Chapter 4
How to reach all

This chapter aims at identifying the main personal and structural obstacles to youth social inclusion. It also offers a set of instruments for youth workers to identify the main risks and barriers to social inclusion of young people in their community. The second part of the chapter explores the motivation of young people to participate, offering a set of good practices that could inspire youth workers to develop attractive activities for their target group.

OBSTACLES

The youth partnership study on barriers to social inclusion, "Finding a place in modern Europe",[16] refers to five areas of possible inclusion or exclusion: education, labour market, living, health and participation. These five areas present a basis for social inclusion and can be referred to as "safety nets" since they provide basic resources and prerequisites for the fulfilment of everyday needs. But the exclusion of young people can also be determined by personal and practical obstacles.

PERSONAL OBSTACLES	PRACTICAL OBSTACLES
▶ lack of self-esteem, self-confidence; ▶ lack of encouragement; ▶ dislike of being patronised; ▶ unappealing image of youth work; ▶ fear of being discriminated against; ▶ uninteresting activities, etc.	▶ lack of information; ▶ lack of permission to join activities, or group pressure against joining; ▶ lack of time or energy; ▶ lack of money; ▶ cultural or religious conflicts; ▶ mobility problems, etc.

Exercise:

Can you identify the personal and practical obstacles to social inclusion that young people face in your community?

PERSONAL OBSTACLES	PRACTICAL OBSTACLES

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16. Markovic J., Garcia Lopez M.A. and Dzigurski S. (2015), "Finding a place in modern Europe", EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, available at http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/1668217/Finding.pdf/d5685c53-257e-4678-89f6-fcbf17469cff, accessed 27 October 2016.

Exercise:

Based on the areas of possible inclusion or exclusion – education, labour market, living, health and participation – the table below lists the personal and structural barriers that could restrict the full participation of young people. The list is also an essential exercise in identifying recurrent obstacles and risks to social inclusion and, once completed, it will provide a clear image of the needs that young people have in your community.

RISK FACTORS & BARRIERS	YES/ NO	COMMENTS
education		
Enrolment and attendance barriers to education		
STRUCTURAL BARRIERS		
Teacher competencies and motivation		
Achievement and progress		
Learning environment		
Stigmatisation and discrimination		
PERSONAL BARRIERS		
Need to work to support the family		
Social and economic background		
Poor results at school		
Family not giving importance to education		
Gender inequalities		
labour market		
STRUCTURAL BARRIERS		
Getting a job		
Being young!		
Low qualifications		
Overqualified		
Mismatch between the training offered at school and the labour market's needs		
Working conditions		
Low quality, poorly paid jobs		
Temporary contracts		
Gender-based discrimination		
PERSONAL BARRIERS		
Single parenthood and teenage pregnancy		
Health problems and mental illness		

RISK FACTORS & BARRIERS	YES/ NO	COMMENTS
Special educational needs and learning disabilities		
Family situation		
housing		
STRUCTURAL BARRIERS		
Accessibility (not being the first choice of landlords)		
Affordability		
Inadequacy and discrimination		
PERSONAL BARRIERS		
Family systems and social situation		
Intergenerational relationships and family systems (weak v. strong families)		
Particular needs of specific groups (i.e. young parents)		
Homelessness		
health		
STRUCTURAL BARRIERS		
Access to health services and opportunities for practising a healthy lifestyle		
Age and/or status-dependent access		
Economic barriers		
Barriers grounded in legal status (immigrants, refugees, homeless, internally displaced persons)		
Institutional policies and practices		
Quality and coverage of health services		
Measures and policies that are misinterpreted and implemented		
Lack of openness of institutions and unequal treatment		
Exposure to particular information and attitudes		
Lack of health education and relevant information		
Prejudices and discrimination towards particular groups and health problems		
Discrimination among peers		

RISK FACTORS & BARRIERS	YES/ NO	COMMENTS
Exposure to particular values and practices		
Social constructs of roles and power relations		
Power structures		
Heteronormative practices and gender-based discrimination		
PERSONAL BARRIERS		
Lack of awareness and information		
Lack of knowledge		
Preference for a certain lifestyle and behaviours		
Not finding time to go to the doctor		
Community		
STRUCTURAL BARRIERS		
Gap between young people and structures for engagement		
Growing feeling of young people that institutions and organisations are far removed from their realities		
Restricted access to power structures for young people		
Lack of adequate methodologies		
Lack of quantifiable evidence and indicators to measure the impact of lasting engagement on social exclusion		
Inadequate mechanisms to enable youth participation		
Barriers related to access		
Lack of bridging structures		
Money, geographic constraints and time as the main obstacles for the lasting engagement of young people		
Geographic disparities in the provision of services		
Institutional structures and practices		
Formal politics and different engagement structures as closed systems that are less accessible for particular groups		

RISK FACTORS & BARRIERS	YES/NO	COMMENTS
A low level of efficiency and effectiveness of institutions and organisations		
Lack of inter-sector co-operation		
Lack of citizenship education in school curricula		
Civil society policies and practices		
In civil society organisations, an organisational culture and capacity that is not democratic or supportive of young people's involvement		
Contested representation within youth organisations		
Lack of recognition of youth work practices		
Limiting engagement practices		
Insufficient coverage and outreach		
Youth engagement that is limited by predefined domains of interest		
Institutional approaches and methods that often limit access to citizenship rights		
SOCIAL CONTEXTS AND CHANGES		
Rapid demographic change		
Different histories and social change processes (transitions)		
Social perceptions and presentations		
Media promoting a negative image of young people		
Social perceptions of young people		
Attitudes, awareness and understanding		
The way identity is constructed		
Young people feeling discriminated		
A narrowed understanding of democracy and citizenship across Europe		
Tensions between youth activism and formal institutional politics		
Gender issues, with women less involved		

RISK FACTORS & BARRIERS	YES/ NO	COMMENTS
PERSONAL BARRIERS		
Lack of information		
Lack of awareness (related to rights)		
Not willing to engage with each other		
Lack of competencies		
Preoccupation with day-to-day survival		
Self-perception and motivation		
Lack of trust in institutions and organisations		
Youth seeing themselves as autonomous		
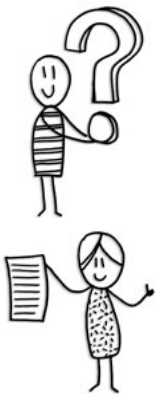
Questions

▸ What are the predominant risks to social inclusion young people face in your community?

▸ Do these risks and barriers vary across time?

Based on the risks and barriers listed above, the socially excluded groups are:

▸ young people with migrant backgrounds;

▸ young people with disabilities;

▸ young people with low educational levels;

▸ young people living in remote areas;

▸ young people with low household income;

▸ young offenders;

▸ young people abusing drugs;

▸ early school leavers;

▸ young people leaving care;

▸ homeless youth;

▸ LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning and Intersex) groups;

▸ women;

▸ young people with parents at risk of unemployment, low education or divorced;

▸ other groups (which ones in your community?).

This list is not complete and (hopefully) not all reasons are applicable to your specific target group. Young people could belong, at the same time, to several of these groups. The list aims to give you some idea as to why certain groups might not be inclined to join your activities, but such activities must be contextualised according to each national/regional/local context.

Young people do not avoid youth worker activities for no reason. One way to find out why is to ask young people themselves. But if you want to get to know your target group really well, you can find out more about them in the neighbourhood they live. What follows is a systematic approach to creating better links to young people and their environment.

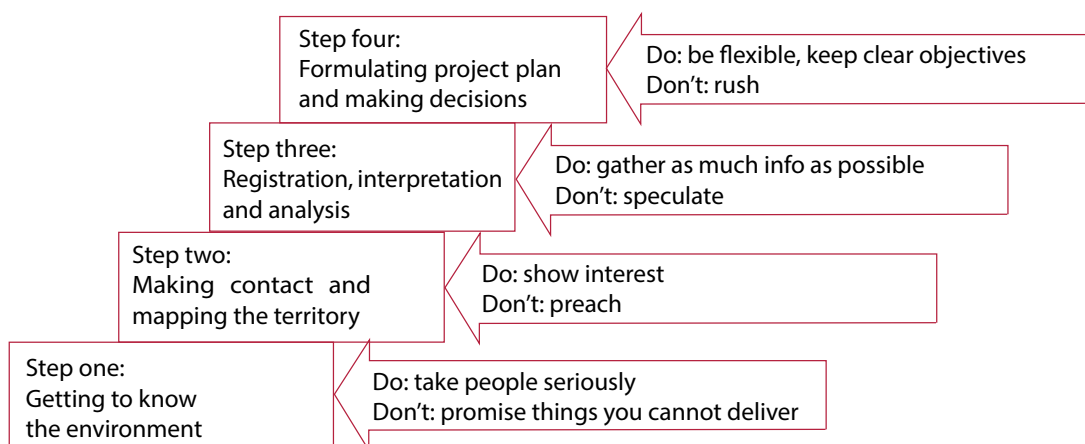**Figure 1: Creating better links with young people and their environment**

Figure 1 is elaborated as follows:

▶ Step one: go out to the places where you can contact the young persons you are targeting. Get to know their environment and life situation. Talk informally to them about their needs and wishes, and do not forget to gather information as well about the "invisible" young people (those you do not meet on the streets). Listen actively but do not promise things you cannot deliver. Avoid being patronising.

▶ Step two: it is important to build trust between the young people and yourself. It is important not to be judgmental or to preach to people when they tell you about past experiences. Show interest in what they are doing, have done and plan to do. Here you can sow the seeds for future participation of young people in your activities.

▶ Step three: analyse the information you gather from your contacts with the target group. Check what challenges they face in daily life, what obstacles they are facing in joining in youth activities, what they like and dislike, and so on. This information should give you an idea what types of activities or projects the young people would like, and which would not be appropriate.

▶ Step four: when you then decide to set up projects geared towards the target group, use all the information you gathered and involve the young persons in it from the start, throughout the project or in all activities. Although improvisation skills and flexibility are vital to a project, it is important – especially when dealing with vulnerable young people – to have a plan. This helps to keep your aims and objectives clear and gives you guidelines for your work with young people. Be transparent in what you are trying to reach, and make sure there is something in it for the young people. More information on setting up a project can be found in the T-Kit on Project Management and the T-Kit on Funding and Financial Management.[17]

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17. *T-Kit No. 9 – Funding and financial management*, EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, available at: http://pjp-eu.coe. int/documents/1017981/1667927/tkit9.pdf/8ce14ff0-586b-46d6-9567-f99495a2ed49, last accessed: November 8, 2016.

WHY YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATE

When trying to reach young people with fewer opportunities it is important to tailor your project to their needs. We need to find the right balance between the young people's interests, their skills and their limits. And secondly, it is important to involve the young people throughout the process in order to give them a sense of ownership.

Another principle in successful youth work with young people with fewer opportunities is to involve young people from the first moment. The approach should not be to do a project for the young people, but rather with the young people or even better by the young people. The young people you are working with are most likely to be able to tell you what they like and what not, why their friends or family would frown upon an activity and when not. So it is paramount that the activity revolves around the young people, giving them a sense of ownership and responsibility. They should be an equal partner in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the project.

When starting an activity or project with young people with fewer opportunities (and probably with any young people), the following checklist could help you assess if your activity is really accessible to all. Again, this list is not complete and might not be applicable to all, but it can be used as a starting point and adapted and amplified along the way.

Checklist before the activity

✓ Get to know your target group, their needs and interests, their cultural backgrounds, their visions of the future, their home situations.

✓ Use different ways and different settings to make your activity known and adapted to the target group (word of mouth; posters in schools, community centres, supermarkets, snack-bars and on streets; local media).

✓ Have a look at who was present at similar activities in the past (age group, gender, culture, or a mix) and analyse why others (friends, brothers/sisters, young people in their neighbourhood) were not.

✓ Tackle all practical barriers (appropriate timing, reduce financial obstacles, accessibility of meeting place, etc.).

✓ Make sure the activity appeals to the target group (or in the worst case, make it look appealing). A few, small extra things (a free drink, free access to the sports hall, a cap or a t-shirt) might win them over to join.

✓ Adapt the youth workers to the target group and subject of the activity taking into account cultural, age, gender or religious considerations.

✓ Make sure other stakeholders (parents, teachers and neighbourhood) are aware of the activity and approve and support it.
✓ Present the activity in a form or method fitting the group and the theme of the activity (peer education, video, research, discussion, etc.).
✓ Make sure the activity is challenging enough but not too challenging.
✓ Adapt the activity to the skills of the young people.
✓ Connect the activity to the interests of the young people.
✓ Involve the young people in the development and implementation of the entire activity.
✓ Make sure it is clear for the young people what they can expect, what they will have to do and in which way they will have to do it.

Megafonen, Stockholm, Sweden[16]

The objective of this project, These Days (Nuförtiden), was to create a news magazine where young people had the opportunity to discuss issues of interest to them, such as racism, violence and discrimination. The participants were 19 young people of immigrant origin, aged between 16 and 25, from Rinkeby-Kista, a borough of Stockholm. Rinkeby-Kista has a population of approximately 60 000, and the project was mainly aimed at the young people from the Kista district, which has one of the highest unemployment rates among young people in Sweden; many of them do not do well in the education system. There is also a high level of criminality in the area. Consequently, the young people lack social networks and the motivation to engage with society, or to be able to access their social rights and overcome discrimination and exclusion. The project raised awareness among young people of their social rights, so that they are more able to access these rights. In the project, they were able to set their own agenda and tackle issues that concern them. The rights that the project focused on were: non-discrimination, non-violence, employment, education, participation and housing. During the project the local council employed six of the participants. As a result of the training aspect of the project, another 12 young people developed their journalistic skills. The magazine was distributed to more than 3 000 young people in the area and it demonstrated what young people can do, and this increased the interest of more young people in the project and in the work of Megafonen. As a result of the project the young people were motivated to continue volunteering and to be more engaged in their neighbourhoods.

Motivation

Getting young people motivated can be a difficult and sometimes frustrating task. But with a bit of preparation and the right attitude it is possible to get young people on board your project. Youth workers can offer different things in their projects to address these needs:

▶ Social benefits: young people are looking for fun, social status, recognition, belonging to a group;

▶ Pragmatic benefits: young people want to see the sense of the things they are doing whether this is access to a sports hall during the project, new skills to put on their CV or going abroad as part of the project;

▶ Psychological benefits: young people are constantly looking for themselves and need to find their own way in life. Wanting to distinguish themselves, they need self-esteem (see section in Chapter 7: "Exploring self-esteem");

▶ Material benefits: young people are sometimes very interested in small material benefits, like a t-shirt, a free drink or a small present. This should not be seen as a bribe, but it could be a way to get them on board initially and, once actively participating in the project, they hopefully will see other benefits.

18. See Council of Europe (2015), *Taking it seriously. Guide to Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights*, and http://megafonen.com, accessed 24 October 2016.

Questions:

▶ Why do young people participate in your activities?

▶ How do you know what motivates them?

▶ What are the benefits of the projects you are running for young people?

The youth worker's task is to offer a framework, motivate, support and advise if necessary, and stand back when the young people targeted are capable of handling themselves independently. Success often depends on this feeling of responsibility and ownership.

Konexe, Czech Republic

"Konexe was founded in 2012. It brought together Roma groups from across the Czech Republic, with the aim of providing assistance to one another and other Roma in similar contexts, particularly in times of crisis… Konexe works on promoting Roma groups as actors and partners in society *and they have adopted an inclusive partnership approach in relation to Roma issues*… A large part of the work of Konexe is concentrated on Roma young people; therefore most of the Konexe activists are young Roma and non-Roma… The key work of Konexe is active and immediate response to threats and unjust situations that affect Roma communities. In 2013, for example, Konexe activists travelled all over the Czech Republic supporting Roma groups and communities who were identified as targets of racially motivated demonstrations. Konexe also developed "Blokujeme!" ("Let's Block the Marches!"), which functions as a platform for supporting antiracist activities in the Czech Republic. Working alongside Roma and non-Roma citizens and organisations, Konexe represents an example of civic courage, based on the defence of human rights.

Konexe does not just go to a situation and then leave; they spend time with the threatened group or community providing psychological and social support to the affected Roma people… Konexe also supports the communities with advice and assistance in organising and preparing for future demonstrations. This work includes providing training on non-violent action and how to safely and peacefully deal with potentially violent situations… Beyond emergency interventions, the activists develop long-term activities such as Roma Holocaust remembrance, advocacy for the victims of discrimination, support for the victims of forced evictions and the development of advocacy methods. In the future, the organisation intends to build a professional emergency support team."

Another role that Konexe has adopted is to inform international organisations about the situation of Roma in the Czech Republic. It contributes at the European level to the drafting of measures and strategies against the growth of hatred and racism (Roma Youth Participation in Action, *Roma youth participation: good practices, from the local to the European level*).[17]

In order to turn active involvement into a positive experience, a number of conditions should be met:

▶ young people should be taken seriously. They should be motivated to participate and share their opinions. They should receive clear feedback on their opinions and ideas, to avoid false expectations;

▶ both parties should share responsibility. Young people should be given a fair share of the responsibility. This will give them a sense of ownership for the project. But youth workers should not leave young people to their own devices. They are still responsible for the young people they are working with, for the process and product of the project. This implies that they should foresee appropriate training and coaching for the people involved in the project;

▶ there should be enough diversity. The youth worker should make sure there is a possibility for all to get involved (see section in Chapter 4: "Obstacles"). There should be opportunities adapted to all young people, no matter what background, interests or skills they have. Young people should be stimulated and supported to find the activity matching their interests and capacities;

▶ enough time and money should be dedicated. Young people with fewer opportunities will not automatically knock on your door to join in your activities. It takes time and effort (which mostly has a price tag attached to it) to actively involve them. The work, staff and finances should be planned accordingly;

▶ experiences should be evaluated and the results effectively used. Each activity and all those involved should be evaluated. This includes participants, youth workers and other partners linked to the project (parents, teachers, football coaches, etc.). Suggestions for improvement should be taken into consideration and used for future projects;

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19. Available at www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/konexe-czech-republic.

► activities should not be isolated events. One youth project will not change the world. Even if young people have a powerful experience in the project, it is important not to lose momentum. A project is only one step on a long road and the youth worker's role is to continue progress on this pathway towards whatever horizon fits the young person (see Chapter 6: "Different working contexts");

► youth work is not an island. A youth activity is rarely just a project for young people. It should have a link to the community as well. Projects with local community involvement tend to bridge the gap between young people and society and often diminish the distrust and suspicion between the two groups. Theatre, for example, can involve parents or teachers to help with costumes, lighting, texts, and so on, and the result can be performed for the community at large.

Attractive activities

Cultureghem, Belgium

The aim of the organisation is to bring together young people from different backgrounds and support social change and intercultural dialogue. Through the use of workshops (kitchen workshops and sport activities) the organisation aims at reducing the high level of racism, mostly against Roma and migrants, faced in the neighbourhood of Cureghem, Brussels, inhabited by people from 170 different countries. The organisation works in close co-operation with the Roma group of the neighbourhood, which is keen to be increasingly engaged in the local community and is very active in organising local activities involving young people.

If you want to have young people with fewer opportunities in your youth work activities, one thing is clear and simple: you have to offer them something they find attractive. It is up to the youth worker to build in non-formal educational experiences within an activity that is, seemingly, pure fun. This hidden agenda does not even have to be explicit to the participants.

When setting up educational experiences, youth workers want to expand the worlds and skills of young people. However, activities should take youth out of their usual habits into trying or learning something new.

Figure 2: Taking youth out of their comfort zone
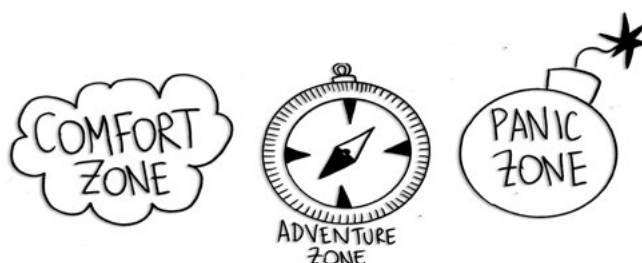
The task of the youth worker is to provide an activity that has this element of adventure (in the sense of pushing the boundaries of what the young people are used to), but they should of course also safeguard the limits of everyone, so that no one gets pushed over a limit they do not want to cross. A good example of this is the so-called survival camps, where people learn to co-operate, achieve and apply new skills, and have to trust each other in order to fulfil all tasks. Closer to home, these limits can be extended with appealing activities such as music, sports, street art, theatre and multimedia, or a combination of the above.