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### **Objective 9 - European Youth Goals**

*Young people are underrepresented in decision-making processes which affect them although their engagement is crucial to democracy. They need access to physical spaces in their communities to support their personal, cultural and political development.*

## **Introduction**

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**OPEN YOUTH WORK FOR OPEN SOCIETY** is an international project started in 2019 that aims to raise awareness about youth work and to support it. The project involves five partners from different countries (Romania, Serbia, Germany, Slovenia and Italy) that worked together to create this dossier as an argumentation aid to support open youth work.

The partners involved in the project are Strauss APS (Mussomeli, Italy), Asociația Curba de Cultură (Izvoarele, Romania), Narandžasti (Pančevo, Serbia), Ris, raziskovalno izobraževalno središče Dvorec Rakičan (Rakičan, Slovenia) and Roter Baum Berlin (Berlin, Germany).

The project supports the 9th objective of the European Youth Goals - Space and Participation for All - to strengthen young people's democratic participation and autonomy in order to provide dedicated youth spaces in all areas of society.

The project "Open Youthwork for Open Society - give a chance to Informal Youth Centres" is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union (Call 2019 Round 2 KA2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices - KA205 - Strategic Partnerships for youth).

**For more information visit:**

[www.youthcentres.eu](http://www.youthcentres.eu)

## What is "Open Youth Work for Open Society"?

### About the project

The project raises awareness about open youth work and stimulates a discussion through different perspectives of young people, youth workers and social scientists. Through interviews addressed to youth workers, by developing a questionnaire aimed at young people and with a youth exchange in Romania, we achieved the desired results through which to stimulate an argumentation on what open youth work is and should be (in its methods, tools, meanings and variations). We collected examples of successful open youth work activities, different models of youth centres, young people's ideas about what open youth work should achieve and how it should be equipped, as well as empirical studies.

The results highlight how open youth work improves young people's competences, supporting them to get active in their interests and in the interest of their communities and those of general society.

The process was accompanied by four Transnational Meetings organised in different countries, through which we have worked together to create a detailed description of open youth work, to analyse the profile of youth workers and to summarise the results in the form of a handout for policy makers. This was done in order to promote youth work based in youth centres with an informal starting point.

This process included representatives from universities and municipalities of each country, who provided comments and suggestions in order to guarantee high quality results for local implementation.

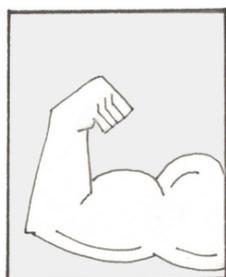
## What is "Open Youth Work for Open Society"?

### Project timeline

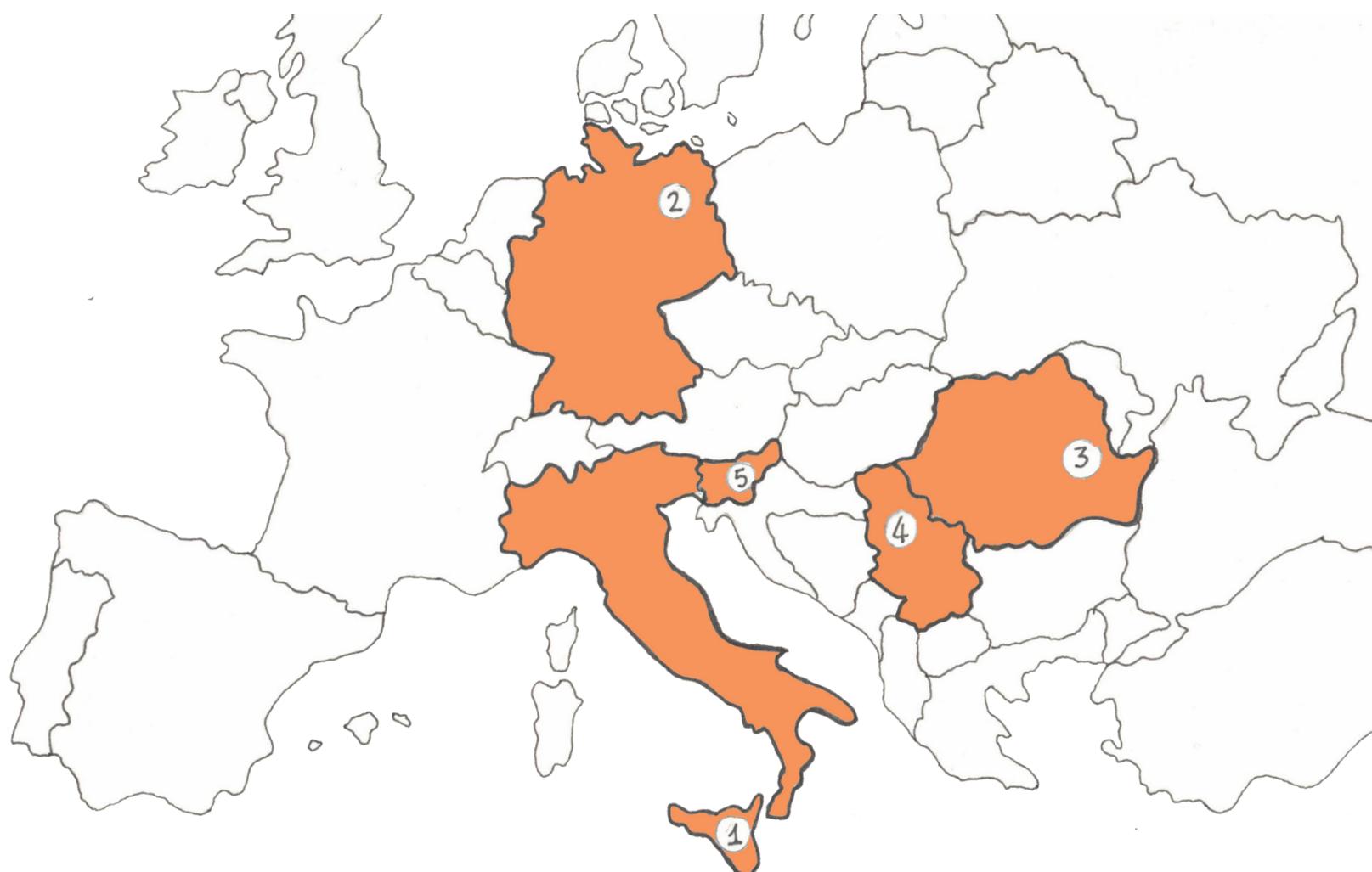


## Partner network

### About us



- 1 Strauss APS
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- 4 Narandžasti
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#### **Roter Baum Berlin (Berlin, Germany)**

Roter Baum Berlin is an NGO founded in 2011 by Roter Baum Dresden and is running all projects of the “Roter Baum” organisation network in Berlin, mostly in the Hellersdorf district. It runs a youth centre - “Anna Landsberger”. The youth centre is mostly focused on programs for local youth, culture and learning processes and it is also implementing several national youth mobility camps and international projects.

#### **Strauss APS (Mussomeli, Italy)**

Strauss APS is a non-profit organisation established in Mussomeli in 1999. It is a self-financed organisation that is part of ARCI (Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana), which has cultural and educational aims and operates at national level. Today, Strauss APS is recognised as one of the most active NGOs in Italy in the field of European youth mobility and is active in the field of European volunteering since 2008.

#### **Curba de Cultură (Izvoarele, Romania)**

Curba de Cultură is all about reaching out to rural youth. Curba de Cultură is an NGO committed to non-formal learning, to culture and to participation opportunities. Their focus is to improve education levels and community engagement for the young people living in rural environments in Romania.

#### **Narandžasti (Pančevo, Serbia)**

Narandžasti association had started to work and cooperate firstly as informal group of people active in self-organized activities with and for youth in the field of culture, art, education and free time with the aim of helping and strengthening the idea of multiculturalism and civil society in the local community (Pančevo, Serbia). The association was officially registered in 2009.

#### **Ris, raziskovalno izobraževalno središče Dvorec Rakičan (Rakičan, Slovenia)**

Research and Education Centre Mansion Rakičan is a public regional organisation from Rakičan, Slovenia founded by the Municipality of Murska Sobota. RIS works in the field of research, education, tourism, intergenerational cooperation, and youth work. Their youth centre “RISKO” aims at improving the level of key competences and skills of young people and encouraging their active engagement in the society.



**A space created by young people for young people**

**This section presents how young people imagine their dream youth centre, in terms of spaces, interaction and equipment.**

## Dream Youth Centre

### How it should be

In order to create the picture of an ideal youth centre, we needed to hear the voices of young people, the main users of youth centres. Here you can find the vision of young people, summed up by youth workers who worked on this project to show what an ideal youth centre should look like. We created a structured interview in order to find out the thoughts of young people about informal and open youth work activities and opinions on what would be their ideal youth centre and professionals working in it. What would they like to find when they step into a Youth Centre?



#### Welcoming Area

A space to welcome for all those who want to enter the youth centre, to ask or find information, to get to know the space. It is the first contact, where the Host will be most present.



#### Common room

A space where the youngsters can gather together to connect with each other, have fun and relax. The space should also contain board and card games and it would allow young people to socialize.



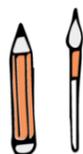
#### Rehearsal room

A fully equipped room where youngsters can experiment with different instruments through the universal language of music. A fully equipped recording studio to give them the opportunity to record their own music, learn how to play an instrument or discover a new passion.



#### Stage / Theatre

A space where young people can perform live music and that can host a big group of people. In this room it is possible to host music-related events, concerts, cinema events, workshops, discussions, seminars and performative events.



#### Creative room

A room where youngsters can have free access to different kinds of materials to let them express their creative ideas as they want. They will have free access to different tools and materials to learn different techniques.

## Dream Youth Centre

### How it should be



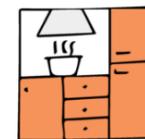
#### Library and Media room

A space where youngsters can have free access to books, films and music. It is an adaptable space with chairs, tables and sofa that can be used for studying, research and as a cinema. This room serves as well as a fully equipped media room.



#### Workshop room

A space where young people can develop their practical building/makers repairing skills. In this space they will have free supervised access to all the gardening tools, drilling machines, wood and other materials, screws, nails, etc.



#### Cafè / Kitchen

A meeting space where people can get together and can cook, where youngsters can learn how to work in a bar, a space that will be used during the events but also on a daily basis. The kitchen hosts also cooking workshops.



#### Space for sport and physical activities

a spacious multifunctional space where youngsters can play different kinds of sports. A quiet space can also be provided, with wooden floor and mirrors, where young people can do yoga, meditation, dance and physical activities.



#### Outdoor area

This area contains a vegetables garden, an outdoor space for activities, a climbing wall, workout machines, a food area with a pizza oven to make pizza and a grill area, a shelter and some bike racks. It should be big enough to host all youth centre youngsters.



#### Other services

The youth centre has also to be equipped with free wi-fi and internet access points that youngsters can use, some laptops/computers, an appropriate office for youth workers and (at least) a storage area.

## Open Youth Work Essentials

### Basic features of a Youth Centre

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This section describes the essential and basic features of a youth centre from the perspective of the young people and the youth workers. Despite the great variety of spaces, activities and vocations, it is possible to orient oneself and try to describe this heterogeneity by identifying recurrences, elements and features which can be found in all the spaces. We have classified these features according to five key words, which seem to us to be recurrent and that represent the main characteristics of a “dream youth centre”. It’s important to keep in mind that the five key words that emerged are not exhaustive of all the inputs, topics and instances that youth centres represent.

#### **Sustainable**

A new or existing youth centre must be adapted according to the principles of sustainability and energy efficiency. We are talking about renewable energies, actions to reduce the environmental impact, and lower water consumption, the promotion of sustainable mobility and better waste management. The activities organized within the youth centre should be sustainable too, reducing the use of plastic, preferring local organic products, using only seasonal vegetables, organising activities and workshops related to green education, etc.

#### **Adaptable**

The capacity of the space to be adaptable is a characteristic of openness, which allows the participation of different target groups, the continuous nourishment of ideas, the empowerment of the young people who use those spaces as their own and of the community (space has shared ownership). Technical solutions of how the space is designed can help (e.g. retractable walls, mobile furniture).

#### **Innovative**

The space will have to be innovative. The educational process through non-formal activities is already innovative in itself. Thanks to this approach, children and young people have the opportunity to experiment with a new method of learning. In the youth centre, innovation corresponds to the ability to question oneself and not to set limits, and in this case, to daydream. Innovation also means that young people have the opportunity to access some funding through which they can develop their ideas and projects.

## Open Youth Work Essentials

### Basic features of a Youth Centre

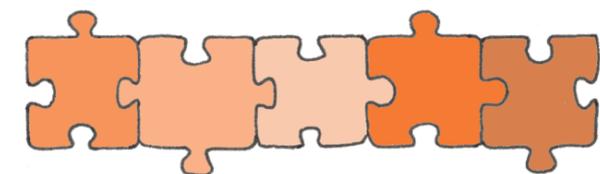
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#### **Accessible**

Welcoming, well cared for, attractive and, above all, accessible spaces. The accessibility of these spaces can be **economic**, by offering many free and low-priced activities; **organisational**, by allowing free access to the youth centres and direct contact with youth workers; **spatial**, in the absence of architectural barriers. These spaces are accessible also in their socially open dimension, that allows everyone to feel at home, where everyone can "stay" and where everyone can "do" by participating in the activities or becoming the promoters of projects and initiatives. In other words: a place where everyone is welcome without any discrimination, judgment or barriers.

#### **Multifunctional**

A space that combines different functions and uses, a space that can be interchanged according to the needs of the situation: this feature guarantees an openness of the spaces, the response to multiple needs, the possibility of accommodating different target groups. Multifunctional does not mean fragmented. The youth centre can accommodate several functions that can be connected, for example by working on visual communication within the space and on shared programming of activities. For instance, large windows or glass walls that will give the possibility to have an overview of what is going on inside the youth centre. This solution will avoid the sense of exclusion that comes from not knowing whether or not you can enter a room.



## Questionnaires

### What would young people like to find in a Youth Centre?



This section presents the most interesting results of the questionnaires which were carried out by each organisation together with the young people involved. We have designed a structured interview, to avoid answers with only a "yes", "no" or very short ones. In this way the youngsters developed their answers and justified them. All the interviews were carried out in the local languages and then translated in English by the youth workers.

We asked for the participation of 10 youngsters (for each Youth Centre involved) who visit the Youth Centre with a certain frequency. We asked for the interviews to be done individually and for the interviewer to be a youth worker or a trusted person from the same sphere, so the youngsters could express freely and at the same time with no peer pressure.

#### **What open activities do you dream of in your imaginary youth centre?**

In the Youth Center imagined by young people there are many diversified activities: in fact there were mentioned activities related to graffiti, jam sessions, video and photography workshops, gardening, theater, and many more.

What emerges as really important is **the possibility for young people to manage their own time**. It is certainly important for them to have an enthusiastic and solid staff in the Youth Centre that can guide them in their activities. But at the same time this leadership role should be permeable to the needs and desires of the young people. In fact, **it is a matter of accompanying and/or supporting young people** in the activities that can be proposed or that they can create by themselves. There are several types of activities proposed by the young people: activities proposed by youngsters for youngsters; activities proposed by experts that allow youngsters to develop their own projects; activities proposed by youth workers and youngsters together (everyone is included in the creative process); activities proposed by youth workers, in which they have a leading role. **The youth center is a space of possibilities.**

#### **You enter the centre. You look right and left. What do you see?**

But how do young people imagine the physical space of a Youth Centre? It is inviting, already through its external appearance: we can

## Questionnaires

### What would young people like to find into a Youth Centre?

find spray graffiti, spray cans, stickers, posters. Generally, the emerging characteristic is the permeability, multifunctionality, adaptability that a Youth Centre should have. So they often mention large rooms and open spaces, not too furnished, in order to allow space for young people to continuously modify the space, according to their needs. A character of 'unfinished'. More and more levels are mentioned: who can imagine a Youth Centre of 2 or 7 floors, connected by stairs, and each room can host different activities and functions. What is never missing is a reception or welcome hall, chill out or relaxing rooms with large sofas, bean bags and pillows, a coffee/tea area, a dedicated area for board games, books, video games, exhibitions, musical instruments. The Youth Centre decorations are made of plants and handmade objects, because "they are not perfect". It is important to have a infoboard, to be always informed about the activities going on in the Youth Centre. Even if it is not related to the characteristics of the space, what emerges is the desire to have a relaxed environment, with **"friendly smiling people that are not in a hurry, looking very relaxed and happy"**.

#### **You talk to some of the staff in a language that you both understand. What are they telling you? How are they talking to you? How do you feel when talking to them?**

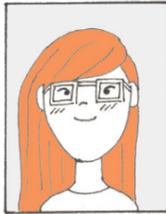
Concerning the communication skills that young people would like to find in the staff of a Youth Centre, the desire that emerges is to **feel welcomed**, not forced, guided to discover the spaces and opportunities of a centre ("I feel welcomed but not forced"), in terms of activities, and to be introduced in existing youth groups.

Many are happy to find someone within the space who is involved in the same activities they are passionate about. That means having the possibility to talk about graffiti, music, and so on. Others express the need to find youth workers who can encourage them to explore new activities, who can be open to listening. Others, on the contrary, only need someone who can give them basic information and then manage themselves completely within the centre.

A conversation with a member of the staff should be: relaxed, friendly, nice, calm, welcoming, open, controlled, but also energetic, easy going, with a positive mood and respectful.

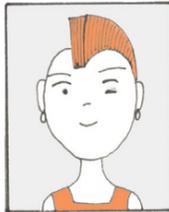
## Testimonials

### Activities, space and communication



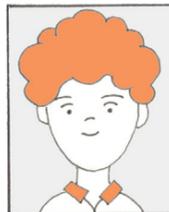
#### Activities

- "We are leading [the activity]. The youth worker is guiding us but mainly we are doing the whole thing";
- "The activity is led by both the youth workers and the youngsters, everyone is included. We are preparing an exhibition of young artists and projection of young directors movies";
- "There is not just one responsible person, the decisions are made as a group";
- "Organized with local people, it could be a workshop about creating something together";
- "I joined an outside yoga activity. [...] In the end, she is encouraging everyone to make up their own yoga pose and name it. We are all laughing, everyone is relaxed and having fun. Nobody was forced to participate".



#### Space

- "I see a sofa, a dartboard, kickertable and a cool flair";
- "Firstly, I'm entering a hallway. There are stairs both left and right. Upstairs there are other stairs that lead to an exhibition space, where they have works from the youngsters [...]. There's an infopoint. Across the front door there are doors that lead to the backyard with a garden";
- "Creative workshops and rooms with working materials for all the courses the youth centre has to offer";
- "I see a big room with posters, pictures and paintings from people that come there. Walls painted, everything is very crafty!";
- "A big library, tables, comfortable chairs and many posters on the walls, with the map of the world!".



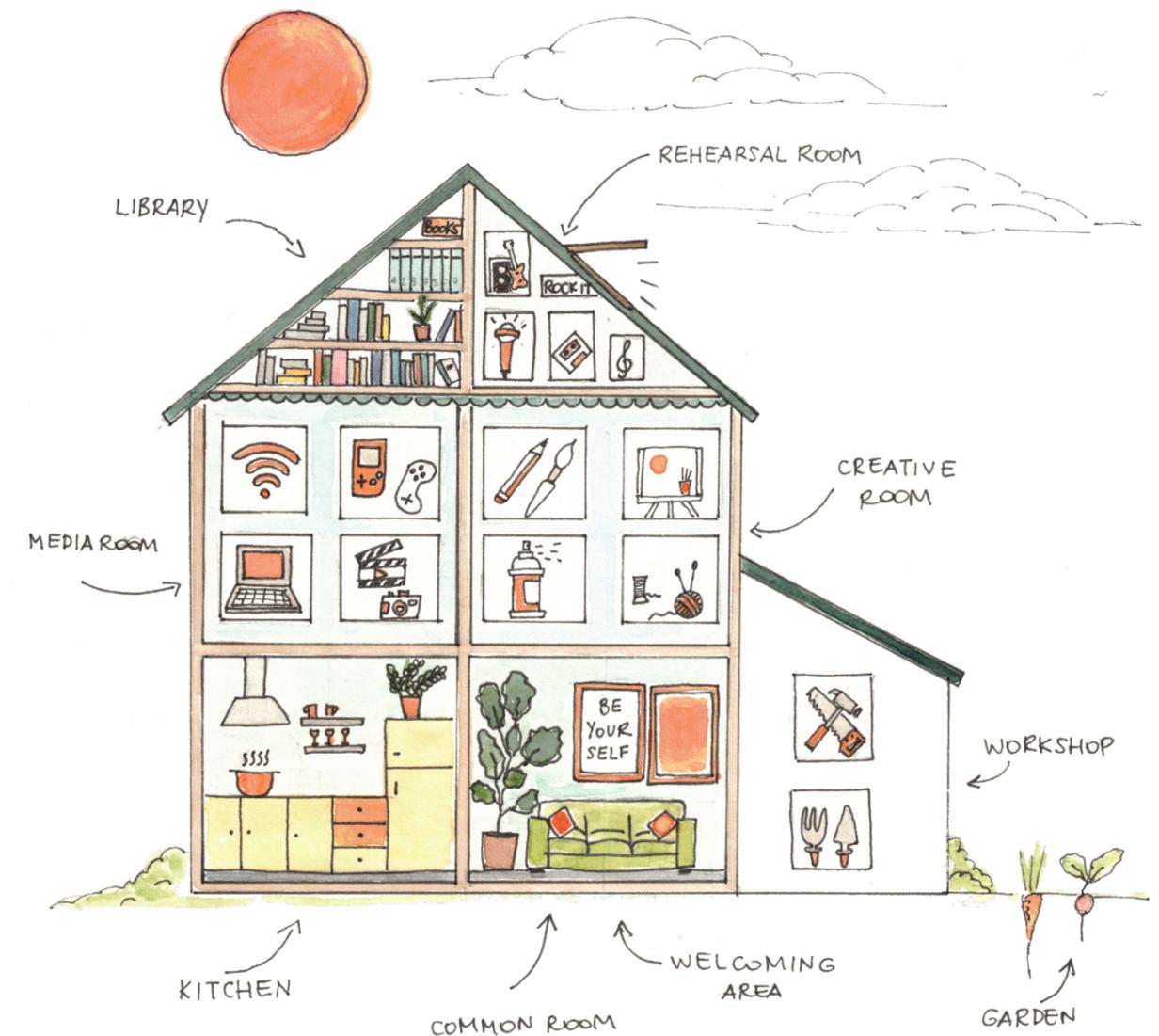
#### Communication

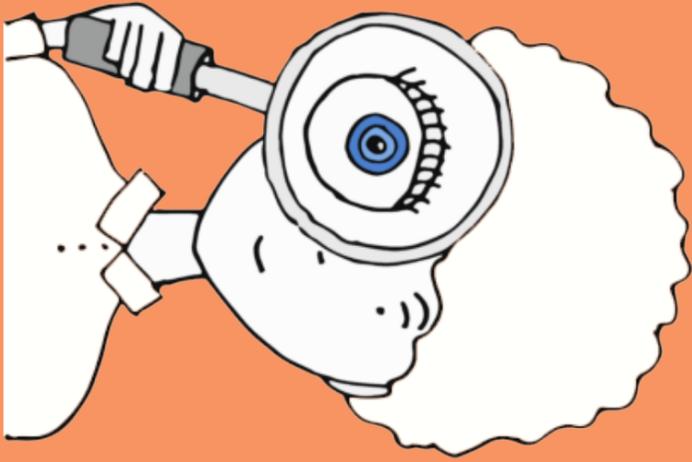
- "They are warm and welcoming, reassuring me if I have some doubts or fears or feel anxious on my arrival. They are very non-formal and friendly, sharing their stories and experiences";
- "I believe that the staff has a nice understanding of us and our problems. That's why we are able to talk with them";
- "They ask me who I am and how I feel. They introduce me to other people. I feel welcomed, but not forced. They show me the building and opportunities, and connect me with peers."



## Testimonials

### Activities, space and communication



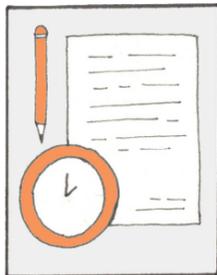


## Recommendation tools for Open Youth Work

This section contains recommendation tools on how youth work can be implemented, recognised and supported.

## Facilities and resources

### Space, time and conditions



Participants were asked to answer some questions to find out what their ideal youth centre is and how it should look, not only aesthetically but also emotionally. Through the collaboration of youth workers, social workers and partners — here are the results.

About the foundations and priorities of a youth centre, from the point of view of the youth workers, firstly we have their perspective on space: one that brings young people together, is welcoming, has identity, often with a history that is enhanced. However, to stop at space would be a mistake, just as to stop at the concession of a space can be a problem. Space is necessary but it is not everything. Space is a centre of gravity only if it is in sync with matters of time and instruments. The times vary from country to country: we are talking about public times of concession, authorisation or recognition of a youth centre. Keeping these public times together with the times of activities, the times of the involvement and engagement of young people, the emerging needs and therefore the expectations from a youth centre is the real challenge. On this point, public policies and public administration can make the difference.

In this context, the wish to have a longer contract for a youth centre is at the centre of this reflection. It is in fact a common desire to have longer contracts (at least 5 years) because we believe that this period of time is essential to establish and create a bond with the young people, the community and the neighborhood. Not only that, but the possibility of a long-term contract makes it also possible to plan ahead for future activities, to imagine the development of the youth centre and to dream big.

Reasoning about times and tools for the development of a youth centre also means reasoning about the concept of shared ownership. When does an asset become a common good? When there is constant work on the territory, when people become familiar with the space and participate in the proposed activities, but also when do users become promoters of events and initiatives themselves. This process needs time and once again the concept of time is always at the centre of our attention. In the second place is the desire to be able to be autonomous in making decisions. Our dream is to get longer concession contracts and the full trust of the policy makers. Society

## Facilities and resources

### Space, time and conditions

should provide youth-led physical facilities and infrastructures called youth spaces defined by being autonomous, open and safe, accessible to all, offering professional support for development and ensuring opportunities for youth participation.



## Youth Workers for Open Youth Work Profile

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We believe that youth workers are the most important element in the success of youth work. The young people are able to accept and shape the spaces and the place for their needs, to appropriate it and enrich it with their own ideas. However, this requires youth workers who not only enable this, but promote, support and demand it. For this, youth workers must have different competences, skills, views and character traits. Some can be learned and trained, others are anchored in the personality of the workers.

We would like to name, assign and elaborate on these in the following section. We have designated different roles for youth workers, each with its own set of tasks. We have named these roles as:

**The host** is entitled to greet newcomers into the youth centre and to introduce them to youngsters already attending activities and the youth centre itself;

**The facilitator** gives the kick off to the implementation of activities for youth, helping them create bonds and taking care of their personal development;

**The fundraiser** has one eye on budget and another on chances to acquire funding and grants;

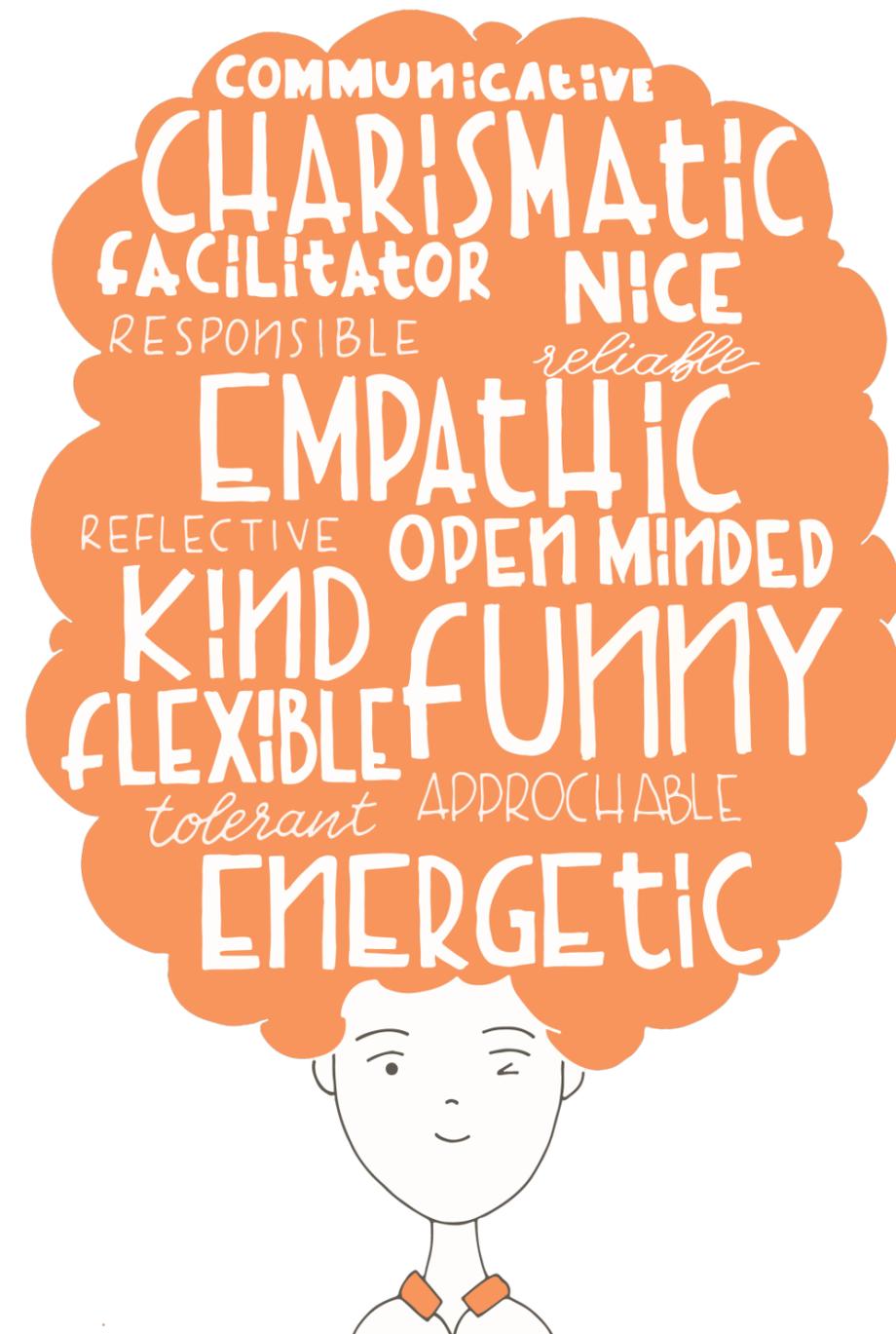
**The logistician** knows everything about the youth centre and its items, being also able to make minor repairs in order to maintain the proper functioning of the structure;

**The communicator** takes care of both public and internal relations of the youth centre, networking with partners and addressing youth;

**The coordinator**, like a mythological hero, has to coordinate the team, to supervise the activities, to have a constant vision of the overall state of the centre of youth workers and of youngsters engaged and involved in the activities.

## Youth Workers for Open Youth Work Profile

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## Youth Workers for Open Youth Work

### Profile

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We realize that most youth centres do not have six staff members and therefore different roles have to be combined in one person. In this respect, youth workers are often egg-laying wool-giving milk ows.

Together with the tasks come specific features. In fact, each role needs to master some specific competences, and it's important to emphasize those features that should be common to all the roles designated and, we believe, to all youth workers. First of all, we would like to talk about the profile that all youth workers should have, regardless of their role in the youth centre. We believe that these attitudes, behaviours, skills, and knowledge are the basis for a successful youth centre.

A youth worker has to pay attention, in the widest possible meaning, to different target groups and situations: attention to youngsters, using and practicing empathy, open-mindedness and trustworthiness; attention to the team, always acting and being a team player; attention to the background of each youngster in order to design a specific individual growth path; attention to the separation of private and professional lives in order to have the chance to set boundaries and spaces in which they can move easily and avoiding the risk of being too involved in situations that could affect the quality standards of their work.

Youth workers also need some skills, like the ability to empower self-reflection and active listening both for themselves as professionals and for their target group. At the same time, a youth worker has to always look approachable, without considering youth like an entity that needs to be constantly lectured and always staying grounded and on the same level as the beneficiaries of their work.

Youth workers need to know how youth work was born and its development, what are its legal bases and its standards on local, national and European levels. They also need to be aware about the importance of multiculturalism and how to empower the valorization of diversity as a useful tool for growth, exploring the field of prejudices and stereotypes, connected to the concept of diversity, to be able to fight any exclusion episodes that might arise.

Youth workers need a compass to follow in their interactions with youth. If, as we assume, a youth worker is going to be identified as

## Youth Workers for Open Youth Work

### Profile

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a role model, it's impossible not to consider **integrity, adaptability, equality, confidentiality and humbleness** as the directions of the compass that youth workers use every day in their relationships with the universe of youth.

Now that we have defined a general profile of the youth worker, let's focus on two of the roles we have previously identified and that we believe are essential for both youth and youth centers.

#### The host

First of all, each youth centre should have a host, a youth worker which welcomes people, especially newcomers. This is of special importance. During their first visit, young people will develop a feeling for whether they meet people there who treat them with respect and whom they can trust, whether they can do things in the youth centre that are in their area of interest, whether they feel comfortable in the rooms and with the people. In short, they will make a decision for themselves whether they feel welcome and want to come back. Therefore, this initial contact is particularly important and should be done by people with special attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviour.

The host must be focused mainly on engagement and on the techniques to generate it. The spark to ignite the host's attitude to engage youth can be identified as charisma, enjoyability, energy and kindness. Such elements will bring the host to have a successful communication with the target group and to realize easily when it's needed to not use formal ways to interact with people and instead to embrace and enjoy the non formal ones.

The skills a host needs are strictly connected to observation and creativity. A host will have to observe the context youngsters live inside and outside the youth center. The awareness about the background, the lifestyle, the beliefs of young people, must be constantly practised in order to be able to find creative solutions to problems or issues that might occur and to adapt the behaviour to the group of youngsters that the host is taking care of.

Understanding the youngsters coming to the youth centre helps the host notice which situations need an intervention or a deeper

## Youth Workers for Open Youth Work

### Profile

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reflection and which ones do not.

For these reasons, a host also has to know what youngsters like, what are the trends among youth, and what are the consequences of the time they are living in. This knowledge can be granted just through a constant development of the knowledge itself. The host can not dwell in the past but must always be focused on the present. Sure, foreseeing the future is also a big help and, since they invest in the future, youth workers are able to do it.

Working with young people is a glimpse on how the future will be and the host has a great responsibility for it. This is the reason why a host has to always be approachable and easygoing, never pretending to be almighty or a know-it-all person: youngsters can not be scared to talk to the host, they must know that the host and the youth center are their shelter from the storm. This goal is reachable if the hosts make no assumption about their guests and their future actions and know when to say sorry or when to accept feedback. Sorry doesn't have to be the hardest word but the kindest of them all, when needed.

#### **The facilitator**

Together with the host, the facilitator has a very important task: taking care of the activities and fostering the self-development of the youngsters attending the youth centre. The role of the facilitator is strictly connected with the transfer of values to young people, both as a group and as individuals, and with the opportunity to ensure that youngsters can see the youth centre as a place in which their growth as a person and a citizen is granted and taken in consideration constantly. In order to respect such intentions, we strongly believe that a facilitator needs to possess and master some particular features when it comes to attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviours.

The most important attitude of a facilitator is the eagerness to learn and to take advantage of each learning situation that might happen, whether it is a failure or a personal experience. Constant learning is fundamental in facilitating activities and all the chances to learn must be welcomed and accepted, especially if they come from young people: it is very important not to take things for granted and always take into consideration the perspective of a youngster to better understand if the direction that an activity is taking is the right one

## Youth Workers for Open Youth Work

### Profile

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or the wrong one for them. Doing this will help the constant use and development of critical thinking in order to keep finding new ways to put themselves in the youngsters' shoes and to figure out what could be the best for their own development.

To enhance such performances, facilitators will need to foster and motivate youth in participation and involvement, empowering them in sharing, organising and implementing their own ideas and activities to give them the most important position possible inside the youth centre, the one they deserve as beneficiaries. That being said, constantly dealing with different individuals that might not merge all the time inside the group, the facilitators also need to be ready to change their plans, to be able to manage deal with initial conflicts and to make everyone feeling valuable and necessary, in the context of the activities.

Considering the importance of their work and their tasks, facilitators need to possess at least basic knowledge of motivational techniques and youth psychology but also to be well aware about social inclusion and non formal methodologies since they could easily represent pillars on which to base all their work with youngsters starting from the beginning.

The involvement of young people can also be fostered through some particular conducts that facilitators can show to their target groups. A facilitator needs to be someone that youngsters can rely on and this can be achieved by always showing them patience, first of all, and a steady coherence between actions and words, acts and speech. Is it enough? No, it is not. A facilitator has to know how to support and involve youngsters, not giving them immediate solutions nor answers, but instead helping them to reach their own. This is a way to help youngsters understand that they always need and are able to stand for their needs, their dreams, their wishes and ideas and their political views.

It is undeniable, in fact, that part of youth work involves a political dimension since one of its goals is to help and foster the growth not just of youngsters as individuals but also, and perhaps most of all, as citizens — and there couldn't be active citizenship and participation without a defined political dimension.

## What is Open Youth Work

### A description of Open Youth Work

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Open Youth Work is an alternative kind of learning and education open to all young people. **Everyone has the right and deserves to be guided in education and growth.**

#### Universal

Open Youth Work has to be accessible to all young people. Independently from their physical and mental resources and obstacles they are able to use OYW offers and structures. Everyone has the right and deserves to be guided in education and growth. Both staff and facility must be prepared and be ready to react in all circumstances.

#### Free

Open youth work should not cost young people any money. They can use it without any duties and on a voluntary basis. In that way all young people can be reached out.

#### Educational

Young people can learn from each other or from youth workers. They learn in a given frame and even outside given frames. Open youth Work is the way to connect all of this. OYW provides experiences and activities that help young people develop abilities, do something in their leisure time in order to support their transition to adulthood and contribute to their personal development.

#### Welcoming

Young people feel that it's okay to open the door and enter the youth centre. They feel taken seriously and can freely express their problems. Young people are using their leisure time to do constructive things / activities in the youth centre. The building and the staff behaviour are welcoming to / for young people. In this way, young people and youth workers can work together to overcome all kinds of problems.

#### Safe

Young people are kept away from any harm by trained professionals. Open youth work provides a space where young people can experiment, associate, meet peers and grow as an individual in a positive and supportive environment.

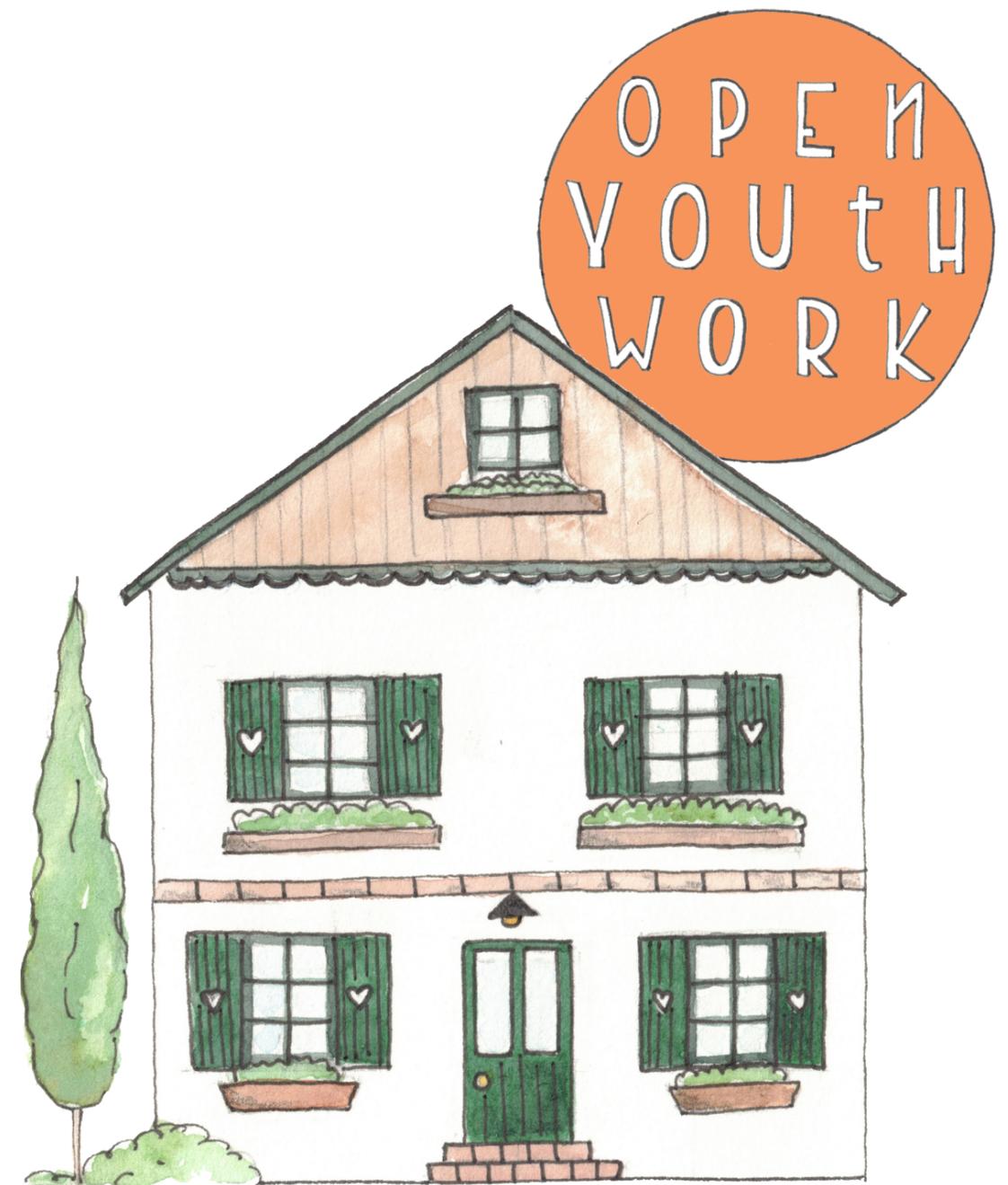
#### Social learning

Young people learn about each other and how to behave with others based on the situation. They learn about group interaction, cooperation and culture, to adapt their speech to different life situations and to different persons.

## What is Open Youth Work

### A description of Open Youth Work

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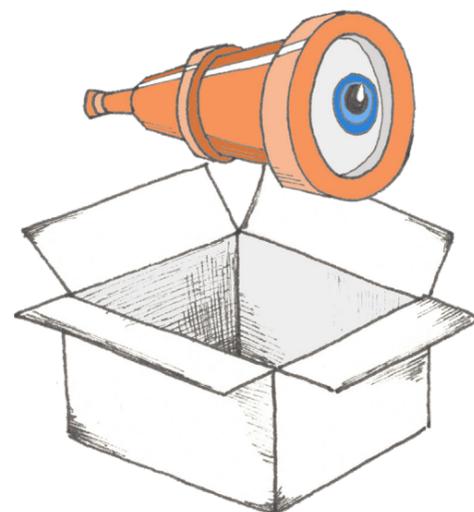
## Benefits of supporting Open Youth Work Opportunities

Open Youth Work Youth Centres contribute to a better society in various ways, bringing benefits mostly on social and economical level, but also on a personal level for those involved and supporting such initiatives.

A youth centre represents a safe environment where youngsters can express themselves, can be creative and where their parents can trust them to be safe (both physically and mentally). This means that they would grow to be reliable citizens, able to vote, to express their options and to engage other people around them to do the same. A youth centre can be a space where connections are built and networks are established, where people know each other and support one another, where youngsters discuss their views and opinions, and where loyalty and trust can be built up.

Moreover, a youth centre is an economical point, where resources are brought and used in the community and for the community, where services are hired and money from external sources are brought in and spent in the community.

We have summarised the most important social, economic and political benefits of Open Youth Work in the table below.



### Legend

- S** = short term period
- M** = medium term period
- L** = long term period

**Benefits** = social, economical, political

## Benefits of supporting Open Youth Work Opportunities

**S** ●

**M** ●

**L** ●

### Benefits



Free space for youngsters to "open up".

More events, activities create greater economical impact.

Increased visibility and positive image of both community and decision-makers.

More social services provided to the community.

More life changing experiences in a safe environment.

YC projects and activities support local communities and businesses (i.e. Erasmus+ or ESC projects).

Citizens build trust towards institutions and decision makers.

Community building process. Visible improvements in the behavior of their youngsters. Youngsters become independent, active, standing for themselves, finding themselves. Strengthen the society and the networks within it.

Promoting a healthy lifestyle decreases health insurance expenses. Youngsters become more capable of creating new companies and business activities in the community.

Youngsters take active part in democratic decision making process.



A project developed by:



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