

JOINT POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS PAPER

2023



Co-funded by
the European Union

Project No. 2021-1-CY02-KA220-YOU-000029051

DY
DIGITAL YOUTH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial Details	3
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction to the Digital Youth project	4
Organisational information	4
Target groups	4
Objectives and results	5
Purpose of this Paper	6
Good examples	7
Successes and challenges	18
Recommendations	25
For practitioners	25
For policymakers	29
Conclusion	32

EDITORIAL DETAILS

AUTHOR

Partners of the Digital Youth project

DATE

October – November 2023

VERSION

Version 2

PROJECT PARTNERS



info@cardet.org
www.cardet.org



info@ruralhub.ie
theruralhub.ie



info@cis-es.org
www.cis-es.org



digitalyouth-
project@kmop.org
www.kmop.gr



come@cyprusyouth.org
cyprusyouth.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our gratitude to all individuals who have played a crucial role in shaping this report, with special acknowledgment extended to those actively involved in on-site research across our partner countries. The content within this document stems from confidential consultations and focused group discussions conducted with diverse stakeholders in the realm of youth work. In order to safeguard the privacy and anonymity of these contributors, their identities have been safeguarded, and their responses meticulously anonymized, ensuring the confidentiality of the information presented.



INTRODUCTION TO THE DIGITAL YOUTH PROJECT

ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

The Digital Youth project is an Erasmus+ KA2 project with partners in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, and Spain. The project started on the 1st of January 2022 and will be ending on the 1st of January 2024.

The partners are

- CARDET (Cyprus)
- Kentro Merimnas Oikogeneias Kai Paidiou (KMOP, Greece)
- The Rural Hub CLG (TRH, Ireland)
- Kipriakos Organismos Kentron Neotitas (KOKEN, Cyprus)
- Consultoría de Innovación Social (CIS, Spain)

TARGET GROUPS

The target groups of this project are

Youth workers

Professionals working with young people under 30 years of age in different settings: educational, counselling, etc.

Policy makers of youth work

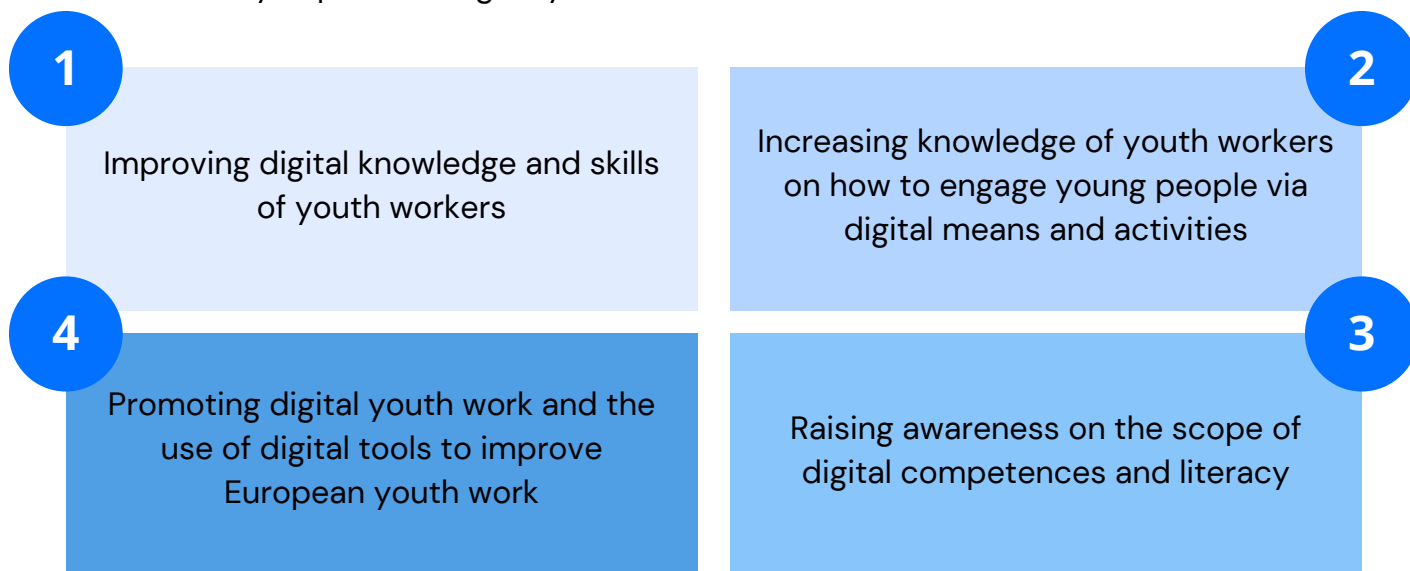
Institutions and authorities who have decisive power in choosing youth work frameworks and structures in the partner countries and/ or the European Union. This can include municipalities, governmental institutions, as well as local schools, etc.

Young people

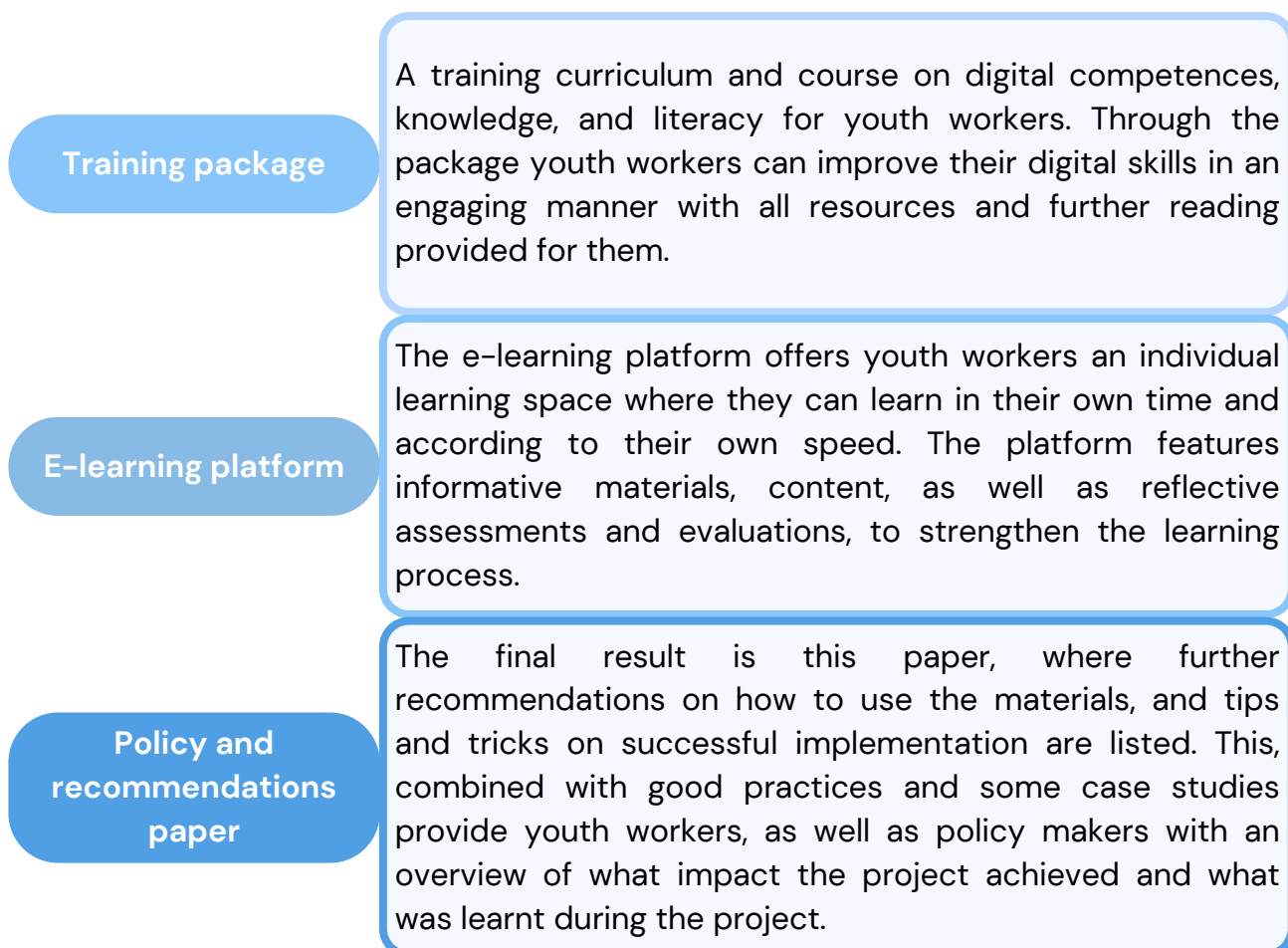
While the project mainly engages directly with youth workers, during its development the partners included young people in the progress to receive an overview of their needs and requirements and find out how to improve the services and support offered to them.

OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

The project envisions the empowerment and support of youth workers to develop and improve their digital skills, knowledge, and readiness in order for them to successfully implement digital youth work.



To achieve the goals and objectives, the partners developed the following results:



All results can be accessed on our website digital-youth.eu.

PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

The following paper provides valuable insight into the experiences and expertise of the project partners as well as professionals in all partner countries. It further offers more information on the lessons learnt during the project, as well as what kind of support measures are necessary for digital youth practices to become more engaging, interesting, and common in European youth work.



The paper is structured in:

Good examples: This features good examples of digital youth work, tools, and practices, which are currently in use in the partner countries and Europe.

Successes and challenges: The partners have collected information on successes and challenges achieved in the project, how they were encountered, and how they were overcome and resolved. This serves as a best practice guide for youth workers and professionals.

Recommendations: The recommendations section offers suggestions and advice for practitioners and policymakers on how to improve digital youth work, the use of the materials of the project and how to successfully engage with young people via digital tools in an interesting and motivating way.

Conclusion: As a reflection on the past and a glimpse into the future, the conclusion provides additional insights into what has been accomplished and what is anticipated through and with the Digital Youth project in the coming years.

Good examples



GOOD EXAMPLES

Within the forthcoming pages, you will be presented with a comprehensive overview of exemplary instances championing digital skills, digital youth work, and digital knowledge across multiple levels. These illustrations have been meticulously compiled through the collaborative efforts of all project partners, drawing from insights gleaned through focus groups, courses, and sessions conducted throughout the project's duration. Additionally, the partners have conducted extensive research independently to contribute to this compilation. Each highlighted example is accompanied by a link for additional information, offering a comprehensive overview and supplementary resources for the respective tools, projects, and initiatives.



GEN-Z HUB

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

The Rural Hub. Mindshift, West Lothian Collage, leD, Centrum Wspierania, Evolve, CARDET

CONTEXT

This initiative involves a virtual social media entrepreneurship community to promote exchanges, recommendations, pointers, tips and tricks, best practices, insights, and innovations to go further in social media entrepreneurship learning.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

This initiative which falls within the Gen-Z project, aims to empower this generation to become social media entrepreneurs whilst developing their key competences and employability skills. This is an initiative which fully comprehends the needs in skills for young people and builds on those in order to foster their employability.

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://platform.genz-project.eu/?lang=en>

YOUTH MYTHBUSTERS

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

KMOP, CARDET, ISES, YOUTH INCLUDED, CROMO FOUNDATION

CONTEXT

This platform serves as an online learning tool for the young people and young influencers and as a space, where young people can communicate with the young influencers in order to establish a strong network and to facilitate their cooperation.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

The Youthmyth Busters (YMB) project aims at promoting the engagement of youth and those at risk of social exclusion (NEETs) in democratic and civic life and to enhance their critical thinking and media literacy in order to strengthen democracy and fight manipulation, propaganda and fake news. More specifically the eLearning Platform aims to provide digital modules to young leaders to enhance media literacy of peers.

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://elearning.youthmythbusters.eu/>

ATHENA PROJECT: LEARN TO CODE FOR FREE

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

Social Hackers Academy

CONTEXT

The idea behind the organisation's initiatives is equal access to education, the labour market and a future-proof career which is also achieved through the free coding online courses they offer. Coding has been the epicentre of attention in the digital world recently and demand is getting higher among young people. By registering at the Athena platform very easily, people gain direct access at a list of innovative courses like for example "First Steps of JavaScript" and "WordPress Foundations".

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

Athena Project is a comprehensive resource for anyone looking to break into the tech industry or advance their existing tech skills. It is designed to be flexible and accessible, with courses available online and on-demand, so learners can advance at their own pace and on their own schedule.

Through the platform learners can also get directions for the future career, like career tracks and opportunities.

There is "Join Our Community" feature, which can offer some additional support in a more personalised way to the learners.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Website: <https://socialhackersacademy.org/>

Athena project (online platform): <https://athenaproject.tech/>

NATIONAL DIGITAL ACADEMY

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

Ministry of Digital Governance

CONTEXT

The platform offers 323 free online courses in 34 fields of knowledge provided by 40 providers around Greece, all of them being highly professional and recognized. Among them are Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Hellenic Open University. A great variety of topics are explored through the courses, all of them very valuable in digital youth work and the enhancement of youth workers' digital skills. Some examples are "Communication and networking", "The Internet", "Digital Entrepreneurship" and "Everyday useful tools".

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

There is a self-assessment tool that allows users to get a view on the current level of their digital skills to help them choose relevant courses. The courses are available in Greek and English, which eliminates exclusion of youth and youth workers based on their language skills.

There is a pool of suggested topics divided in two based on the target group, one category is "general public" and the other "professionals".

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://elearning.youthmythbusters.eu/>

FUNDOO

A TOOL TO EQUIP ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH
15-24 YEARS OLD WITH 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

UNICEF and Junior Achievement Greece

CONTEXT

This free digital tool allows youngsters to develop 21st century skills, like communication and entrepreneurial skills, through nine interactive tasks. Any young person can send a message writing "FunDoo" via WhatsApp, Viber, Instagram or Facebook Messenger and they get a task as a response in simple and understandable language. Upon completion of all nine tasks, they get a certificate of participation.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

The focus is learning through play. Young people participating in it will get familiar with the chatbot function. It is available in almost every social media platform used by youth, broadly speaking.

The pedagogical approach is based on the principles of experiential learning, giving users the opportunity to complete each task in any order and time they want. It has been developed based on the results of a poll on the transition from education to the labour market conducted in September 2022 and a series of exploratory focus group discussions with young people and teachers that took place in the 1st quarter of 2023.

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://greece.ureport.in/page/FunDoo/>

Contact person: Olga Siokou – Siova Communication Specialist

UNICEF Tel: +30 211 2340 297 Email: osiokou-siova@unicef.org

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

National Youth Council of Ireland

CONTEXT

NYCI advocates for the integration of Digital Youth Work within youth work environments. Employing inventive approaches, they enhance the utilisation of STEAM to facilitate the attainment of youth work objectives. Furthermore, they provide training for youth workers to assist the young people they engage with in navigating both the challenges and advantages presented by an ever-growing digitalised world.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

- Integration of Digital Youth Work
- STEAM Approach
- Outcome-oriented Methodologies
- Risk and Opportunity Management
- Adaptation to Digital Trends

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://www.youth.ie/programmes/digital-youth-work/>

SKILL IT FOR YOUTH

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

Youth Work Ireland

CONTEXT

Skill IT for Youth aims to increase the quality and relevance of youth work through digitalisation, resulting in increased opportunities for young people in the 21st century.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

- Integration of Digital Tools
- Enhancing Quality and Relevance
- 21st Century Opportunities
- Youth-Centric Approach
- Potential for Innovation in Delivery

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://www.youthworkireland.ie/2020/01/taking-digital-youth-work-to-the-next-level/>

FORÓIGE

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

Foróige [Development of Youth]

CONTEXT

Foróige GO Digital Youth Work (Digital Skills for What's New and What's Next) has developed 6 programmes that promote the use of digital skills and facilitate young people to improve their digital literacy skills. This initiative has developed the following programmes:

- Foróige – GOBuild: Practical Tech Skills
- Foróige – GOLevelUp: Creative Digital Skills and Innovation Programme
- Foróige – GOVirtual: Immersive Online Spaces
- Foróige – GOSafely: Digital Safety
- Foróige – GOSonic: Digital Production

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

- Comprehensive Programme Development
- Practical Technological Skills Emphasis
- Creative Digital Skills and Innovation
- Immersive Online Spaces
- Digital Safety Prioritisation
- Digital Production Focus

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://www.foroige.ie/our-work/go-digital-youth-work>

SFI – LÉARGAS

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

Science Foundation of Ireland [SFI] / Léargas

CONTEXT

This initiative aims to strengthen the youth work sector's capacity to use STEAM for the betterment of young people's lives. This involves delivering engaging STEAM education projects through training, professional development, and collaboration with frontline organisations. Youth workers will lead the implementation of STEAM projects, co-created with young people to address local needs, engage in discussions with youth on relevant STEAM themes emerging during COVID-19, and deliver educational programmes that blend science and art, employing innovative youth work methodologies.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

- Youth Co-Creation
- Blending Science and Art
- Relevance to Current Issues
- Public Engagement Projects
- Continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://www.youth.ie/programmes/steam-engagement-programme/steam-in-youth-work/>

DIGITAL ARTS DIALOGUE

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

Consultoría de Innovación Social, Pistes-Solitaires, BUPNET, Happiness Academy, University of Athens, Liberitutti

CONTEXT

The Digital Arts Dialogue project aims to improve digital youth work by providing professionals with interactive and creative exercises combined with the concepts of Restorative Justice. Using the values of respect, dignity, and exchange of Restorative Justice, the project provides dance, movement, and artistic activities that revolve around the topics of stereotypes, self-realisation and empowerment, improving digital work and more.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

The project uses the innovative approach of Restorative Justice, its mitigating and respect values and incorporates them into the exercises by including exchange and balance in each activity. Digital Arts Dialogue further includes uses creativity and arts in a direct and practical way, giving youth workers step-by-step instructions on how to implement the activities and exercises.

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://www.digi-arts.eu/>

Successes and challenges



SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

The following presents case studies and examples illustrating the challenges and problems encountered by both partners and participants throughout the project in their respective practices and work experiences.

This section can offer support to youth work practitioners who encounter obstacles in their practices and are seeking assistance in resolving them. These case studies can also function as a preventive measure to inform youth work professionals about the kind of challenges that they could encounter or the situations in which digital youth work might be important.



CPD Opportunities for Youth Workers

People involved	Youth workers (with varying experience) – project result 1 Focus Group
Context	Participating in this focus group provided us with a firsthand understanding of the existing landscape of digital youth work in Ireland. It offered insights into current practices and highlighted the requirements of youth workers to integrate digital methodologies into their daily activities.
Initial challenge / problem	Youth workers highlighted a lack of access to continuous professional development opportunities to stay up to date with emerging technologies, digital programmes, and platforms. Additionally, it was noted that there was varied knowledge among them regarding the integration of existing technologies into their daily practices.
Path to solution	The solution encompassed presenting youth workers with various strategies and methodologies to integrate digital practices into their teaching approaches. It underscored the necessity for training on contemporary frameworks, such as DigCompEdu.
Lesson learnt	There is an essential need for training programmes for youth workers in order to integrate digital practices. Recognising the transformative impact of digital technologies in the contemporary landscape, comprehensive training is essential to equip youth workers with the requisite skills, knowledge, and strategies. These training programmes should go beyond mere familiarity with digital tools; they should delve into the topics of effective integration, ensuring that youth workers not only embrace technology but also harness its potential to enhance engagement, communication, and the overall quality of youth work practices. The multifaceted nature of these programmes should encompass areas such as digital literacy, innovative pedagogies, and the utilisation of digital platforms. This will ensure that youth workers are not only digitally literate but also adept in leveraging technology for meaningful and impactful youth engagement.

Maintaining Youth Engagement through Digital Resource Creation

People involved	Youth workers (with varying experience)
Context	Understanding how to address the issue of maintaining youth engagement was presented during this training event. Youth workers noted how this is a continuous problem in their daily teaching practice.
Initial challenge / problem	One significant challenge in youth work is the ongoing effort to maintain youth engagement. With the advent of digital technologies, there is an opportunity to address this challenge by integrating or developing digital learning platforms. By leveraging these platforms, youth workers can create educational content that is not only informative but also engaging and enjoyable for young individuals. Incorporating interactive elements, multimedia resources, and gamified features can enhance the overall learning experience, capturing the attention and interest of youth in the digital age. This approach recognises the importance of adapting to the preferences and expectations of the younger generation, fostering a more dynamic and effective educational environment within the realm of youth work.
Path to solution	Creating digital resources can ensure that young people are engaging with learning materials that are engaging for their digital skills development. Regularly updating and diversifying digital learning materials, incorporating real-world examples, and fostering participatory environments can further enhance engagement.
Lesson learnt	Incorporating innovative and interactive digital strategies is crucial for creating meaningful connections and sustaining engagement with young people. It highlights the need for continuous learning and flexibility within the youth work sector to effectively meet the evolving needs of young individuals in a technology-driven world. Collaboration and co-creation with the target audience can provide insights into tailored solutions, ensuring that youth work remains relevant, impactful, and responsive to the dynamic digital landscape.

Lack of digital understanding

People involved	Youth workers and young people of testing of project result 1 handbook of the project
Context	Various youth workers and young people came together to test and pilot the project result 1 – the training handbook and its content.
Initial challenge / problem	The youth workers and young people when introduced to the project and the general topic deemed the subject as superficial, as they were of the opinion that they had already learned all there is about basic digital skills and did not need to learn more about the fundamentals.
Path to solution	The facilitators of the session provided them with more information about the structure of the training and its chapters and asked them more detailed questions about what digital competence frameworks, which convinced and showed the participants that there is always room to learn and they started engaging more into the topic and what aspects are included in digital competences.
Lesson learnt	While the topic might seem basic and superficial for some participants in the beginning, many people are not aware of what sectors digital competency includes. In case a participant is well-informed and well-versed in digital work, they can be a mentor and support for the others in learning and offer a helpful role in the training.

Use of Interactive Tools in Youth Work

People involved	Youth Workers in the project result 2 Training – Implementation
Context	The case study was situated during the implementation of the project result 2 Training – Implementation and the face-to-face sessions.
Initial challenge / problem	Presenting such a lengthy and detailed content to the participants during after office hours whilst maintaining their full attention was a challenge.
Path to solution	Our team of experienced trainers have incorporated interactive digital activities in the sessions such the use of online tools (i.e., Kahoot and Mentimeter). That made participants more engaged and removed them from the position of passiveness.
Lesson learnt	Even though this is a minor example of good practice this is something that was of rather inspiring significance to the participants and the highlight of the F2F sessions. What works for them may (or may not) also work for young people and participants appeared to wish to incorporate such interactive tools in their future practices.

Reaching Out to Youth Workers in Remote Areas

People involved	Youth Workers in the project result 2 Training – Implementation
Context	The case study was situated during the implementation of the project result 2 Training – Implementation.
Initial challenge / problem	Populations in remote areas often face a disadvantage in being reached by initiatives. Hence, they often end up ‘lacking behind’ in terms of tools and competencies compared to their urban counterparts.
Path to solution	In collaboration with KOKEN, CARDET reached out to a large number of youth workers who gathered for the project result 2 Training – Implementation from a range of remote villages. Being the ones approaching the youth workers instead of expecting for them to make the journey was indeed more fruitful.
Lesson learnt	The lesson learned from this was that youth workers across the country are eager to learn and develop their competencies and bridge the existing gap with youth. Though sometimes it is worth going the extra mile in reaching out for them.

Complementary Digital Integration

People involved	Youth Workers in Greece with five to nine years of experience (Focus Group for project result 1)
Context	During the focus group, the participants emphasised the importance of non-formal education and experiential learning in their youth work as they prefer one-to-one relationships with young people.
Initial challenge / problem	The challenge was adapting to digital tools and ensuring accessibility for all (particularly those from vulnerable groups).
Path to solution	The solution involved promoting the complementary use of digital tools alongside traditional methods, thus overcoming boundaries and enhancing accessibility. A list of essential digital tools, including interactive platforms, was created and added also to the Digital Youth material.
Lesson learnt	Fostering a positive balance between face-to-face and online activities is essential.

Recommendations for practitioners



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The recommendations produced are based on the experiences made by the project partners, the facilitators and trainers involved, and the participants taking part in the Digital Youth sessions, project development, and training.



Content and importance



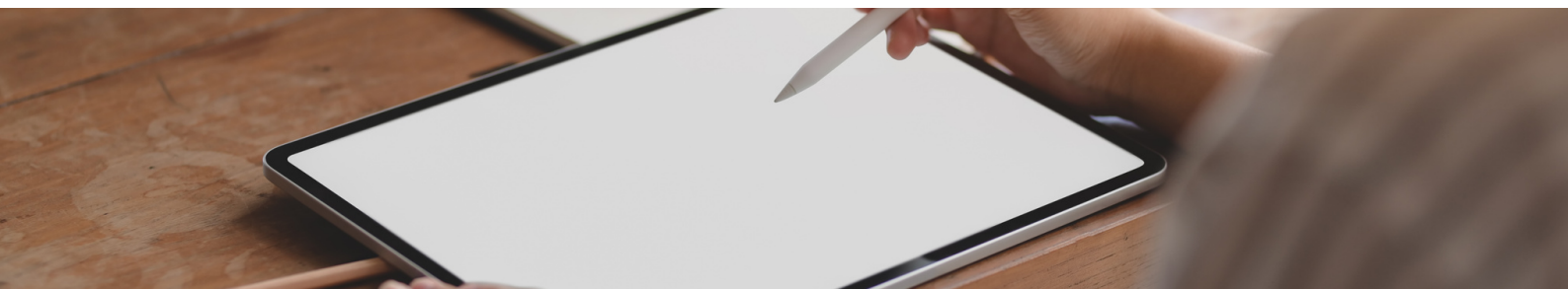
Promotion and engagement



Continuous Professional Development (CPD)



Collaboration



Content and importance

Promoting digital literacy: Digital literacy is crucial, especially in today's environment where social media and fake news play a significant role in the lives of young people. It is essential to encourage skills such as internet safety, social media etiquette, online research, critical thinking, and understanding consequences. Additionally, youth workers should promote the utilisation of support sources for young people facing digital safety issues, such as online bullying. Given that the project advocates for digital youth work and interaction, aspects like digital safety should not be underestimated.



Balance of content: Pay attention to provide young people with a diverse set of content methods including traditional methods, text, visual input, interactive exercises, group work, etc. Employing a range of learning methods, will ultimately maintain an interesting and engaging learning environment for young people.



Adaptation and innovation: Always tailor and adapt content, including the Digital Youth materials, to the young people you are working with. Adapt resources to address local needs, cultural considerations, and diverse digital literacy levels of the target audience. No audience is always the same. There might also be a need to try innovative methods with a new group of young people who might be interested in innovative techniques and exercises.

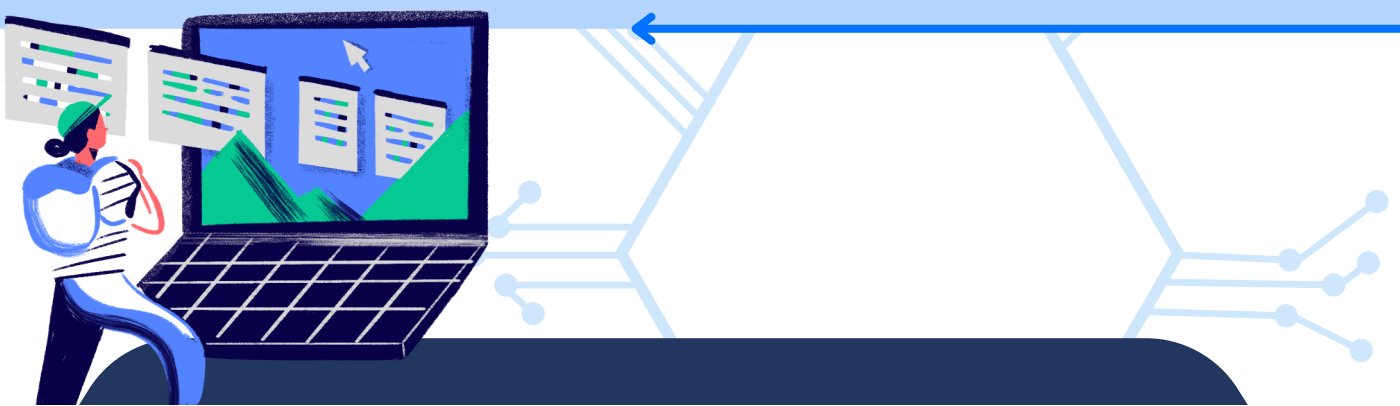
Promotion and engagement

Digital presence: When promoting and conducting a digital course, content, or initiative, build a strong digital presence by creating a website or social media profiles for your youth program to connect with the target audience. Engage with them through relevant online platforms and create opportunities for them to share their thoughts and ideas digitally.



Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Improve your skills: Stay updated with technology trends by attending workshops, webinars and conferences related to digital youth work. Subscribing to technology news sources and following relevant social media accounts can also help in keeping up-to-date with the latest tools and platforms that youth are using. Actively seek opportunities for specialised digital skills training to harness the full potential of digital tools and improve your knowledge in them. This further improves your confidence in how they work, making it easier to use them in your training later.





Collaboration

Resources and platforms: While there is an overflow of platforms and networks online, they can be quite useful sometimes, especially when they revolve around a topic you are focusing on as well. Make effective use of already developed materials on the topic of digital youth work, subjects, and topics you are addressing, and benefit from them in your work practices.



Common platforms and networks: Foster a culture of collaborative learning among youth workers. Establish digital learning communities or forums where practitioners can share insights, challenges, and best practices related to digital youth work. This collaborative approach enhances collective digital readiness.



Recommendations for policy makers



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

The recommendations produced are based on the experiences made by the project partners, the facilitators and trainers involved, and the participants taking part in the Digital Youth sessions, project development, and training.



Continuous Professional Development (CPD)



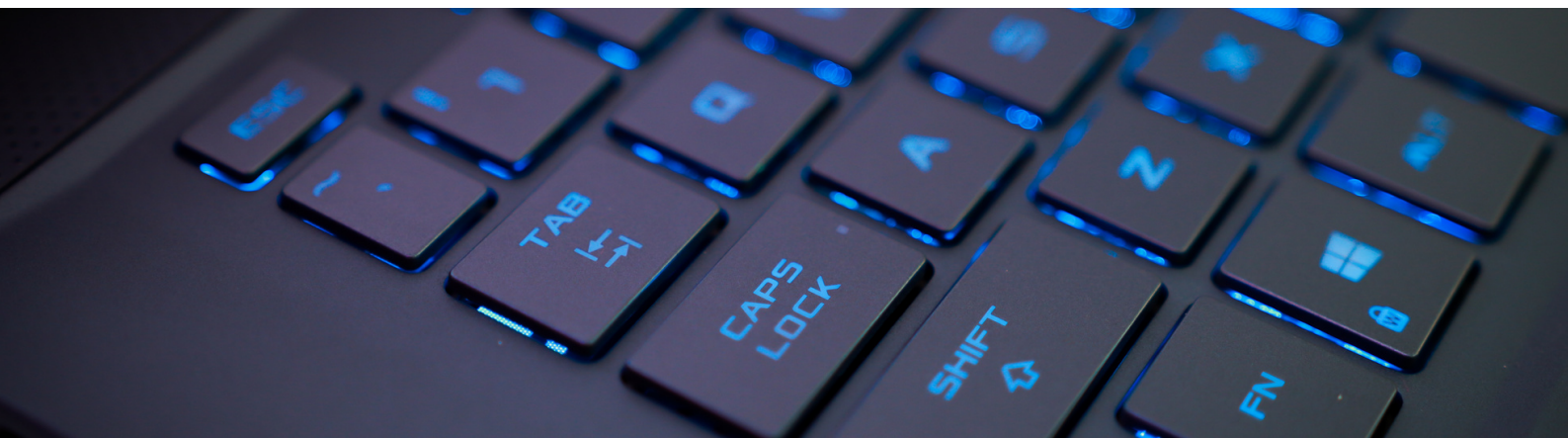
Collaboration



Incentives



Content and importance



Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Support digital skills training: Support and foster the willingness and motivation of youth workers and professional who want to improve their digital skills. This can be done by providing them with course, incentives like grants, to attend such courses, or even just the opportunity of time to attend the courses. Youth workers with relevant and up-to-date digital skills contribute to better youth work for you and in Europe.

Collaboration

Professional networks and contacts: Encourage collaboration and partnerships between youth organisations, government agencies, and private sector organisations to share resources and expertise, creating a more robust ecosystem for digital youth work. This can be done via information events, as well as by supporting them in building joint portals, platforms, or a simple network of contacts.



Inclusion and diversity: Create target initiatives to bridge the digital, including providing access to devices and the internet for disadvantaged communities. Inclusivity and diversity could also be promoted by supporting programs that empower girls and underrepresented groups in STEM fields, emphasizing mentorship and opportunities for career advancement, and others.



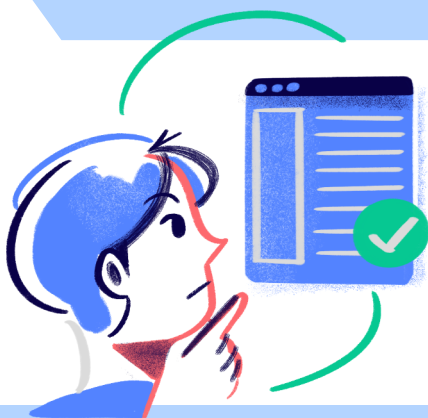


Incentives

Innovation in incentives: While it might sound like a very traditional way of supporting the improvement of methods, it is a proven way of success and impact. Create incentives, e.g., grants or recognition of successful initiatives, which motivate youth workers to put in the resources and time to learn and apply new techniques and methods. Thus, they are more encouraged to implement innovation and engage more youth in learning and counselling.

Content and importance

Framework and curriculum: Encourage youth workers to apply new work methods and practices by providing them with the time and schedule to do so. Having a time slot that is dedicated to innovating the techniques, content, and methods of educational or professional curricula, offers them a chance and opportunity to try out new practices and activities and evaluate their impact.



Digital literacy: Invest in digital literacy education by developing comprehensive digital literacy programs that encompass both basic digital skills and advanced digital competencies. These programs shall be integrated into the school curriculum, emphasizing critical thinking, online safety, and responsible digital citizenship.

CONCLUSION

The Digital Youth project has enhanced the skills of all partner organisations in the field of digital youth work, improving competences in engaging young people and youth workers in digital skills. It has also facilitated learning about the significance of digital skills and literacy and why it is crucial to acquire more knowledge in this area. Additionally, partners gained insights into available digital tools that can be utilised to enhance methods and practices in digital youth work in Europe.



Furthermore, all partners were able to enhance their contacts and networks in youth work, both within their countries and at a European level. They acquired knowledge about effectively engaging people online, whether they are young individuals or professionals. Consequently, the partners' digital youth work practices are now equipped with additional activities, knowledge, and competences, positioning them well for future projects, training initiatives, and promotions.

The Digital Youth partner organisations will collectively conduct the final promotional events in their respective countries to inform even more youth workers, policymakers, and organisations about the project, its content, and the benefits it brings to youth work. Through these events and future training opportunities, the partners are dedicated to improving youth work and increasing the utilisation of digital tools to create effective, interactive, and engaging educational activities for young people.