.
- ▶ Consider starting small, grow and learn organically.
- ▶ Do not do everything on your own.
- ▶ Allow space for imperfections.

Beyond these four general principles, the project management team can draw from a wide range of green practices that can help transform a random youth project into one that is sustainable and future-proof. Below is a list of the most common measures green project managers undertake along the project cycle to reduce the environmental impact of their projects.

## Ideation and planning

At the ideation and planning stage fundamental decisions are taken. They shape a project and its character in many ways, including the extent of its environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the influence of these decisions is greatest at this stage. The following tips for project managers can help to increase the sustainability of youth projects.

- ▶ Choose the right partners – invest in finding and working with partners with experience in or at least commitment to sustainable project management. Partners located close by make sustainable travel easier and less challenging.
- ▶ Communicate values – be clear and explicit about your environmental commitment right from the start of a new partnership. Communicate green values, standards and eco-practices in project planning meetings and invite partners to do the same.
- ▶ Make agreements – eco-friendliness can mean something different to each project partner. Therefore, make clear agreements to clarify what eco-friendliness means in your project, which green practices to use and how they will be measured.
- ▶ Commit to promoting green youth work – sustainability is not only about the current project. It includes spreading the word and letting others know that green youth project management is possible. Systematically sharing experiences, practices and success in networks, among colleagues and partnerships is an essential contribution to future-proof youth work.

## Resource mobilisation

The second project stage is about ensuring all resources for project implementation are at hand. The project manager should at least consider the following tips to increase project sustainability.

- ▶ Co-operate with ethical funders – select the funders you work with carefully and refrain from seeking support from companies, donor programmes or foundations that lack environmental policies or engage in harmful environmental practices.
- ▶ Be smart with materials – when planning the material needs for a youth activity, there are a few questions to ask: Do I really need it? How can I purchase it in a sustainable way? What about lending, borrowing or reusing materials? Less is more.

- ▶ Communicate green commitment and practices – inform funders and supporters openly and explicitly about the eco-practices applied in the project. Not only will many of them appreciate this commitment and support the project more willingly, but it also informs them about the importance of environmental sustainability.
- ▶ Be ready to promote green travel – travel usually leaves the biggest environmental footprint. Thus, promoting green travel is an essential choice for sustainability. Some funding programmes like Erasmus+ offer additional financial support for green travel. Be sure to make use of this opportunity.

## Implementation

Many smaller or bigger decisions affecting a project's environmental sustainability are waiting for the project management team at the implementing stage. Practical and logistical choices can make the difference between a youth project being considered green or not. The following ought to be considered by the project manager.

- ▶ Choose the right location – the project location, for training courses, seminars or youth encounters for example, has a huge influence on the sustainability of a project. Therefore, ask yourself the following questions: Does the venue have any green certificates or sustainable policies? How reachable is the venue by public transportation? Is there an opportunity to work outdoors? Are there natural spaces available?
- ▶ Make green travel easier – an online meeting with participants is a great tool for raising awareness and motivation for green travel and for sharing tips and resources. If no green travel is possible, consider offsetting plane travel.
- ▶ Make sustainable food a default – food is a great gateway to make a youth activity eco-friendlier and learn about sustainable practices. Instead of asking participants if they need vegetarian food, offer plant-based food as the default option. Ideally, the food served during an event is plant-based, seasonal, organic, locally sourced and produced under fair conditions.
- ▶ Pay attention to waste management and the use of resources – together with the participants, reflect and brainstorm on how you can minimise the use of water, electricity, heating and air conditioning and other resources during the event. How can waste be reduced? And what about waste separation and even upcycling during creative workshops included in the daily programme?
- ▶ Opt for reusable cups and bottles – say no to single-use plastics. Ask participants to bring their own bottles or cups to refill with water. This can be part of the practical information provided before a training course, seminar or youth camp.
- ▶ Include environmental education – integrate symbolic and hands-on activities in a youth activity to raise awareness of sustainability. Planting, gardening and cleaning up the neighbourhood always bring added value to an event.

## Evaluation and follow-up

Environmental sustainability does not end with the implementation but has also an important learning dimension. The following recommendations might be helpful for the project manager.

- ▶ Measure project activities – gain insights into the kilometres travelled by each means of transportation, the water consumed, waste produced, leftovers per meal or energy used at your training venue. This helps to track the overall CO<sub>2</sub> output of an activity and to find areas for improvement.
- ▶ Evaluate project activities and collect honest feedback – ask the team and participants to rate the sustainability of the whole project or certain activities. Identify success as well as shortcomings and plan how to improve next time.
- ▶ Keep learning – standards of sustainability change. New practices and developments are created at a fast speed. Try to keep up to date. Stay in touch with partners inside and outside the youth sector.
- ▶ Be positive and celebrate milestones – show gratitude and acknowledge everybody's contribution. Be optimistic and focus on making youth work greener a journey of contagious positivity.

### 2.3.5. Further resources

Sustainable events: Is it even possible? (see Further reading)

- ▶ "Sustainable events: Is it even possible?" is a guide to making activities and events more sustainable and planet-friendly, helping project managers to estimate, reduce, offset and report CO<sub>2</sub> emissions resulting from a project.

Green your youth project. A handbook (see Further reading)

- ▶ A practical guide in seven languages (Catalan, English, Spanish, French, German, Hungarian, Dutch) to make European educational youth work more sustainable and greener by exploring eco-practices for project planning, travel, venue, food, materials, communication and collaboration, and the office.

Glossary: Sustainable means of transport (green travel) (see Further reading)

- ▶ Clarification of sustainable means of transport within the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes of the European Commission.

T-Kit 13 Sustainability and youth work (see Further reading)

- ▶ A practical resource for youth workers and educators to introduce the topic of sustainability to young people in a non-formal setting.

Greening the youth sector – Sustainability checklist (see References)

- ▶ A set of checklists sharing best practices for sustainable event preparation, promoting green thinking on various topics such as teamwork, accommodation, food, waste, transport, printing and paper, and education.

SALTO Green Resource Centre (see Further reading)

- ▶ A knowledge hub to improve the quality of education for sustainable development and increase eco-responsible behaviour covering all sectors of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

The green toolbox (see Further reading)

- ▶ A publication providing tools, information, inspiration, facts, case studies and practical tips on a variety of sustainable aspects for NGOs such as offices, financial management, mobility, food, waste management and green teams.

Guides for youth NGOs (see Further reading)

- ▶ A guide providing advice and practices on key aspects of common challenges facing green NGOs, including strategic planning, sustainable project management, learning organisation and human resource management.

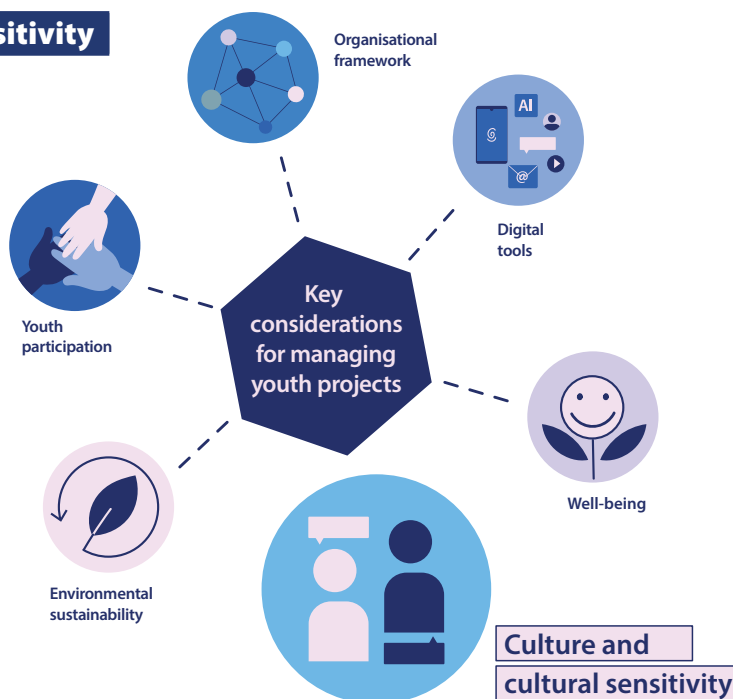
## 2.4. Culture and cultural sensitivity

### 2.4.1. Defining culture and cultural sensitivity

There are many definitions of culture. What is important in all of them is that culture stands for a set of different values, beliefs, traditions, norms and behaviours that contribute to shaping an individual, a group or a community. Culture informs how individuals perceive, communicate and act towards the world around them, as well as how they interact with other members of their own or other (culture) groups.

When talking about culture, it is important to include cultural sensitivity, as well. Cultural sensitivity encompasses:

- ▶ the awareness of the existence of the cultural differences between people/groups;
- ▶ the ability not to declare and judge the perceived cultural differences as good or bad, but to accept them as a reality;
- ▶ an understanding that cultural differences influence people's reflection, their behaviour and the set of values they assign to the world around them;



- ▶ the competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) that enable an individual to interact with people belonging to different cultural groups and to empathise and learn about the others' set of cultural values, norms and behaviours.

Mastering one's cultural sensitivity leads to a higher level of cultural competence and higher effectiveness in relationships with other people and stakeholders related to everyday life settings, such as school, work or leisure time. It is important to note that cultural sensitivity goes beyond tolerance, as it involves embracing and accepting the diversity and added values of cultures that construct one's living context. By acknowledging, openly discussing and celebrating these differences, one can advance and promote environments where a variety of voices and perspectives are welcomed, creating opportunities for richer collaboration and innovation.



**Figure 17. Aspects of cultural sensitivity**

Culture has been recognised as the “fourth pillar” of sustainable development (Sabatini 2019), along with the social, economic and environmental pillars. Just as these other pillars contribute to the development of strong communities, culture plays a vital role in shaping identity, values and cohesion. In youth project management, understanding and integrating cultural perspectives aligns with the broader goals of sustainable development and global co-operation.

**Tip**

Adapt your own management, leadership, decision making and communication style and contribute to creating inclusive environments for everybody.

### 2.4.2. Importance and relevance for youth project management

Culture and cultural sensitivity are important in the context of youth project management, as each culture carries its own set of values, norms, communication styles, work ethics, decision-making processes and leadership preferences. These influence the dynamics between the project team members, between young participants, between the team and participants, and across the entire management process, given that each team member involved may have their own perspective on how the project should unfold.

For project managers, cultural diversity in a youth project brings:

- ▶ different perspectives to the project based on the experiences and backgrounds as well as the cultural values of everyone;
- ▶ enhanced creativity and problem-solving, as the discussions among team members with different perspectives and ideas also lead to different reactions to challenges and setbacks in a project, creative approaches and a greater chance of finding innovative solutions;
- ▶ a higher level of collaboration and communication within the project team, to prevent conflicts and reduce potential misunderstandings; which in turn contributes to better efficiency and effectiveness of the youth projects.

For young people, cultural diversity in a youth project leads to:

- ▶ awareness of their own cultural boundaries and getting to know those of the others;
- ▶ enlargement of their own cultural boundaries through practising cultural sensitivity and intercultural learning;
- ▶ an understanding of how the values and norms of a society affect people's behaviour and attitudes;
- ▶ learning to constructively interact with representatives of different cultures and further contribute to increased acceptance of cultural diversity in society.

By considering and respecting cultural differences and diverse viewpoints within a youth project, project managers can and should adapt their own management, leadership, decision making and communication styles and contribute to creating inclusive environments for everybody present. This will further result in developing more effective projects that are sensitive to the needs and identities of all participants. Thus, the project can be relevant for a wider audience and have a higher level and a longer-term impact on the community and the beneficiaries that the project targets.

### **2.4.3. Challenges**

Project managers and youth workers involved in projects often face challenges throughout the implementation processes in relation to cultural aspects. The most common challenges are presented below.

#### **Language differences**

When working in intercultural teams and projects, words and expressions may be misinterpreted given the use of a language that is, in most cases, not a mother tongue for everyone. Furthermore, certain expressions and use of idioms can lead to confusion or even be considered offensive by some people when they are perceived through different cultural lenses. It is essential to pay attention to misunderstandings as they can escalate and lead to potential conflicts that could be easily avoided.

#### **Direct communication and feedback**

While some cultures appreciate and encourage direct feedback, some may find it offensive, causing resentment among colleagues. Understanding such cultural differences and acting accordingly influences the quality of the relationships and of the experiences of working together in managing youth projects.

#### **Allocation of resources**

The allocation of resources such as time, space or materials is often considered a challenge. Youth from different backgrounds may see "fairness" in unique ways. If resources are not shared transparently, it can quickly lead to feelings of unfairness or favouritism that might divide the team.

#### **Leadership styles**

The leadership styles often cause (hidden) frustration among youth leaders. Some team members expect clear direction from a leader, while others prefer a more collaborative approach where everyone has a say. Not discussing these preferences and expectations lowers morale and creates tension or hostility and may lead to disengagement.

## Food for thought

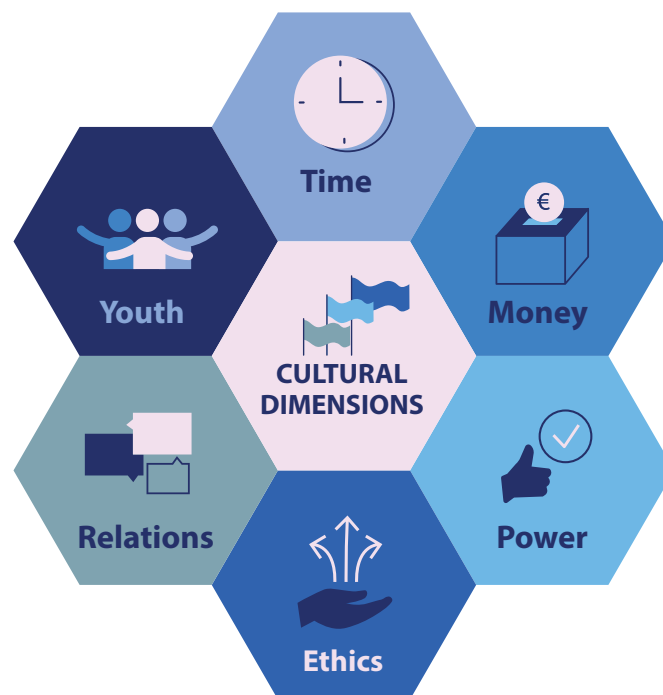
- ▶ What culturally sensitive issues are you confronted with most often in your youth projects?
- ▶ What do you personally do to make sure you act in a culturally sensitive way when working in diverse teams?
- ▶ How do you deal with culturally sensitive issues in your project teams or with your young participants?

### 2.4.4. Practices and approaches

Various dimensions of culture influence youth project management by shaping how young people and project managers interact, communicate and make decisions.

Understanding these cultural dimensions helps foster a collaborative environment, ensuring that projects are respectful of diverse perspectives. The most relevant dimensions affecting youth project management are time, money, power, ethics, interpersonal relations and communication and youth (see Figure 18).

By recognising them, project managers can create culturally sensitive plans that accommodate a wide range of values and expectations. Given the interconnection between these dimensions, each one should be addressed while taking into consideration the relationship with the others.



**Figure 18. Dimensions of culture relevant for youth project management**

#### Time

In project management, time is the dimension of culture that impacts aspects like scheduling, meeting attendance and timely delivery of tasks. Perceptions of time vary across cultures, especially the importance of punctuality and deadlines, both important for effective project management. In youth projects, it often happens that the project management team consists of young people or youth workers from different cultural backgrounds and that they are expected to work in mixed teams with people who have different perceptions of time. In

some cultures, timing and punctuality is not perceived as strictly as it is in other cultures. It is important and necessary for the project managers to:

- ▶ be aware of the cultural differences within the project team and understand their implications for time management;
- ▶ be open towards accepting the different attitudes towards time management;
- ▶ practise flexibility and communicate transparently about it, to avoid conflicts and delays during project implementation;
- ▶ find a balance in time management that works for all individuals while setting realistic deadlines for everybody involved;
- ▶ be prepared to adjust schedules and timelines to accommodate different expectations regarding time.

## Money

Attitudes towards money can vary among different cultures, influencing budgeting and resource allocation in youth projects. Some cultures may value the conservation of resources, caution, the long-term planning and strategic approach towards financial management, while others may value generosity, sharing the resources freely and a more reactive approach in the project's financial management. The potential repercussions of poor financial management can be severe, for example when a final financial report is rejected by a donor leading to loss of funding, damaged reputations, distrust among employees and diminished trust from stakeholders. This can jeopardise future projects and limit opportunities for growth and development within these organisations. Project managers working in a team with diverse cultural backgrounds should:

- ▶ gain an understanding of the different perspectives on finances and money;
- ▶ navigate sensitively the variety of financial expectations within the team;
- ▶ develop a culturally sensitive budget plan that ensures fair distribution of resources among the partners and team members related to the spending priorities;
- ▶ establish clear rules and procedures for managing project finances to ensure transparency in financial operations and reporting.

## Power

Across cultures, power is perceived differently and implies different behaviours and feelings. While some cultures prefer a clear hierarchical structure in leadership and decision making, others favour equal power distribution, value equality and democratic decision making. Cultural views on authority and hierarchy affect decision-making processes. In some cultures, young people might be encouraged to voice opinions and take leadership roles, while in others, adults traditionally have more control over decisions. In youth projects where participants come from different cultural backgrounds, the project management team needs to handle these different perspectives and perceptions of power by considering the following.

- ▶ Make sure team members get to know each other and understand the differences in power dynamic preferences present in the team.
- ▶ Balance hierarchical and egalitarian leadership as well as democratic decision making depending on the team members' preferences.
- ▶ Clarify through an agreement the project's approach to co-operation and teamwork.
- ▶ Ensure that each partner's role and responsibilities are valued and understood to support collaboration and prevent power struggles hindering project progress.

## Ethics

Significant differences exist between different cultures regarding ethical norms and values. In different cultures, different situations and events have different ethical norms and values assigned to them. Thus, for some it can be difficult to understand the justification and prioritisation of specific behaviours that derive from deeply rooted values and ethical norms. Some possible practical implications for youth project management may include the fact that some team members may prefer working in teams and prioritise harmony above everything else. On the other hand, some may favour transparency and individual accountability. The clash of preferences may lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Project managers dealing with ethical contradictions might try to do the following.

- ▶ Facilitate discussion on the perception of ethics at work at the start of the collaboration.
- ▶ Establish clear ethical guidelines at the beginning of a project based on respect and the understanding of culturally internalised ethical norms and values.
- ▶ Nurture respect among the team members and their different values and social norms.

## Interpersonal relations and communication

Misinterpretations and misunderstandings can occur easily when people from different cultures work together and communicate in a different language that is not native to them. This can potentially lead to conflicts, delays or the failure to achieve the project's objectives. To contribute to effective teamwork and conflict resolution within the project, the project manager should:

- ▶ recognise, understand and respect different communication styles;
- ▶ ensure open and respectful communication within the team;
- ▶ support team members to express themselves, so they feel understood and valued;
- ▶ facilitate the drafting of communication guidelines that resonate with all team members, irrespective of their cultural background.

## Youth

The role that young people play is different in every culture. Their relationships to adults, their perception in society and the norms they have to comply with differ across countries. Balancing the different understanding of youth within an intercultural youth project is a challenge many project managers face. Understanding the cultural context of young people such as their background, opportunities, restrictions, values and beliefs leads to developing more engaging, exciting and meaningful project experiences for them and increases the impact of the project. Some suggestions for project managers for achieving a high level of active participation and contribution of young people in a project include:

- ▶ considering the diverse cultural frameworks influencing the perception of young people and their position in the communities of all young people involved in the project;
- ▶ being flexible and adaptable to the changing realities of the young people they aim to include in the project activities;
- ▶ being responsive to the cultural differences in how youth engage with their community and address challenges;
- ▶ welcoming and respecting different cultures and perspectives in a project, which brings a greater chance of engaging the youngsters.

### Tip

For a culturally diverse approach to youth project management, consider the following.

- ▶ Balance flexibility with accountability: acknowledge cultural differences in time perception while setting clear but adaptable deadlines.
- ▶ Ensure transparency in financial planning: establish clear financial procedures from the start of your project.
- ▶ Balance hierarchy and participation: respect different leadership styles while ensuring all voices are valued in decision making.
- ▶ Establish shared ethical guidelines: discuss and define ethical expectations to prevent misunderstandings from the start.
- ▶ Create a communication framework: recognise different communication styles and agree on clear, respectful communication practices for everyone.
- ▶ Adapt to the wide range of youth realities: consider cultural differences in how youth engage and create an enabling environment.

## 2.4.5. Further resources

European Culture Compass (see Further reading)

- ▶ The European Culture Compass is a new, overarching strategic framework from the European Commission that offers guidance on the role of culture and cultural heritage across all EU policies.

T-Kit 4 Intercultural learning (see Further reading)

- ▶ A practical resource for youth workers and educators to introduce the topic of intercultural learning for youth workers and trainers working with intercultural groups and implementing international youth projects.

Beyond Culture (see Further reading)

- ▶ This book highlights the role of unconscious cultural beliefs and biases in shaping the complexity of human culture. It also advocates cross-cultural awareness as a means of understanding each other better and improving social dynamics.

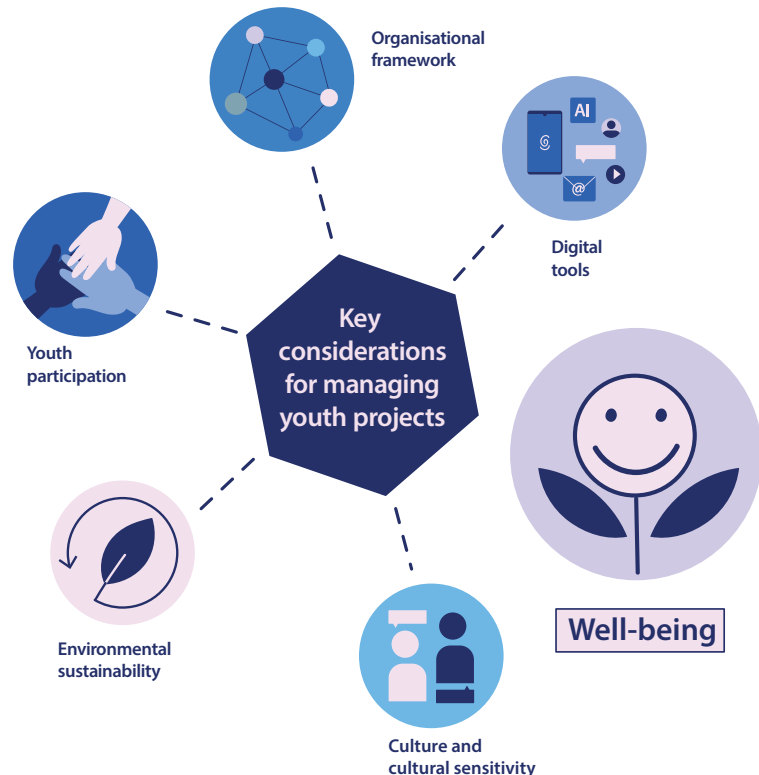
The cultural intelligence difference: master the one skill you can't do without in today's global economy (see Further reading)

- ▶ This book highlights the most important research on cultural intelligence from academics around the world and shares several proven strategies for improving your cultural intelligence. It also offers access to the most popular and only academically validated cultural intelligence assessment.

## 2.5. Well-being

### 2.5.1. Defining well-being

Well-being, beyond the abstract concept, manifests itself through a dynamic balance between physical, emotional and mental dimensions. It is grounded in tangible elements such as physical health (nutrition, exercise), stress management, the quality of social relationships and satisfaction in daily life. Manfred Max-Neef's (1991) theory of fundamental human needs provides a useful framework for understanding well-being. According to Max-Neef, needs such as subsistence, affection, participation, identity and freedom are essential pillars for achieving this balance.



### 2.5.2. Importance and relevance for youth project management

Well-being in youth project management is about the well-being of those involved in projects.

- ▶ Team members – they play a crucial role in managing the project and supporting and guiding young people, and it is essential to prioritise their well-being at all levels. They often face pressures related to managing responsibilities, meeting deadlines and supporting participants. This can lead to challenges in maintaining a healthy work–life balance and managing stress.
- ▶ Young participants – in each youth project, they go through a series of processes related to being part of a (new) group, getting used to a new environment, being subject to carrying out new tasks or learning new skills, which may be sources of stress. Furthermore, in some cases, they also deal with issues specific to adolescence such as identity exploration, social integration or external pressures from school and family.



## Terminology

- ▶ **Subsistence** – the basic needs for survival, including food, water, shelter and rest.
- ▶ **Affection** – the feeling of being loved and having emotional connections with others.
- ▶ **Participation** – actively engaging and contributing to one’s community and social groups.
- ▶ **Identity** – a sense of self, self-esteem and the recognition of one’s place within society.
- ▶ **Freedom** – having autonomy and the ability to make choices in life.

Adopting a holistic approach to well-being means taking into account the needs of both participants and the project team. An environment that promotes physical and mental well-being for everyone involved – both young people and professionals – is essential. Ensuring a good balance between professional and personal life, offering adequate emotional support and maintaining a collaborative and caring work environment directly contributes to the success of the project. A healthy and motivated team is better able to create an environment conducive to participants’ growth, thus reinforcing the overall success of the project.

Managing well-being in a youth project should not be seen as an optional “extra” but as a key factor in the project’s success. A project that does not consider the well-being of its participants may experience disengagement, tensions or poor communication, affecting its overall effectiveness. Conversely, prioritising well-being creates an environment where young people are more motivated, more engaged and more capable of collaborating, thereby increasing the project’s chances of success. The role of the project manager is to ensure that decisions promote the well-being of all while advancing the project.

## Tip

Managing well-being in a youth project should not be seen as an optional “extra” but as a key factor in the project’s success.

It is important to highlight that, depending on their life experiences, backgrounds or the environment they live and work in, team members and young people may encounter personal challenges and systemic oppressions that directly affect their well-being. These oppressions, which must be acknowledged and addressed in projects, can include but may not be limited to:

- ▶ racism;
- ▶ sexism;
- ▶ heteronormativity;
- ▶ classism;
- ▶ ableism;
- ▶ xenophobia;
- ▶ environmental injustice;
- ▶ religious discrimination.

Ignoring or reproducing the dynamics behind these oppressions can hinder not only the participation of individuals but also their personal development.

### 2.5.3. Challenges

In managing youth projects, various obstacles and challenges can arise that impact the well-being of both the project team and the participants. Recognising these challenges proactively enables project managers to develop strategies that maintain project resilience and well-being. Below are some common challenges and considerations for addressing them effectively.

## Balancing multiple stakeholders' expectations

Managing a youth project often involves navigating the different expectations of different stakeholders – participants, team members and external partners. Depending on how close or far apart these expectations are, addressing them may require more or less effort and this process may cause distress and negatively impact those in charge of managing the project.

## Navigating systemic oppressions

Project teams and participants may experience different forms of systemic oppression, such as racism, sexism or ableism. These dynamics can hinder participation and impact individual well-being. Addressing these challenges involves creating inclusive practices and acknowledging power imbalances within the group.

## Managing stress and unpredictable situations

Unexpected changes, such as shifts in schedules or external disruptions, can increase stress levels. Given that such situations may occur at any time and are not always predictable, it is important for project teams to anticipate common approaches to overcome deadlocks and stressful situations.

## Maintaining a work–life balance

The personal and emotional commitment required in youth projects can blur the lines between professional responsibilities and personal life. Project leaders should promote boundaries, encourage regular check-ins and schedule breaks to avoid burnout.

## Creating and sustaining safe spaces

The feeling of safety is critical for well-being, yet achieving this consistently across a range of groups can be challenging. Safe spaces are more than physical locations; they are environments where individuals feel respected and valued. Establishing clear agreements and open communication helps create and maintain these spaces.



### Food for thought

- ▶ How do you ensure the well-being of your project team and participants?
- ▶ How do you recognise and address stress in yourself and others?
- ▶ What practices do you use to create a supportive and mentally healthy environment when managing youth projects?
- ▶ Does your organisation have policies or practices to support mental health and well-being?

### 2.5.4. Practices and approaches

In youth project management, creating a sense of safety – both physically and mentally – is essential for the well-being of all those involved. A safe space allows participants and team members to thrive, express themselves and fully engage in the group. However, ensuring that someone feels 100% safe is not always possible, as everyone's experience of safety is personal and subjective.

A safe space can be understood as an environment where participants and team members feel respected, listened to and free from judgment or discrimination. For example, a safe space might be one where participants can share their pronouns, express their opinions openly or address difficult topics without fear of ridicule.

When working in a group, it is essential to take time to communicate, establish a common framework and ensure an environment that is as safe and supportive as possible. By doing so, project managers can better promote the well-being of all participants and team members. A common framework or agreement helps individuals better understand one another and clarify their expectations. Whether working in pairs or larger

groups, it is crucial to dedicate time at the start of any new collaboration, project or group formation to lay the groundwork. Project managers should keep in mind that:

- ▶ in partnerships, during the initial project meeting, discussing expectations, project visions and available resources helps form this common framework;
- ▶ when working with young participants, they should aim at developing a group agreement or a “living charter” that outlines clear, shared guidelines for collaboration;
- ▶ it is essential to involve all concerned individuals in the process of creating such common frameworks;
- ▶ when new people join the project, it is vital to introduce them to the agreement, confirm their alignment with it and check if they have additional needs for feeling comfortable;
- ▶ the agreement should be revisited and revised if any concerned individuals request it.

Another practice worth mentioning is the creation of peer support spaces that are vital for allowing participants and team members to share their experiences, express their emotions, identify which needs have been met or unmet and discuss their physical state. These moments should be intentionally planned and integrated throughout any project activity. For instance, a project could include peer support groups or reflection groups for participants and similar peer support practices for team members. Those facilitating such processes could be using tools such as:

- ▶ emotion wheels to help express feelings;
- ▶ visual aids like photo language cards;
- ▶ reflection questions to guide deeper conversations.

Putting a project on track requires following a structured methodology and completing a series of tasks. Depending on one’s personality, this can seem either overwhelming or motivating. Regardless, having a clear vision of the project stages, the tasks to be completed and their deadlines helps streamline task management. A methodical approach – whether based on digital tools or traditional methods – helps distribute responsibilities effectively, set priorities and ensure regular project follow-up. By adapting the approach based on the group’s needs, better co-ordination and task management are ensured. Flexibility and adaptability are essential for managing unexpected events and changes during a project.

Encouraging adaptability within the team helps maintain motivation and address challenges more calmly. Project managers and project teams are encouraged to:

- ▶ prepare for and anticipate potential obstacles;
- ▶ focus energy and resources on what they can control or influence and let go of what they cannot;
- ▶ channel their efforts towards effective planning, communication and responsiveness to challenges, rather than spending energy on things beyond their reach;
- ▶ minimise unnecessary stress and support a more adaptive and resilient project methodology.

Creating an inclusive environment requires stepping outside of what one might instinctively do and recognising that life experiences are not universal. This involves questioning any systemic oppressions (such as racism, sexism or ableism) that colleagues or participants may experience and understanding that their experiences are different. From here, it becomes essential to implement specific practices that demonstrate sensitivity to social norms and a commitment to creating a safer space. For instance, project managers should consider setting clear guidelines for inclusive language and organising regular team reflections on inclusivity.

Through adopting an inclusive approach, project managers seek to value diversity and ensure that everyone feels respected, safe and represented in youth projects’ activities and decision-making processes. In youth projects, project managers are invited to:

- ▶ create environments where all individuals – regardless of their identities, experiences or abilities – can participate fully and equitably;
- ▶ recognise and remove barriers – whether physical, social or systemic – that have traditionally prevented certain groups from accessing the same opportunities;
- ▶ be mindful of neurodiversity, ensuring that participants with different cognitive styles – such as those with autism, ADHD or dyslexia – feel supported and included by offering clear instructions, providing extra processing time or adapting communication to meet individual needs.

Accessibility should also be considered as a key principle for ensuring the mental and physical well-being of project teams and participants in youth projects. One of the best ways to assess a space is with input from individuals directly affected by potential accessibility issues. Their perspectives are invaluable in anticipating necessary adjustments. Project teams should consider this input and adapt accordingly. At the same time,

even an environment designed to be safe may not feel secure for everyone. Being in a space where the spoken language is not everyone's native language, or being in a group with people from different backgrounds, can create feelings of insecurity. This is why group-building phases are crucial and should be respected. Activities like name and pronoun rounds, icebreakers, getting-to-know-each-other games and creating a group agreement are essential steps for establishing a climate of safety and trust for both participants and team members.

Inclusion is not a one-time action but a continuous process that must be nurtured throughout the project. It is essential to ensure that all participants and team members feel heard, respected and safe, during the project's preparation and its implementation. By establishing inclusive practices from the start and being attentive to changing needs, project managers can create an environment where everyone can thrive and contribute fully.

## 2.5.5. Further resources

The 7 habits of highly effective people (see Further reading)

- ▶ A set of principles for improving one's effectiveness, one of these being taking "care of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being", highly resonating with the concept of this section.

Coyote magazine (see Further Reading)

- ▶ Issue 32 of this online magazine, which looks into the different corners and overlaps of youth work practice, policy and research, focuses on well-being and features a series of articles on issues such as the dimensions of well-being, psychological first aid in youth work or how sport can help young people's well-being.

Seminar on youth mental health and well-being (see Further reading)

- ▶ The web page of the seminar features a range of presentations from the meeting, including the "Playfield mental well-being" or the "Guide to neurodiversity in youth organisations", as well as a link to a young people's mental health and well-being podcast and to other resources such as the effects of Covid-19 on young people's mental health and psychological well-being – an updated literature review.

T-Kit 6 Training essentials (see References)

- ▶ This T-Kit contains, among other things, elements referring to working in teams in the framework of educational activities that may be useful when reflecting on how to make the experience meaningful for everyone involved.

SALTO Inclusion Education Resources (see Further reading)

- ▶ An online resource depository for those working on inclusion and containing a large palette of tools, publications, reports, etc.

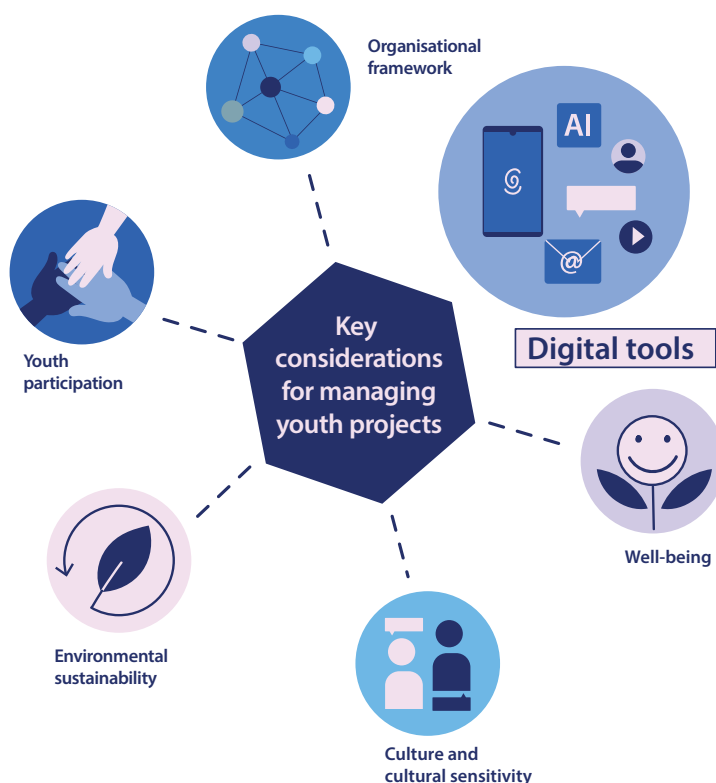
## 2.6. Digital tools

### 2.6.1. Defining digital tools

Regardless of the complexity of projects, people have always used different support tools for the smooth progress of their work.

While in the past these tools were mostly manual or analogue (such as paper, pens, typewriters, etc.), today most projects are managed using digital tools. Everything from the conceptualisation of a project to signing a grant agreement, from planning a meeting with team members scattered across the world to monitoring and reporting, has been increasingly happening without the need for a single word to be printed on a piece of paper.

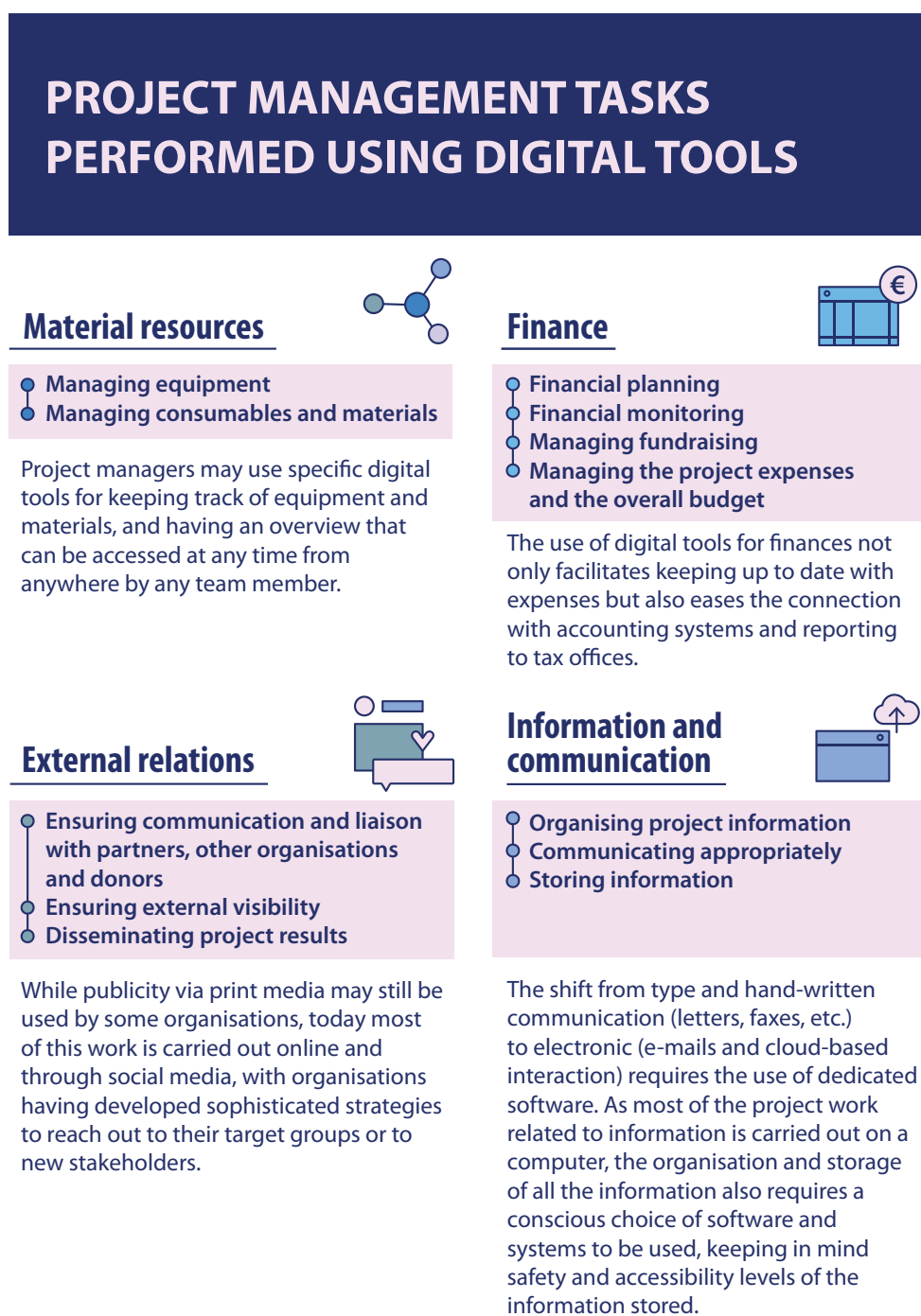
The digital tools that allow such actions to be performed refer to electronic devices, including computers, tablets and smartphones, and to specialised programs,



software and social media, such as Microsoft 365, Dropbox, Zoom, Asana, Trello, Signal, Facebook, Slack or other emerging online systems.

## 2.6.2. Importance and relevance for youth project management

As a result of recent technological developments there are very few project manager tasks that do not have a corresponding digital tool. The fact that such tools exist does not imply they should be used, but their *raison d'être* is linked to saving time and facilitating the experience of managing a project. In some cases the use of digital tools is required or highly recommended. Keeping in mind the task model presented earlier (see Figure 7), Figure 19 displays a few tasks for which the use of digital tools is crucial for project managers. Please note that most software packages offer integrated project management tools that bring together all relevant workflows from finances to human resources and project cycle management.



**Figure 19. Project management tasks to be performed using digital tools**

The use of digital tools in youth project management is also relevant because of the intensive communication work that projects require, within the project team and with external stakeholders. At times, the capacity to master digital tools such as presentation, design or video making software may prove to be crucial for attracting partners, funding for the project or involving young people. Similarly, being confident and able to switch between various real-time communication or team collaboration tools represents one step towards guaranteeing the smooth progress of a project.

It is also worth mentioning that the use of digital and online tools is highly recommended when reaching out to young people who are considered to be digital natives and use the internet on a regular basis (Eurostat n.d.).

### **2.6.3. Challenges**

The numerous project management digital tools and solutions and the continuous development of this sector is a positive sign for project managers. They are able to find tools that fit their needs and, as mentioned earlier, that lead to saving time and enhancing the quality of their work. However, the availability of these tools raises a series of challenges and also reveals obstacles that need to be taken into account during the management process. A non-exhaustive list of such obstacles and challenges is explored below.

#### **Technical solutions**

The abundance of digital tools may persuade project managers that there is a tool for each task to be performed. Yet sometimes, it is not about the technical solution that can be used to solve a problem, but about the way we address the problem and the already existing resources in the team.

#### **Gaps or lack of tools**

Not all project management tasks have corresponding “best” options for digital tools. Often, old, classic methods can be ideal solutions despite their mobile incompatibility and being perceived as “boring”.

#### **Too many tools**

At the opposite end of this spectrum, a simple search on the internet for a digital tool may result in tens, if not, hundreds of results. Even when search objectives and criteria are clear, too many options may prove to be time-consuming, confusing and eventually discouraging.

#### **Access to the internet**

Internet access should not be taken for granted despite the positive data according to which only 3% of young people do not access the internet daily in the EU. Young people from urban or rural areas of the same country, or from different parts of Europe, may have different experiences concerning the quality of the internet they use. As a large number of digital tools are internet-based, a poor-quality internet connection may prove to be a challenge to many young people across the continent.

#### **Ethics**


The discovery of a new tool may come in handy; however, it may also raise a lot of ethical questions. Young people and youth workers started paying attention to the history of the companies that create digital tools, their data protection and privacy policies, the way they might use the data or their commitment to environmental sustainability.

#### **Data protection and privacy**

Ensuring data protection and privacy is relevant internally, within the project team and the organisation, and also externally, with young participants or other stakeholders. Given how sensitive this issue is, managers should consider different approaches to handling data, including minimising the data collected, controlling access, using security tools and protocols, complying with specific regulations, including GDPR, the rules for handling personal data and keeping everyone informed about the use of the data and the existing data-management procedures.

## The environmental footprint

While the transition to paperless projects may contribute to saving trees, this action is not enough for environmental sustainability. The use of digital devices and tools poses big environmental challenges related to their production (mining, energy for production or data storage, growing demand, etc.) and their use (energy for daily use, etc.).



**Food for thought**

- ▶ How do you decide which digital tools to use in your youth projects?
- ▶ How do you ensure that all team members and participants have equal access to the digital tools used in your projects?
- ▶ What steps can you take to assess the ethical and environmental impact of the digital tools you use in your work?

### 2.6.4 Practices and approaches

The latest technological advancements have greatly enhanced the development of digital tools in all areas of project management. While this is good news for project managers, they should be mindful when using such tools and consider some of the meaningful practices and already tested ideas.

Project managers should ask themselves if a digital tool is truly needed. They should make sure the need to use a digital tool matches:

- ▶ the specific needs of the project;
- ▶ the needs of the beneficiaries;
- ▶ the needs of the project team.

The temptation to use digital tools is high, especially because they are designed to make the life of project managers easier. When deciding on the use of a digital tool, specific attention should also be paid to:

- ▶ the costs it implies, including buying and maintaining it;
- ▶ the complexity of setting it up;
- ▶ how resource-intensive the tool is;
- ▶ how easy or costly it is to train other project team members to use it.

The process of choosing should also be viewed from the perspective of the young people that are the other target group of the project or members of the project team. The project manager should at least consider what tools young people are already using, whether the new tools they intend to use are easily adaptable to the target group or being flexible enough to switch to tools that are suggested or demanded by young people themselves.

## Presentations

Project managers often create presentations for their own teams, for funders or other external stakeholders. There are many digital tools (PowerPoint, Keynote, Canva, etc.) that can make this task easy and there are also many ways to approach presentations. The following is a non-exhaustive list to consider when designing inspiring presentations.

- ▶ There is not one universal recipe on how to put together good presentations.
- ▶ Apply existing guidelines and consider adapting them to your own project – for example, use the “6 by 6” guidelines that focus on the idea of reducing the quantity of text by having a maximum of six words per line and six lines per slide; use this wisely and make sure the message is not distorted for the sake of simplicity.
- ▶ Remember the saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” and include eye-catching photos or visuals.
- ▶ Do not forget humour, because a good laugh is always appreciated.

## Communication – E-mails and messages

Communication, especially written, is one of the main, recurring tasks that project managers need to perform throughout all the project stages. It is important for project managers to consider the following.

- ▶ The means of communication should be adapted to the purpose and the target group.
- ▶ Digital tools and applications are helpful, but they do not excuse project managers from being clear, precise and respectful.
- ▶ Avoid writing “angry” messages; once written and sent, such a message might be shared online on social media and might affect your professional career in the long term. Do not send such messages. A quick talk will go a long way to settling misunderstandings.

## Using digital tools

Digital tools can be very useful for facilitating communication and collaboration, accessing information or performing tasks. However, one should not be afraid of going back to the “old-school” pen and paper whenever that may prove to be helpful or needed.

When choosing a new digital tool, consider that digitally skilled team members may only need a short time to get used to it. Such team members are a precious support resource for everyone else in the team and learning from and with them is a great way to understand how digital tools work. They can also help with team-building exercises.

## Energy saving

The sleep mode of any device does not mean the consumption of energy is paused. Turning off devices when they are not used is one way to save energy. Similarly, using different software in dark mode is also highly recommended in order to reduce one’s energy consumption.

## Digital tools and young people

Just as the digitalisation of youth work is considered “an absolute requirement to keep up with the times” (Kiviniemi and Tuominen 2017), the need to use technology, digital platforms and tools in youth project management has also become a way to ensure youth projects are attractive to young people and potentially a source for them to practise and further develop their digital skills. In order to ensure that their projects stay up to date, project managers may consider:

- ▶ staying updated about the new tools or features that are appealing to young people;
- ▶ following the trends in the use of online social media by young people;
- ▶ learning how to responsibly use digital and AI tools;
- ▶ integrating these new tools and being receptive to the changes in the way young people use digital tools.

## AI in youth projects

The arrival of AI in the landscape of youth work and youth projects is welcomed with both enthusiasm and scepticism. The benefits of using AI in youth projects are numerous and include the replacement of automated and time-consuming tasks (such as data collection and analysis), the generation of content (writing specific text related to the various aspects of the project, for example) or the creation of design content (the generation of images, sounds or videos). There are a number of critical aspects related to the use of AI, therefore project managers should consider the ethical and privacy implications of using AI in their work, for example:

- ▶ using AI platforms or tools based on socially aware algorithms;
- ▶ informing and obtaining consent from young people regarding data collection and analysis;
- ▶ being transparent about the use of AI.

A healthy approach would be to regard AI as a tool and use it intelligently, relying on it to generate a first draft of the content that is needed and then ensuring that human oversight is in place and the content is reviewed to make sure it is aligned with the project’s objectives and the needs and rights of young people.

## 2.6.5. Further resources

Digital tools for youth workers (see Further reading)

- ▶ A handbook providing youth workers with a comprehensive understanding of why and how digital tools work, strategies for innovation, management tools, non-formal education tools and making use of social media for effective youth work.

e-missions.nl (see Further reading)

- ▶ A digital tool that can be used as a CO<sub>2</sub> calculator for the digital world and that offers helpful advice on how to lower the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint.

Digitalisation and artificial intelligence (see Further reading)

- ▶ A web page that features the “insights into artificial intelligence and its impact on the youth sector”, a publication, five videos on AI and the youth sector and other relevant resources (documents, videos, etc.) that offer insights into AI, digitalisation and their impact on the youth sector.

AI Act (see Further reading)

- ▶ The first-ever European legal framework on AI, which addresses the risks of using AI.

European SALTO Digital Resource Centre (see Further reading)

- ▶ A collection of useful resources on digital transformation, as well as good practices and handy one-pagers on topics such as making use of DigiComp in projects or of the guidelines for tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy.

# Managing the youth project cycle

## 3.1. Ideation and project planning

### 3.1.1. Introduction

The ideation and planning stage is the starting point for any youth project. At this point of the project cycle, the project idea is being shaped and a detailed project plan developed.

Ideation and planning the foundation of the entire project gives it direction and guidance by defining key aspects of the project, including:

- ▶ the project's purpose;
- ▶ the target group of the project;
- ▶ the activities of the project;
- ▶ the project's results.

The more precise and detailed the idea is, the easier it is for the project manager and the team to ensure the realisation of the project stages. With a clear project plan, the team can identify and mobilise the resources needed and realise the activities as planned to reach the project goal.

For a youth project to be successful, it is important to ensure youth participation from the very beginning. This means for the project manager:

- ▶ making sure project planning is accessible for young people;
- ▶ actively engaging young people in decision-making processes;
- ▶ allowing youth perspectives and ideas to craft project goals and project activities.

### 3.1.2. Challenges

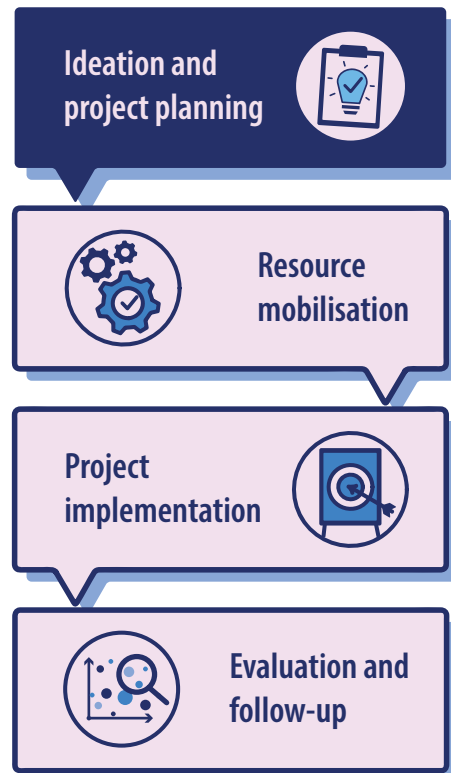
Planning a youth project is an exciting task. Doing it together with a committed group of young people is empowerment in its true form. It builds positive energy, confidence and power for the community and young people.

Letting this opportunity for planning a powerful project slip is not only a missed chance for creating a positive impact. It might also result in disempowering young people, discrediting young people's participation among adults and wasting plenty of human, financial and material resources.

Here are a few key challenges that a project manager and those planning a project should bear in mind when designing a project. Being aware of these challenges helps to avoid making common mistakes and can turn challenges into opportunities.

## Understanding youth, the community and their needs

A good youth project is based on a deep understanding of the situation in the community. The needs of young people, the problems they face and their desires and aspirations guide the purpose of the project. The immediate and wider social, political, cultural and economic context provide the source of the project design and its rationale. While this seems obvious, the difficulties are to be found in the details and in the constantly changing realities in the communities. What was true yesterday might not be true today anymore. This requires



the project manager to constantly update their understanding and to challenge their assumptions about reality in their community. Missing the latest developments or not assessing relationships accurately will result in a weak project design. Thus, analysing the community is vital, as is doing this together and with the active involvement of young people.

### **Developing a strategic project idea**

A strategic youth project is one that helps to advance or improve the situation of young people and the community. Unfortunately, achieving substantial change or improving social or political realities for young people cannot be done in one go. It requires sustained efforts that work gradually towards one direction. Being aware of the limitations of a project is a good starting point for being strategic, because it helps develop an understanding that long-term change is the result of collective and multiple endeavours. A second step is to envisage the tangible contribution of the youth project to the long-term goal and how the project activities will achieve its results. In contrast, this means that a youth project is not worth pursuing if it does not help advance towards the envisaged long-term goal.

### **Ensuring a unique and creative project design**

Successful youth projects often use creative approaches to known and recurrent challenges for young people and their communities. Change is often not the result of repeating the very same youth activity, but rather of fresh ideas, new activities and new partnerships that invigorate communities and trigger sustainable development. Thus, when planning a new project, it is advisable to check what initiatives are already being implemented by other stakeholders in the community to avoid repetition and to be able to complement or build upon the achievements of others rather than to duplicate. While it may be difficult to actually do, it is important to distance oneself from well-known projects and activity types that are easy to implement and to envisage different projects that match the needs of young people and their communities.

### **Building a reliable and capable partnership**

A youth project realises its full potential through the partnership that makes it happen. For this to happen the project must make best use of all the partners' experiences, expertise, resources and networks. Easier said than done, it requires all project partners to be fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses, their existing resources and potential, and to create the conditions for all of their assets to come into play at the right moment. At the same time, a well-designed project might face obstacles because the partners do not have all the capacities needed for its implementation. Thus, for a successful youth project, a matching partnership composed of the right mix of organisations and institutions such as youth organisations, other civil society organisations, local, regional or national public authorities and educational institutions (private or public schools, vocational education and training providers) is instrumental to ensure a project's quality and impact.

### **Anticipating risks and remaining flexible to change**

In a youth project many things can happen. But usually what does not happen is that the project goes as planned from the beginning to the end. The reasons for this are manifold and include the evolving community context, the characteristics of social interactions or unexpected and unforeseen events. In short, in a constantly changing human context, planned projects have to remain flexible and adapt their approach and activities accordingly. While it is not possible to anticipate fundamental external shocks like the global Covid-19 pandemic, many other project-related risks can be assessed and planned for in advance. Doing this increases the readiness of the project management to respond to challenges and adapt the project accordingly when needed.



## Food for thought

- ▶ How do you ensure that your understanding of the community context and young people's realities stays up to date?
- ▶ How do you balance the limitations of a single project with the ambition to contribute to long-term community change?
- ▶ What strategies do you use to avoid duplicating existing projects in the community?
- ▶ Have you experienced challenges in project partnerships where resources or capacities were mismatched? How did you address them?
- ▶ How have you handled unexpected challenges in past projects? What did you learn from those experiences that could help you in the realisation of your current project?

### 3.1.3. Common tasks and considerations

Project development varies widely depending on the organisations and people involved, their approaches, priorities and practices, and the project's type and scope. Naturally, small-scale, short-term community initiatives require different, often simpler planning tools than multi-year youth projects aiming at policy change across multiple European countries.

Therefore, the planning process and tools should match the preferences, habits and needs of those involved while responding to the project's requirements.

A commonly applied planning process is that within an organisation a project idea is drafted based on the identification of a core problem within their community or field of work (see Figure 20). This idea is circulated among potentially interested partners and a partnership, respectively a project team, is formed. The new partnership then takes care of a collective project planning process. However, this does not exclude other institutions or associations becoming project partners at a later stage.



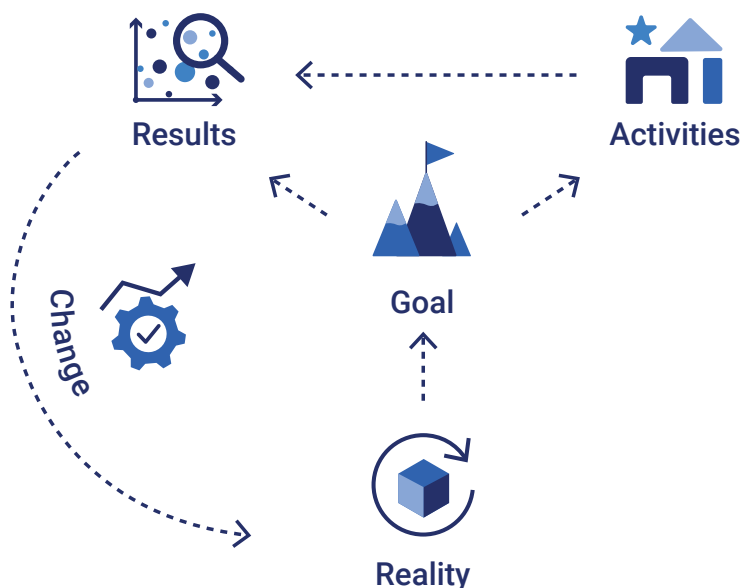
**Figure 20. Common project development process**

Other practices that one might meet include projects being fully developed by one organisation and project partners joining for the project's implementation without participating in project planning. In another scenario, committed individuals develop a project idea during a seminar and then reach out to organisations they are involved with. In this case the partnership is formed based on existing links and networks.

### A simple framework for project planning

Whichever way is chosen, in the end the project needs to be planned by somebody, be it one organisation, one person or collectively by a team representing all project partners and young people. The latter represents the most inclusive approach to project planning in the youth sector.

A simple project framework (see Figure 21) helps to understand how the most important project elements relate to each other. The framework serves two purposes for the project manager. First, it highlights the order in which project elements should be explored. Second, it helps to build the project's logic or rationale to explain why the project is needed, what it aims to change and how it will achieve its results.



**Figure 21. Project framework**

The framework's elements are as follows.

- ▶ Reality: the community context as the project's starting point, especially the core problem including the rights and needs of young people.
- ▶ Project goal: the declared goal of the project defined in response to the community context gives the project direction and target.
- ▶ Project activities: the activities are the instruments through which the project aims to realise its goal.
- ▶ Project results: the achievements of the activities that impact the local reality in the community and bring about the desired changes.

### Guiding questions for project planning

At the very least, project planning must establish the project's idea and its rationale and logic. Other dimensions to explore for more complex projects include the following:

- ▶ project partnership;
- ▶ youth participation;
- ▶ green practices;
- ▶ risk assessment;
- ▶ sustainability and dissemination;
- ▶ monitoring and evaluation.

Table 5 provides an overview of guiding questions that correspond to each of these dimensions and that should be answered during project planning.

**Table 5. Guiding questions for project planning**

<b>Project dimension</b>	<b>Guiding questions for project planning</b>	<b>Project planning tasks</b>
Project rationale and logic	▶ <b>What is the problem to be addressed and changed by the project?</b>	Analysing context and identifying needs
	▶ <b>What is the goal or the change to be achieved by the project?</b>	Formulating the project goals and the envisaged change
	▶ <b>What are the project’s activities, their sequence, timing, target groups and results?</b> ▶ <b>How do the activities create the project’s results and achieve the project’s goal?</b>	Developing the project’s internal logic by defining the project activities and expected results
Project partnership	▶ <b>What thematic and technical capacities are required for the implementation of the project?</b> ▶ <b>Who is implementing the project?</b> ▶ <b>What expertise, experiences and resources do the partners bring in?</b>	Forming a project partnership
Youth participation	▶ <b>What is the role of young people in the project?</b> ▶ <b>How are young people involved from the planning phase onwards?</b> ▶ <b>How is the project accessible to young people?</b>	Defining the degree of and the measures for youth participation
Green practices	▶ <b>What harmful practices do you need to avoid in the project?</b> ▶ <b>What green practices will be applied in the project?</b> ▶ <b>What are the measures for promoting environmental responsibility during the project?</b>	Embedding green practices
Risk assessment	▶ <b>What risks exist for the project’s implementation and how can you address them?</b>	Conducting risk assessments and developing risk mitigation plans
Sustainability and dissemination	▶ <b>How is the sustainability of the project’s results achieved?</b> ▶ <b>What are the instruments for ensuring the project’s visibility and dissemination of results?</b>	Framing sustainability and dissemination
Monitoring and evaluation	▶ <b>How does the project prove that it has achieved its goals and results?</b>	Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework

### 3.1.4. Step by step – Planning a youth project

Based on the common project development process and the guiding questions, the T-Kit proposes a step-by-step project planning guide composed of the following.

# PROJECT DEVELOPMENT STEPS



**STEP 1** | **Identifying a problem and brainstorming a first idea**  
 Create an idea for a new project as a starting point for forming a project partnership



**STEP 2** | **Seeking project partners and forming a project partnership**  
 Build a capable and committed partnership for the project implementation



**STEP 3** | **Devising measures for inclusive youth participation and environmental responsibility**  
 Agree on the degree of youth participation and environmental practices in the project



**STEP 4** | **Analysing communities and identifying needs**  
 Develop a solid understanding of youth and community needs as the basis for project design



**STEP 5** | **Designing the project**  
 Develop a needs-based and result-oriented project benefitting young people and the community



**STEP 6** | **Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework**  
 Define appropriate measures for project monitoring and evaluation



**STEP 7** | **Checking and finalising the project's plan**  
 Develop a concise project idea description for resource mobilisation and project implementation



**Figure 22. Project development steps**

The steps and methods are a suggestion for small, medium-sized and less complex youth projects. The application of more advanced project development tools is advised, particularly for international, long-term, multidimensional and cross-sectoral youth projects.

## Step 1 – Identifying a problem and brainstorming a first idea

As happens naturally within organisations or among youth work practitioners, an idea for a project is born through an exchange of observations and experiences. Another possibility is that the ideation is purposefully triggered through a workshop or a meeting dedicated to generating the first ideas for a new youth project.

At this point, the team must be aware that this is only the first brainstorming session to take place. The draft idea that has been created serves as an orientation for the need of the community or young people to be addressed, and the potential, relevant activities to be explored in more detail.

By describing the draft idea with a consolidated one-pager (see Tool 1), the team ensures that the idea can be picked up at a later stage and that it can be shared with interested partners.



### Tool 1

## Template for a one-pager describing a new project idea

When creating a first idea for a new project, the ideation should focus on the following:

- ▶ identifying the core problem the project intends to address;
- ▶ framing a range of possible project results;
- ▶ mapping ideas for potential project activities.

This first idea serves as an orientation and guidance for further in-depth planning.

For documenting the developed ideas for the project, summarise the key conclusions under the following headings.

- ▶ The working title of the project.
- ▶ A short description of the core problem (a maximum of five lines).
- ▶ The project's goals (a maximum of two lines).
- ▶ The project's target group (a maximum of three lines).
- ▶ The project's activities (a maximum of 30 lines).
- ▶ The project's results (a maximum of 10 lines).

The document can easily be turned into a call for partners by simply adding the following information.

- ▶ A short description of your organisation including an online link (a maximum of three lines).
- ▶ The contact details for your organisation.
- ▶ The general terms of co-operation (a maximum of 10 lines).
- ▶ A short profile of the potential partner (a maximum of 15 lines).
- ▶ A proposal for a meeting date.

## Step 2 – Seeking project partners and forming a project partnership

Once the first thoughts for the new project idea are drafted, it is time to bring partners on board to strengthen the project. Forming partnerships is important for the following reasons.

- ▶ Partners bring in complementary resources, expertise and experience.
- ▶ Partners increase visibility, help with building networks and enhance sustainability.
- ▶ Partners boost project credibility through their own reputation and past performance.
- ▶ Within partnerships, risk can be distributed and better mitigated.

The cross-sectoral character of the youth field makes it particularly beneficial to build a partnership composed of a variety of different partners. This allows the project to benefit from the power each partner holds. However, it requires a well-designed role and task division and management between the partners that is based on the partners' capacities and field of work.

Table 6 provides a short overview of the assets different types of partners might bring to the project. A more detailed look at strategic partnership building is offered in the 2025 "Youth work strategies manual" published by the EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership.

**Table 6. Assets of different youth stakeholders for youth projects**

Type of project partner	Partner's added value
Youth organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Direct connection with young people, ensuring youth voices and needs are at the centre</li> <li>▶ Know-how of non-formal education suitable for young learners</li> <li>▶ Strong networks for engaging local youth communities</li> <li>▶ Development of young people's capabilities, including those of young leaders and volunteers</li> </ul>
NGOs working in the youth field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Well-established connections with funders, institutions and a wide range of stakeholders</li> <li>▶ Expertise in securing resources and managing project sustainability</li> <li>▶ Engagement in advocacy and shaping youth-related policies</li> </ul>
Public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ability to integrate youth issues into national or local strategies</li> <li>▶ Access to public grants, facilities and logistical support</li> <li>▶ Capacity to implement systemic changes and institutionalise initiatives and/or policy recommendations</li> <li>▶ Access to broad audiences and wide stakeholder groups through official communication channels</li> </ul>
Educational institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Expertise in curriculum development and education for young people</li> <li>▶ Ability to certify learning achievements and validate non-formal education</li> <li>▶ Direct access to young people for participation in initiatives</li> <li>▶ Accessible facilities such as rooms, technical equipment and infrastructure</li> </ul>
Religious entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Strong local networks and moral authority in many communities</li> <li>▶ Mobilisation of volunteers and charitable resources</li> <li>▶ Providing meeting spaces and emotional/spiritual support for young people</li> </ul>

Given the relevance of a strong project partnership, it is best to invite partners to the project as early as possible. Therefore, the developed project idea should be shared with possible partners to invite them to join a more in-depth planning process.

To identify which partners are most suitable, criteria should be developed based on the project idea. This allows the team to assess which types of experience, expertise and capacities of partners are most needed for the project. Relevant criteria can include:

- ▶ thematic expertise in youth work (coaching, volunteering, youth camps);
- ▶ technical expertise for youth projects (training, publication, digital skills);
- ▶ organisational capacity and resources (staff, networks, financial sustainability).

The partner capacity assessment grid (see Tool 2) provides a template for creating a tailor-made partner assessment matrix for a youth project.



## Tool 2

### Partner capacity assessment grid

Assessment criteria	Project requirement	Your expertise	Partners' fields of expertise	Missing expertise
<b>Thematic expertise</b>				
Awareness and understanding of the wider cultural, social and political contexts				
Knowledge of project-related themes (such as citizenship, peace building, governance, environment, human rights)				
Knowledge of specific youth-related themes (such as mental health, personal development, youth work)				
Experience of addressing inclusion, youth participation and diversity				
Familiarity with relevant youth policies and frameworks (local, national, regional, international)				
<b>Technical expertise</b>				
Project management of local, national or international projects (short-term, mid-term or long-term)				
Monitoring and evaluation				
Resource mobilisation and fundraising				
Education, facilitation and training				
Digital tools and technology				
External communication, visibility and dissemination				
Production of publications and learning materials, such as manuals or handbooks				
<b>Organisational capacities and resources</b>				
Available human resources for project management and thematic work (such as staff, volunteers, contracted experts)				
Membership and access to local, national and international networks				
Experience of managing similar projects				
Adequate financial resources and budgeting expertise				
Established communication channels with target groups and stakeholders				
Good funder relations and community reputation				
Feel free to add any dimension you feel is missing in the assessment grid.				

Depending on the size of the project, it is a good practice to work with a mix of well-known and new partners. By doing so, each new project builds upon already established terms of co-operation and extends the network and builds strategic alliances for the future.

When working with new partners, it is advisable to hold a meeting to explore if there is common ground for co-operation. Once all partners are on board, a kick-off meeting is a good opportunity to formalise the partnership and to agree on a shared timeline for project development.

### Tip

How to find new partners for a youth project.

- ▶ Ask former partner organisations for their recommendations.
- ▶ Contact networks for sharing a call for partners.
- ▶ Search formerly funded projects of donor institutions to identify potential partners.
- ▶ Search online platforms dedicated to youth work such as SALTO's Otlas Partner Finding Tool.

For productive co-operation, here are a few good practices to consider throughout the partnership.

- ▶ Take time to get to know each other at the beginning of the co-operation.
- ▶ Agree on general terms of co-operation (principles of collaboration, roles and responsibilities, means of communication) early on during the partnership.
- ▶ Note down and keep accessible for all partners all agreements and decisions made in your meetings.
- ▶ Do not shy away from talking about finances and apply a transparent information policy.
- ▶ Formalise your partnership in written form at the latest when you receive funding for your project.
- ▶ Use already existing organisational resources, procedures and practices instead of reinventing the wheel.

The organisational practices tool (see Tool 3) helps project partners to identify their resources, procedures and practices that can be used within a new youth project.



### Tool 3

### Organisational practices

## Organisational practices



### DECISION MAKING

- » How do you take decisions in your team meetings?
- » What operational decisions can members of the team make?
- » On what questions do you need to consult other team members?
- » How do you deal with conflicting ideas and settle disagreements?



### COMMUNICATION

- » What internal communication tools do you use in your team?
- » What are the purposes of team meetings and how many team meetings do you need for managing your project?
- » What tools and channels for external communication, project visibility and dissemination do you regularly use? Which ones work best?



## DOCUMENTS AND TEMPLATES

- » What types of documents (partner agreements, minute notes, activity reports, call for participants, session outlines or contracts with external consultants or trainers, for example) are used in your projects?
- » What templates can you use for these types of documents?
- » How do you make sure that all people have access to the latest version of these templates?



## EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES AND METHODS

- » Have you ever carried out similar educational activities before? If so, what were the lessons learned?
- » Do you have resource materials on the topic of educational activities? If so, how can you make them available to the team?
- » Do you have descriptions of training programmes or single educational activities (such as session outlines or exercise details) that could match the needs of the project? If so, in what format can you make them available to the



## PARTNERS, KEY PERSONS AND DONORS

- » Does your organisation have a list of former project partners and/or strategic partners at local, national or international levels for project support or dissemination? If so, what are potential multipliers for this project?
- » Do you have a pool of experts, educators or consultants that you can draw from for external expertise? If so, which fields of expertise and what type of support is covered for this project?
- » Do you keep a track record of former funders and supporters of your projects? If so, who are they and can they support your new project?
- » Did you submit similar (successful) project proposals before to the same or different funders? If so, can they be used as an orientation?



## FINANCES

- » What accounting principles are most important in and for your organisation?
- » How often do you update the project team and the partners about project finances?
- » Do you use specific templates for managing project finances? If so, what are they, especially for project budgeting and budget monitoring?
- » What documents and procedures do you use for handling project expenses and grant distribution between partners?

Feel free to add any other topic or raise any additional question that helps to identify already established practices, procedures or existing resources that will benefit your project.

### Step 3 – Devising measures for youth participation and environmental responsibility

Before delving into the depths of project planning, it is a good practice to take some time to agree on two very fundamental aspects of any youth projects:

- ▶ the degree of youth participation that the project aims at and the corresponding measures;
- ▶ the environmental standards, policy and practices applied by the project.

These decisions will shape the youth project and thus they need to be considered from the very beginning. For example, if a high degree of youth participation is envisaged, then young people – if not involved already – need to join the project for the community and needs analysis (step 4) already. Likewise, a decision on the project's level of environmental responsibility affects the practical and logistical aspects of the project (for example, online or offline activities, travel, activity venues, materials) that need to be considered when defining project activities and their format.

Project partners and team members alike might differ in their view and practices on both aspects. This requires the project management team to reach an agreement as a basis for joint action. The following guiding questions might support the decision-making process.

- ▶ What are the organisation's usual practices regarding youth participation and environmental responsibility in youth projects?
- ▶ What level of youth participation is most appropriate for addressing the identified core problem?
- ▶ What environmental harm does the benefit of the project justify and how can this harm be limited to the absolute minimum?
- ▶ Does the partnership have the capacities or can it build the capacity to cater for a high degree of youth participation and environmental responsibility?

Tool 4 provides guidance for assessing organisational or respective project capacities for youth participation.



#### Questionnaire assessing the capacities for youth participation

##### Youth support

- ▶ Can you provide adequate support measures for young people to aid their involvement in the project?
- ▶ Can you step back, allow young people to take the leadership role and let them make mistakes from which they can learn?
- ▶ Can you provide training opportunities for young people to grow in different aspects of project management?
- ▶ Do you have in place tailor-made support measures (psychological, logistical, financial) for young people with fewer opportunities?

##### Accessibility of your project

- ▶ Can you offer young people a physical accessible space where they can meet and discuss their initiatives?
- ▶ Is there room in your project for young people to propose their ideas, initiatives or share feedback for ongoing projects?
- ▶ Are your project meetings accessible and welcoming to young people?
- ▶ Can young people become part of your project management team and eventually try out different roles within your project?

##### Project management

- ▶ Do the needs and interests of young people form the basis for your project ideas?
- ▶ In the process of project development, do you consult young people about their needs and interests?
- ▶ Do you invite young people to participate in the project planning process?
- ▶ Do you evaluate and celebrate project achievements together with young people?

#### Youth inclusion

- ▶ Can you ensure that young people from a variety of backgrounds are involved in your projects?
- ▶ Do you have specific measures and a dedicated budget in place to include young people with fewer opportunities in your project?

#### Communication

- ▶ Can you ensure that young people are sufficiently and continuously informed about the project, its objectives and their role in it?
- ▶ Do you use transparent and open channels of communication that are accessible and used by young people?
- ▶ Do you reach out to a wide range of young people, specifically to the young target group of your projects?
- ▶ Do you acknowledge the achievements of young people and make them public?

### Step 4 – Analysing communities and identifying needs

All good youth projects are based on a comprehensive understanding of the situation of young people and their community. The only way to establish this is by conducting a context analysis, which serves the following purposes:

- ▶ to better understand the problems, needs and desires of young people;
- ▶ to picture the situation of young people in the wider community context;
- ▶ to identify possible target groups, strategic partners and support structures.

The analysis is the starting point for the project design by providing possible entry points for action. To conduct this analysis, many different tools (see the examples in Table 7) are at the disposal of the project planning team. Choosing a good combination of tools helps during project planning to obtain a complete picture of the community.

**Table 7. Common tools for context analysis**

Tool	Purpose	Key features
PESTLE analysis	Analyses external factors (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental)	Identifies trends and influences in the broader context
SWOT analysis	Evaluates internal and external factors (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)	Balances internal capabilities with external opportunities and risks
Problem tree analysis	Maps out a central problem, its causes and its effects	Provides a visual breakdown of complex issues
Stakeholder mapping	Identifies stakeholders, their relations and influence	Guides engagement strategies

Project ideas are usually developed within the framework of the organisation's vision and mission. Thus, building upon the organisation's strategic plans implies that it is often not necessary to use tools for analysing the wider community and organisational context when planning a single youth project.

Therefore, when strategic plans are thoroughly developed and regularly updated, two tools seem most appropriate for a wide range of youth projects, the problem tree and the actor pyramid (see Tool 5).



Tool 5

Context analysis tool set

# Problem tree

A problem tree is a tool to clarify the cause-and-effect relationship of an identified problem (EXACT – EU External Action Wiki n.d.) that a youth project wants to address.

The tool helps to better understand the problem and its findings serve as a starting point for the project design.

Figure 23. Problem tree, adapted from Tearfund 2024

## WHY USE IT?

*The problem tree helps:*



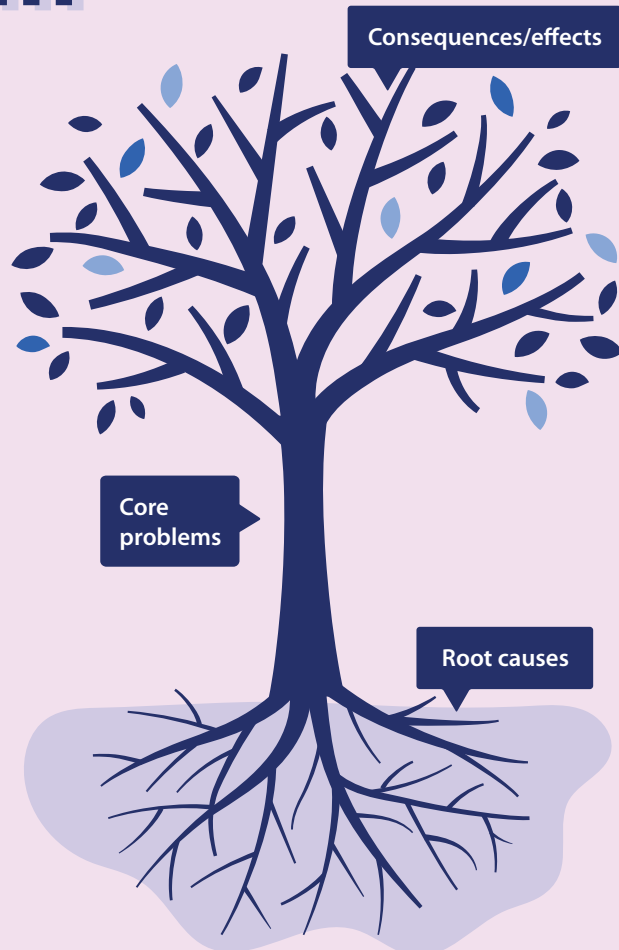
deconstruct a complex problem existing in a community and for young people



distinguish between the causes and effects of the problem



identify factors that need to be tackled by the project to address the problem



## HOW TO USE IT?

### Step 1 Identify the problem

Name the core problem you want to address with your project. Make sure that the problem is formulated with a clear problem statement, such as the lack of free-time activities for young people, the limited use of environmentally friendly practices in the implementation of youth projects or recurring violations of young people's right to political participation.



### Step 2 Deconstruct the causes and effects of the problem

Place the core problem at the centre of the problem tree; the stem of the tree.

Then start the analysis by identifying a first rank of causes of the problem and note those down. Then proceed by asking for each first-ranked cause why the problem exists and note down the answers. By doing so you have identified second-ranked causes of the problem. Now proceed by asking for each second-ranked cause again why it exists and identify its causes (third ranked).

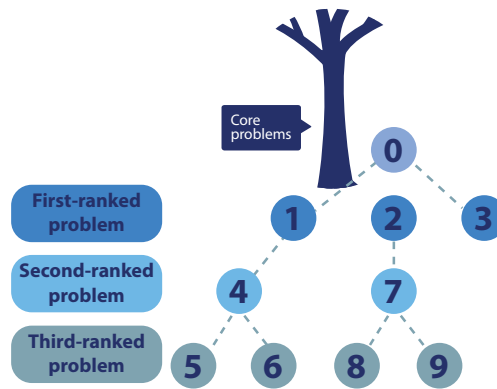


Figure 24. Deconstructing hierarchical cause relationships



Now focus on the effects – the treetop – of the problem and list them in the upper part of your tree. Proceed similarly as you have done for the root causes and allow at least for asking one time if first-ranked effects are creating further negative effects.



Once you have done so, review the root section of your problem tree and adjust the hierarchical order of the reasons to the best of your knowledge.



If there is something you do not know or you are not sure about while doing the analysis, note it down. It might be worth seeking additional information to clarify these open questions to complete your analysis.

# Actor pyramid

The actor pyramid is a tool to identify stakeholder groups and community groups affected by and involved in the upholding of the problem (Maiese 2003).

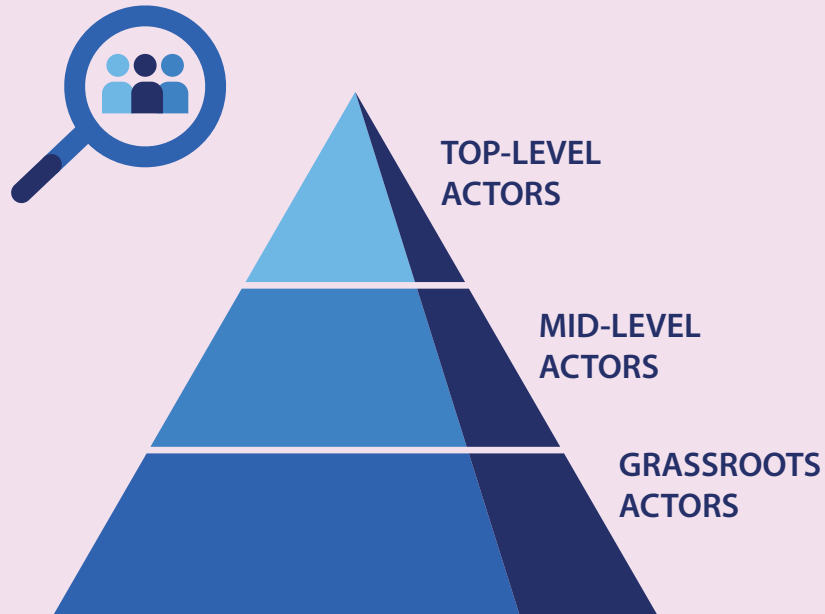


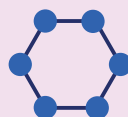
Figure 25. Actor pyramid, adapted from Lederach (1997)

## WHY USE IT?

*The actor pyramid helps:*



map all relevant stakeholders and community groups in relation to the problem



understand the influence of the respective stakeholders and the project's partnership's outreach to these actors



identify potential target groups and strategic partners for the project to effectively address the problem

## HOW TO USE IT?

### Step 1 *Identify the actors*

The first step of the actor pyramid analysis is best done while conducting the problem tree analysis. Note down all the stakeholders and community groups, including decision makers that are involved or affected by the roots or the effects that you identify.

### Step 2 *Position the actors in the pyramid*

In a second step, position the identified actors and stakeholders in the pyramid depending on their level of influence. Make sure to include your own organisation and partners in the pyramid as well.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FINALISING THE CONTEXT ANALYSIS

- Do not shy away from reformulating the core problem if needed.
- Experiment with the causal sequence of factors and their underlying causes until you establish the most compelling hierarchical order of influence.
- Sometimes a cause might also appear as an effect, hinting at the existence of a vicious circle, which is often a good entry point for action.
- Avoid turning the problem tree analysis into a history review by focusing on the factual conditions related to the problem rather than on the historical reasons for the problem.
- Be as specific as possible when completing the actor pyramid by naming certain institutions such as government departments or associations, or even individuals.
- Do not forget to check which projects and initiatives are already under way in your community and address the problem you have identified; this is a good source for identifying potential partners and allies and helps avoid duplicating efforts.
- Place your organisation and your partners in the actor pyramid as well to understand which other stakeholders are in your proximity and therefore easier to reach out to and involve.
- Once done with the problem tree analysis, mark the roots that can realistically be addressed through your project.
- Once done with the actor pyramid, shortlist the most important stakeholders for your project intervention.

When using these tools to analyse the community, gaps or missing information often become apparent. In such cases, conducting small-scale community research is recommended to gather the necessary insights.

Depending on the type of information missing, different research methods can be used. Table 8 provides an overview of the most common research methods for youth projects. These methods can also be used in the frame of participatory action research with young people. The University of California, Berkeley operates the [Youth Participatory Action Research Hub](#) with many resources on how to conduct participatory research with young people. The information collected allows project managers to revisit and complete the problem tree and the actor pyramid analysis.

**Table 8. Overview of research methods for youth projects**

Method	Purpose	Type of information
<b>Desk research</b>	To gather existing information from secondary sources, to understand background, trends, policies and existing initiatives	Quantitative and qualitative data: statistical reports, academic articles, case studies, project examples, government policies
<b>Survey</b>	To collect standardised data from the community and young people to identify opinions, attitudes and needs	Quantitative and qualitative data: opinions, perceptions, needs disaggregated by profile of respondents, including young people
<b>Expert interview</b>	To gain in-depth insights and analysis from individuals with expertise on the topic	Qualitative data: opinions, experiences, expert interpretations, insights into developments and specific technical or contextual knowledge
<b>Focus group</b>	To explore a variety of perspectives and expertise on a specific aspect from practitioners or young people	Qualitative data: opinions, attitudes, shared experiences and emotional responses

### Step 5 – Designing the project

With the identified core problem being sufficiently analysed, the project’s design phase can take off. This is the moment during the planning stage when the project’s idea takes a concrete form as the goals, activities and expected results of the project.

Based on the problem tree analysis, the first step is to define the purpose or the goal of the project. To reach more clarity on the project’s purpose and to help narrow down the focus of the project, it is useful to formulate the project’s aims and objectives.

Therefore the core problem from the problem tree analysis is being reformulated into a project aim, and the most relevant causes into project objectives. Then, the project’s objectives can be fine-tuned by detailing them if needed.

#### Terminology

##### Goal

- ▶ General term describing the purpose of a project encompassing both aims and objectives.

##### Aim

- ▶ The overarching, broad goal or purpose of a project.
- ▶ An aim is a general statement describing the societal change the project is trying to achieve in the long term.
- ▶ A project usually has only one aim.

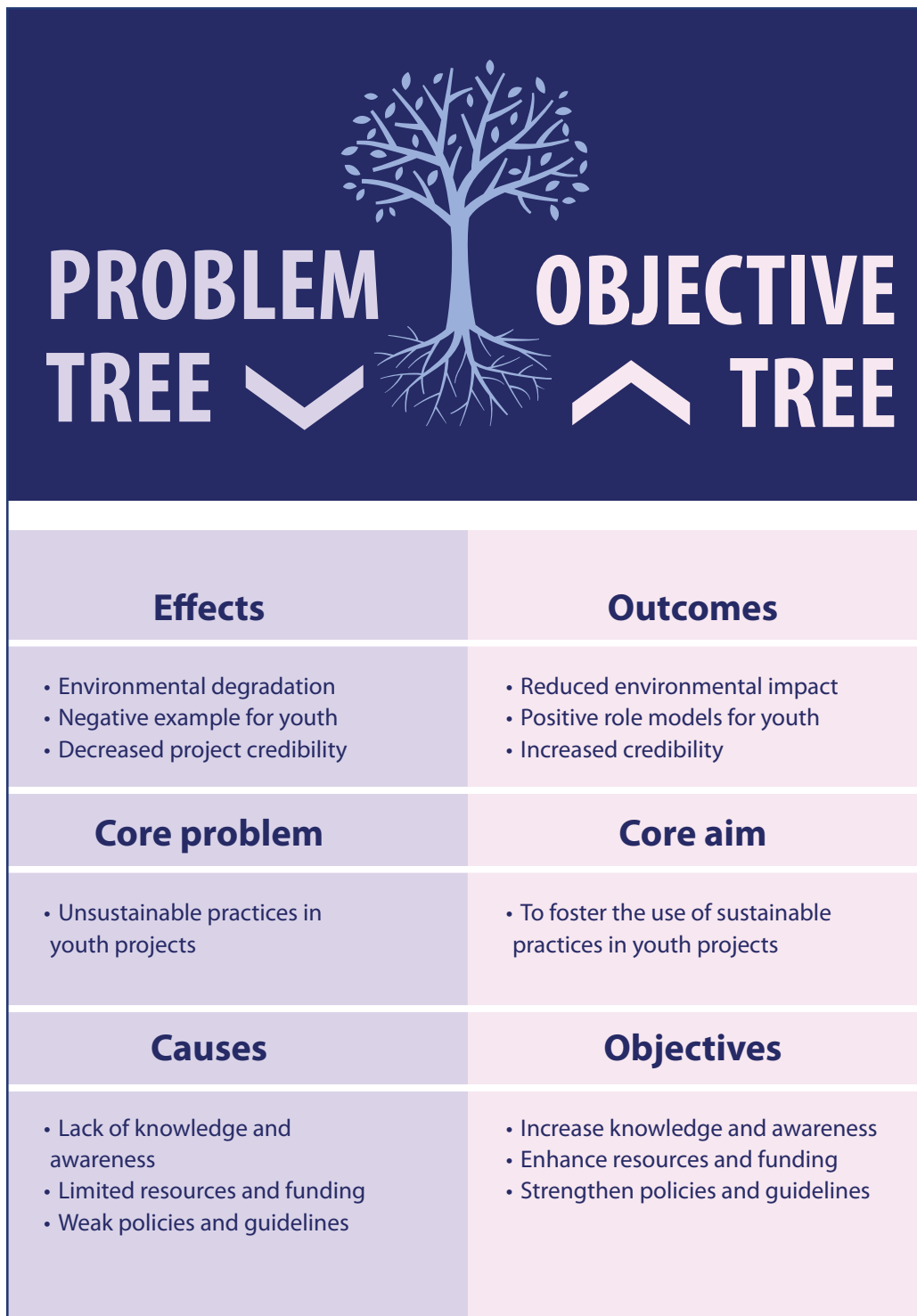
##### Objectives

- ▶ Specific, measurable steps that must be achieved to fulfil the aim.
- ▶ Objectives are more concrete than aims and should be clear and time-bound.
- ▶ Usually more than one objective, but often not more than two or three.

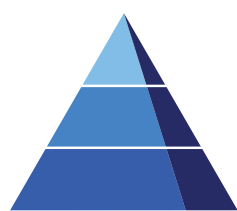
Afterwards, it is time to zoom in on the objectives, and define which target group the project should aim at while simultaneously identifying strategic partners that can support and strengthen the project’s reach and effect. The actor pyramid therefore provides useful information and direction.

Table 9 gives an example of this process by linking the findings of the problem tree and actor pyramid analysis to the project’s aims, objectives, target group and strategic partners.

**Table 9. Example of links between context analysis and project design**



**Table 9. Example of links between context analysis and project design**



# ACTOR PYRAMID

Top-level actors	
<b>Governments and public authorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministries of Youth, Environment or Education</li> <li>• Local and national environmental protection agencies</li> </ul>
<b>International organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)</li> <li>• European Commission's Youth Unit (DG EAC.B3)</li> <li>• Council of Europe's Youth Department</li> <li>• European Youth Forum</li> <li>• SALTO Green Resource Centre</li> </ul>
<b>International NGOs or entities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenpeace</li> <li>• World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)</li> <li>• Earth Charter International</li> </ul>
Mid-level actors	
<b>National, regional, international youth bodies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National youth councils</li> <li>• Regional youth networks and umbrella organisations</li> <li>• Environmental umbrella organisations and networks</li> <li>• Advocacy groups focused on sustainability and youth empowerment</li> </ul>
<b>Educational institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities offering youth, social work or environmental studies</li> <li>• Vocational training centres focusing on youth and social work</li> </ul>
<b>Funders and donors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erasmus+ programme (European Union)</li> <li>• European Youth Foundation (Council of Europe)</li> <li>• Private foundations</li> </ul>
Grassroots actors	
<b>Youth groups and young people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local youth clubs</li> <li>• Informal groups of young people</li> </ul>
<b>Local communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community associations and grassroots initiatives</li> <li>• Municipal councils and youth departments</li> </ul>
<b>Local NGOs and youth NGOs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small-scale environmental organisations (such as local permaculture groups)</li> <li>• Local youth organisations focused on sustainability and civic engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Youth work practitioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth workers, social workers, youth educators</li> <li>• Project managers in NGOs working on youth projects</li> </ul>
<b>Suppliers and service providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local eco-friendly product vendors</li> <li>• Sustainability-focused consultants</li> </ul>

**Table 9. Example of links between context analysis and project design**



While the project development has greatly advanced by now, the project activities still need to be established in relation to the objectives. It is important to be creative and aware of other ongoing initiatives in this process instead of replicating other projects, preferring to add to and build upon their actions and achievements.

A guiding question for defining project activities is to ask what needs to be done to achieve the respective project objective. At this point, an initial brainstorming exercise can generate as many answers as possible. Only during the second step is it advisable to check the ideas for their feasibility and shortlist the most promising ones. In the final step, the best matching activities for the consortium and their capacities can be chosen.

Once the activities are established, their results can be deduced. In project methodology applied in the youth field, three levels of results can be identified.

- ▶ Direct results: the immediate output of an activity.
- ▶ Indirect results: the secondary or mid-term outcome of an activity.
- ▶ Impact: the long-term effect and sustainable change that the project's activities contribute to.

Table 10 provides examples of activities and results for a youth project promoting sustainable green practices.

**Table 10. Example of a youth project rationale linking objectives, activities, results and impact**



For more complex youth projects, the final step is to conduct a risk assessment to understand what problems might occur during project implementation. Based on the identified risk, the project team can plan actions to tackle the potential risks. Table 11 shows an example of a risk assessment conducted for a youth project on sustainable practices in youth work.

**Table 11. Example of a risk assessment for a youth project on sustainable practices**

Project risk	Probability (1= low to 5 = high)	Impact (1= low to 5 = high)	Mitigation measures
Incorrect time plan, delay in reaching project milestones	1	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prevention: jointly created project timeline, project planning based on the partners' previous experiences, clearly assigned/timed tasks and defined results for each project activity.</li> <li>▶ Intervention: allowing for a redistribution of tasks among the partners if needed, opportunity for each partner to assign additional personnel to specific activities/tasks, allowing for rescheduling and modification of project timeline.</li> </ul>

Project risk	Probability (1= low to 5 = high)	Impact (1= low to 5 = high)	Mitigation measures
Low level of quality of the educational resource materials	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prevention: consortium established based on competences and organisational capacities, project monitoring and evaluation framework side-lines the project implementation.</li> <li>▶ Intervention: allowing for a redistribution of tasks among the partners to compensate for failed performances, opportunity for each partner to assign additional personnel to specific project activities, allowing for rescheduling and modification of the project timeline.</li> </ul>
Not enough participants in the training activities	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prevention: liaison with key stakeholders early on, extensive use of existing partner networks, various forms of outreach and visibility activities targeting specific target groups, operating a waiting list for all activities/events to handle drop-outs.</li> <li>▶ Intervention: intensifying the promotion of events after one event has not reached the expected figures, allowing for a prolongation of the recruitment phases of the training programmes, postponing the respective multiplier event if registrations are below expectation.</li> </ul>

## Step 6 – Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework

With step 6, the project development process comes closer to the end. But this does not make this step less important.

After the project idea is specified by having created a clear project rationale, the next task is to ensure that the project achievements can be proven at the end of the project. Because only then can one be sure that the project has successfully achieved its goals.

The instrument for verifying the project's success is a monitoring and evaluation framework. This is a structured plan to systematically track and assess the process, progress, performance and impact of a project. Its two key components are:

- ▶ monitoring: collecting project data and tracking progress during project implementation to allow for eventual project adjustments;
- ▶ evaluation: analysing project achievements and assessing overall project success and impact at the end to identify the lessons learned and to plan follow-up actions.

In section 3.4 Evaluation and follow-up, the framework expands to the dimension of learning to make sure the project management team draws on the lessons learned from the project's realisation. This will strengthen the ability to realise future youth projects.

**Table 12. Difference between monitoring and evaluation in youth projects**

Aspect	Monitoring	Evaluation
<b>Purpose</b>	Continuous oversight to ensure activities are implemented as planned and to allow for changes if needed	Assessment of the project process, quality achievement and impact and identification of lessons learned
<b>Timing</b>	Continuous throughout the project lifetime	Usually at mid-term and at the end of the project
<b>Scope</b>	Focused on activities and results	Focused on results and project impacts
<b>Leading questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ What is happening?</li> <li>▶ Is the project plan being followed?</li> <li>▶ Are there immediate issues to be addressed?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ To what extent did the project achieve its goals?</li> <li>▶ What worked out and what did not?</li> <li>▶ What lessons can be learned for future projects?</li> </ul>

In practical terms, this means a monitoring and evaluation framework defines what project information needs to be collected by what means to assess how far the project has achieved its results and purpose.

The complexity of the monitoring and evaluation frameworks varies depending on the scope of the project and its activities. However, there are common elements in all frameworks:

- ▶ indicators: tools to assess the progress and achievement of a youth project;
- ▶ means of verification: methods to collect data and evidence to confirm whether project indicators have been achieved.



## Terminology

Many different indicators exist. Here are few distinctions to be aware of.

- ▶ Indicators for direct results measure the direct outcomes of an activity.
- ▶ Indicators for indirect results measure the secondary or mid-term outcomes of an activity.
- ▶ Indicators for impact measure the long-term effect and change resulting from a project.


Indicators can carry quantitative (quantity, frequencies of something) and qualitative (non-numerical, judgments and perceptions) aspects.

Indicators and means of verification go hand in hand and need to be established together. For youth projects, it is often sufficient to prove a project's success at the level of direct results due to their often rather short-term reach. Only complex youth projects will require verification of the project's mid-term or long-term effects.

Table 13 shows examples of indicators and means of verifications commonly used in youth projects.

Table 13. Examples of common indicators and means of verification

# EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS AND MEANS OF VERIFICATIONS COMMONLY USED IN YOUTH PROJECTS

 <b>Objective</b>	 <b>Activity</b>	 <b>Results</b>	 <b>Indicator</b>	 <b>Means of verification</b>
<p><b>To improve digital literacy among young people in rural areas</b></p>	<p>Conduct <b>10 digital skills workshops</b> in rural areas</p>	<p><b>200 young people trained</b> in digital literacy</p>	<p>Number of workshops conducted</p> <hr/> <p>Number of young people trained</p> <hr/> <p>Digital skill development of young participants</p>	<p>Participant lists of workshops</p> <hr/> <p>Workshop reports</p> <hr/> <p>Knowledge-based pre- and post-tests or self-assessment of skill development</p>
<p><b>To promote mental health awareness among young people</b></p>	<p>Conduct awareness campaigns and workshops on mental health</p>	<p><b>Five campaigns</b> were held, reaching <b>1 000 young people</b></p>	<p>Number of campaigns conducted</p> <hr/> <p>Number of young people reached</p>	<p>Campaign reports</p> <hr/> <p>Photos, videos, press reporting, social media documentation (such as post interaction)</p>
<p><b>To create learning materials on sustainable practices in youth projects for project managers</b></p>	<p>Research on sustainability practices</p> <hr/> <p>Creating and publishing resource materials</p>	<p>Handbook and resource database on sustainable practices published and accessible</p>	<p>Number of examples available in the database</p> <hr/> <p>Number of downloads of the handbook and/or number of distributed copies</p> <hr/> <p>Percentage of project managers reporting usefulness of the materials</p>	<p>(Digital) copy of the handbook</p> <hr/> <p>Web platform analytics and/or distribution list</p> <hr/> <p>Reader survey</p>

## Step 7 – Checking and finalising the project’s plan

The last project planning step is rather easy. However, it requires the project team to take a critical look at their own project idea to check against internal flaws and verify the project’s rationale and logic.

The simplest way of doing this is to review all the documents that have been produced in the previous steps. The list below provides an overview of the most relevant aspects to look at.

### Relevance

Does the project idea address the needs and the problem that it aims to change? Does the project address a real problem in the community and for young people?

### Feasibility

Is it possible for our partnership to implement the project? Can we do it alone or do we need additional support or expertise?

### Results and impact

Is it realistic that the project activity generates the planned results? Is the impact of the project realistic?

### Innovation

Is the project bringing anything new to the community, young people or the organisations involved? Is the project innovative and unique in the community or does it replicate other already existing activities?

### Sustainability

Can the project results last beyond the project’s duration? Can other stakeholders use the results of the project for their own work?

### Involvement and commitment

Do all the partners want to fully commit to the project? Are they ready to invest time, energy and human and financial resources to make the project happen?

If any of the questions above is answered with a “no, it does not” or “no, it is not possible”, then aspects of the project need to be redesigned and improved.



#### Tip

Inviting an external expert to assess the project idea is a good way to add an unbiased perspective to the project development process.

Good candidates for doing so are experts that:

- ▶ know the community and young people;
- ▶ know one or more organisations in the partnership;
- ▶ have expertise in the project theme;
- ▶ have been involved in similar projects before.

If a project steering group is supporting the project, it is also a good alternative for the external assessment of the project idea.

After making possible adaptations, the final project plan needs to be written down so that it can serve as a guide for the next project stages. Most organisations have developed a standardised format for this purpose that will record all aspects that have been explored in the previous project development steps. The key tasks of the final project planning document is to unite all important aspects of the project into a single description,

in other words to create a storyline for the project that connects all the dots. The depths and length of the description depends on the complexity of the project and might vary from two to more than 10 pages.

What is important is that the project description is precise and documents the decisions made during the project planning process. Tool 6 gives an overview of the content of such a project description and can be used as orientation.



## Tool 6 Project idea description

Content	Details	Suggested number of pages
Project title	▶ Working title of the project	One line
Project partners	▶ Name, country and city of each project partner ▶ Short description of the field of expertise of each partner	Maximum one page
Project background	▶ Short description of the situation in the community and for young people ▶ Definition of the core problem that the project addresses	Maximum one page
Project aims and objectives	▶ Definition of the general aim of the project ▶ Definition of the project's objectives	Maximum 10 lines
Project target groups	▶ Listing of all the project's target groups ▶ Short description of each target group	Maximum half a page
Project activities	▶ List of the project's activities ▶ Description of each project activity, including activity format, target group and expected output	One to three pages, up to five pages for complex projects
Project results	▶ Short description of the expected project results	Maximum half a page
Project risks	▶ Risk assessment, including counter-measures	One page
Monitoring and evaluation framework	▶ Description of the monitoring and evaluation framework	One to two pages, up to five pages for complex projects
Youth participation	▶ Explanation of the project's practices and approach to youth participation	Half a page to one page
Environmental practices	▶ Explanation of the project's practices and approach to environmental sustainability	Half a page to one page
Other key decisions	▶ Short description of any other key decisions taken for the project	Up to one page

## 3.2. Resource mobilisation

### 3.2.1 Introduction

In project management, resource mobilisation comes as the next stage after ideation and project planning, yet before project implementation. Once the project's objectives, activities, expected results and its target groups are defined, it is time to move forward and to mobilise all resources necessary for its implementation.

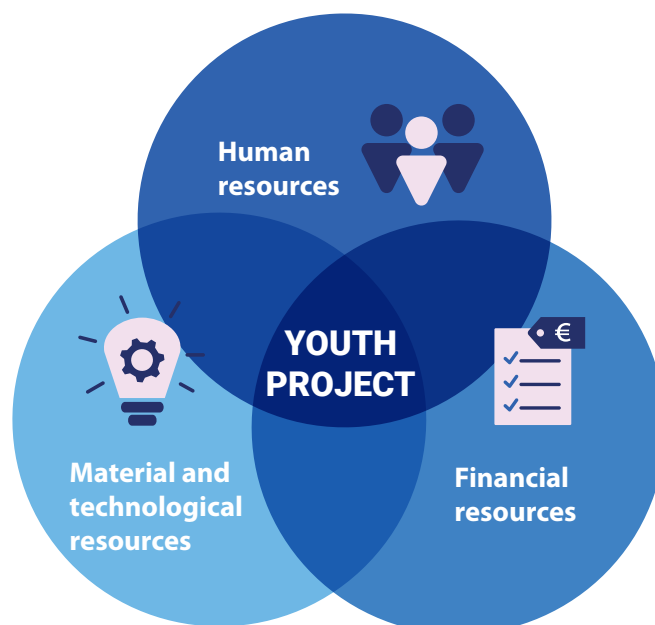
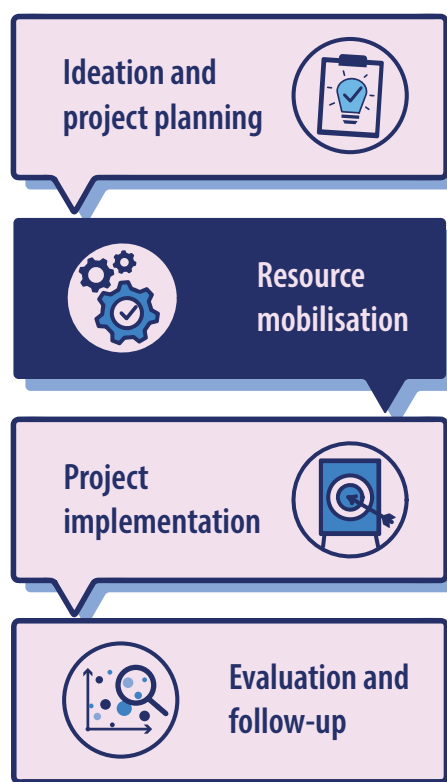
Resource mobilisation refers to identifying and securing the necessary resources for the project's implementation, as well as anticipating their correct use. Technically, the objective of this stage is to ensure that adequate financial, human, technological and material resources are available so that the foreseen youth project can bring about the desired impact. Resource mobilisation involves a variety of tasks depending on the scale and scope of the planned youth project and the type of resources necessary for its implementation.

Resources necessary for the implementation of a youth project can generally be listed under three main categories (see Figure 26).

Material and technological resources include equipment, materials, facilities, hardware and software, vehicles and means of transportation, and communication tools such as phones, cameras or other equipment.

Human resources include volunteers, project management team members, specialists or thematic experts (such as youth workers, youth educators, social workers, youth policy experts) and community leaders, and potential members of steering and/or advisory bodies. Basically anyone contributing their time, skills, knowledge and networks to the implementation of the project.

Financial resources cover any resources necessary for a project that cannot be organised through in-kind or pro bono support, including material, technological and human resources. This could include travel tickets, catering services, flipchart paper and markers, group entrance tickets to a museum, social media advertising costs or promotional materials.



**Figure 26. Resources needed for the implementation of a youth project**

The steps and tasks for mobilising resources for a youth project are plentiful and are described within this section, from identification of required resources and mapping potential sources to specific tasks for fundraising.

### 3.2.2. Challenges

Succeeding in mobilising resources for implementing a youth project is a very rewarding process. It is empowering and fulfilling to obtain the means to make a project happen and to see an idea come to reality.

The process holds immense potential as a catalyst for empowering young people and strengthening relationships and networks within the community, especially if an inclusive and participatory approach is applied. It helps young people and communities to take ownership of the youth project and realise their collective capability. Resource mobilisation strengthens and creates new partnerships and collaborations with local authorities, the private sector, community groups and civil society organisations. It helps to establish a stronger community and reinforces social cohesion. Mobilising resources with a youth group can be a real learning path by itself, and should be approached as such. Finally, resource mobilisation can also be enjoyable at times.

It is important for the team to keep in mind the potential struggles and challenges that they could face, to be prepared and to tackle them swiftly if they appear.

#### ► **Uncertainty of securing resources**

When engaging in resource mobilisation, it is impossible to predict in advance its results. Experienced teams or project managers are generally more used to accepting this fact. However, less experienced teams and youth groups could face a major setback in case the needed resources are not obtained after implementing their carefully planned resource mobilisation strategy. It is important to anticipate such potential negative effects on the team and the young people, as it can demotivate individuals or even result in disengagement. Mentioning the uncertainty and raising awareness about it from the start is key to avoiding an unhappy surprise, for instance if a grant application is rejected. Likewise, every success in resource mobilisation, no matter how small, should be rightfully celebrated as it has the power to remotivate teams and create momentum.

#### ► **Duration and delays in securing resources**

Planning ahead and anticipation are essential for mobilising resources. However, these skills are sometimes limited in less experienced teams or within youth groups. It requires determination and stamina to plan well in advance, allowing enough buffer time for possible delays or disruptions. This is especially important when working with young people, who often favour a more spontaneous or ad hoc approach. The team might want to embrace the possibility of delays in resource mobilisation which can result in postponing the start of the project. To keep young people motivated and engaged throughout the process of resource mobilisation, the team should communicate transparently about potential delays from the start. Similarly, when seeking institutional funding, the team should carefully review the time frame offered by the targeted funding programme to correctly predict the start of the project's implementation. It can easily take months for the project to start after the funding application is submitted.

#### ► **Creativity and youth participation in resource mobilisation**

If resource mobilisation does not yield immediate results, the team or youth group might feel that there are no available resources or that there is intense competition for them. This perceived scarcity could result in teams becoming demotivated and eventually giving up their planned youth project. To prevent this from happening, the team can mobilise young people to find creative approaches to resource mobilisation. Creativity and thinking out of the box are vital for success in raising resources or funds for a project, as it can help to tap into less solicited resources. For instance, the strategy could be to organise community-based fundraising events that are new to a community, thereby increasing their chances of success.

#### ► **Capacity and skills for resource mobilisation**

Resource mobilisation can be a real challenge, particularly for teams or youth groups lacking the necessary specialised skills such as strategic thinking, anticipation, advocating or proposal writing. Without proper training or experience, teams may struggle to produce engaging narratives or messages, to engage successfully with potential sponsors or partners or to identify the right funding opportunities and develop compelling proposals respecting the rules of a funding programme. Being aware of the challenges ahead, the potential duration of the process and the possibility of setbacks is essential for achieving success. The team or project manager should adapt the resource mobilisation strategy to match the capacity of the team and the young people involved. It is crucial to avoid overwhelming team members with tasks that are too demanding. Resource mobilisation should follow a gradual approach, beginning with simpler activities for small-scale projects and progressing to more complex fundraising efforts for larger-scale events, allowing the team to learn and grow along the way.

### ► **Selecting the right approach and strategy for resource mobilisation**

There are multiple approaches to mobilising resources, depending on the scale and scope of the planned project, the availability of resources and the team's capacity and time. Selecting the right approach can be particularly overwhelming for a less experienced team or youth group, yet it is important for achieving results and moving forward to the project's implementation. This section offers various tips and tools to ease the reflection and decision-making process when selecting the approach and strategy for resource mobilisation.



- How do you maintain team morale during resource mobilisation, particularly when facing challenges or setbacks?
- How do you celebrate successes in resource mobilisation?
- How do you actively involve young people during the resource mobilisation process?
- How can you integrate innovative approaches or creativity during resource mobilisation?

### **3.2.3. Common tasks and considerations**

Identifying the necessary resources and budgeting are crucial steps prior to actually taking the steps for resource mobilisation. The various key tasks and considerations in the resource mobilisation phase are described below, prior to offering a step-by-step action plan in section 3.2.4.

#### **Identification of the resources needed and budgeting**

At first, it is necessary for the team to identify the resources needed to implement the planned youth project. A precondition for doing this is that the project idea is clearly formulated and detailed.

Based on the project's details, the team needs to list all the necessary resources for each planned activity, quantifying and qualifying the necessary resources for each: technological and material, human resources and/or financial means.

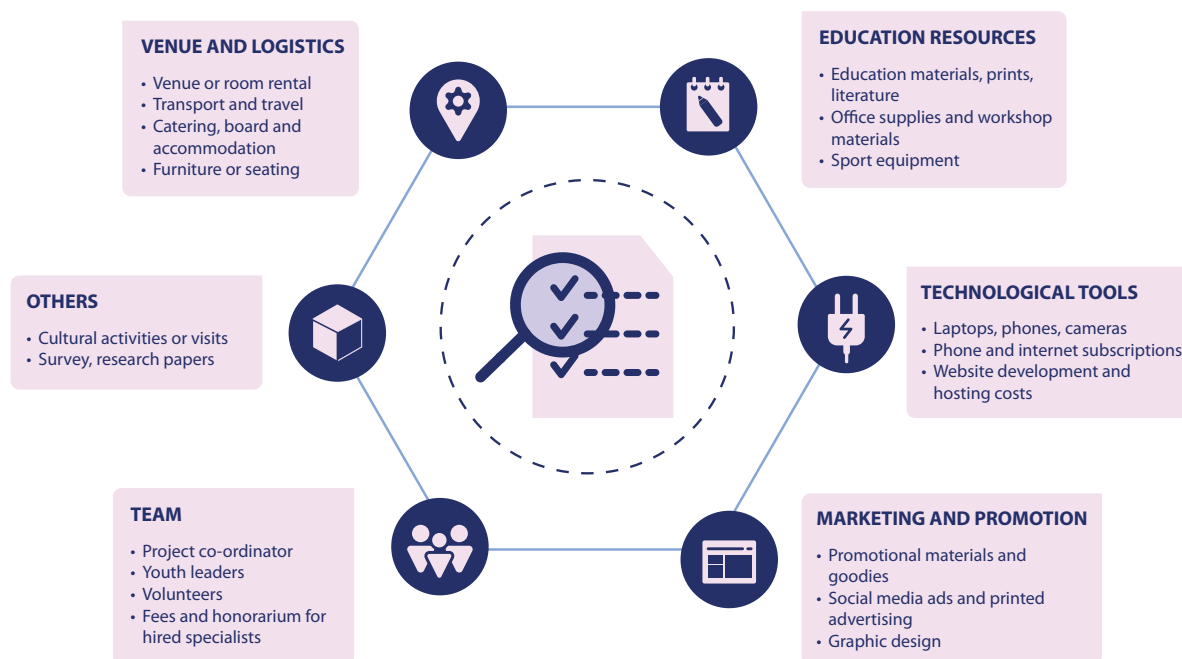
Costs related to transversal activities such as project co-ordination, ongoing communication and visibility must also be considered and quantified. When technological, material or human resources cannot be found, their costs must be budgeted for. For example, if a training facility is not available pro bono or a facilitator cannot offer a team-building session for free, expenses like room rental or facilitator fees should be included in the budget.

The checklist on commonly needed resources (see Tool 7) in youth projects provides advice for the identification of resources and budgeting.

The team should start by listing all physical equipment and materials required for the implementation of the planned youth project, including printed materials, technical equipment or software and office supplies. The need for office space, venues and related equipment (for example seating, projector) must be considered too. In case these resources are not available in the partnership and if they cannot be obtained in-kind, the costs for rental or acquisition must be listed in the list of necessary resources.

Equally important, the team needs to precisely determine the human resources necessary for the implementation of the project. This includes listing the necessary personnel and their skills, time and role in the planned project and checking if there is an available person within the team to take over this role. The team must consider project management personnel, necessary for the implementation of the planned project, as well as any thematic, short-term support staff such as facilitators, trainers, mentors, communication experts or any other specialists. It is essential to determine the costs for the personnel to deliver their tasks. Will these be hired staff members, freelancers or volunteers? Beside this, for youth projects involving larger events, it might be wise to anticipate the support of youth volunteers. In this case, their expected roles, tasks and level of commitment shall be anticipated to ease volunteer mobilisation.

# Commonly used resources in a youth project



**Figure 27. Common resources needed for a youth project**

For each foreseen necessary resource, the actual costs should be checked by reviewing prices online or requesting price estimations at local businesses or shops. It may involve comparing the prices offered and deciding on the right option for the planned youth project. In this regard, the team should establish clear criteria for making their choice. While it is common practice to select the “best value for money” option, other factors should also be considered. For example, the ecological footprint of the provided services may play a significant role in the decision. Indeed, green and locally sourced services might be more expensive, but could be better aligned with the values and principles of the planned youth project. A last thing to consider when planning a budget is the fact that bulk prices might be obtained through negotiation, therefore the team should not shy away from asking for discounts especially when working with local businesses or planning larger expenses. For instance, when booking multiple rooms in a hostel for a week-long youth exchange, the training hall could be offered free-of-charge or at a discounted price.

Through this process of identifying the necessary means for the implementation of the planned project, the team will develop:

- ▶ a preliminary budget, offering an estimate of how much money is needed for the project;
- ▶ an overview of the resources that can potentially be obtained in-kind through co-operation and partnerships.



**Tool 7**

**Checklist for commonly needed resources in youth projects**

Category	Resource item/ examples	In-kind sources	Unit cost	Quantity	Total price	Comments
<b>Venue and logistics</b>	Venue or room rental					
	Transport and travel					
	Catering, board and accommodation					
	Furniture or seating					
	<i>add your own items</i>					
<b>Educational resources</b>	Educational materials, literature and prints					
	Office supplies and workshop materials					
	Sports equipment					
	<i>add your own items</i>					
<b>Technological tools</b>	Laptops, phones, cameras, etc.					
	Phone and internet subscriptions					
	Website development and hosting costs					
	<i>add your own items</i>					
<b>Visibility and dissemination</b>	Promotional materials					
	Social media ads and printed advertising					
	Graphic design					
	<i>add your own items</i>					
<b>Personnel costs</b>	Project co-ordinator					
	Youth leaders					
	Volunteers					
	Fees for hired specialists					
	<i>add your own items</i>					
<b>Others</b>	Cultural activities or visits					
	Survey or research papers					
	<i>add your own items</i>					

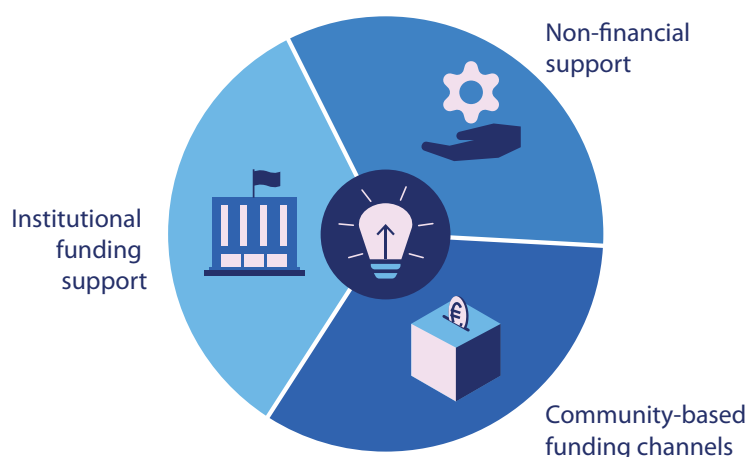
## Mapping resources and strategising resource mobilisation for a youth project

Once the necessary resources and budgets to implement the planned project are detailed and estimated, the team should proceed with strategising the acquisition of these resources.

This step is often called fundraising, implying that it is all about raising funds for the project implementation. However, as seen earlier, technological, material and human resources might be obtained through non-financial support (pro bono or in-kind). Therefore, strategising resource mobilisation might include a fundraising process but it may as well involve other tasks, such as community mobilisation and seeking partnerships for sponsorships, pro bono use or in-kind contributions.

Strategising resource mobilisation starts with mapping the known, available or existing sources that might provide the necessary resources to implement the planned youth project. The team should brainstorm and list ideas where they could obtain non-financial and financial support for the project's implementation. Current partners, local businesses or entities as well as existing funds should be listed. If the team has limited expertise or knowledge of this, it is recommended consulting other organisations or experts or doing research on similar projects in the community to identify potential sources.

## Three categories of support for a youth project



**Figure 28. Sources of support for a youth project**

To proceed systematically when mapping the available and existing sources of potential support, it is important to differentiate three different categories of support (see Figure 28), namely:

- ▶ non-financial support;
- ▶ community-based funding channels;
- ▶ institutional funding support.

### Non-financial support

Non-financial support refers to in-kind contributions such as the pro bono use of materials, space, equipment or volunteering. Non-financial support can take various forms, including:

- ▶ the free use of municipal premises by a youth group;
- ▶ donations of photography equipment from local businesses;
- ▶ an experienced educator volunteering for five days during a youth camp;
- ▶ free entrance tickets to a local festival.

In-kind contributions can come in handy for small-scale and relatively simple youth projects or youth-led initiatives.

In fact, in-kind donations, pro bono use of premises or equipment and the support of volunteers can sometimes be sufficient to proceed with the implementation of a youth-led initiative. However, for more complex youth projects involving a larger set of activities, it might be necessary to seek funding because it would be too challenging to cover all needs with non-financial support schemes.

It is important to note that involving young people in securing non-financial support is a great tool for fostering their sense of ownership and enhancing their leadership skills. Various ways to engage young people in this process will be described in section 3.2.4.

## Community-based funding channels

Community-based funding channels refer to financial support mechanisms that rely on contributions from individuals, local communities and informal networks rather than institutional sources. It may include community-based fundraising events, individual donors, crowdfunding platforms, membership fees or subscriptions.

The advantages of seeking funds through community-based channels is that it is more flexible and less bureaucratic than institutional funding sources. Moreover, these funding channels can be built through personal and community networks and partnerships and can result in broad community mobilisation, raising visibility and awareness about the project for which the team seeks funding.

### Tip

#### Ideas for community-based funding channels

- ▶ Cultural events such as outdoor movie screenings, art sales, concerts or theatre evenings, cultural festivals or storytelling nights, masterclasses and DIY workshops.
- ▶ Sport competitions or events such as running or walking events with registration fees.
- ▶ Crowdfunding platforms like GoFundMe, Ulule, Kickstarter.
- ▶ Garage or second-hand sales, seasonal markets, swap events.
- ▶ Creative sales such as selling youth-made crafts, art or digital products.
- ▶ Social events like community charity dinners, quiz nights, dance parties, game nights or food and drink tasting events.
- ▶ Lotto, bingo and tombola.
- ▶ Membership fees or subscriptions.

Community-based fundraising also offers plenty of opportunity to mobilise young people throughout the process, thus creating stronger connections and a positive dynamic within the group. It can be a very creative and bold process and can take a variety of forms, providing young people with the opportunity to learn and grow throughout the process as well. Community-based fundraising may bear fruit faster than institutional fundraising, as there are no external calendars or schedules to follow. For example, the team could organise an outdoor movie screening, a sports competition or a second-hand swap event at any time to raise funds.

However, community-based fundraising can be highly demanding, often resembling a project in itself, as organising mid to large-scale community events requires significant time, energy and resources. Last but not least, community-based fundraising may not be suitable for larger-scale and more complex youth projects, for instance when several international journeys are required, as it usually results in smaller amounts being raised over (under €5 000).

## Institutional funding support

Institutional funding support for youth projects is provided in the form of a grant issued by an institutional partner such as:

- ▶ a public entity;
- ▶ an organisation;

- ▶ a development agency;
- ▶ a foundation or a trust;
- ▶ an academic institution.

## Tip

### Where to look for grants

- ▶ Local and regional authorities, such as city councils, regional entities.
- ▶ National youth programmes or agencies.
- ▶ Regional development funds.
- ▶ Civil society organisations and non-profit organisations operating youth programmes.
- ▶ European Union funding programmes, such as Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, Town Twinning programme.
- ▶ The Council of Europe's funding programmes such as through the European Youth Foundation.
- ▶ National development agencies of EU countries such as Agence Française de Développement, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH or foreign embassies.
- ▶ Foundations and charity trusts.
- ▶ Corporate social responsibility funding programmes, such as local banks, insurance companies or large businesses.
- ▶ Cultural and art councils.
- ▶ Health and well-being institutions.
- ▶ Educational institutions and training centres offering youth programmes.

Institutional fundraising requires the project team to apply for funding to a donor institution and to submit a set of documents describing the project idea. It generally offers larger funding and may be therefore suitable for youth projects with a budget higher than €5 000 or with a more complex set of activities. Some funding programmes offer technical assistance or consultation throughout the funding and/or project implementation process, which may be useful for less experienced groups or teams.

However, institutional funding tends to be more bureaucratic and less flexible and involves a longer time frame between proposal submission and project implementation, as projects must adhere to calendars and deadlines set by the funding programme. It therefore requires a certain diligence and anticipation in planning, implementation and reporting. Last, institutional funding programmes might expect the implementing team to advance part of the funds for implementation, which could be a challenge for smaller youth groups or organisations with lower financial capacity.




In most cases, co-funding is expected when receiving a grant from an institutional funding source, therefore the team should be ready to combine the grant with non-financial contributions, community-based funding or funding support from another institutional funding source.

### Three options for resource mobilisation

Considering the necessary material, technological, financial and human resources for implementing the planned youth project, along with the three mobilisation strategies and their characteristics, the team can determine the most suitable approach for them and the project.

Table 14 provides an overview of the different characteristics of each approach to resource mobilisation. Each approach calls for a specific set of tasks and activities. Nevertheless, for larger-scale youth projects, the team may need to draw on all three categories of resources. This includes leveraging local partnerships for in-kind contributions, applying for grants from institutional funding programmes and organising community-based fundraising events for co-funding.

**Table 14. Characteristics of the three approaches to resource mobilisation**

	 <b>Non-financial support</b>	 <b>Community-based funding channels</b>	 <b>Institutional funding support</b>
<b>Source</b>	Local community groups, public entities, small businesses	Individual, communities, small businesses	Formal organisations or entities, agencies
<b>Suitability</b>	For informal youth groups, youth-led initiatives or less experienced teams		If youth-friendly, for informal youth groups and youth-led initiatives; otherwise, for more experienced teams
<b>Formality</b>	Flexible, rather informal, personal, emotional		Structured, quite formal, professional, strategic
<b>Communication</b>	Direct and simple messaging, engaging narratives and storytelling		Structured, evidence-based and data-driven project descriptions, written documents
<b>Funding scale</b>	No funding	Usually small-scale (under €5 000)	Often larger-scale (over €5 000)
<b>Availability</b>	Often based on personal relations and networks		Generally through an often extensive formal application process
<b>Documentation</b>	Minimal documentation		Larger project proposal documents and extensive documentation and reporting
<b>Time frame</b>	Short-term, one-time but renewable		Longer time frames between ideation and implementation
<b>Mobilisation methods</b>	Call for in-kind contributions, sponsorships, pro bono use of equipment or premises and volunteering	Community-based fundraising events, individual donors, crowdfunding platforms, membership fees or subscriptions	Responding to a call for proposals by submitting a requested set of documents describing the project idea
<b>Sustainability</b>	Depends on voluntary contributions and goodwill Requires regular engagement with local actors for long-term partnerships	Depends on voluntary contributions and goodwill Requires regular engagement with the local community, as well as offering a range of community-based fundraising events	High potential for sustainability, if multi-year grants or partnerships are possible Requires regular effort to meet the expectations of the funding programme
<b>Limitations and challenges</b>	Often cannot cover all costs foreseen by the project Quite limited for more complex projects	Unsuitable for projects with a larger-scale budget or complex set of activities Requires significant time, energy and resources in itself	Requires skilled team members able to comply with the multiple regulations and conditions of the grant programme (documentation, accountability, communication, reporting, etc.)
<b>Example</b>	Pro bono use of a meeting room offered by the municipality council	Bake sales at the local market	Grant from the Erasmus+ programme or the European Youth Foundation

The strategic approach to non-financial support and community-based funding channels relies mainly on building relationships and networks within the community. The team needs to create engaging narratives and stories to be shared with the local community and the potential partners. Personal links are often key to success as local enterprises are more willing to offer in-kind contributions to a youth project when knowing the young people engaged in it or the leading team. Mobilising young people to communicate about their project is an added value for raising non-financial support and community-based funding, as it gives a genuine and concrete perspective.

In contrast to the above, the strategic approach for raising funds from an institutional funding programme involves a more formal and strategic communication and tone, tailored to the respective fund. It requires the team to use data-driven or evidence-based communication and to compile a set of comprehensive and consistent project documents.

Institutional fundraising does not rely on personal links or connections, however engaging with representatives of the funding programme through events and conferences might help to be identified as a potential partner. If institutional fundraising is new to the team, a youth-friendly fund is a good first choice. A fund with a youth-friendly approach is a funding programme designed to be accessible and supportive of young people and youth-led initiatives. They generally offer simplified application processes, smaller-scale grants, wider eligibility criteria, support and coaching, and more flexibility in implementation and reporting.

### 3.2.4 Step by step – Mobilising resources for a youth project

Step-by-step resource mobilisation action plans are described here for non-financial support and community-based funding channels, and for institutional fundraising. Depending on the resources required, the team can move forward with one or both action plans in order to obtain the means to implement their planned youth project.

#### Action plan for non-financial support and community-based funding channels

The approach when seeking non-financial and community-based funding support is different compared to institutional fundraising. A five-step (see Figure 29) action plan can help implement it and obtain the necessary resources.



Figure 29. Action plan for non-financial support and community-based funding

### **Step 1: Develop a step-by-step action plan**

The team agrees on the tasks for mobilising resources, schedules them and assigns a person in charge. The step-by-step action plan must be particularly detailed and precise, for instance highlighting which business entity should be contacted, by which means, for what, by whom and when. Asking young people who participate in the project to co-develop the step-by-step action plan is strongly advised. It will enhance their understanding of what it takes to make the project happen. The team should also invite the young people to take the lead on some of the tasks, as resource mobilisation is a particularly empowering process for young people and may enhance their leadership and other key competences. Tool 8 provides a template for an action plan.

### **Step 2: Develop key messages and narratives to communicate about the project**

The team creates written, visual or video materials to communicate about the project and contact potential partners and supporters. The target should be specified prior to developing the message and the communication channel. For instance, local businesses would be more receptive to a written request for a contribution whereas the wider community might prefer short promotional videos by the young people themselves. Messages should apply a personal or emotional tone, yet be faultless and coherent.

Young people can take the lead in creating promotional materials, such as visuals or videos, using their creativity to craft an engaging narrative about the project. For example, they could share their motivation for implementing the project through a video presentation. Prior to sending off the produced messages, it is essential that the project's core team verify that the quality is up to the expected standards. Testing the messages during the preparatory phase can help get them right.

### **Step 3: Mobilise youth, volunteers and other community members**

Seeking non-financial support and community-based funding is best done through personal connections and relations. This makes the team members, young people involved in the project and volunteers or active community members most suitable for the job. Once the team has listed all the potential partners and supporters, it is best to decide within the team who is the best individual to approach them – meaning those who already know them personally. This is essential for getting positive responses.

### **Step 4: Secure partnerships and collaborations for in-kind contributions and pro bono support**

The team, young people and volunteers use agreed channels to contact potential partner organisations, local businesses, experts and public services to secure in-kind or pro bono contributions. It is best to clearly state how the partner could contribute to the youth project, for instance through the free use of premises or the donation of entrance tickets or literature. This helps the supporters to quickly assess if they can and want to contribute or not. If they agree, the team should express gratitude and acknowledge their support by including their logos or mentions in project communication materials. If the response is negative, the team should still thank them warmly for their consideration and express hope for future collaboration. Cultivating positive relationships with local businesses and organisations can lead to potential support for future projects.

### **Step 5: Organise community-based fundraising events**

Community-based fundraising events are organised to raise funds for smaller-scale youth projects, when all necessary resources cannot be sourced from in-kind and pro bono contributions. It is essential that community-based fundraising events remain easy to organise. Therefore it should be carefully thought over and planned. Fundraising targets should be set by assessing the costs and budgets of the event. As with the other steps, ensuring the participation of young people and volunteers will be crucial for success. In the previous section, a variety of community-based fundraising events were presented, including bake sales, game nights, sports tournaments, cultural events, charity dinners or bingo games. Creativity is key to success, as unique events are likely to be positively received by the community. Equally important is fostering good relationships with other organisations. This includes being mindful of scheduling to avoid conflicts with other events and refraining from duplicating fundraising activities already being planned by others.



**Tool 8**

**Example of an action plan template for non-financial support and community-based funding**

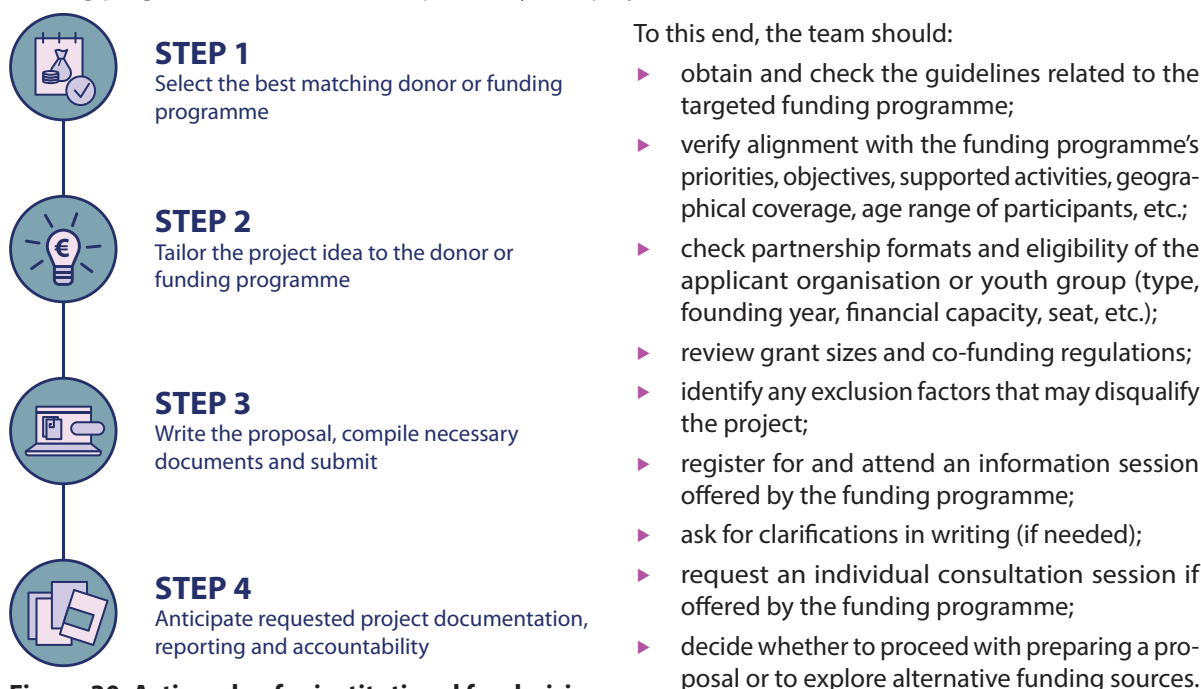
Task	How will it be done?	What is being asked for?	Who is in charge?	By when?	Done? (✓)
Contact a local bakery	In person, with prepared request letter	Pastries for 25 people, in-kind contribution or discounted pricing	Mariam and Ahmed	10 February	
Contact the city hall	By phone, followed by e-mail	Free-of-charge market spot for the bake sale on 7 November, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.	Sofia	17 March	
Contact a local insurance company	By e-mail followed by a meeting	Sponsorship for 20 young people participating in an international youth exchange	Theo, Leyla and Mia	31 July	
Communicate about the crowdfunding platform	Social media posts with videos produced by young people	Financial donations on the crowdfunding platform	Zara, Liam, Chloé, and Amy (all others repost)	From 2 October until 17 October	

**Action plan for institutional fundraising**

As outlined above, institutional fundraising is a distinct approach to securing resources for a youth project. It requires a different strategy to non-financial or community-based funding (see Figure 30).

**Step 1: Select the best matching donor or funding programme**

Based on the mapping and identification of possible funding sources, the team should select the best matching funding programme or donor for the planned youth project.



**Figure 30. Action plan for institutional fundraising**

Tool 9 provides a simple checklist supporting the team in their assessment of funding programmes.

Reviewing all the above listed details is essential to assess if the funding programme is suitable for the planned youth project, in order not to engage in a fundraising process that would bear no fruit because of formal exclusion criteria.



### Checklist for assessing funding programmes

Question	Answer
Does the fund accept applications from our type of organisation?	
Are there geographical restrictions on the seat of our organisation or on the activities?	
Are there any specific requirements regarding legal status, years of operation or previous experience?	
Do our project objectives align with the fund's thematic priorities (such as youth empowerment, sustainability, economic development or social inclusion)?	
Does the fund have specific focus areas such as rural development, gender equality or innovation that match our project?	
Does the fund support the types of activities we plan to implement?	
Are there any restrictions on certain types of expenditures (like staff salaries, equipment or travel)?	
What is the minimum and maximum funding amount available?	
Does the fund require co-financing?	
Are there any restrictions on budget categories (for example a maximum percentage for administrative costs)?	
What is the application deadline and timeline?	
What documents and supporting materials are required (a budget, project proposal or letters of support)?	
What level of reporting, monitoring and evaluation is required during and after the project?	
Are we willing and able to comply with the fund's reporting and administrative requirements?	

### Step 2: Tailor the project idea to the donor or funding programme

Once the funding programme is identified, the team needs to consider if modifications to the initially planned project are necessary to better match the funding programme. It is rare that a planned project perfectly fits a funding programme. Tailoring the project's scale, scope or formats and activities might be necessary, for example adding specific activities, modifying the number of participants or changing the scope of certain events.

However, this should be done carefully, so that the project does not lose its purpose and essence, meaning the funding programme might not be suitable for the project. In this case other funding sources must be sought. Some activities might not be eligible under the chosen funding programme, obliging the team to consider different funding sources to implement them, such as community-based funding channels. The team needs to anticipate what project activities the grant would cover and what it would not, so that the resource mobilisation strategy can be adapted to seek the potentially missing resources elsewhere.

### Step 3: Write the proposal, compile necessary documents and submit

Writing a project proposal means translating your project idea into the funding programme's language and format. It requires some technical skills to do this successfully.

Before starting to write the project application and compile all the necessary documents, the team should double check the deadlines and formats for application including:

- ▶ when and how is the project application to be submitted?;
- ▶ which document(s) must be completed and/or provided?

In cases where a template or specific format for the project proposal is offered by the funding programme, the team should review it methodically and discuss if any elements need clarifications. If this is the case, a request for clarification should be sent promptly to the funding programme.

Once the format and its content are clarified, the proposal-writing process can start. This consists in answering each question on an application form, respecting the guidelines, formats and set limits.

#### Tip

For a successful project proposal consider the following.

- ▶ Tailor the proposal to the priorities and goals of the funding programme.
- ▶ Review the guidelines, formats and criteria of the funding programme prior to project writing.
- ▶ Demonstrate in the project proposal the involvement of young people in the ideation of the project.
- ▶ Be clear and concise, yet don't oversimplify.
- ▶ Argue and convince by showing evidence and former achievements (statistics or results).
- ▶ Don't assume the funding programme knows your context or background.
- ▶ Respect the page or word limits, don't submit generic descriptions.
- ▶ Adhere strictly to the funder's requirements.
- ▶ Ensure all sections are complete and aligned.
- ▶ Ensure overall consistency across the project application in terms of terminology, wording and key details of the project.
- ▶ Eliminate errors, spelling mistakes and ensure consistent formatting, line spacing, font type and size, and page margins as well as coherent and systematic numbering of sections and subsections.
- ▶ Use AI support tools only if you are able to properly tailor the text to your project.
- ▶ Compile a detailed and clear budget, estimate project costs precisely.
- ▶ Provide all requested complementary documents.
- ▶ Submit on time and avoid last-minute submission.
- ▶ Be open to revising the project proposal based on peer review or the funding programme's feedback.

The narratives and their tone should be straightforward, formal, strategic, precise, evidence-based and data-driven, and strongly aligned with the priorities and objectives of the funding programme. Using clear and concise language is essential so that the reader will easily understand the essence of the project and its technical details.

Through the written application, the team should demonstrate that the proposed project is particularly relevant for the funding programme and will offer added value to it. The team should pay attention to explain the contextual background, needs and any other constraints in detail. It should not assume that the assessor(s) of the project proposal has any knowledge of the topic or the geographical area in which the project takes place. Once the application form is completed, it is advisable to ask a person who did not write it to review it and provide feedback.

Last but not least, donors often request a set of legal and complementary documents to be submitted together with the technical project description. This should be respected by all means, to avoid the application being rejected for missing documents.

If all of the above is respected, the funding proposal can be submitted.

### Step 4: Anticipate requested project documentation, reporting and accountability

Being the recipient of a grant from a funding programme comes with a set of donor-specific responsibilities with regard to project documentation, reporting, communication or accountability.

At the stage of resource mobilisation, prior to submitting their grant application, the team must assess if they have the capacity to fulfil these requirements. It is common for instance that a funding programme requests an original signed list of participants and original travel documents to prove that a youth festival took place. To this end, the team needs to anticipate how these documents will be gathered and compiled during the festival. The requirements of the funding programme must be considered throughout all phases of the project, from inception and activity implementation, through visibility and communication, to evaluation and reporting. In some cases, the team should anticipate the need for administrative support or expertise, such as from an accountant.

## 3.3. Project implementation

### 3.3.1. Introduction

The project implementation stage follows resource mobilisation and consists of carrying out the previously defined and planned project activities to reach the project objectives and accomplish the expected results. This stage allows the project idea to become reality, ensuring a real-life impact on young people and their communities.

In youth projects, the purpose of the implementation stage goes beyond just delivering results and also concerns:

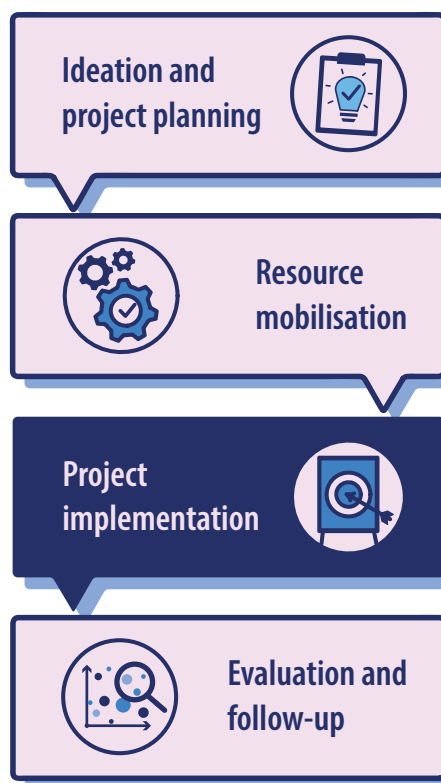
- ▶ empowering young people and creating a positive social impact resonating with them;
- ▶ helping young people to gain skills, confidence and opportunities to influence their reality;
- ▶ creating visibility for the impact of the youth project.

Youth projects require a flexible, inclusive and engaging approach during implementation, including mentorship, competence development and structured yet adaptable management to accommodate school or work schedules. In order to ensure the successful implementation of a youth project, managers should focus on:

- ▶ providing space for young people to influence and shape the project and its implementation in the best case as equal team members;
- ▶ designing engaging activities for young people to become active participants;
- ▶ implementing activities to foster young people's growth, confidence and a sense of ownership over the project activities.

### 3.3.2. Challenges

Implementing youth projects comes with challenges that can hinder their effectiveness and impact. Poor team co-ordination and communication, delays in project activities, mismanagement of resources and lack of monitoring and documentation are some of the most common obstacles. These issues often arise due to the dynamic nature of youth participation, limited resources and varying levels of experience within project teams. If not properly addressed, they can lead to inefficiencies, missed opportunities and reduced project credibility.



## Poor team co-ordination and communication

Team co-ordination and communication may be challenging in youth projects for various reasons. Team members and participants often come from diverse backgrounds, each with varying levels of experience and expertise. While diversity is enriching it can also pose challenges for communication and time management. Another recurrent challenge within youth projects is the often high turnover of team members within youth organisations, which can disrupt information flows and weaken team dynamics. For international youth projects, the strong reliance on digital tools for communication and co-ordination increases the risk of misinterpretations, delays and a lack of personal or direct connection between the team members. Weak team co-ordination and communication can lead to confusion, misunderstandings and inefficiencies that may ultimately derail project goals. Some of the possible specific consequences of poor co-ordination and communication are:

- ▶ missed deadlines;
- ▶ decreased morale and frustrated team members;
- ▶ work duplication or work not done due to the inefficient use of time and resources;
- ▶ a reduced impact on the young people participating as a result of their limited project experience.

## Delays or incomplete realisation of activities and results

Another significant challenge in youth project management is ensuring that planned activities and intended outcomes are realised on time and to the desired extent. Delays or incomplete realisation of project activities that impact the project's effectiveness and the morale of young participants often happen because of unrealistic project objectives or limited resources, funding and time. Overambitious project planning driven by a strong desire to make a positive impact combined with a lack of project management experience of project team members and participants is another frequently observed reason for delays in project implementation. Such delays or incomplete realisation of project activities can lead to:

- ▶ reduced impact and unmet objectives of the project;
- ▶ missed opportunities for learning within the project;
- ▶ decreased motivation, enthusiasm and commitment of young participants;
- ▶ loss of credibility of the project organisers in the eyes of external stakeholders and funders.

## Mismanagement of resources and funds

Ensuring the efficient management of resources and funds in youth projects has often proven difficult, as project teams often operate with limited budgets and resources. Mismanagement of resources and funds in youth projects is caused by different reasons. Among the most common are inadequate financial planning that lacks the necessary level of detail, the project managers' lack of experience in financial management and accounting, and a lack of attention to regular budget adjustments throughout the project's implementation. A loose project timeline and the tendency to pursue additional project objectives and realise none of the foreseen project activities is another source of mismanaging resources and funds. Some of the possible negative consequences for a youth project are:

- ▶ compromised project quality;
- ▶ delays within the project timeline or incomplete activities;
- ▶ loss of trust from stakeholders, including funders, partners and participants;
- ▶ loss of credibility for potential future funding and support opportunities.

## Lack of monitoring and documentation

The lack of monitoring and documentation in a youth project affects its transparency and prevents the team from identifying areas for improvement and adjustment. Monitoring and documentation often receive lower priority in youth projects because of limited resources and time, a lack of awareness of the importance of monitoring and documentation, and inexperience with project management and quality reporting among the team members. Furthermore, monitoring and documentation are often perceived as bureaucratic exercises instead of processes or sources for learning and consequently they generate a feeling of fear among young people and youth organisations.


The dynamic project environment of the youth sector and the flexibility it requires from project management is another factor that makes monitoring and documentation challenging. This is particularly true when paired with a high turnover of volunteers and/or staff and a lack of expertise and discipline in establishing and using regular monitoring practices. Possible negative consequences on youth projects when monitoring and documentation are neglected include:

- ▶ a lack of accountability and credibility of the project and its organisers;
- ▶ difficulty in keeping the project on track due to insufficient assessment of its progress;
- ▶ missed learning opportunities and limited capacity of the project to improve over time;
- ▶ an inability to replicate success as effective project activities are not identified and their achievements not recorded.

### Fluctuating commitment of young people

The high level of participant turnover and the fluctuating attendance or commitment of young people are also among the common challenges that managers need to handle. Youth organisations note their difficulty to engage young participants in more than one-off activities. Despite displaying enthusiasm and interest when coming across project ideas, young participants sometimes drop out of projects or prefer not to commit. This is partly due to the nature of their lives and priorities that change. Low levels of commitment to youth projects can affect the continuity of the project's implementation and often disrupt the envisaged activities and the project's timeline. Furthermore, project managers may have to deal with the following negative consequences:

- ▶ cancelled activities due to the lack of participants;
- ▶ severe financial losses, especially for projects relying on participant-based funding;
- ▶ loss of credibility in the eyes of external stakeholders and funders;
- ▶ difficulties in securing future support and partnership.



**Food for thought**

- ▶ What are the most common challenges that you face when implementing your youth project?
- ▶ How do you ensure effective communication within your team?
- ▶ What approaches do you use to keep youth projects on track and create realistic timelines?
- ▶ What simple monitoring practices have helped you to track a project's progress without overwhelming the team?

### 3.3.3. Common tasks and considerations

This section explores the key tasks that project managers are expected to perform throughout the implementation stage. Those include task, team and time management, decision making with teams, organising team meetings, practical, administrative and logistical aspects, project visibility, troubleshooting and project monitoring and documentation.

#### Collaborative partnership

Two or more organisations or groups of young people co-operating on a youth project is considered a collaborative partnership. This brings together different skills, resources and ideas, making it easier to accomplish tasks and create a bigger impact and allowing the project to reach a wider audience and access more resources. Teamwork is often one of the most rewarding parts of youth project management because it shows how people can create positive change.

In the context of youth project management, developing and maintaining collaborative partnerships has two dimensions:

- ▶ within the team: the project manager should foster an inclusive environment where all team members feel appreciated, contribute equally and support one another. For a qualitative co-operation within the project team, having a clear division of roles and tasks among the team members is crucial;
- ▶ with relevant stakeholders, including young people, schools, local communities, institutions or organisations, and youth organisations: for effective project implementation, nurturing a collaborative environment where all partners are engaged and motivated is an added value.

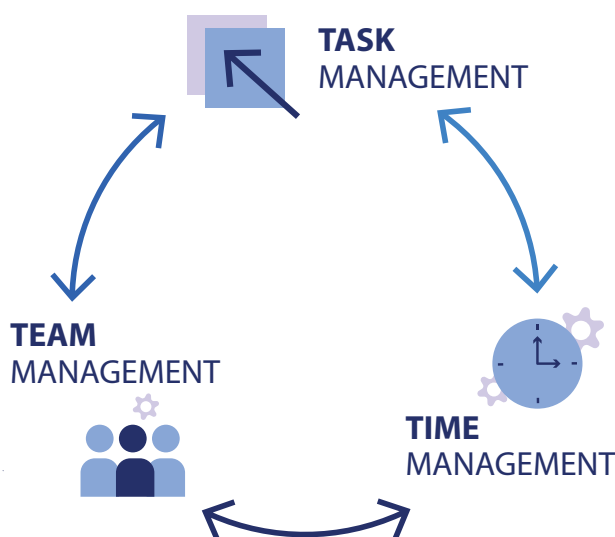
### Tip

To foster effective collaboration among partners, project managers should keep in mind that:

- ▶ working with partners requires good communication and a shared vision;
- ▶ project goals and partners' roles and responsibilities should be clear;
- ▶ partners may have their own agenda that requires clarification and focus on common elements;
- ▶ young people are partners and not merely participants;
- ▶ young people should be involved in the project's decision-making processes.

Co-leading a project team involves working alongside others. It requires constant encouragement of teamwork and reminding each team member of the shared responsibility for achieving project goals. As a project manager, it is essential to build a collaborative and trustful atmosphere within the team where everyone feels involved, valued and empowered to contribute their competences and ideas.

Leading a youth project also consists of clarifying and dividing the responsibilities among team members, especially when involving young people, based on their experience, expertise, interests and learning objectives. In order to ensure a smooth implementation of youth projects, project teams need to keep track of time, meet deadlines and make any needed adjustments if things are running behind schedule.



**Figure 31. Task, team and time management in youth projects**

### Task, team and time management

The combination of task, team and time management helps keep a youth project on track and ensure everyone knows what needs to be done and by when. This is especially important in a youth-led project where young

team members particularly are going through a learning process and need ongoing support throughout the project’s lifetime. Steering teams (see section 1.3) may provide project managers with the ideal support during the project implementation phase, especially when dealing with the overlapping between task, team and time management.

**Terminology**

- ▶ Task management is about co-ordinating and organising all project activities as planned and on time.
- ▶ Team management is about co-ordinating an effective team by supporting and leading the team members, facilitating co-operative team dynamics and taking into account their expertise and experiences.
- ▶ Time management is about planning, organising and controlling the allocation of time to project tasks and activities to ensure deadlines are met.

# The Eisenhower matrix



Figure 32. Adaptation of Eisenhower matrix for prioritising tasks

If done well, these three aspects improve the quality of work, reduces the team's stress and prevents last-minute night shifts to complete unfinished duties. Effective management of tasks, teams and time helps the project stay organised, improves the quality of work, reduces stress and creates a positive experience for everyone involved. Therefore, project managers are encouraged to:

- ▶ inform everyone about the project's goal and activities and ensure that all team members know their role and responsibilities within the project;
- ▶ set realistic timelines and milestones for each project activity, using, for example, a Gantt chart (see Tool 10) to visualise the project's schedule and be ready to adjust pre-defined timelines;
- ▶ break the project down into smaller, manageable tasks, making it easier to see what needs to be completed and in which order;
- ▶ assign each task to a team member or group based on their expertise and experience;
- ▶ hold regular meetings for updates and feedback to monitor the workload and morale and offer any required support;
- ▶ use youth-friendly techniques like setting daily or weekly goals to support young people in delivering their tasks on time;
- ▶ support young people in prioritising their tasks, for example by using the Eisenhower matrix (see Figure 32);
- ▶ respect the time constraints of young team members and participants such as school schedules, part-time jobs or leisure-time activities;
- ▶ use digital management tools in complex projects to assign tasks, set deadlines and track and update the progress of each task, improving transparency and accountability.



### Tip

When working with employees, volunteers or mixed teams, consider:

- ▶ the timing of meetings, for example, while employees may be available during the day, volunteers may only be able to join meetings in the evenings;
- ▶ the commitment of each team member, for example, the involvement of employees in projects can be part of their tasks, however volunteers may only be available for a limited time;
- ▶ the focus of team members, for example, employees may be running projects in parallel and may tend to focus on getting the job done while volunteers may be interested in the learning journey that a project offers;
- ▶ any other factors that you experienced in the past that may be relevant for the composition of your team.

If you work exclusively with volunteers, you may want to consult SEEYN's Volunteer Management Handbook, a resource for organisations and youth groups seeking to involve volunteers in their initiatives.




**Tool 10**

**Gantt chart with an example of a training course**

Activity	Tasks	April	May	June	July	August	Person or team in charge
A1 Training courses on sustainable practices in youth work	Development of the educational programme						Project manager, educators
	Logistical and administrative preparation						Logistics co-ordinator
	Call for participants						Outreach officer and partner organisations
	Selection of participants						Project manager, educators
	Preparation of participants						Partner organisations
	Implementation of the training activity						Project manager, educators, logistics co-ordinator
	Evaluation of the training activity						All team members

**Decision making in a project team**

During the implementation of youth projects the team needs to make many decisions to move the project forward. Two things are important for making the right decisions during a project’s implementation: What is the decision about? And how will the team agree?

	Consequences	Repetition	Energy invested
<b>Strategic</b>	High	Low	High
<b>Tactical</b>	Medium	Medium	Medium
<b>Operational</b>	Low	High	Low

**Figure 33. Types of decisions and their characteristics (adapted from International Institute for Nonviolent Action 2019: 65)**

Generally, decisions fall into three categories (see Figure 33).

**Strategic decisions**

These are big-picture choices that shape the overall direction and goals of the project. These decisions are often made at the very beginning of a project, but can also occur during a project’s implementation when important adjustments need to be made to project activities or to the project budget that then affect objectives or outcomes. Strategic decisions are important because they influence everything the project aims to achieve.

## Tactical decisions

These are specific types of decisions that help break the project's big ideas into small, practical actions. They involve defining approaches to stakeholder communication, project outreach measures, planning specific activity components such as identifying an activity venue, assigning crucial resources and outlining work steps needed to make the project successful.

## Operational decisions

These are the day-to-day choices that keep the project running smoothly. These decisions are usually smaller and repetitive but still important. They cover tasks like scheduling activities, handling logistics, assigning who will post updates on social media, deciding what time a meeting should start or arranging materials for an event. Operational decisions ensure that each part of the project stays organised and on schedule.

Understanding the different types of decisions that project teams need to make helps them choose a matching decision-making technique. There are two types of decision-making techniques – formal and informal – that may be employed in youth project management.

Formal decision-making techniques are used when the project team needs to take a strategic or tactical decision that may have a major effect on the project, its objectives and impact. However, they can also be applied to more complex operational decisions. Formal decision-making techniques allow for transparent shared decision making and ensure that all team members are involved, influence the decision making and accept and support it.

Informal decision-making techniques are less structured and work well for operational decisions and everyday choices that do not necessarily need the agreement of all team members or partners. These techniques are especially beneficial when the project team needs to make quick decisions that have a minor effect on the project's overall impact and philosophy. They help keep things flexible and they allow the team and the project to make progress without investing too much time in details.

**Table 15. Informal and formal decision-making techniques in youth projects, adapted from International Institute for Nonviolent Action (2019)**

Formal decision-making techniques in youth projects	Informal decision-making techniques in youth projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Consensus</b> – the whole team discusses an idea until a decision is formed and supported by everyone.</li> <li>▶ <b>Voting</b> – each team member votes on the suggested options and the option with the most votes is chosen.</li> <li>▶ <b>Group delegation</b> – a group of team members is assigned to figure out the best decision for the task at hand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Negative questions</b> – if, within a given time, nobody asks whether anyone is against this decision or whether there is anyone that does not agree, then a decision is made;</li> <li>▶ <b>Negative supposition</b> – it is based on the assumption that somebody who disagrees with a decision being made will raise their voice, thus if everyone remains silent, agreement is assumed;</li> <li>▶ <b>Synchronicity in twos</b> – when at least two people answer a proposal positively while others remain silent, the proposal is accepted.</li> </ul>

Making decisions as a group rather than by the project manager alone is highly recommended particularly when working with young people. Collective decision making allows for tapping into the wisdom of the group, giving voice to young people's perspectives, allowing young people to influence decision making, creating ownership, shared responsibility and commitment to the project. What is more, for young people, shared decision making is also a great source of learning about what decisions need to be made during a project's implementation, what consequences specific decisions have on the project realisation and how decisions come to life through a shared process.

To facilitate quality collective decision making, project managers should:

- ▶ make it clear to everyone what type of decision is being made;
- ▶ create a safe space in which young people can share their opinions and express themselves more comfortably;

- ▶ choose the decision-making technique based on the importance and nature of the decision or choice to be made;
- ▶ for strategic and tactical decisions, it is advisable to use formal techniques, as they ensure transparency, equal involvement and a clear structure for the decision-making process;
- ▶ for operational (smaller or more flexible choices) decisions, it is advisable to keep things simple and use informal techniques that are quick and easy to use;
- ▶ ensure that the decision-making process is inclusive and transparent, which boosts morale and ownership.

## Team meetings

Team meetings are an essential part of staying organised and making sure everyone is on the same page. They help keep the project team connected and ensure that every person involved understands what is happening and what they need to do. The main purpose of team meetings is to make decisions, solve problems, distribute tasks and to ensure everyone in the team is informed about the project's progress.

The most common form of team meetings in youth projects are meetings of the co-ordination team leading the project's implementation. Other meeting formats exist as well and include planning meetings for specific project activities, meetings with external service providers such as educators for youth exchanges, workshops or seminars and meetings of authors of educational materials.

A range of elements make the difference between a productive team meeting and one that does not justify the time spent by everyone attending the meeting. The key elements that should be carefully considered when organising a team meeting are:

- ▶ preparation;
- ▶ attendees;
- ▶ meeting facilitation;
- ▶ duration and frequency;
- ▶ documentation;
- ▶ follow-up.

Table 16 includes some guidance on each element in order to support the implementation of fruitful meetings during a youth project.

**Table 16. Key elements of team meetings in youth projects**

<p><b>Preparing for team meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Draft a clear meeting agenda in co-operation with the team prior to the meeting.</li> <li>▶ Formulate guiding questions that the meeting will answer.</li> <li>▶ Circulate the agenda, guiding questions and any additional materials people should be aware of prior to the meeting so team members can prepare.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Attendees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ For general co-ordination meetings invite all the members involved in the project team.</li> <li>▶ For issue-specific meetings be conscious about people's time and only invite the relevant team members.</li> <li>▶ Consider inviting external experts or contributors if specific input is needed for informed decision making.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Duration and frequency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Agree upon the frequency of co-ordination meetings in the beginning and ensure their regularity based on the project needs.</li> <li>▶ Adjust frequency when the project pace changes.</li> <li>▶ Be flexible with the length of meetings; as a rule of thumb, any online meeting longer than an hour leads to shorter attention spans, while in-person meetings can be longer.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Facilitating team meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ensure all meetings are facilitated by a person assigned to the role.</li> <li>▶ Facilitation allows for a properly guided discussion, staying on topic and time, and encourages everyone to speak and contribute.</li> <li>▶ For learning purposes rotation of the facilitation role is an appropriate model and should be accompanied by an experienced facilitator to enhance the learning experience of a young person.</li> </ul>

**Table 16. Key elements of team meetings in youth projects**

<p><b>Documenting team meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Agree on a minute-taker to record key talking points, decisions made, agreed task distribution and deadlines of all meetings.</li> <li>▶ AI tools can provide assistance but their notes need to be revised.</li> <li>▶ Make sure the meeting notes are completed and accessible online for all team members within 24 hours.</li> <li>▶ Encourage younger members to take on the role of a minute-taker and support them in the preparation of the notes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-up activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Agree on the specific activities that will ensure everyone follows through on their tasks.</li> <li>▶ Schedule follow-up meetings, if suitable.</li> <li>▶ Follow up after the meeting and remind team members of their duties well in advance of their deadlines.</li> <li>▶ Keep reminding people of their duties to make sure the tasks do not drop off their agendas.</li> </ul>
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Tool 11 provides an example of an agenda for regularly scheduled co-ordination meetings.



**Tool 11**

**Sample agenda of regular scheduled online co-ordination meetings**

Duration (minutes)	Agenda item	Activity
10	Welcome and opening	Give a quick opening statement on how everyone is doing or ask a warm-up question. For example, what made you happy this week?
5	Agenda and guiding questions	Provide a short reminder about the purpose of the meeting, the agenda points and the questions that need to be answered during the meeting.
10	Update on the project's progress	Share the achievements of the latest project period to establish the status quo of the project's implementation.  Guiding questions can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Where are we at?</li> <li>▶ What have we achieved?</li> <li>▶ Can we build upon the achievement and move on or do we need to reinforce our efforts before we can proceed?</li> </ul>
20	Review upcoming tasks and action planning	Make everyone aware of the next project activities and the specific tasks that need to be performed, and agreeing on task division and deadlines.  Guiding questions can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ What do we need to do next?</li> <li>▶ Who is doing it?</li> <li>▶ By when does it need to be done?</li> </ul>
10	Addressing questions	Address any questions or concerns regarding the decisions made and adjusting if needed.
5	Closing and next steps	Summarise the key points of the meeting and the agreements made. For example, task distribution and deadlines. Agree on the key details for the next meeting (time, purpose).

## Practical, administrative and logistical aspects

Besides managing the team and ensuring a timely delivery of tasks, the project manager must take care of many practical, administrative and logistical duties. In practice, particularly in small organisations and in projects managed by young people, the project manager arranges logistics, prepares paperwork and is in charge of ensuring administrative responsibilities are delivered. While the majority of these tasks take a rather procedural form, do not affect the character of the youth project and do not require specialised skills, others are more critical, sensitive and time-consuming. What is more, some of the practical or logistical decisions can affect the youth project to a greater extent.

Many youth projects include learning or networking activities for young people, youth work practitioners or other representatives of public or private youth work stakeholders. Those activities – be it youth camps, training courses, seminars, study visits or large-scale youth forums – require an event venue, a place where all attendees come together for mutual learning, knowledge exchange and networking. Choosing the right venue is not a trivial task as many aspects come into play that need to be considered, including:

- ▶ location and connectivity to public transport;
- ▶ availability of working space, including large and well-equipped plenary and additional break-out spaces;
- ▶ a sufficient number of bedrooms for all participants matching the project's standards for accommodation;
- ▶ accessibility of the venue for people from diverse backgrounds and with different abilities;
- ▶ safety and security aspects, particularly when selecting a place for underaged young people.

While these requirements are the bare minimum, finding the right event venue can be challenging. However, for many youth projects, these are not sufficient selection criteria. A venue for a youth exchange should provide an example to young people that responsible living, learning and working is possible. Therefore, aspects of social and environmental sustainability are often added as important considerations when project managers choose a venue. The youth sector includes organisations that manage youth-friendly working and living spaces and the project partners are encouraged to seek those out, especially if the project has an international dimension. The Green Venue Checklist (see Tool 12) by ECOasmus is an easy-to-use assessment instrument that helps consider the aspects for making a qualified choice about a training.



## Green venue checklist (ECOrasmus 2024)

<b>Name of venue:</b>				
<b>Location/address:</b>				
<b>Connection to public transport:</b>				
	<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>PARTLY</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT</b>				
	Is there a sustainability manager/committee?			
	Is there a sustainability policy?			
	Do they have any green certification?			
	Do the staff receive training on environmental and sustainability issues?			
<b>WATER</b>				
	Do they measure water consumption?			
	Do they have amenities in place for saving water (such as dual-flush toilets, water-saving devices or water-efficient machines)?			
	Do they collect and use rainwater?			
<b>WASHING AND CLEANING</b>				
	Do they take measures to reduce the cleaning of towels and sheets (only changing on request, for example)?			
	Do they use cleaning and sanitary products with an eco-label (such as detergents, toilet paper or shampoo)?			
<b>WASTE MANAGEMENT</b>				
	Do they separate waste (at least paper, plastic, glass and organic food waste) and ensure it is disposed of in the correct waste management facilities?			
	Do they avoid the use of single-use tableware (cups/glasses, plates and cutlery, straws, etc.) and individually packaged food servings (butter, honey, jam, etc.)?			
	Do they register the total amount of waste?			
	Do they have a waste plan to reduce and/or reuse waste (including paper, food, equipment, packaging, etc.)?			
	Do they compost organic waste?			
<b>ENERGY</b>				
	Do they measure the energy consumption of the establishment?			
	Do they use/purchase renewable electricity?			
	Do they have energy-saving devices in place (LED lights, energy-efficient electrical appliances, motion detectors, etc.)?			

<b>FOOD AND DRINKS</b>			
Do they provide food that is organic and/or eco-labelled?			
Do they co-operate with local farmers and/or other local food providers?			
Do they provide seasonal meals and fruits?			
Are imported products like coffee, tea, chocolate, bananas, etc. fair-trade labelled?			
Do they offer vegetarian and vegan food?			
Are there water fountains available?			
<b>GREEN AREA</b>			
Do they refrain from the use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers?			
Do they take initiatives to protect and support the local biodiversity on the premises?			
<b>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</b>			
Do all employees receive at least a living wage?			
Do they ensure non-discriminatory and fair treatment of staff (in terms of recruitment, general employment, training, promotion)?			
Do they provide access for people with additional needs (staff and guests)?			
Do they support any environmental or social community development activities (greening activities, supporting local NGOs/schools, environmental and/or educational activities, etc.)?			
<b>GUEST INFORMATION</b>			
Do they inform and involve guests in their environmental work and encourage them to participate in environmental initiatives (water saving, energy saving, waste saving/recycling, food waste reduction, local biodiversity protection, etc.)?			
Do they inform and encourage guests to use sustainable transportation alternatives?			
Do they promote responsible tourist behaviour in the destination (for example informing guests about codes of conduct for visits to natural areas or providing information about responsible tour operators)?			

Holding face-to-face events also means people must travel to reach the venue. Ensuring young people reach the venue on time and safely, particularly if coming from different countries, is challenging enough; ensuring that this is done in a sustainable and youth-friendly manner is an additional task. The “Greening the youth sector – Sustainability checklist” that the EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership has created, includes a section on transportation (see Tool 13). It provides guidance for when dealing with travel for or during a face-to-face youth event.



## Travel considerations for a youth event, adapted from “Greening the youth sector – Sustainability checklist” (EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership 2021a)

- ▶ Public transport should always be favoured over private, motorised vehicles. Provide information to participants ahead of an event about public transport. Offering them a free ticket for local public transport is a great incentive!
- ▶ Whenever public transport is not available, efforts should be made to group people in shuttles or create shared spreadsheets with arrival times so participants can share a ride.
- ▶ Provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities taking public transport; make sure to include accessibility information.
- ▶ Consider mixing online and face-to-face participation.
- ▶ Encourage low-emission transportation. If travel by air cannot be avoided, use the airline’s carbon compensation scheme or a carbon emissions offset programme such as Climatecare or Carbon Footprint.
- ▶ Pack as light as possible and avoid bringing unnecessary items because increased luggage weight requires higher carbon emissions to transport.
- ▶ Combine multiple reasons for travel. If possible, extend trips so they fulfil multiple purposes.
- ▶ Use bicycles or similar non-motorised vehicles during the event.
- ▶ Avoid flights! Encourage travel by bus, train, eco-friendly boat, car-share or bicycle as these have smaller carbon footprints. Night trains are also an option for some destinations.
- ▶ Avoid printing tickets when travelling.

### Project visibility and dissemination

Visibility and dissemination of the project’s results increase its outreach and impact. For project managers this means that they need to ensure consistent external communication about the project, which is best done through a consistent communication plan.

A communication plan details how the project will communicate with participants, partners, young people, the community, public and private stakeholders or the media to inform them about the project and disseminate its results.

Developing a communication plan involves:

- ▶ setting communication goals;
- ▶ identifying the target groups of the project’s external communication;
- ▶ formulating the project-related messages to be shared with different target groups;
- ▶ defining the communication channels of the project (social media, websites, newsletters, publications or events, for instance);
- ▶ setting a communication timetable or calendar;
- ▶ defining measures for monitoring the outreach and impact of the communication measures.

When communicating externally, managers have the option of using a centralised or a decentralised approach. In centralised communication, one person or a small team is responsible for all external communication, which makes it easier to keep the messages consistent. In decentralised communication a wider group of people within the youth project contributes to the external communication, which makes communication faster and more flexible. However, implementing qualitative decentralised communication in a youth project requires good co-ordination, information accuracy and consistency between messages and the overall project goals.



## Terminology

**Visibility** – The project is recognisable by the public and key stakeholders in the youth sector because they are regularly informed about its purpose, activities and achievements.

**Dissemination** – The project results are systematically shared with other organisations, stakeholders and youth work practitioners working on the same topic and bring added value to their work.

By creating a clear communication plan and strategy, project managers can share their project-related messages in an organised, consistent and effective way. Some suggestions for project managers that develop a communication plan and strategy of a youth project include the following.

- ▶ Co-ordinate the use of a range of communication channels and make use of all channels available to the project partners and team members.
- ▶ Vary the communication channels while refraining from overloading the project's capacity.
- ▶ Do not neglect communication best practices such as e-mail newsletters, posters or even in-person events for reaching specific target audiences.
- ▶ Emphasise creativity and storytelling for authenticity and engagement.
- ▶ Choose platforms that are relevant for the target group and for young people, and create visually appealing content.
- ▶ Involve and empower young people to take charge of communication activities using their networks.
- ▶ Use a jointly designed project visual identity to brand the project and make it recognisable.
- ▶ Provide all partners and young participants with communication templates and guidelines but also allow for flexibility so that they can add their own style and voice.

### Visual identity

A carefully designed visual identity for a youth project makes it identifiable by the public and more likely that people will talk about it. The core elements of a project's visual identity should reflect its purpose and values. The chosen components such as the set of symbols, images, colours and designs should make the project recognisable and memorable. Core elements of a project's visual identity are a project logo, a colour scheme, preferred fonts and a consistent style for any project materials, documents, social media posts or presentations (see Figure 34).

#### SIMPLICITY

Easily recognisable and memorable

#### RELEVANCE

for the project's identity, values and target audience

#### STORYTELLING

Incorporates elements, reflects values, history or mission

#### COLOUR

Evokes emotions and associations

#### TYPOGRAPHY

Legible and memorable



**Figure 34. Key logo elements for youth projects**

These elements create a recognisable brand that people can easily identify. A well-made visual identity helps a project stand out, connects it with the audience and builds a professional image that people can trust and remember.

In youth projects, visual identity should be appealing to young people, encouraging them to explore more about the project and motivating them to join the project activities. When creating a visual identity for a specific youth project, the project team:

- ▶ starts by thinking about the project's values, goals and specific objectives and how to represent them visually;
- ▶ takes into consideration the desired target audience and their needs and preferences, reflecting them in the elements of the project's visual identity;
- ▶ considers the feelings (such as excitement, inspiration or engagement) they want to generate in young people;
- ▶ chooses the design elements (colours, fonts, etc), that match those feelings;
- ▶ includes young participants in creating logos, selecting colours and designing promotional materials, as they are often keen to develop a unique visual identity that resonates with their peers;
- ▶ considers using digital tools that allow non-designers to easily create templates and branded visuals for social media posts, presentations and reports.

## Troubleshooting

It is fair to assume that issues and problems will arise during the implementation of any youth project. That is why project managers need to be prepared for troubleshooting and undertaking adjustments in their project.

Fortunately, the risk assessment conducted at the planning stage (see section 3.1) is a great resource for troubleshooting as it provides guidance and specific measures for dealing with the anticipated problems and challenges and to make better decisions under pressure. Expanding on the risk assessment through the use of a "what-if analysis" (see Tool 14) at regular intervals helps to solidify the preparation for possible challenges.



### Tool 14 Four steps for conducting a "what-if analysis"

A "what-if analysis" is a risk assessment technique to help project managers anticipate risks and make informed decisions to address problems.

It comprises four simple steps.

- ▶ Identify risk factors for the project, such as budget, timeline or certain activities that constitute milestones for upcoming project components.
- ▶ Formulate possible scenarios by simulating risks. For example, a partner organisation withdraws from the partnership; a participant in an international training programme misses the organised shuttle transfer because of delays; the proposed educational programmes do not attract a sufficient number of participants.
- ▶ Conduct an impact assessment by evaluating how each scenario would affect the project's objectives and impact.
- ▶ Develop suitable responses by defining measures to undertake in such scenarios.

Here are some of the commonly observed issues or problems, of varying severity, that project managers face:

- ▶ technical or logistical difficulties;
- ▶ late arrival of participants to in-person events such as workshops or youth camps;
- ▶ sudden venue or schedule changes;
- ▶ unexpected cash-flow, budget and/or funding issues;
- ▶ a drop-off in engagement and motivation among participants or team members;

- ▶ missed deadlines and delays with the implementation of activities;
- ▶ safety and ethical concerns;
- ▶ emotional or mental health crises of participants or team members;
- ▶ lack of cultural sensitivity or inclusion;
- ▶ interpersonal conflicts among team members or participants;
- ▶ unforeseen external factors such as public transport strikes.

Unfortunately, not all issues can be predicted or anticipated. Therefore, the project team must be ready for ad hoc troubleshooting or to deal with unexpected problems as they may arise. Table 17 provides a short list of dos and don'ts when troubleshooting.

**Table 17. Dos and don'ts for troubleshooting in youth projects**

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Stay calm, assess the situation and focus on finding solutions</li> <li>▶ Keep the team informed and work together to find the best solution</li> <li>▶ Avoid blaming others and making rushed decisions that could create more issues</li> <li>▶ Ensure team members, participants – young or old – feel comfortable reporting issues without fear of judgment or blame</li> <li>▶ Encourage open dialogue and active listening</li> <li>▶ Offer guidance on resolving conflicts respectfully</li> <li>▶ Establish protocols, identifying person(s) to contact and procedures to follow</li> <li>▶ Be flexible and adapt the schedule as needed</li> <li>▶ Prioritise tasks and focus on critical project milestones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Panic or make rushed decisions that might cause more issues later</li> <li>▶ Blame others as it can create tension and does not help solve the problem</li> <li>▶ Ignore a problem in the hope that it will disappear</li> <li>▶ Assume that everyone understands instructions or messages in the same way</li> <li>▶ Plan rigid scheduling that does not necessarily accommodate needs</li> <li>▶ Adopt punitive approaches when dealing with problems</li> <li>▶ Rely on one plan only without alternatives</li> <li>▶ Push unilaterally for one solution while people resist its implementation</li> </ul>

### Monitoring and documentation

The role of monitoring project activities, results and budget is to ensure that the project stays on track and reaches its goals. Monitoring involves regularly checking the project's progress to understand if planned objectives are met and if adjustments are needed.

Project managers use specific methods for data collection to monitor and control project activities. These methods should be based on the monitoring and evaluation plan (see section 3.1) defined at the planning stage of the project, and should feed into the overall evaluation of the project (see section 3.4). Their use helps to effectively track the progress of the project, understand the challenges that the project team is facing during the implementation phase and assess the outcomes of the project activities.

Tips for project managers for organising monitoring activities for youth projects.

- ▶ Adapt data-collection methods to fit objectives and envisaged results.
- ▶ Use a mix of data-collection methods in order to capture a full picture of the project's results related to quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- ▶ Use youth-friendly means of data collection to encourage active youth participation.
- ▶ Consider the use of digital tools for data collection, monitoring and analysis in youth project management.

The second aspect of monitoring is related to the project's budget and its finances.



## Tip

For simple budget control and financial monitoring, project managers are encouraged to:

- ▶ regularly – monthly or every two months – check expenses against the planned budget to avoid over-spending, especially given the limitations youth projects may have;
- ▶ use simple accounting or other professional tools for tracking expenses and generating budget reports;
- ▶ establish financial thresholds to flag over or under-spending early;
- ▶ apply accounting principles (no payment without invoice or the “four eyes” principle, for example) that promote transparency and accountability;
- ▶ promote good practices for money transfer between partners (official budget requests or financial reports);
- ▶ conduct quarterly or monthly budget reviews with stakeholders to ensure financial transparency;
- ▶ integrate, whenever possible, the need for young people’s financial literacy, when understanding budgets and expenses, for example.

Project managers are tasked with ensuring the correct spending of project funds and to avoid them running out before the project ends. The latter can be avoided through ongoing budget control and financial monitoring processes. Budget control consists of checking the project’s expenditure against the planned budget. This enables the project manager to control the expenditure and ensure all parts of the project are financially supported and there are no surprises or shortages at a later stage of the project.

In addition to monitoring activities, results and budgets, a large part of the work of a project manager is to document the project’s activities, its progress and achievements. This helps to:

- ▶ create a clear picture of the project’s journey and impact;
- ▶ make valuable lessons learned available to the current team and for future projects;
- ▶ highlight what worked well and what could be improved;
- ▶ stay organised, transparent and proud of what is accomplished.

Reporting on project activities refers to providing an account of the results obtained. This is done in the form of activity reports (see Tool 15) that usually contain both narrative and financial sections which vary in content and size depending on whether they are for internal or external use. These reports serve to document the activity and keep everyone informed about what has happened and are a record that can be shared with others, including sponsors, partners or the community, so they can understand the project’s progress and impact.

Activity reports contain information about the implemented activities, the achieved results, the participants in the activity, their learning and level of satisfaction as well as the challenges faced and lessons learned. In the project’s evaluation stage, the project management team uses the report and the collected data to evaluate the respective activity and understand its contribution to achieving the project’s results.



### Tool 15

#### Basic activity report template

<b>Project title</b>	▶ The title of the overall project
<b>Project activity</b>	▶ The title of the activity itself – in case it differs from the project title
<b>Venue and time</b>	▶ Where and when the activity took place
<b>Brief activity summary</b>	▶ A short summary about the activity’s objectives, what happened and whether the objectives were achieved
<b>Step-by-step description</b>	▶ A description of the activity’s stages (preparation, implementation, etc.)

<b>Programme</b>	▶ A snapshot of the activity's programme
<b>Activity results</b>	▶ An account of the learning generated by the activity – for participants, for the team, for the activity partners
<b>Participants</b>	▶ Details about the age, profile, geographical origin, etc. of those who participated in the activity
<b>Financial overview</b>	▶ Details on the overall costs and comparison to the initial budget
<b>Overall evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A summary of the participants' evaluations</li> <li>▶ A set of lessons learned from the implementation of the activity that can be used for subsequent activities</li> <li>▶ Suggested next steps and follow-up</li> </ul>

For documentation of project activities, project managers are encouraged to:

- ▶ systematically and regularly record project activities;
- ▶ use the same report template for each activity in order to ensure reporting consistency;
- ▶ involve young people, both team members and participants, in the process of creating reports;
- ▶ collect success stories and testimonials to capture the project's progress through individual experiences;
- ▶ share activity reports, testimonials and success stories with key stakeholders to keep them informed about the project's activities and progress;
- ▶ recognise both individual and group achievements to encourage a sense of pride and accomplishment in young participants;
- ▶ keep a centralised online accessible repository of project reports.

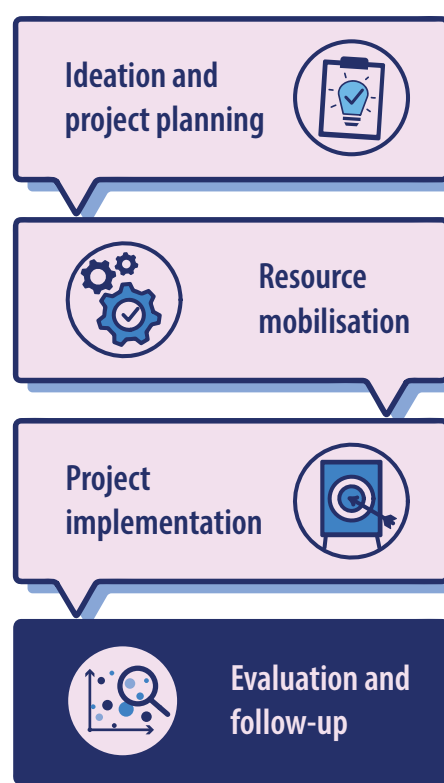
### 3.4. Evaluation and follow-up

#### 3.4.1. Introduction

Evaluation is considered the closing stage of youth projects and is accompanied by the reflection on the potential follow-up to the project. When evaluating a youth project, the team uses the information that has been gathered to assess:

- ▶ what has been learned from the experience of managing the project, both for the project team and for the young people participating;
- ▶ the processes that took place throughout the project (identifying the problems, working in the project team, involving young people or making decisions, for instance);
- ▶ the performance and results (for example, the extent to which the objectives have been met);
- ▶ the project's impact or its contribution to the desired change in the local community.

Evaluation is considered the longest process in project management. It is initiated during the ideation and planning phase, as one of the last steps, and it continues through data collection and is accompanied by monitoring throughout the implementation phase, ending with the conclusions and reporting during the final evaluation. Based on the results of the evaluation, a follow-up may take place. This applies to small-scale, short-term community projects as well as to large, multi-annual, long-term youth projects. The more complex a project is, the more likely the need to plan a more elaborate evaluation process.



This section complements the information on the monitoring and evaluation framework shared earlier (see section 3.1) and provides a deeper reflection on evaluation dimensions and processes. It highlights the learning dimension of youth projects by providing hands-on examples of tools that can be used to harness the learning or make use of it in future instances.

### **3.4.2. Challenges**

Evaluation is an exciting moment at the end of a youth project. It allows the project manager, the team and young people to analyse their entire journey from planning to the implementation phase. This reflective journey does not come without challenges and project managers should consider some of the following when planning the evaluation of a youth project.

#### **Understanding the value of evaluation**

The process of evaluating a youth project may be perceived as an extra burden, especially when project activities have ended and everyone can see that the expected results have been achieved and participants are happy. Spending time, going through all the activity reports and the data collected throughout the entire project may seem repetitive and unattractive. However, an eye-opening and motivational explanation of its concept and benefits coupled with an adequate preparation of the content and the methods to be used give project managers the power to transform the perception of evaluation meetings and processes. Furthermore, presenting evaluation as a process of identifying lessons learned and good practices that can be used in future youth projects or of understanding the mistakes to be avoided next time may provide more clarity on its role and value to both the project and its team.

#### **Choosing evaluation tools**

Choosing the right evaluation tools throughout a project may turn out to be the key to a successful evaluation process. Project managers should consider the alignment between the project's objectives and the evaluation tools in order to avoid the collection of irrelevant data. While quantitative indicators and data may be easier to formulate and to gather, qualitative insights are crucial for understanding the project's impact and should always be covered by the chosen tools. Given that young people are often involved in the evaluation of many youth projects, project managers should consider offering them appropriate training on the use of evaluation tools and data interpretation.

#### **Involving young people in evaluation**

Young people that take part for the first time in a youth project may connect the term evaluation with the marking system from school. As such, this may be perceived as an "adult business" or a cognitive exercise that lacks action. Furthermore, analysis, reflection and interpretation of data may be perceived by young people as "boring". Thus the role of project managers is to underline the relevance of the evaluation process for young people and the project itself and to design evaluations that are engaging and spark their interest.

#### **Assigning limited resources for evaluation**

The perception of this last stage in the management of youth projects is often limited to the idea of a meeting that assembles a few people, usually the project team, to talk about the project and its results. This may lead to the conclusion that this process requires a minimum of resources. Such an approach endangers the process of evaluation as it has the potential to narrow its scope and depth. When limited resources and possibly insufficient time are allocated to evaluation, the project team may find itself in the position of rushing the evaluation, missing the opportunity to explore important lessons, to involve or invite relevant stakeholders, including young people, and to "barely scratch the surface" of the entire project experience. A successful project team should consider evaluation from the planning stage in order to benefit from the valuable insights this process is capable of generating and should ensure adequate time, material and financial resources as well as the involvement of relevant actors.

#### **Considering sensitive cultural dimensions in evaluation**

Evaluation processes require the capacity to regard past experiences with a critical eye and to share and receive feedback. This process may be problematic in intercultural contexts given that, as mentioned earlier in section 2.4,


in some cultures direct feedback may be offensive to team members that are not used to being direct and sharing their feedback with others. They may be reluctant to fully engage in the evaluation process or take a step back. Similarly, applying critical thinking may be confused with criticism, which has a negative connotation in some cultures. As such, the participation and the contribution of those involved in the evaluation process may have an undesired effect on it. Thus, being aware of and familiar with the cultural and personal backgrounds and preferences of those taking part in the evaluation helps project managers anticipate and prepare to better facilitate evaluation processes.

### Lacking systems and resources to collect and process data

Evaluation is dependent on the data that are collected throughout the project. Data gathering relies on collection practices or systems that are applied thanks to careful organisation of resources and good planning, or answering specific questions at different stages. The project manager's or team's discipline to consistently apply these practices eventually leads to projects being well documented. However, data alone are not enough for the evaluation process and project managers should develop practices for analysing and processing the data. Once developed, these processes can be replicated and improved over time in various project settings.

### Using feedback for future changes

Youth projects drive positive social change in the communities where they take place and their evaluations are the moments when these changes are usually assessed and celebrated. However, regardless of the success or failure of projects, the feedback resulting from the evaluation process, which may indicate, among other things, the need to improve or change management practices, should also be recognised. Many people are reluctant to embark on such a journey as it may entail that they have to give up the working style or tools they are comfortable using or because they are afraid of new approaches they are not familiar with. Moreover, changes may not produce an immediate effect and may require more time before their impact is felt. By involving team members in the reflective processes of evaluations, in the decision-making processes concerning future improvements and in the process of implementing them, project managers create the foundation for gaining new allies in the development of their work. It is important for everyone to be conscious that applying such changes and improvements to the management process increases the possibility of better future projects and thus leads to positive social change.



**Food for thought**

- ▶ How do you relate to the evaluation process? What does it mean for you and your organisation?
- ▶ What practices have you developed around evaluation?
- ▶ What challenges do you encounter when preparing or implementing your evaluation plans and what support can you seek to solve those challenges?

### 3.4.3. Common tasks and considerations

In order to explore some of the key tasks related to the evaluation process, a step-by-step model is proposed below. However, before diving into this, a few considerations need to be taken into account.

#### Evaluation timeline

As seen from the previous sections, the evaluation process should be adapted to the specific type and format of the youth project. While there are different practices and ways to tackle evaluation, a healthy approach considers designing the evaluation at the ideation and planning stage. Though evaluation and follow-up is the last stage of the project cycle, the actual process can already start during the initial project management phase – waiting until the end of the project should be avoided. Further elements of this consideration are proposed in the step-by-step model (see section 3.4.4).

## Youth involvement

Project managers can foresee different degrees of involvement by young people in the evaluation of youth projects, knowing that the most rewarding and engaging would be to involve them in all phases of the evaluation process and beyond. Ensuring the involvement of young people at this stage is a healthy way to close a project cycle as it enables them to:

- ▶ become aware of the results of their work;
- ▶ connect the efforts they made to the project's outcomes;
- ▶ highlight what they are good at and what they still need to improve;
- ▶ voice their own opinions and feedback;
- ▶ take ownership of the failures and successes experienced throughout the project phases;
- ▶ take responsibility and commit to taking the project results further through project follow-up.

## Proactive evaluation

Evaluations can prove to be stressful due to their potentially disruptive dimension. The project experience is unpacked, analysed and regarded with a critical perspective, and this may result in increased pressure for some of the team members, especially if they had negative experiences throughout the project and do not feel safe sharing their thoughts and reflections with others. A genuine and continuous proactive approach may be a true energy booster and confidence builder, enabling team members to feel safe and to regard projects as learning experiences. For example, instead of asking “What mistakes were made?” or “Who is responsible for them?”, project managers could focus on “What can be learned from this project?” or “What could be improved next time and how?”. The latter approach is certainly more inviting to dialogue and reflection, more open and stimulating.

## Environmental sustainability

Depending on the scale, nature and size of the project, project managers need to decide if during the evaluation process a meeting (or several) is required. The challenges and concerns about project activities explored in earlier chapters also apply to organising evaluation meetings when they are deemed necessary. In the case of local youth projects, evaluation meetings can prove to have a very low environmental impact if they take place in the local community. In the case of international youth projects, the evaluation phase may actually consist of on-site meetings, despite the fact that following the Covid-19 pandemic, their online transfer has become a common practice. When it comes to long-term successful projects, evaluation meetings are also used to celebrate the project's results.



### Food for thought

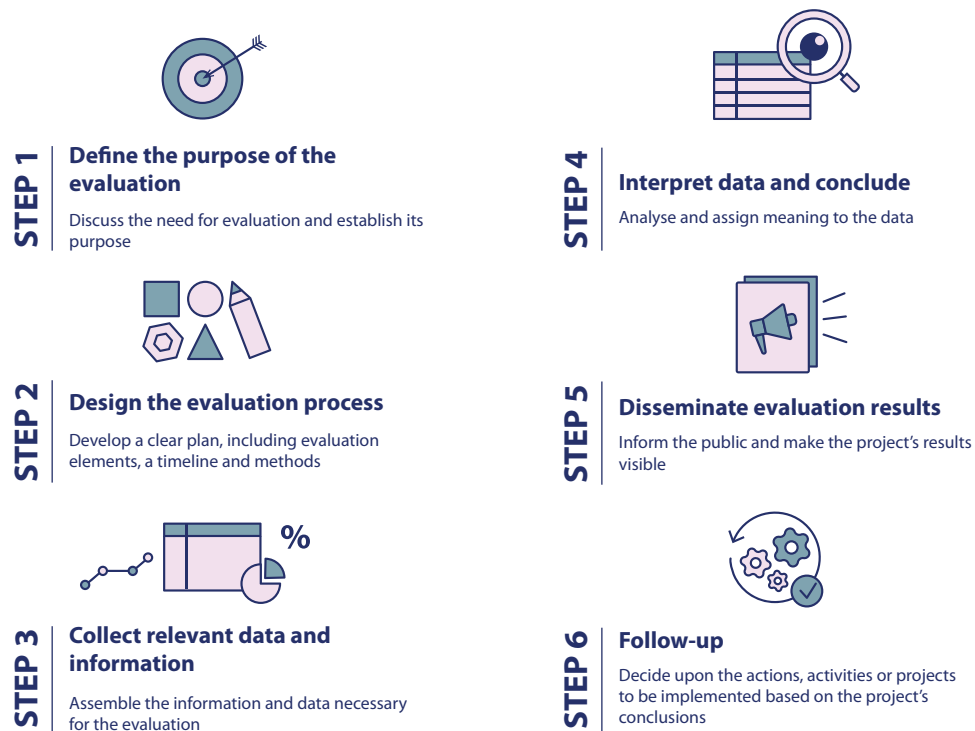
- ▶ Does the project evaluation require a meeting?
- ▶ If yes, does it need to be in person? Can it take place online or be hybrid?
- ▶ Who should be involved in the evaluation meeting?
- ▶ What kinds of digital tools could you use for a smoother evaluation meeting?

### 3.4.4. Step by step – Evaluation and follow-up of youth projects

This step-by-step model is adapted from the first edition of this T-Kit (EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership 2000). It considers evaluation as a linear process and includes the contributions that other stages of the project cycle bring to it.

The proposed steps (see Figure 35) are as follows.

# EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP STEPS

**Figure 35. Evaluation and follow-up steps**

## Step 1 – Define the purpose of the evaluation

The aim of this step is to determine the overall purpose and direction of the evaluation process. Understanding and agreeing on why evaluation is needed provides a clear orientation for all the steps that follow. Depending on the needs addressed, the evaluation purpose can be categorised as internal or external.

An evaluation based on internal needs focuses on the project aspects that affect the youth organisation or the young people directly involved in the project. For example:

- ▶ achievement of the project's results and desired change;
- ▶ improvement of the organisation's capacity to manage youth projects;
- ▶ better planning of future projects;
- ▶ assessment of the overall lessons learned by the youth project.

An evaluation based on external needs focuses on motivations or requirements that concern external stakeholders. For example:

- ▶ reporting to funders;
- ▶ raising awareness of the public about specific issues.

When the reflection on the purpose of evaluation poses a problem, the team can rely on the definition of a youth project for further clarity. Its focus on young people and their involvement in a project provides a series of inherent evaluation purposes. These include:

- ▶ the learning acquired;
- ▶ the change in behaviour;

- ▶ their personal and professional development;
- ▶ the level of their participation in their local community;
- ▶ the impact on the community or a specific policy field, etc.

## Step 2 – Design the evaluation process

Once the purpose of the evaluation is clarified, project managers can move on to designing the evaluation process. This step consists of reflecting and deciding on the evaluation's:

- ▶ audience;
- ▶ indicators and targets;
- ▶ focus points and question(s);
- ▶ road map or plan.

Regardless of the scale of the youth project, project managers should ensure the reflection on each of these evaluation elements during the planning stage of the project.

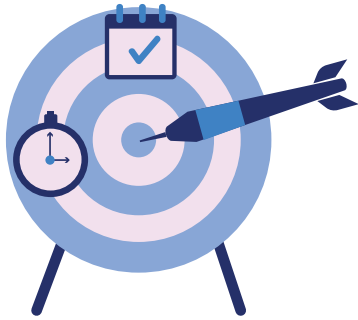
### Evaluation audience

During the design step, project managers should define the specific audiences that are targeted by the evaluation, with whom the evaluation findings should be shared. At this point, the purpose of the evaluation plays an important role because, depending on its internal and/or external focus, it provides useful insights and narrows down the target audience. Examples of typical internal audiences include team members, the youth organisation itself or the young people involved in the implementation of the project, while external audiences usually consist of funders, youth organisations from the local community or any other external stakeholders.

### Evaluation focus points and questions

The decision on the purpose and audience of the evaluation will inform the process of choosing and refining the points on which it should focus. In youth project settings, these typically include:

- ▶ objectives;
- ▶ results;
- ▶ resources;
- ▶ impact on the organisation;
- ▶ process.



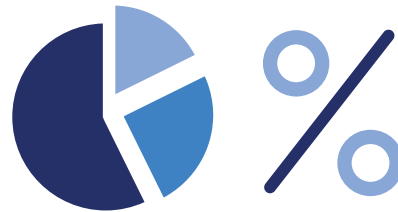
# Objectives

The achievement of a youth project's objectives is the most obvious element to consider during the evaluation. This is usually done by comparing the project's objectives to its actual results. This comparison is smooth if the objectives have been clearly defined and are measurable and if a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators or criteria have been proposed.

## Possible evaluation questions:

- To what extent have project objectives been achieved?
- Why have some objectives not been achieved?

# Results



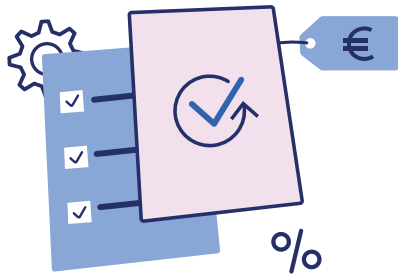
Project results refer to the social changes that were intended but also the changes or lessons learned that happened during the project cycle that concern those involved (project manager, project team, young people, etc.), the organisations and partners that contributed, the relations with the local community, etc. A distinction should be made between results that are:

- direct (usually immediate outcomes related to the project activities) or indirect (secondary outcomes that are visible over time);
- planned (explicitly planned and anticipated) or unexpected (not anticipated, positive or negative challenges, surprises or lessons).

This helps project managers understand the extent to which the results represent a consequence of its activities, or are unintentional and would have happened anyway.

## Possible evaluation questions:

- What are the project's key results?
- Which activities produced negative results and should be avoided?
- Which activities produced positive results and how could these be adapted for other projects?



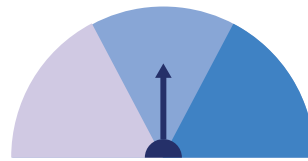
# Resources

Evaluating the mobilisation and use of resources in youth projects provides, among other things, insights about the worthiness of the efforts invested in mobilising resources. It may also allow reflection on how the resources were secured or which resources are always needed for specific types of youth projects.

## Possible evaluation questions:

- How efficient was the use of the financial resources? (The balance between income and expenditure, allocation, etc.)
- What material resources were most crucial for the project and how easy or difficult was it to secure them?
- Which materials are not required for the next activities or projects?

# Impact on the organisation



Another dimension that can be explored during the final evaluation is the impact of the project on the youth organisation carrying it out. Project managers should consider:

- the internal aspect such as the expertise and experience gained by staff and volunteers, the new staff and volunteers that joined the organisation or the organisation's growing membership;
- the external aspect that includes the new partnerships developed as a result of the project or the strengthened or newly built reputation of the organisation.

## Possible evaluation questions:

- How has the reality of the organisation been impacted by the implementation of the youth project?
- What are some of the organisational benefits (and challenges) brought about by this project?



# Process

In the context of evaluation design, the term “process” refers to the entire project management experience, from ideation and planning to the final evaluation and follow-up. It concerns everyone – project manager, the project team members, volunteers, etc. – that has been part of the project’s journey.

### Possible evaluation questions:

- What are the highlights in terms of the lessons learned for the project team?
- What good practices emerged?
- What was most challenging?
- What could have been done differently at each project stage?

Depending on the purpose of the evaluation, one or more of these elements may be integrated into the design process. Similarly, one or more evaluation questions need to be formulated for each focus point. Clearly defined questions are priceless because they help sharpen the collection process on the data that are needed. Project managers should take the time and draft clear and concise questions rather than broad ones that generate data that may not be useful or easy to interpret later.

## Evaluation indicators and targets

As seen in section 3.1, indicators are tools that allow project managers to track the progress, changes and achievement of the project’s objectives. For more examples, please refer to the monitoring and evaluation framework presented in that section.

The comparison below (see Table 18) gives a picture of the two main types of indicators that are commonly used in youth project evaluation.

**Table 18. Comparison between quantitative and qualitative indicators**

Quantitative indicators	Qualitative indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ For example, the number of young people trained in environmental sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ For example, the perception of young people of their role in protecting the environment in their local community</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A numerical dimension – captured in units, proportions, rates, percentages, etc.</li> <li>▶ A focus on narrow parts of the project, on specific numbers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A narrative dimension – captured through observations or behavioural changes as part of the envisaged social change</li> <li>▶ A focus on the broader dimension of the project and the changes that occur</li> </ul>

Table 19 provides an example that incorporates the elements presented so far under Steps 1 and 2 of the evaluation process.

**Table 19. Example of an evaluation design**

<b>Evaluation purpose</b>	Assessing the lessons learned by the youth project	
<b>Evaluation audience</b>	Project participants and young people in the local community	
<b>Evaluation focus point(s)</b>	1. Results – Young participants and digital literacy	
	<b>Evaluation question(s)</b>	<b>Indicator(s)</b>
	Have young people from rural areas increased their digital literacy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of young people participating</li> <li>▶ Number or percentage reporting a change in knowledge on digital literacy</li> <li>▶ Number or percentage reporting increased comfort with operating computers and digital devices</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation focus point(s)</b>	2. Process – Young participants and their active participation	
	<b>Evaluation question(s)</b>	<b>Indicator(s)</b>
	Are there any practices and/or follow-up projects on youth participation that emerged?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of practices</li> <li>▶ Satisfaction level of those that were involved</li> <li>▶ Number of ideas generated by young people that were implemented throughout the project</li> </ul>

### Evaluation plan

Once the design is ready, project managers, or an evaluator appointed by the project team, need to develop an evaluation plan. There is no standard format for evaluation plans. They are based on the uniqueness of each youth project and they should be tailored to meet the project’s specific needs and circumstances. Two useful questions that should be asked are: “When should the evaluation take place?” and “Who should be involved?”. Table 19 provides examples of how these questions and their corresponding answers may help shape the evaluation plan depending on the format of the youth project.

**Table 20. Questions to consider when evaluation meetings are foreseen**

	When should the evaluation take place?			Who should be involved?
	On a regular basis	In the middle of the project	At the end of the project	
<b>Examples from the field</b>				
An environmental youth project consisting of one main activity (such as tidying up a city's river banks)	-	-	It may only need a final evaluation	Project team members, project partners
A similar youth project that consists of a week-long training course based on non-formal education may require daily evaluations	It may require daily evaluation sessions	Usually this is not required	Yes	During the project: participants, youth trainers, facilitators  At the end: the project manager/ implementation team should also join
A two-year environmental youth project based on a large cross-sectoral partnership (involving several formal education, national and local public and private institutions, for instance)	Following the work plan and the completion of tasks across the partnership	Covering implementation, financial status, results achieved, lessons learned and remaining objectives to be attained	Yes	Project co-ordinator, representatives from each partner organisation

### Step 3 – Collect relevant data and information

There are several aspects about data collection that need to be explored.

► **Use**

Collected data may be used for a number of purposes, including institutional reporting (such as financial or narrative reports for funding institutions) and decision making, or a combination of these.

► **Source**

Young people, participants or project team members are considered the main source of information when evaluating youth projects. Other sources include, but are not limited to, youth workers, parents, project partners, existing reports or databases, photos or videos, or the community where the project was implemented.

► **Type**

Project managers collect qualitative and quantitative data connected to the set of indicators, including data on the participants' demographics (age, gender, etc.), participant numbers, participant satisfaction, narratives on their learning, etc.


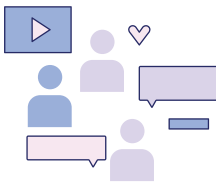
► **Timing**

Data can be collected at various points – in the beginning, throughout, at the end or after the project – depending on the focus of the evaluation. Data may be collected in person at the end of individual activities or via the use of digital tools.

► **Methods**

The most common methods used in youth projects are listed in Table 21.

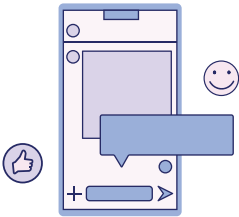
**Table 21. Most common data-collection methods used in youth projects**

<p><b>Most common data collection methods</b></p> <p>METHOD <b>Questionnaires</b></p> <p><b>ADVANTAGE</b> provide an in-depth perspective on project elements</p> <p><b>FORMAT</b> preferably accessible online or via mobile apps using engaging digital forms and using youth-friendly language</p> <p><b>TIMING</b> applied periodically, after specific activities or project milestones</p>	 <p><b>TYPE OF YOUTH ACTIVITY</b> Training courses, youth camps, youth festivals, etc.</p> <p><b>EVALUATION FOCUS</b> Objectives, process, results, resources, impact</p>
<p>METHOD <b>Interactive focus group discussions</b></p> <p><b>ADVANTAGE</b> enable a relaxed, comfortable environment for young people to share honest opinions and ideas</p> <p><b>FORMAT</b> informal, friendly and inclusive guided discussions facilitated by peers or the project manager and the use of different visual aids and interactive methods like storytelling, drawing or games to facilitate open sharing</p> <p><b>TIMING</b> scheduled periodically or after major project events</p>	 <p><b>TYPE OF YOUTH ACTIVITY</b> Training courses, conferences, etc.</p> <p><b>EVALUATION FOCUS</b> Objectives, process, results, impact</p>

**Table 21. Most common data-collection methods used in youth projects**

<p>METHOD</p> <h2>Feedback stations or suggestion boxes</h2> <p><b>ADVANTAGE</b> create a safe space for honest and anonymous feedback and surface issues or suggestions that cannot be voiced openly</p> <p><b>FORMAT</b> physical boxes, digital kiosks or QR codes linking to digital feedback forms</p> <p><b>TIMING</b> present throughout the project's implementation and checked periodically by the manager/facilitators</p>	 <p><b>TYPE OF YOUTH ACTIVITY</b> Youth conferences, training courses, community activities, etc.</p> <p><b>EVALUATION FOCUS</b> Process</p>
<p>METHOD</p> <h2>Youth-led/peer interviews and feedback sessions</h2> <p><b>ADVANTAGE</b> provide deeper insights into individual experiences, challenges and impact on specific young participants and encourage honest responses and empower young people with data collection responsibility, fostering their sense of ownership within the project</p> <p><b>FORMAT</b> structured around guiding questions to ensure useful feedback while allowing informal conversation</p> <p><b>TIMING</b> scheduled periodically, after major activities or milestones</p>	 <p><b>TYPE OF YOUTH ACTIVITY</b> Campaigns, mid-term evaluations of long-term youth projects, etc.</p> <p><b>EVALUATION FOCUS</b> Objectives, process, results, resources, impact</p>

**Table 21. Most common data-collection methods used in youth projects**

<p>METHOD</p> <h2>End-of-session quick pulse checks</h2>		
<p><b>ADVANTAGE</b></p> <p>fast and low-effort for young people to complete, with immediate insights into their satisfaction and engagement and allow for real-time adjustments based on immediate feedback</p>	<p><b>TYPE OF YOUTH ACTIVITY</b></p> <p>Workshops, training courses, youth exchanges, team meetings, etc.</p>	
<p><b>FORMAT</b></p> <p>short feedback exercises face to face or through apps, SMS or WhatsApp</p>	<p><b>EVALUATION FOCUS</b></p> <p>Process, results</p>	
<p><b>TIMING</b></p> <p>organised at the end of each activity or even on a weekly basis for quick updates</p>		

Tool 16 showcases an example of a questionnaire that can be used for learner evaluation for educational youth activities. “T-Kit 10 – Educational evaluation in youth work”, developed by the EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership (2007), offers further insights into tools that can be used for data collection in educational projects.



**Tool 16**

**Sample data collection – Evaluation questionnaire for an educational activity**

Sample of an evaluation questionnaire for educational youth activities	
Objectives and own expectations	<p>In your opinion, to what extent have the activity objectives been met?</p> <p>Objective 1:</p> <p>Rate on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = not achieved; 5 = fully achieved)</p> <p>Repeat this for each objective</p> <p>Please explain your choices:</p> <p>My expectations of this activity were met</p> <p>Rate on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (fully)</p> <p>Please explain:</p> <p>My learning needs were met</p> <p>Rate on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (fully)</p> <p>Please explain:</p>
Programme	<p>What is your perception of the general flow of the programme?</p> <p>Which session or series of sessions was/were the most beneficial for your own learning?</p> <p>What did you miss in this activity?</p> <p>Any other comments on the programme?</p>

Sample of an evaluation questionnaire for educational youth activities	
Learning	To what extent have you improved your (include here the learning objective/key targeted competences, such as the ability to use project management techniques)? Rate on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot) Please explain:
Next steps	How do you plan to use what you learned after the activity?
General satisfaction	What is your general level of satisfaction with this activity? Rate on a scale from 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (fully satisfied) Please explain: Would you recommend this activity to other young people? Why?
Other contribution	If we were to repeat the training activity, what three changes should we implement? Anything else that you would like to share with the activity team?

### Step 4 – Interpret data and conclude

Data analysis is a process that requires a specific set of skills. In youth projects, those in charge of analysing data are expected to have at least a basic understanding of statistical analysis (in order to process quantitative data) and thematic and content analysis (in order to process qualitative data). While these skills might sound intimidating, they are pretty straightforward and can also be learned through practice.

- ▶ Statistical analysis consists of finding answers to questions by finding patterns and trends in numbers and data, and by making sense of them, or looking at what numbers say about the project.
- ▶ Thematic analysis is about understanding people's messages by finding common themes or ideas they share.
- ▶ Content analysis focuses on counting and examining specific words, phrases or themes in written or verbal messages in order to identify what they reveal about the topic.

Besides these data analysis skills, those in charge of the evaluation should also display critical thinking skills, having the capacity to question and deconstruct given narratives and to consider different perspectives and points of view.

In the process of reviewing data and seeking to understand the extent to which a youth project was successful, project managers should look for elements that highlight the results, for the consistency between various quantitative and qualitative data. For example, a high rating for the accomplishment of objectives should be supported by positive narratives, learning statements or strengths that were identified.

Table 22 shows an example of data interpretation based on the objectives, results, success indicators and the data collected.

**Table 22. Example of data interpretation**

Objective	To improve digital literacy among young people in rural areas
<b>Expected output</b>	200 young people trained in digital literacy through 10 workshops
<b>Indicator(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Number of workshops conducted</li> <li>▶ Number of young people trained</li> <li>▶ Digital skills development of young participants</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Eight workshops on digital literacy</li> <li>▶ 120 young people participated in digital literacy workshops</li> </ul>

**Table 22. Example of data interpretation**

Objective	To improve digital literacy among young people in rural areas
<b>Data collected</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Eight lists of participants from workshops (8 x 15)</li> <li>▶ Eight workshop reports highlighting the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• four new interactive methods used throughout the workshops;</li> <li>• 95% satisfaction of participants with content and methods.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Evaluation meeting report pointing out:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the difficulty of securing enough participants for 10 workshops;</li> <li>• 80% of young people score at least 90% on the post-training assessment compared to 20% on the pre-training assessment;</li> <li>• only 50% have access to a computer or a digital device.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Interpretation</b>	<p>The data revealed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ a significant improvement in the digital skills proficiency of young people in rural areas;</li> <li>▶ that the result can be related to the lower number of participants in each workshop – trainers dedicated more time to each individual participant and new interactive methods were used;</li> <li>▶ that the overall participation rate decreased, and that certain demographic groups, particularly low-income families, do not have access to computers or other digital devices or to a reliable internet connection.</li> </ul>

The data analysis and conclusion process can unfold in different ways. Table 23 displays some scenarios corresponding to common practices encountered in youth projects.

**Table 23. Possible scenarios of data analysis and conclusion**

Stages	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ One person is tasked with analysing the data and making a summary of the findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ One person is tasked with analysing the data and sharing a summary of the findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Each team member has access to the collected data and is tasked with analysing them and making sense of them individually</li> </ul>
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The same person is in charge of drafting the conclusions</li> <li>▶ Conclusions are shared with the project team, the organisation and sometimes with external stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Findings are reviewed and discussed in a team meeting</li> <li>▶ A report is drafted based on the results of the team meeting</li> <li>▶ Conclusions are shared with specific target groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Individual findings are reviewed and discussed during a team meeting</li> <li>▶ A report is drafted based on the results of the team meeting</li> <li>▶ Conclusions are shared with specific target groups</li> </ul>

Evaluation meetings for finalising data analysis and drawing final conclusions are common in youth projects. Besides team members, such evaluation meetings may also include young people, project partners, the main stakeholders and, depending on the project's characteristics, funders. The example included in Tool 17 shows agenda elements and some of the facilitation methods that could be used during such an evaluation meeting. This template can be easily adapted to suit a variety of objectives, including, but not limited to:

- ▶ establishing whether the project was successful;
- ▶ evaluating the quality of the partnerships developed and their future;
- ▶ reflecting on the benefits of involving young people in the project management and their integration in future initiatives;
- ▶ exploring the lessons learned for the entire team or organisation;

- ▶ reflecting on the evaluation conclusions and planning for future steps or follow-up;
- ▶ discussing the main elements to be included in a report for the project's funding institution.

Project managers can adjust Tool 17 as needed for planning evaluation meetings.

The conclusions drawn at the end of the data analysis process are usually presented in the format of a report. Just as in the case of the analysis process, reports vary in size, content and format depending on their purpose and the audience they are intended for. For example, small-scale youth projects that do not require institutional funding and are implemented thanks to volunteers or donations may not require reporting at all. It is useful to have a one-page brief project summary, including its activities and results, and an acknowledgement for those that contributed to the project that can be shared through various communication channels.

Because each funding institution has its own report forms, project managers and their teams should become familiar with the reporting obligations before the start of the project implementation.

### Step 5 – Disseminate evaluation results

The results from the evaluation can be used for various purposes, including:

- ▶ informing public and private institutions and the local community about the project's achievements;
- ▶ proving the capacity of the organisation to achieve results and the desired change in the community;
- ▶ building a positive image of the organisation;
- ▶ sharing the learning that young people have gained through the project.

In a similar way to the evaluation process, having a clear understanding of what needs to be achieved through the dissemination of the project's results is the first step to a successful dissemination. A strategic approach should also include:

- ▶ a reflection on the target group (who is the audience to be reached) and tailoring the messages accordingly;
- ▶ deciding on the dissemination methods (how to reach the audience), including the channels to be used (presentations, workshops, social media, etc.) and finding allies that could ensure the reports are widespread and the messages reach the target group;
- ▶ ensuring that appropriate resources are allocated for this purpose;
- ▶ monitoring and evaluating this process in order to learn from it and to be able to make necessary adjustments in the future.

### Step 6 – Follow-up

One of the functions of project evaluation is generating conclusions that, besides assessing the project's success or the lessons learned from it, identify potential actions that would further reinforce or extend the project's impact and social change. Follow-up is the term that refers to such actions and to the continuation of a project. Before exploring it any further, some clarifications are needed. There are a few subtleties between two expressions – project follow-up and a follow-up project – that are often used interchangeably, despite the different meanings they bear. For the purpose of this T-Kit the two terms are defined as follows.

#### Terminology

- ▶ Project follow-up – an open, generic expression that designates any action that could happen after a project and that is linked to it. For example, an e-mail sent after the end of a project or a meeting between former project partners are examples of project follow-up.
- ▶ Follow-up project – a specific expression that designates a potential new project cycle that has its origin in and is closely linked to the initial project cycle. For example, a new project consisting of training young people on how to use a manual that was created during a previous project.



Tool 17

## Example of an evaluation meeting agenda

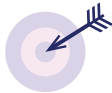
# EVALUATION MEETING AGENDA ELEMENTS



**Welcome**  
by the facilitator (and/or organisers)

## POTENTIAL METHODS OR FACILITATION APPROACHES

Round of names and roles in the project – if not all participants know each other



**Introduction to the meeting**  
Meeting objectives and expected results

Brief input from the facilitator – a few visual elements



**Project review**  
Objectives, expected results, indicators and project activities

Brief input from the facilitator – a few visual elements



**Evaluation findings**

**Gallery walk**

- findings are displayed on the walls around the room
- participants can walk in pairs or threes and take note of and exchange shortly their first impressions
- a specific amount of time is dedicated to “visiting” each set of data



**Reflection on findings**

**Small group work**

- participants work in small groups, potentially bringing two pairs together to identify the project’s strengths and weaknesses, key learning points and impact
- presentations in plenary
- wrap-up by facilitator that clusters and draws connections between the ideas that emerge



**Suggestions and recommendations**

**World Cafe**

- build on the insights from the previous session – propose a few topics and questions to explore – one per table
- make one table topic open to any thoughts from participants
- run a few rounds to ensure people get to visit each table
- summarise at the end



**Follow-up**

**Individual reflection coupled with buzz-groups**

- reflect individually on ideas to be taken further
- discuss them in pairs
- share in plenary the results



**Closing**

**Plenary**

- summarise the overall results of the meeting
- explain what will happen with the results – what the organisation/team plans to do with them
- thank everyone for their commitment and participation

## Project follow-up

Also referred to as follow-up actions, project follow-up is closely linked to the project that has concluded. Follow-up actions depend on the specificity of the project and can include some of the following:

- ▶ staying in touch with project participants or partners;
- ▶ maintaining project visibility actions;
- ▶ creating or encouraging communication/networking platforms (alumni communities, etc.);
- ▶ measuring the impact of the project after a certain period;
- ▶ keeping participants and partners informed about the follow-up projects;
- ▶ multiplier workshops implemented by participants in their own communities;
- ▶ presenting or disseminating the project results in other spaces.

## Follow-up projects

Follow-up projects capitalise on the outcomes and lessons learned of the previous project. There are different ways to initiate follow-up projects:

- ▶ further exploring specific changes that the initial project created;
- ▶ considering new trends or issues that were identified;
- ▶ arising needs or changes that a project team should apply in the way they manage projects;
- ▶ trusting and offering young people the opportunity to experience and extend the ownership they developed during the initial project;
- ▶ purposefully designing activities that generate follow-up projects.

At times, project managers may face a large number of follow-up project ideas. In order to filter and select those to be implemented, they should consider:

- ▶ their needs and those of young people from the local community;
- ▶ the level of involvement or commitment of young people;
- ▶ the scale and scope of the new project;
- ▶ its alignment with the organisational values and strategy;
- ▶ the resources that may be required to implement them;
- ▶ the environmental implications;
- ▶ the availability of funds, whether these are required and the priorities of potential funding institutions.

As many youth projects include educational activities, a basic reflection tool can include questions about the learning outcomes each person takes back home and how they will implement them. Tool 18 is a sample personal action plan encouraging young participants to identify personal follow-up ideas and to plan some steps. Project managers can adapt it to fit their organisational realities. They can also use it with their team members and encourage them to transfer their project management-related learning from one project to another.



**Tool 18**

Template for a personal action plan for follow-up projects

# MY ACTION PLAN

## Multiplying and bringing home the course results

General idea – theme or topic of my project:

Specific objectives:

Skills/knowledge I would like to put into practice back home:

How can I keep my motivation high?

What can hinder me or decrease my motivation?

WHAT	WHEN	RESOURCES	OBSERVABLE RESULT	NOTES
<p><b>Step-by-step actions to set your project in motion</b></p> <p>For example, develop the concept of the project on the topic I want to address.</p>	<p><b>Deadline</b></p> <p>For example, until the end of May.</p>	<p><b>Who can help you, what material resources do you need?</b></p> <p>For example, who could I work with? What partners have I chosen? What manuals/toolkits can I use?</p>	<p><b>What will happen that will tell you that you are done?</b></p> <p>For example, I will have a file on my computer, a maximum of two pages, with the most important information on the topic.</p>	<p>For example, add a deadline to my agenda.</p>



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# Glossary

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**Aim** – the overarching, broad goal or purpose of a project describing what the project is trying to achieve.

**Direct results** – the immediate outcome of a project activity.

**Dissemination** – the project's results are systematically shared with other organisations, stakeholders and youth work practitioners working on the same topic and bring added value to their work.

**Evaluation** – analysing a project's achievements and assessing the overall success and impact of the project at the end to identify lessons learned and plan follow-up actions.

**Follow-up project** – a specific expression that designates a potential new project cycle that has its origin in and is closely linked to the initial project cycle. For example, a new project consisting of training young people on how use a manual that was created during a previous project.

**Goal** – general term describing the purpose of a project, encompassing both aims and objectives.

**Impact** – the long-term effect and sustainable change that the project's activities contribute to.

**Indicator** – a tool to assess the progress and achievement of a youth project. Indicators can be developed for a project's direct and indirect results or impact. Indicators can carry quantitative (quantity, frequencies of something) and qualitative (non-numerical, judgments and perceptions) aspects.

**Indirect results** – the secondary or mid-term outcome of a project's activity.

**Means of verification** – methods for collecting data and evidence to confirm whether a project's indicators have been achieved.

**Monitoring** – collecting project data and tracking progress during a project's implementation to allow for eventual project adjustments.

**Objectives** – specific, measurable steps that must be achieved to fulfil the project's aim.

**Project follow-up** – an open, generic expression that refers to any action that could happen after a project and that is linked to it. For example, an e-mail sent after the end of a project or a meeting between former project partners are project follow-ups.

**Project management competences** – the ability to lead, co-ordinate and manage different aspects of a project.

**Project management techniques** – methods or strategies used to carry out tasks effectively throughout the project lifecycle.

**Project management tools** – specific instruments, software or systems used to plan, execute and monitor a project's activities.

**Task management** – co-ordinating and organising all project activities as planned and on time.

**Team management** – co-ordinating an effective team by supporting and leading the team members, facilitating the team dynamics and taking account of their expertise and experiences.

**Time management** – planning, organising and controlling the allocation of time to a project's tasks and activities to ensure deadlines are met.

**Visibility** – the project is recognisable by the public and key stakeholders in the youth sector because they are regularly informed about its purpose, activities and achievements.

**Youth project** – a project designed and implemented for, with or by young people for the immediate or long-term benefit of young people, their organisations and their community.

**Youth project management** – the use of competences, tools and techniques throughout the various stages of a project in order to successfully reach its objectives and contribute to social and political change, while empowering young people to participate and ensuring their continuous learning and development.

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# About the authors and contributors

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## Contributors

Tiphaine Coulardeau is a project manager and consultant with over 16 years of experience in youth empowerment and participation. She has dedicated her career to supporting the growth of youth organisations, connecting young leaders worldwide and ensuring their voices are heard in the right spaces. Tiphaine is highly skilled in resource mobilisation, fundraising and strategic programme development for youth participation. She has successfully designed and managed numerous youth engagement and capacity-building initiatives across Europe, the South Caucasus, the Overseas Countries and Territories of the European Union and beyond. Tiphaine contributed to writing the section on resource mobilisation in this T-Kit.

Alain Crudenaire is an experienced educator and coach specialising in youth project management, well-being, interpersonal communication and conflict management. He holds a bachelor's degree in specialised education for psycho-educational support and a master's degree in media literacy. Alain also works as a facilitator and project manager for a youth organisation. Certified as both a life coach and emotional coach, he combines a unique blend of expertise in well-being, inclusion and communication to address both individual and collective needs. His work focuses on fostering resilience and inclusion and on conflict resolution through innovative educational approaches and project management practices. Alain contributed to writing the section on well-being in this T-Kit.

Danijela Matorcevic is a psychologist, youth trainer and adult educator with extensive experience and expertise in cultural sensitivity, inclusion, youth work, youth project and volunteer management at local, national, regional, European and international levels. She has led numerous initiatives aimed at empowering young people and fostering intercultural understanding, establishing volunteer centres and supporting peacebuilding and community resilience in post-conflict areas of South-East Europe. Danijela specialises in designing and managing youth projects that address community challenges, promote collaboration and build sustainable solutions. Her work emphasises integrating cultural awareness into project strategies and organisational development. Danijela contributed to writing the sections on culture and cultural sensitivity and on project implementation in this T-Kit.

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Julia Stollenwerk is a facilitator and project co-ordinator who focuses on intercultural learning, non-formal education and sustainable youth work. She leads training courses and seminars for young people and youth workers on sustainability, global education, personal development and social competences across Europe, as well as nationally and locally in Germany and Spain. Julia contributed to the development of the handbook "Green your youth project" and a sustainability website, which both promote sustainable practices for European youth projects. Julia contributed to writing the section on environmental sustainability in this T-Kit.

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