



GR OW

**Goals, Resources,
Opportunities, Wonders.**

Best Practices Report

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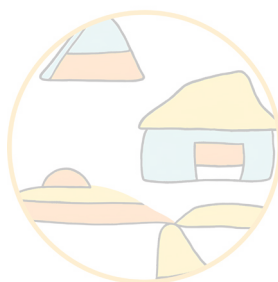
1. Introduction

The Report on Best Practices summarizes the key outcomes of the Transnational Project Meeting held in Mussomeli from September 20 to 23, 2024. This event brought together nine youth workers from the partner organizations Roter Baum Berlin, Curba de Cultura, Lojtra, and Strauss APS, all of whom shared their expertise and innovative approaches in the field of youth work.

The Best Practices presented focused on the areas of specialization within the partnership, particularly the organization, preparation, and implementation of Summer Camps, International Youth Camps, and other initiatives promoting international youth exchanges and youth engagement. These practices emphasized practical methodologies, showcasing the partners' ability to create impactful and well-structured programs.

A key component of the meeting was the exchange of tools, methods, and protocols that underpin successful youth programs. These included agenda templates, preparation plans, and example videos illustrating activities and outcomes, typically used during the dissemination phase of projects. By sharing these resources, the partners not only highlighted their individual expertise but also contributed to a collective pool of knowledge that enhances the capacity of each organization.

This meeting was more than just a platform for sharing Best Practices; it served as a foundation for building a solid framework of mutual understanding and collaboration among the partners. The exchange of ideas and experiences created opportunities for innovation and strengthened the collective commitment to advancing the field of youth work. The report captures this dynamic exchange, emphasizing the value of partnership and shared learning in fostering impactful youth engagement and international collaboration.



2. Roter Baum Berlin – Best Practices

1) A Summer Camp Carers' Manual

This manual, recognized as a Best Practice by Roter Baum Berlin during the TPM in Sicily, is a detailed and thoughtfully crafted guide designed to support the successful planning and execution of summer camps. It weaves together practical advice, essential frameworks, and inspirational goals to ensure that these experiences are not only well-organized but also deeply impactful for participants.

At its core, the manual addresses the diverse expectations of those involved—supervisors, team members, and children—while emphasizing teamwork and preparation as the foundation for success. It walks readers through every stage of the camp journey, from initial preparations and check-ins to daily activities and final departure. Detailed sections provide strategies for handling group dynamics, managing conflicts, and fostering active participation, ensuring inclusivity and collaboration at every step.

The manual doesn't shy away from the practical aspects, offering guidance on shopping, cooking, and packing, as well as how to handle medical issues or accidents effectively. Annexes provide ready-to-use handouts and checklists, simplifying complex tasks like managing group funds, ensuring safety at swimming lakes, and coordinating daily operations. Clear instructions for both carers and children set expectations and promote smooth communication throughout the camp. Underpinning all of this is a strong commitment to child protection, reflected in a dedicated concept that prioritizes the safety, well-being, and development of every participant.

The goals of the manual extend beyond logistics. It seeks to inspire camps that provide a true break from everyday life, offering fun and exciting activities that strengthen teamwork, boost self-confidence, and encourage self-determination. By immersing participants in nature and fostering social connections, it aspires to create experiences that are both meaningful and memorable.

With its combination of practical tools and aspirational goals, this manual serves as an invaluable resource for anyone looking to organize summer camps that leave a lasting, positive impact on all involved.

The manual is available following this link:

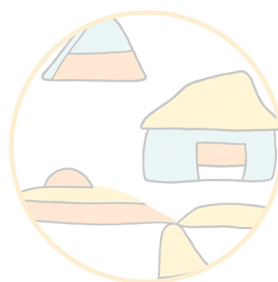
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pMhzj80dYHe9ALt1AFZKHfhM8EAIYdmJ/view?usp=drive_link

2) Video Promotion about Summer Camps organized by Roter Baum

The video is available at the following link: https://youtu.be/syi6l7Q53BY?si=sNZ_6vRw4v60k82v

3) Document on Child Protection

This document provides an overview of the child protection framework, outlining the key principles, policies, and procedures in place to ensure the safety and well-being of children. It includes detailed descriptions of the relevant documents that guide child protection practices and presents the core concept behind these measures, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding children in all environments.



3. Strauss APS - Best Practices

1) The Hero's Journey Manual: A Best Practice from Strauss APS

Presented as a Best Practice by Strauss APS during the TPM in Sicily, The Hero's Journey is a transformative project aimed at children and young people aged 9-14. The initiative successfully promoted social inclusion and fostered the development of key skills, particularly in creative writing, while helping participants reconnect with their social dimensions and gain a deeper sense of self-worth and community involvement.

Objectives and Activities:

The project achieved its goals through a series of well-structured activities, blending non-formal education techniques with creative expression.

Self-Assessment Workshops:

Participants engaged in reflective workshops based on Non-Formal Education methods. These 3-hour sessions, held at different times, encouraged young people to assess their abilities, improve self-awareness, and create a safe, inclusive environment for personal growth.

Creative Writing and Social Inclusion Workshops:

In small groups of up to 10 participants, weekly 3-hour sessions explored the theme of social inclusion through the lens of the "Hero's Journey" narrative model. This approach helped participants recognize their personal growth, reflecting on their potential and ability to contribute to society while fostering social cohesion.

Creative Writing Camp on Etna:

A 10-day intensive camp on Mount Etna offered an immersive experience where participants applied their newly learned skills by crafting personal stories. These stories were compiled into a booklet, serving as a powerful final outcome that showcased the journey of creativity, personal development, and self-discovery.

The Final Story:

One of the most significant outcomes was the creation of a collective story, born from the daily writings of the participants. Each young writer contributed their emotions, reflections, and personal experiences, which were then woven into a single narrative. This collective story highlighted key moments of growth, overcoming challenges, and the shared experience of self-discovery and social inclusion.

The story captured the themes central to the camp: the challenge of inclusion, the courage to face insecurities, and the power of imagination to transform reality. The characters, who embark on a journey to discover unknown worlds, metaphorically represented the participants and their personal growth. Each chapter revealed a part of the participants' experiences, which were later analyzed to deepen the understanding of their emotional and personal development.

Final Results:

The Hero's Journey proved to be an exemplary best practice for youth summer camps. Participants not only enhanced their creativity and developed new skills but also strengthened their social identity. The collective story stands as a lasting, tangible reminder of their emotional journey, filled with authentic moments of growth, and will continue to resonate with the participants for years to come.

2) The Competence Model: A Best Practice for Youth Workers

Presented as a Best Practice, The Competence Model was a youth-focused project designed for young local participants aged 16–20, specifically aimed at those involved in Solidarity Projects under the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programme. This innovative approach provided participants with a “Competence Model for Youth Workers” to help them understand their capacities and personal traits, fostering self-awareness prior to writing their Solidarity Project application. The project was structured around four key themes—attitudes, behavior, skills, and knowledge—each explored in weekly workshops dedicated to personal growth, social interaction, and creative expression.

Week 1: Attitudes

- **Objective:** The focus of the first week was to help participants discover their natural inclinations and create a safe, open environment for self-expression.
- **Activities:** Participants were guided through individual exercises addressing sensitive topics such as sexuality, gender identity, sexual orientation, and body positivity. These topics, related to Solidarity Projects, allowed participants to reflect on their personal preferences and interests in isolation. The group activities that followed encouraged open discussions, fostering a safe space for self-acceptance and expression.
- **Results:** By the end of the week, participants had gained a clearer understanding of their personal identity and felt more comfortable discussing sensitive topics and expressing themselves in a supportive setting.

Week 2: Behavior

- **Objective:** This week focused on exploring personal and interpersonal behavior, with an emphasis on communication, particularly “Non-Violent Communication.”
- **Activities:** Workshops introduced participants to communication techniques aimed at improving interpersonal interactions, even in challenging or unfamiliar situations. The group worked on an art project that expressed their values and personal identity, which was then presented using public speaking techniques. The week concluded with a debate, encouraging participants to reflect on their creative process and the motivations behind their work.
- **Results:** Participants developed stronger communication skills, gained confidence in public speaking, and became more adept at expressing their thoughts and emotions, both individually and within a group.

Week 3: Skills

- **Objective:** The focus of this week was to deepen participants' understanding of their personal and

3. Strauss APS - Best Practices

interpersonal skills, fostering creativity and entrepreneurship.

- **Activities:** Workshops took place in lesser-known areas of town, where participants were encouraged to draw inspiration from their surroundings and develop creative, artistic, or practical ideas. These ideas were broken down into short, medium, and long-term goals, helping participants identify areas where they could improve and develop their skills to bring their visions to life.
- **Results:** Participants gained a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship, learned how to identify and cultivate their talents, and developed practical skills for setting and achieving goals. They also gained a greater appreciation for their environment and its potential as a source of creative inspiration.

Week 4: Knowledge

- **Objective:** The final week aimed to explore self-esteem, self-love, and fundamental human concepts such as beauty, empathy, and motivation.
- **Activities:** Through artistic exercises, participants delved into themes like beauty and empathy, gaining insight into the meaning of self-worth and self-love. A labyrinth-themed activity challenged them to navigate obstacles, symbolizing their personal journey of self-discovery. They also conducted community-based activities, such as interviewing locals on self-esteem and engaging in social experiments focused on solidarity. The week's final deliverables included a video script addressing the week's themes, community interviews, and solidarity-based social experiments.
- **Results:** By engaging with the community and creating meaningful content, participants consolidated their understanding of self-worth and empathy, demonstrating solidarity in action and applying the concepts they had learned in a practical context.

Final Outcomes

This project stands as a model best practice in using the “Competence Model for Youth Workers” to guide personal development and foster self-awareness. By addressing attitudes, behaviors, skills, and knowledge, the project provided participants with valuable tools for self-reflection and growth. Through creative activities, group work, and community engagement, the young people involved enhanced their communication skills, entrepreneurial abilities, and social awareness.

3) “Lo scritto necessario” project

The project “Lo scritto necessario” was created to address the emerging needs of children and adolescents, who felt the necessity for a space for expression and listening after the challenges and restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on both social interaction and psychological well-being, this initiative offers a collective opportunity for dialogue, emotional support, and growth. It allows young people to develop new ways of personal expression, helping them identify and articulate their emotions and share their experiences.

Supported by the Department for Family Policies, the project aims to guide young people in building emotional and communication tools, creating spaces where they can freely express themselves and reflect on their feelings. This practice seeks not only to support psychological well-being but also to strengthen resilience and the ability to connect with others through empathy and mutual understanding.



4. Curba de Cultura – Best Practices

1) Best Practices for Youth Exchange Program: Empowering Practical Life Skills

This Youth Exchange program was born out of the recognition that many young people lack essential practical skills due to gaps in formal education. Often shielded from daily responsibilities while living with their parents, they rarely encounter challenges such as managing finances or handling basic household tasks like changing a lightbulb. The initiative aimed to equip 16–17-year-olds with the tools they need to transition into independent living, whether for university, work, or other life stages. It also encouraged them to support their families in managing household responsibilities.

The program emphasized building confidence and competence in dealing with real-life situations. Participants explored topics such as self-safety, financial and time management, household tasks, healthy lifestyles, and digital literacy. Practical workshops covered a range of scenarios, from cooking to basic repairs, while team-building activities, role plays, and reflective sessions created a supportive and engaging learning environment.

A well-structured yet adaptable approach ensured the program met participants' evolving needs. By fostering intercultural exchange through shared accommodations and teamwork, it encouraged collaboration and social skills. Reflection sessions helped participants process their experiences, address challenges, and celebrate growth.

The outcome was transformative. Young people left better prepared for independence, equipped with practical skills, and confident in their ability to manage the complexities of adult life. The exchange not only broadened their horizons but also gave them a safe space to step outside their comfort zones, supported by facilitators, group leaders, and peers. This program proved a powerful tool for empowering youth as they prepare for their future.

2) First Experience Erasmus+

This Erasmus+ project was designed as a bilateral exchange for 13–14-year-olds, offering them their first experience of traveling abroad and living together with peers from another culture. The program focused on creating a safe, supportive, and exciting environment where participants could begin to explore the richness of cultural diversity while developing essential interpersonal skills.

3) Nature in Frame project

The “Nature in Frame” project was designed for participants aged 15–17 or 18 and older, offering a unique opportunity to combine the art of photography with an immersive exploration of nature. This program aimed to develop participants' photography skills while deepening their appreciation of the natural world.

Set against the backdrop of stunning landscapes, the experience allowed participants to discover the beauty of their surroundings through the lens of a camera. Workshops led by photography

experts guided them in mastering techniques such as composition, lighting, and storytelling. Practical sessions encouraged creativity and experimentation, empowering participants to capture the essence of nature in their own unique way.

By the end of the project, participants not only honed their technical skills but also cultivated a greater sense of environmental awareness and artistic expression. “Nature in Frame” was more than a photography workshop—it was an inspiring journey of discovery, creativity, and connection.

4) United in Arts & Crafts project

The “United in Arts & Crafts” project brought together 15–16-year-olds to celebrate the traditional crafts of the Roma community while fostering inclusion and collaboration between Roma and Romanian youth. This initiative created a vibrant space where participants could connect through creativity, learning about each other’s cultures while working side by side on artistic projects.

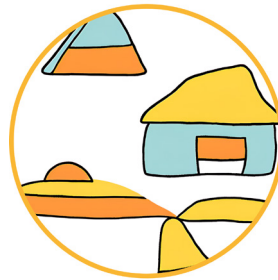
5) Entre Terre et Mer

The “Entre Terre et Mer” program, part of the OFAJ initiative, brought together 15–17-year-olds from three different countries for a trilateral exchange aimed at developing language skills through cultural immersion and shared experiences.

4. Curba de Cultura - Best Practices

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|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Breakfast | | | | |
| Intro / Get to know each other | Safety/healthy lifestyle | Planning / financial management | Digital world | Dissemination / testimonials |
| Break | | | | |
| Teambuilding | Safety of others/ Emergency situations | Time management | Walk | Youth Center: workshops with international/ local volunteers |
| Lunch | | | | |
| Teambuilding | Visit Youth Center: Workshops (Basic electricity, cooking, household, clothing) | Souvenirs time | Free time | Meeting the local + international volunteers |
| Break | | | | |
| Treasure hunt discovery | | Break | Break | Break |
| | | Youthpass | Personnal belongings /documents | Evaluation / Closing |
| Reflection groups | | | | |
| Dinner | | | | |
| intercultural/ food evening | Free evening | Boardgame by Nikola | Werewolves/ games | Good bye party |

Example of Template planning - Youth Exchange Life Skills



5. Lojtra – Best Practices

Lojtra, a youth-focused organization established in 2014, shared its comprehensive approach to youth work as a Best Practice during the TPM in Sicily. The organization operates entirely in the private sector, relying on project-based funding, and is dedicated to fostering international youth exchanges, training for youth workers, and supporting local and advocacy projects. Over the past 27 months, Lojtra has implemented 17 youth exchanges and cooperated on about 15 additional ones. The organization has extensive experience organizing mountain summer camps, having supported around 20 camps, each hosting approximately 50 young participants.

1) Key Practices, Experiences, Strategies, Tools, Ideas, Guidelines and Beliefs

1. Targeting International Youth and Collaboration with Schools:

Lojtra focuses on international youth exchanges, with funding being available primarily for international projects. The organization works closely with schools, ensuring that youth from diverse backgrounds are included in these exchange programs. It caters to different age groups (13-15, 16-17, 18-24, 24-30), maintaining a clear distinction between under-18 and over-18 groups to address age-appropriate needs and challenges.

2. Enhancing Learning Through Participation:

Lojtra's approach centers on engaging young people in every stage of the process, from preparation to execution. The organization places a strong emphasis on building relationships with youth, especially with younger participants, where significant conversations often occur informally during activities. Programs are designed around the needs, interests, and desires of the participants, with a hands-on approach for younger age groups (13-14), and more abstract concepts for older participants. The group development phases, cultural contexts, and safety of the participants are carefully considered, following Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

3. Connection with the Local Community:

Lojtra believes in strengthening connections between participants and local communities. The organization utilizes public facilities like schools for accommodation, which provides cost efficiency and fosters social value. Additionally, it actively engages with local services such as firefighters, cooks, restaurants, drivers, and even local elderly institutions. This connection to the community helps both participants and the community feel more involved and supported.

4. Practicalities and Communication:

Lojtra makes use of modern communication tools like WhatsApp and Snapchat groups to keep participants and staff connected. They also maintain shared documents for group leaders and other team members, ensuring transparency and collaboration. The organization highlights the importance of clear role distribution and task delegation to ensure smooth operations during activities.

5. Group Dynamics and Safety:

Working in nature is a key feature of Lojtra's programs, as it significantly strengthens group bonds, especially for older participants (20+). The organization also recognizes that regular meetings before

and after international experiences contribute to more cohesive groups with greater motivation. While it can take around 20 meetings and two international projects to build a strong, motivated group, clear rules and agreements are vital from the outset. Lojtra stresses the importance of having sufficient trained staff, suggesting at least one trained adult for every eight young people, with additional support as needed.

6. Gradual Integration for Newcomers:

Lojtra understands the challenges faced by newcomers, advocating for gradual integration into the group. This approach ensures that participants feel comfortable and are more likely to stay engaged in future projects.

In summary, Lojtra's best practices revolve around creating a dynamic, community-oriented, and youth-driven environment, where learning is fostered through active participation, clear communication, and structured group activities. This holistic approach helps develop not just skills, but also a sense of belonging and personal growth among the young people involved.

2) Project “Reconnected”

This video presents a Best Practice from the Reconnected project, which took place from June 25th to July 2nd, 2021, in Litija, Slovenia. The video was created by the participants themselves, capturing their experiences and activities throughout the youth exchange. Reconnected was an Erasmus+ Youth in Action-funded project, coordinated by the National Agency in Slovenia, Institute Movit. The exchange brought together young people from diverse backgrounds to engage in activities designed to build connections, foster cultural understanding, and encourage active youth participation. The video highlights the collaborative nature of the project and offers a glimpse into the positive impact of international youth exchanges.

The video is available following this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W7JXHm_V8g

3) Manual “Reconnect with Nature”

At a unique campsite nestled on a hilltop beside the Sava River, surrounded by lush forests and an old farmstead adapted for group and youth activities, 21 youth workers from across the EU gathered with a shared goal: to create a collective resource pool for nature-related activities and youth work. Over the course of seven days, participants engaged in an enriching process of sharing methods, exploring educational formalities, and discussing the deep connections between nature, learning, and youth engagement.

Drawing on their diverse professional and cultural backgrounds—ranging from teachers to non-formal educators and scouts, and representing eight different nationalities—participants brought a wealth of perspectives to the table. The seminar blended experiential learning with a variety of

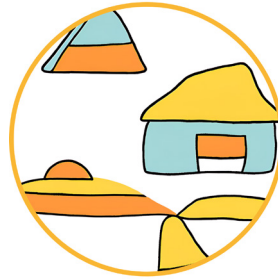
approaches, including theatrical, teambuilding, introspective, sensual, linguistic, environmental, and social activities. This mix allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the value of nature-based education and the role it plays in youth development.

A key outcome of this gathering was the creation of a structured resource manual. This manual reflects the group's collective work and includes a compilation of reasons why nature-based activities are essential, general guidelines for implementation, detailed descriptions of the methods and activities shared during the seminar, and additional resources for further exploration.

This Best Practice emphasizes the importance of experiential learning in nature and serves as a valuable tool for youth workers looking to integrate outdoor environments into their programs. It provides practical insights into how nature can be leveraged to support youth development, promote learning, and foster deeper connections to the environment.

The manual is available following this link:

https://www.drustvolojtra.si/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/RECONNECT-WITH-NATURE_manual.pdf



6. Conclusions

The Transnational Project Meeting in Mussomeli was a significant milestone in strengthening collaboration and fostering innovation within the partnership. By sharing Best Practices, tools, and methodologies, the participating organizations—Roter Baum Berlin, Curba de Cultura, Lojtra, and Strauss APS—demonstrated their commitment to improving the quality and impact of youth work.

The exchange of experiences not only highlighted effective approaches to organizing Summer Camps, International Youth Camps, and youth exchange programs but also underscored the importance of preparation, dissemination, and youth engagement strategies. Through the shared use of preparation plans, agenda templates, and dissemination materials, the partners built a robust knowledge base that will serve as a resource for future projects.

More importantly, the meeting cultivated a spirit of trust and mutual understanding among the organizations, laying the groundwork for deeper collaboration. The practices and insights shared during these sessions will undoubtedly inspire and enhance the work of all partners, ensuring a broader and more meaningful impact on the youth they serve.

This event marked a critical step forward in building a unified, informed, and innovative partnership that is well-equipped to address the challenges of modern youth work and to empower young people across diverse cultural and international contexts.



7. Next Steps

The next step in the project focuses on developing a Methodological Toolkit for youth workers, offering practical and comprehensive guidance on how to organize and manage successful summer camps. The foundation for this toolkit begins with a needs analysis, which will gather insights from youth workers and young people to ensure the toolkit addresses real challenges and priorities. This analysis will provide a detailed understanding of the specific needs that must be addressed to make summer camps more effective and impactful.

The development of this toolkit will be informed by the knowledge and experiences shared during the Best Practice exchanges between partner organizations. These exchanges will serve as a starting point for identifying what works well and what can be improved in the organization of youth camps. Building on the findings from the needs analysis and the Best Practices shared, the toolkit will cover various aspects of organizing a summer camp.

To refine the methodology further, pilot actions will be carried out, allowing the toolkit's content to be tested in real camp settings. These pilot activities will provide valuable feedback, enabling youth workers to assess the toolkit's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. The experiences and lessons learned during this testing phase will be essential in refining the content and making sure it is both relevant and practical for future users.

This iterative process ensures that the final toolkit meets the actual needs of youth workers, offering them a resource that is not only practical but also adaptable to the unique contexts of each camp. The aim is to create a user-friendly and effective tool for youth workers, particularly for those with less experience or volunteers looking to take on roles such as camp animators or leaders.

By integrating feedback and continuously improving the toolkit, the project ensures that it will be a valuable resource for organizing safe, engaging, and meaningful summer camps. The toolkit will empower youth workers to provide the best possible experiences for participants, while also contributing to the ongoing development of the youth work sector as a whole.



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This Report was created thanks to the cooperation of the entire “GROW” project team composed of the NGO partners “Lojtra”, “Curba de Cultură”, “Strauss APS”, “Roter Baum” Berlin.

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