



Key Action 2 PARTNERSHIPS FOR COOPERATION
Cooperation Partnership - Youth

HOTSPOTS

Connecting European Suburbs through Smart Youth Work

28/02/2022 – 27/04/2024 (26 months)

NEEDS AND CONTEXT

Civil society organizations have been called, in 2020, to answer new challenges to keep their mission and actions still effective and pro-active. The Covid-19 widespread pushed to design new

plans for the upcoming years and to find new strategies and alternative solutions to engage the beneficiaries and participants of our activities, young people and local communities.

In a framework where physical meetings and activities in presence have been drastically reduced to contain the pandemic, it became evident the **need to rethink the way and methods to involve the youth groups we work with**. Therefore the digital sphere, day by day, started to gain more relevance and organizations initiated a process to be quipped for the new conditions. This implied both a wider use of digital platforms and tools and also an adaptation of the non-formal education methods we were used to.

Even though, in the last years an impressive work has been run, with a consistent variety of approaches and a big heterogeneity of methods applied, still the work could be further fine-tuned. This, specifically, for what concerns the creation of a pedagogical approach (including different tools and methods for the digital and offline spheres) to strengthen intercultural perspectives among young people coming from different European suburbs and from more marginalized realities.

Suburbs are indeed the settings where young people can encounter and interact with other peers. Still, they often might risk to become the landmark of exclusion and the stage for racism, sexism, bullying and different displays of discrimination. In Europe these areas are normally marked by a quite strong heterogeneity, still there are elements in common as, for example, the tendency of being a "artificial ghettos" for the youth living there, a space where it's challenging to create interactions with the other realities and benefit from other opportunities. They might become the setting for discriminative events, hate speech and harmful rhetoric. Therefore they can be the places where the extreme right parties and movements are setting their roots, permeating the mind-setting of the young people and leading them to extremism and radicalization. In these realities it's acquiring more and more relevance the raising awareness action targeted to young people, to acknowledge the values of cultural differences, the importance to exchange ideas with peers and to have open minded approaches towards what we don't necessarily know.

OBJECTIVES

HOTSPOTS is a Cooperation Partnership in the field of youth, **aimed to develop non-formal education tools and methods, within a newly designed pedagogical approach, to enhance both online and offline,**

intercultural learning-ICL among young people coming from suburban backgrounds, and more specifically, in national and transnational Youth Participation Activities-YPA, within the Erasmus+ program.

In order to achieve this goal, a set of **specific objectives** have been set:

- **SO 1:** to build up, in the suburban dimensions involved, the local **diagnostic** to better understand the situation, needs and profiles of the youth, the challenges they face in their everyday life and with a specific focus on the subject of Intercultural Learning
- **SO 2:** to share the existing tools, approaches and the **smart and digital youth work's** practices, with specific regards to the online and offline dimensions, used by the consortium to promote active participation and Intercultural Learning
- **SO 3:** to design a new, synthetic and innovative **pedagogical perspective** applicable to smart youth work in the involved countries, and **including an educational package with tools and methods** usable for the online and the offline sphere. These tools will be designed also for a potential use in the national and transnational YPA
- **SO 4:** to strengthen the **capacity-building of youth workers'** digital and offline practices, in order to have them ready to face the nowadays challenges and to be ready to offer a wider variety of activities to the young people they work with, motivating them for an higher participation and bringing new ones on board
- **SO 5:** to **connect, empower and engage** young people from outskirts and isolated areas in different EU outskirts, to equip them to act as agents of change and promoters of new grass-rooted actions.

PRIORITIES

The project will be focused on the following **priorities covering the Erasmus+ sectors:**

- **Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth and sport:** the project's main setting will be the suburban dimension of different European cities improving the outreaching of young people and youth with fewer opportunities. A specific attention will be dedicated to under-represented groups, facing socio-economic difficulties or any other potential source of discrimination based on sex, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The project will contribute to strengthen their access to the program's opportunities and to create the setting for an inclusive environment for learning
- **Addressing digital transformation through development of digital readiness, resilience and capacity:** the main methodological framework of the project is non-formal education-NFE, with the perspective of combining the offline with the online spheres in order to bring more young people on board and to offer them a bigger variety of inclusive activities. Therefore the project will support the purposeful use of digital technologies for learning and will contribute to design a pedagogical approach, including the alternation and the inter-changeability of work in presence and the use of digital tools
- **Common values, civic engagement and participation:** the project main axe is Intercultural Learning and the importance of developing the young people social and

intercultural competences, critical thinking and open minded approaches. Moreover, within the end of the project and as a direct outcome, the young people involved are expected to become peer educators of other youth of the same age and background, further enhancing their social and civic engagement and strengthening the possibilities for participation through non-formal learning activities.

FOCUS

The project will have a specific focus on two main concepts: **Smart Youth Work-SYW** and **Digital Youth Work-DYW**.

SMART YOUTH WORK is seen as the innovative development of traditional YW encompassing digital practices, including research, quality and policy components. It builds upon the needs of young people, youth workers, youth leaders and other stakeholders supporting youth and, contemporarily, it takes into account the wider societal context, providing opportunities for experimentation, reflection and learning from experiences. It is not a YW method, since it can be included in any YW setting (open YW, youth information and counselling, youth clubs, detached YW). It can happen in face-to-face situations as well as in online environments, or in a mixture of these two and digital media and technology can be used either as a tool, an activity or a content in YW

DIGITAL YOUTH WORK means proactively using or addressing digital media and technology in YW. It builds upon the ethics, existing principles, knowledge, practices and means proactively using or addressing digital media and technology. It has the same goals of YW, and for this reason, fully meets the above mentioned needs.

TARGET GROUP

YOUTH WORKERS AND EDUCATORS: cooperating with their organizations in educational activities. They should be mainly active in urban,

suburban, isolated and very populous areas where are more evident the cases of social exclusion, bullying, racist and sexist discrimination which see young people as the main victims.

The age range of participants will be between 25 and 35 years old, but the participation will be opened also to younger people aged between 18 and 25 active as peer educators and more adults, over 40 working as youth workers.

YOUNG PEOPLE: aged between 15 and 25 years old, living in urban and suburban isolated areas where the youth workers and educators are active. A settled number of places will be also reserved to young people aged 25-30, where motivated and justified by partner organizations. The groups will be heterogeneous to better favour the exchange and interaction: therefore realistically, some will be students from local secondary schools, while others are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and young people at risk of exclusion who have been exposed to different types of discrimination, as bullying or hate speech.

METHODOLOGY

The whole project will be developed within the umbrella of the **non-formal education - NFE** perspective and methodologies. The proposed educational approach will be constantly based on the learning by doing. Therefore, the specific learning objectives forecasted in the different steps are conceived in a consequential perspective to better achieve a coherent learning process of all the actors and stakeholders involved.

This approach moreover allows to shape the action/s according to the needs of the direct beneficiaries (young people) and of the indirect ones (the local communities involved), respecting the specificities, ensuring flexibility to the learning experiences and enhancing the young people knowledge, skills and competences.

PROJECT TIMELINE

