

European Perspectives and Good Practices on
**Youth Work in Schools and
Educational Institutions**

Inspiration and Approaches for Youth Workers

Veronica Hellström, Marita Mattila & Renata Beatriz Ribeiro (eds.)



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ABSTRACT

Youth work has the potential to promote and support young people's well-being, equality, and inclusion. Alongside traditional forms of youth work, youth work in schools is becoming more widespread. As an institution, the school contains almost the entire age group and is a fertile environment for youth work. However, different countries have different starting points for implementing youth work and other possibilities for making it an integral part of everyday school life. This publication brings together a range of good practices for implementing youth work in schools. The good practices have been collected from Finland, Portugal, Estonia, and Greece through a questionnaire. The practices presented are linked to four different themes: sustainable development, democracy education, well-being work and strengthening the community. In this publication, 29 good practices that are suitable for implementation in a wide range of settings

are introduced. Further, it briefly outlines the different starting points and contexts for youth work in the four countries mentioned above.

This publication is intended for professionals implementing and planning youth work in schools and educational institutions. It is an opportunity for municipal decision-makers, school staff and others interested in the subject to learn more about youth work in schools and educational institutions. The publication aims to share and disseminate information about youth work in schools. Thus, it strengthens the role of youth work and defines its role in the educational communities of schools. This inspirational publication for school youth workers has been produced as part of the YWIS – Youth work in schools project, funded by the Erasmus+ Cooperation partnerships in youth.

Keywords: School youth work, youth worker, school, youth, non-formal learning

FOR THE READER

School youth work is a concept that is being developed and practiced in schools. There are no clear and ready-made solutions - yet!

This publication contains good practices of youth work in schools from four European countries, classified under four different themes. These practices have been compiled to help and encourage European youth workers in the field of school youth work to experiment with different initiatives in their own working environments.

In every educational institution that enables school youth work, it would be beneficial to organise unit-specific consultations on the objectives, content, and follow-up of the school youth work. All related professionals should jointly agree on the methods for integrating school youth work into the educational community. It is valuable that youth work in educational establishments is tested in an open-minded, bold, experimental, and multidisciplinary way, making full use of guidance resources. Different institutional and societal approaches can happen, but we strongly underline the value of a youth orientation.

Youth work in schools is not youth work without the participation of the youth and without meeting the needs of young people. Youth work can bring about changes in schools that have a positive impact, especially for young people but also for the whole school community: more events that break routines, growing together instead of controlling, bold reactions and

responses to current phenomena, and more free time to be together.

In this publication, the terms ‘School youth work’ and ‘Youth work in schools and educational institutions’ are understood to refer to all activities that are in some way related to youth work, its ethos, and the encounter with young people, whether carried out by trained or untrained professional youth workers. This can be interpreted as a broad definition of school youth work. (See Kiilakoski 2021, 220.)

Many professionals recognise the significance of learning from past experiences to enhance their work and increase their success. In pursuit of this, organisations often employ tools such as manuals or guides, providing valuable resources to carry out their activities more efficiently and effectively. YWIS partners produced this publication to support and inspire the field in developing their work. The project employees are the authors of this publication.

The good practices compiled in this publication have been collected from various professionals and volunteers who either work with young people or facilitate young people’s living conditions and the youth field. These professionals include youth workers, teachers, researchers, project managers, and many others who believe in the impact of youth work. Due to the diversity of professionals, among other things, the good practices presented vary in nature, scope or the time and resources required to implement them. Participation in

the activities described in the good practices is always voluntary for young people, but they require a commitment from adults in the school.

As a reader, you are not just a spectator. You are an agent of change in the youth work landscape. The publication invites professionals to seize the good practices compiled, and shape them to fit their environments and witness the impact they can make on youth, schools and society. It serves as a reminder that the potential for transformation lies not only in the hands of individuals but also in the collective efforts of a community dedicated to shaping a brighter future for the younger generation.

It is important to consider these good practices not as static tools but as basic principles that can guide you in building your own activity or initiative. This is not a set of rigid guidelines but an open call to adapt and implement to infuse your context with practices that resonate with you and your community. With a strong emphasis on collaboration, inclusivity, and continuous learning, this publication aims to inspire positive change in the youth work in schools. In conclusion, this publication is a call-to-action to collaborative learning, with the belief that, together, we can open new doors, break down barriers, and create spaces where all young people can thrive.

The publication is organised into two parts, each offering valuable insights into the principles and practices of meaningful youth work in schools and educational institutions.

Part 1 introduces the concept of youth work in schools, providing an overview of its historical development and the diverse approaches to youth work in schools across Europe. The focus

on Finland, Estonia, Portugal, and Greece allows for a subtle understanding of the cultural, social, and educational contexts that influence youth work in each country, which lays the grassroots for a collaborative and inclusive approach to youth development.

Part 2 lies at the heart of the publication, presenting a collection of good practices in youth work in schools. Each is categorised under themes that resonate with contemporary youth challenges and opportunities, such as sustainable development, democracy education, student well-being, and community strengthening. The publication offers a set of initiatives from each partner country. The publication emphasises the adaptability and versatility of these practices, providing a toolkit for youth professionals to tailor interventions based on the needs of the young people they serve.

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ABOUT THE YWIS PROJECT



YWIS - Youth Work in Schools project is a collaborative initiative co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union which focuses on the development of youth work in educational environments. The duration of the three-year project is 01.09.2022–31.08.2025.

The consortium for this project is led by the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (Xamk) and composed by the Municipality of Vila Boa do Bispo, University of Thessaly, and Saaremaa Noorsootöö Keskus, from Portugal, Greece, and Estonia respectively. The YWIS project stands as a testament to the power of international cooperation in shaping the youth work in schools and educational institutions.

The primary aim of the YWIS project is to strengthen the role of youth work within schools, advocating for the integration of informal education opportunities into formal educational structures. Through four main topics: sustainable development, democracy education, student well-being work and strengthening the sense of community, the project seeks to not only enrich the quality of youth work but also contribute to a holistic educational experience for young individuals. It is expected that the project will help to identify models and practices, try something new and strengthen the debate on youth work in schools in Europe.

One of the distinctive features of the YWIS project lies in its approach to collecting, testing, mixing, and sharing good practices. This publication serves as a repository of ideas, experiences and methodologies gathered from different European contexts, providing a good basis for testing and implementing youth work in one's own practice. The contributions of each partner enrich the collective knowledge base, providing an adaptable resource for educators, youth workers and policymakers.

The YWIS project recognises the multifaceted nature of youth work and acknowledges its potential to strengthen social inclusion, promote active citizenship, and contribute to the overall well-being of young people. At its core, the YWIS project encapsulates the spirit of innovation, collaboration, and commitment to improving youth work practices, with the aim of creating a ripple effect that has a positive impact on the lives of young people across Europe. Through its multi-faceted exploration and practical expertise, the project aims to make a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse on meaningful youth work in the school environment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	5
FOR THE READER	6
AUTHORS	8
ABOUT THE YWIS PROJECT	9

PART 1 – YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS: AN INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCING YOUTH WORK	14
YOUTH WORK ACROSS EUROPE.....	17
Finland.....	17
Estonia.....	22
Portugal.....	25
Greece	28
A COMMON APPROACH TO YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE YWIS PROJECT	31

PART 2 – GOOD PRACTICES OF YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS

DEFINING GOOD PRACTICES.....	34
OVERVIEW OF YWIS GOOD PRACTICES	36

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.....	38
1. Minimising Food Waste.....	41
2. A Vision for a Sustainable Future	43
3. Climate Spring	46
4. Click and Grow	49
5. Celebrating the International Day of Forests.....	51
6. Ecosystems and Biodiversity Preservation – “Sea Starts Here”	54
7. Environmental Sustainability in Fashion	56

DEMOCRACY EDUCATION	58
8. Four Democracy Education Practices in One School	61
9. Experience Narratives from (write your suburb, school or place here!)	64
10. The Youth Council of Saaremaa Municipality “Youth Cafes”	67
11. Participatory School Budgeting	69
12. Three Programs for the Participation of Youth in Decision-Making Processes	71
13. Most important to whom?.....	74

14. Six Thinking Hats of Commoners	76
15. Sociocracy.....	79
WELL-BEING WORK.....	82
16. Mental Health Promotion Posters and Strength Cards	84
17. M-Crew – a method to prevent and intervene in bullying	88
18. Outdoor Classroom and Class.....	91
19. The School that Invites You to Move – Two activities	93
20. I am.....	96
21. SMS+Green Care	98
22. Creative Writing	100
STRENGTHENING THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY	103
23. Future Café for 9 th Graders in the Spring	106
24. Get acquainted – Be genuinely present – Listen.....	108
25. Amistamo – Mobile Ideas	111
26. Strengthening the School Community through Premises Solutions	114
27. Supporting Group Dynamics.....	117
28. Artistic Renewal of Public Spaces.....	120
29. Musical Chairs as a Commons	122
AFTERWORD	124
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	125
APPENDIX.....	127

PART 1

YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS: AN INTRODUCTION

Let us give each and every child the chance of a better future. It is the best and most rewarding investment you can think of.

(Von Der Leyen 2021)

INTRODUCING YOUTH WORK

In several countries from the European Union, the concept of youth work is clearly defined and stands as a distinct practice. However, in certain regions, particularly in Southern European countries, the term may not be as widely recognised, and there may not be a universally recognised framework for youth work. Nevertheless, a unique and varied set of social and educational practices are operating in all these countries alongside the family and the school. (Council of Europe European Union Joint Programme Portal. s.a..)

According to the Council of Europe (s.a.a), youth work is a comprehensive concept encompassing diverse activities in the domains of social, cultural, educational, environmental, and political engagement for and with young individuals, whether they participate as part of a group or individually. These activities are carried out by both paid professionals and dedicated volunteers, and they hinge on informal and non-formal learning processes that place the primary focus on the needs of young people. Youth work fundamentally represents a form of social engagement, intertwining the development of young individuals with the societies they are part of. Its core mission is to empower young people, fostering their active involvement in community life and decision-making processes. (Council of Europe s.a.a.)

In some European nations, professional youth work has a well-established tradition involving

qualified personnel who engage with young people through programs and facilities funded by local and national authorities. These professionals provide structured support and guidance to young individuals. Conversely, other countries have a strong foundation in voluntary youth work, where activities are organised and delivered by non-profit organisations. This approach places a significant emphasis on the voluntary participation of both young people and those who guide them. In yet other countries, youth work operates without a recognised youth work profession, and those involved in youth work activities are volunteer leaders who engage with young individuals. This informal structure often relies on the dedication and enthusiasm of community members to support and mentor the youth. (Council of Europe s.a.b.) The highly decentralised nature of youth work across Europe means that it is carried out by a wide range of institutions, organisations, and individuals, both independently and in collaborative teams, reflecting its diversity in the multitude of forms it takes. Maintaining the premise that participation is based on voluntary choices, youth work can extend to other environments such as educational institutions and schools.

Formal and non-formal education have been traditionally perceived as distinct domains of learning, a perspective dating back many years. While formal learning is often equated with structured education within institutions, learning transcends the confines of educational

establishments such as schools and cannot be limited to such a narrow interpretation. Informal learning is the spontaneous, often unintentional, everyday acquisition of knowledge. On the other hand, non-formal learning is a deliberate and designed form of learning that may not have learning as its primary objective. It can be seen in activities where the youth acquire social skills through sports, learn foreign languages via online communication, or develop their identity while participating in youth programs. The boundary between informal and non-formal learning is somewhat elusive, with non-formal learning involving pre-planned activities with an educational component capturing the essential aspects of learning more effectively. (Kiilakoski 2015, 33.)

Cooperation between formal and non-formal learning institutions has implications for both sides. In formal education, when learning situations allow learners to draw upon their prior knowledge, experiences, and conceptions, it implies informalisation. Pedagogical methods evolve, incorporating ideas like work-based learning, place-based education, or the utilisation of social media to revamp educational practices within formal institutions. An emphasis on recognising prior learning and portfolios also entails that formal learning content integrates informal and non-formal learning experiences. In contrast, from the perspective of non-formal learning, this process involves formalisation. Acknowledging prior learning may necessitate non-formal institutions to issue diplomas, clarify learning situations, and prepare learners for skills demonstrations. These concurrent processes of formalisation and informalisation render the educational landscape more interconnected and blurred. As an example of this evolution, collaboration is deepening between youth work and schools, prompting a reevaluation of one of

youth work's fundamental components – leisure time. The increasing presence of youth workers in schools blurs professional boundaries and encourages mutual learning among professionals. (Kiilakoski 2015, 34.)

The relationship between formal education and youth work can be traced back to a time when schools became the primary locale for structured learning, while youth work filled the void in leisure time outside of school hours. Additionally, many facets of youth work found their origins in association with educational institutions, where teachers often played pivotal roles in shaping diverse forms of youth work. Rarely has the development of school and youth work occurred in complete isolation from one another. In many countries, the synergy between formal education and youth work, including the integration of youth work within schools or youth-oriented activities, represents a noteworthy domain of educational practice. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the level of collaboration between schools and youth work varies considerably from one place to another. (Nieminen 2022.)

In Part 1, the project partners explore youth work across Europe, offering insights into the specific contexts of Finland, Estonia, Portugal, and Greece, providing a brief definition of youth work, a concise overview of its historical development, and an examination of the relationship between youth work and schools— additionally, common perceptions of how youth work functions within school environments are discussed in each national context. This part aims to establish a comprehensive understanding of the state of youth work within educational settings across these European countries, hinting at what may be a common approach to youth work in schools.

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YOUTH WORK ACROSS EUROPE

Finland

A definition of youth work

In Finland, The Youth Act (1285/2016, § 3) is a framework law that defines the goals and tasks of youth work at a general level. Youth work is defined as supporting young people's growth, independence, and inclusion in society. According to the Youth Act, everyone under the age of 29 is considered young. However, municipalities are responsible for organising youth work without having to produce the services themselves.

The Ministry of Education and Culture supports the youth work of municipalities and NGOs and its development by central government transfers or discretionary transfers (Ministry of Education and Culture s.a.). Finnish legislation gives municipalities' youth activities a broad framework to focus their activities on different age groups, and traditionally, youth work has been targeted at middle schoolers (around 13–15 years old). During the last decade, though, youth work has, to an increasing extent, also been targeted at young adults, where the work attends to building bridges in the study or work paths, focusing on individual guidance instead of group activities. (Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 22–25.)

In Finland, youth work holds a strong statutory position, yet it is difficult to define precisely.

Youth work can be understood as either 1) close to education or 2) social work (Williamson 2017 cited in Kiilakoski 2021, 219). In the first understanding, the focus is on all young people and supporting their growth, while in the latter, the target group of youth work is more limited, concerning young people in a more vulnerable position, in which case the task of youth work is to address social problems. Since the Second World War, youth work has in Finland been seen specifically as education, which should be aimed at all young people, taking place in a young person's free time (Nieminen 1995 cited in Kiilakoski 2021, 219).

In youth work, youth is seen as a valuable phase of life and not just as preparation for adulthood. The goals of youth work are to promote democracy, support healthy lifestyles and growth, and reduce social challenges. Promoting group relations and equality is central to youth work. Functionality and fun are emphasised in youth work methods. (Kiilakoski 2021, 219.) Youth work aims to secure the well-being of young people.

The history of youth work as a profession in a nutshell

In Finland, modern youth work can be seen to originate at the end of the 19th century. At that time, youth work was not a profession but was often done on a charitable basis by

existing professional groups such as priests and teachers. From the 1940s to the late 1980s, the professionalisation of Finnish youth work strengthened its status. Youth work was increasingly differentiated as a separate field, trying to distance itself from other fields such as school, public education, and social work. During that time, legislation concerning youth work was enacted, higher education for youth workers was developed, and scientific research related to youth work and youth increased in importance. Further, the Ministry of Education made regular financing available for youth work in 1945. These actions promoted the perception of youth workers as their own professional group and defined the field of youth work. Despite the improvements, youth work was often seen as a semi-profession when compared to other professions, such as teachers or social workers. (Nieminen 2014, 37-41.)

Since 1945, Finland has invested in youth work education, and it is currently available at all education levels, from vocational education to doctoral studies. In Finland, the state supports the development of youth work in several ways. This is seen as a positive thing by the youth work community. Among other things, the state offers a wide variety of formal and non-formal education, legislates and governs youth work activities, and finances youth work research and practical youth work. (Kiilakoski 2019, 9, 80-82.) Over time, municipalities gained much power over the organisation of youth work and were, therefore, relatively free to organise activities according to their own objectives. For this reason, youth work has also varied from municipality to municipality.

In addition to municipalities, the church and youth organisations also carry out youth work.

Today, there is a strong push for promoting multi-professional networks rather than sectoral youth work, and youth workers are also expected to cooperate more with other professionals, such as social workers, teachers, and psychologists. Much progress has been made since the early days of youth work in raising awareness about youth work and strengthening its status, but the process of professionalisation is still ongoing. (Nieminen 2014, 42-43.)

The relationship between youth work and schools

In the field of municipal youth work, there has already been a long-term development in which the relative importance of group activities in free time is decreasing, and youth workers can increasingly be found in connection with other institutions, for example, schools and educational institutions (Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 19). Youth work is seen as a legitimate actor in schools, and its benefits have been recognised by the Finnish state. As one example of that, the state also granted special transfers for municipal youth work in schools and educational institutions to alleviate the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

School youth work is thought to bring something new to the school and encounters with young people. Thus, it is assumed that youth work deviates from the work of professionals already operating in schools, which are established and fulfil the school's welfare mission by law. (Jurvanen et al. 2021.) Youth work in schools creates spaces for peer activities for young people and participates in building bridges to young people's future educational paths. In this way, the well-being task of youth work focuses both on individuals who have

difficulties in their educational path and, more broadly, on supporting groups of young people. These activities are based on the traditions of youth work but also meet school development goals. (Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 79.)

Young people also recognise the well-being role of schools. In Finland, the State Youth Council, which is an expert body on youth work and youth policy, and the Finnish Youth Research Society carry out and publish a yearly Youth Barometer that measures the values and attitudes of Finnish young people aged 15-29. In the 2020 Youth Barometer, young people were asked which parties should be responsible for people's well-being. 81% of young people answered that schools and educational institutions have a great or rather great responsibility for people's well-being. (Myllyniemi & Kiilakoski 2021, 55.)

Almost the entire age group meets at the school. Thus, youth work has the opportunity to broadly support the well-being of young people both on an individual and group level. Furthermore, youth work brings adults to school whose relationship with young people is based on volunteering. In recent years, the importance of strengthening multi-professional cooperation and youth work in the fields of basic education and vocational training has been emphasised. It is one of the sub-goals of the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2020-2023 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2020, 19-21). The programme is a statutory horizontal programme that the Government adopts every four years with the aim of promoting a good living environment for young people. The programme defines the most important central government objectives and measures concerning young people for the coming years.

Common perceptions of youth work in schools

In recent years, the youth work done by municipalities in schools and educational institutions has increased significantly, and up to 90% of Finnish municipalities report that they do youth work in schools and educational institutions, at least to some extent. After youth facilities, schools are the second most common field of activity for youth work, and it is already quite common for a youth worker to be present either part-time or full-time at schools or educational institutions. Originally, youth work in schools developed from the municipalities' own needs without state guidance. This explains why there is great variation in different municipalities, for example, in terms of resources, methods, and scope of work. (Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 50-52.) Each school has its own culture; thus, youth work has developed in different cities and municipalities in various ways. Further, cooperation conditions vary according to municipalities and schools' history. (Kiilakoski 2021, 220.)

One way to visualise the implementation of school youth work is through four levels (Kolehmainen & Lahtinen 2014, 16-17):

- 1) **The facility level** refers to the diversified and joint use of youth and school facilities to benefit young people.
- 2) **The method level** to the utilisation of youth work methods, where the role of youth work is often that of the implementer.
- 3) **The information exchange level**, where information is exchanged between the youth service and the school (concerning both youth work activities and leisure services at the school as well as school events that require youth work skills), but information is also exchanged on individual young people.

- 4) **The educational partnership level**, where the youth worker is involved in the school's everyday life in cooperation with other school professionals. This is a question of flexibility and openness of the entire school's culture. The success of cooperation requires the support of the management and the openness of those working there to new ways of doing things.

School youth work, understood in this way, can assign a youth worker to several different roles: an educator, a reliable, companionable adult, a motivator for young people and the entire school community, as well as a developer of community spirit. An adult who is an expert in youth cultures and who communicates information to teachers about the phenomena of young people's lives. (Kolehmainen & Lahtinen 2014, 18-23, 58.) However, the youth worker does not have an evaluative role like teachers do. Youth work

also differs from other school professions in the sense that youth workers working in schools are often connected to free time outside of school. This connection is often seen as very beneficial.

Youth work in schools is youth-oriented, recognises young people's different needs and worlds and understands their connections to everyday school life. In addition, youth work promotes relationships between young people but also considers the relationships between the youth worker and young people and the relationships between different professionals working in schools. Interpreted in this way, the special task of youth work is to bring activities to school that emphasise positive relationships and see young people as a resource. (Jurvanen et al. 2021.) Youth work is not only a passive bystander but an active actor who creates and builds the future.

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Estonia



A definition of youth work

Youth work is defined in the Youth Work Act (44,262/2010, § 3) as follows: “Youth work is the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of young persons, which enable them to be active outside their families, formal education and work, on the basis of their free will.” This means that youth work is done outside the family, work, and formal education. It is based on free will and promotes the development and self-realisation of a young person. Youth work is targeted at young people between the ages of 7-26 years.

The history of youth work in a nutshell

Youth work in Estonia has a history of more than 100 years, and its roots go back to the 19th century. The first act regarding youth work was accepted in 1936 (Youth Organisation Act), which included the age group of young people (all students and other citizens under the age of 20 years old), tasks for the Ministry of Education regarding youth, the definition of youth organisations, and funding of youth work. During the first Estonian Republic, 1918-1940, specific structures were created to support the socialisation of young people, e.g., pupils’ leisure time activities as organised by schools, associations created by young people, etc. After gaining independence in 1940, Estonia faced successive occupations during World War II, first by Germany, where youth contributed to agricultural work. Under Soviet rule, only the Comsomol youth organisation was permitted to promote Soviet ideology. Estonia regained its independence in 1991, and after that, lots

of youth organisations were created or re-created based on the experiences of the time of the first republic of Estonia. The national system was re-organised, and a new foundation for youth work was set. In 1991, the Estonian Students Association was created, one of the oldest youth organisations in the history of second independent Estonia. In 1999, when the first Youth Work Act was accepted, the local municipalities got the responsibility for organising youth work in their areas. The same year, the first Youth Work Forum was held to discuss youth work organisations with young people, youth organisations and people working with youth, and the Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC) was founded. The Youth Policy Council was established in 1999, and its aim was to consult the minister of education on issues concerning youth work. From 1 August 2020, the Estonian Youth Work Centre and other organisations under the Ministry of Education and Research were reorganised into a state-level institution called the Education and Youth Board. (European Commission 2023.)

The youth work in Estonia

The organisation of youth work by local authorities is regulated under the Youth Work Act and Local Government Organisation Act. The organisation model based on local authorities also follows an important starting point for carrying out youth work: youth work must be as close to youth as possible and take fully into account the principle of autonomy of local authorities applicable to the administrative organisation of the state. Local authorities and the state are partners within the context of the organisation of youth work in Estonia. The state creates a legal and strategic framework and supports local authorities in terms of

priority areas and the provision of services. The activities of local authorities are directed and supported through state support programmes. The aim is to enhance the availability of youth work and guarantee services of better quality in institutions associated with youth. At different levels, a common practice of delegating the practical implementation of youth work tasks to NGOs is used. At the national level, the development of youth affairs is supported by several umbrella organisations, societies uniting different professions and organisations of youth work, youth associations, and foundations. Hobby schools, work brigades, camps, youth centres, and youth associations managed by the non-profit and private sectors render their services at the local government level. Youth affairs is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research, which plans youth policy, organises youth work, and manages the work of the Education and Youth Board. (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium 2023.)

Common perceptions of youth work in schools

Youth work is done in formal and vocational education schools. It supports the school's curriculum goals, is based on extracurricular activities, and is organised by school youth workers, pupils' unions, and activity leaders (Haridus—ja Teadusministeerium 2022).

Involving students in shaping school life and decision-making processes can be considered one of the goals of school youth work. The main goal is to support the activities of the student council. The student council is an

informal association based on citizen initiative, which provides willing students with the right to represent and protect the student body both in and out of school. Interest groups (primarily in elementary school) and free subjects (in high school) that support both general and the development of subject competences and enable young people to deal with their interests more deeply. A part of school youth work takes place in the form of various school events and projects, be they holidays or theme-based activities. It is possible to support students' participation and organising experiences through events while also ensuring the development of key competences and the handling of cross-cutting themes. Here, the school is partnered with youth work institutions and organisations. Joint action makes it possible for all participants to hone cooperation skills, expand existing knowledge and skills, get to know each other, and consider each other. In school youth work, a significant task is mutual communication and cooperation and in supporting group processes - noticing and understanding each other, considering each other, learning and acting in a group, relationships with peers, relationships with adults, etc. Youth work at school supports the development of a young person and, at the same time, creates added value that supports learning and makes school a place where people are happy and motivated to go. Cooperation between the school and youth employment institutions is, which is obviously understood and is a common practice. Although the school and the youth centre are different institutions, the principle of youth work is similarly applied in both - based on the young person and his interests and needs, supporting the participation of young people and cooperation between fields. (Reitav 2013, 230.)

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Portugal



A definition of youth work

Youth work in Portugal is not yet regulated. There is still no official definition, although several informal definitions of this concept exist. However, most working contexts require training and adherence to standards of quality and accountability. Portuguese youth workers have training programs at their disposal that provide and promote training support to young people, associative movements, and professionals in the youth area. (European Education and Culture Executive Agency 2021.)

In official EU documents and the national legal system of Portugal, the term “youth work” is not explicitly used. Instead, the term “socio-educational animation of young people” or “juvenile socio-education” is employed. In the Portuguese translation of the text of the Council of the European Union’s Resolution of 27 November 2009, work for, with, and about youth is referred to as “juvenile animation”. According to this Council Resolution, translations of the terms “youth work” and “youth workers” into Portuguese are not consistent. The translations used include “animation of youngsters”. During the 1st Socio-Cultural Animation National Congress held in 2010 in Portugal, a definition of socio-cultural animation was established as a set of practices developed with the aim of encouraging individuals to participate and become agents of their own development process and of their communities. The sociocultural animator is a professional trained for developing and implementing an intervention plan in communities, institutions, or individuals, putting it into practice cultural, social, educational, sports, recreation, and leisure techniques. (Queirós 2014, 71–73.)

The “youth technician” professional profile is at a level 4 EQF standard - which allows access to the 12th-grade degree of secondary school. The description of the required qualifications is highlighted as roles the intervention in the design, organisation, development, and evaluation of projects, programmes, and activities with and for young people through methodologies in the field of non-formal education, facilitating and promoting citizenship, participation, autonomy, inclusion, and personal, social, and cultural development. (Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e Ensino Profissional, I.P. 2020.)

The history of youth work in a nutshell

Sociocultural animation in Portugal can be traced back to the 19th century when a project was created to educate the working class on how to read using new methods. The project also trained teachers to teach and reach out to the most marginalised groups in society, using practical methods to rescue children from the traditional textbook approach; elements and attitudes are still present in youth work today. (Queirós 2014, 73.)

In the 20th century, influenced by states such as Germany, Italy, and Spain, the Portuguese authoritarian government established an organisation open to all males and mandatory for those aged 7 to 14. The aim of this organisation was to promote moral, civic, and political education of young people through physical and pre-military training. In addition, the government established a female counterpart with the aim of guiding young women to fulfil their roles in the family, community, and the state. (Queirós 2014, 74, 75; Kuin 1993.)

The regime used these organisations as a way of controlling and shaping the beliefs and attitudes of the younger generation, in line with its authoritarian ideology. The government oversaw and regulated all forms of youth development by establishing a system requiring all non-governmental organisations to be subordinated to it. In 1970, mandatory organisations were disbanded and replaced with the Secretariat for Youth, which aimed to empower young people through collaborations between the government and civil society organisations. Youth policies became less political and more cultural since the state played a more administrative and promotional role. Youth work was largely focused on the promotion of physical education and the development of healthy lifestyles. However, after the 1974 Revolution, there was a renewed focus on social justice and community development, which led to a broader conception of youth work that incorporated a wider range of activities and objectives. During the constitutional period, the concept of a “youth organisation” was introduced to distinguish youth associations from other organisations. In 1985, the United Nations designated the year as the International Year of Youth, sparking a significant movement around youth issues in Portugal. Both government and non-governmental bodies began to take an active interest in youth issues. The Youth Institute was established in 1988, which led to the creation of several training programmes specifically designed for young leaders and workers in the youth sector. This journey underscores the continuous transformation of youth work, adapting to the evolving needs and aspirations of young people in Portugal over time. (Queirós 2014, 75-78.)

The relationship between youth work and schools

The Permanent Observatory for Youth (OPJ) was one of the entities responsible for the development of youth work in the country. This research and study programme enhances the production, exchange, and dissemination of scientific knowledge about the diversity of youth realities in Portugal. Since 1989, the OPJ has developed projects in several thematic areas, such as health, education, employability, community building, and political participation. Working closely with the OPJ, the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (IPDJ) has conducted studies to support policy development, such as building the first National Youth Plan. In 2019, the largest study was produced on the actions of municipalities in the youth area. The study aimed to take a detailed inventory of local policies and initiatives and was complemented by public debate and presentation. (European Education and Culture Executive Agency 2021.)

In recent years, youth work in schools has become an increasingly important part of the educational system in Portugal. This has been driven by a recognition of the importance of providing young people with the support and resources they need to succeed academically and socially. Common perceptions of youth work in schools in Portugal include a focus on promoting active citizenship, developing social skills, and improving academic achievement. Teachers often carry out youth work in schools, with the support of other school staff, to provide a holistic approach to education and development.

Common perceptions of youth work in schools

The Portuguese government has recognised the importance of youth work in schools and has implemented various initiatives to support it. One of the initiatives is the creation of the National Plan for Youth 2022-2024, which includes more than 400 measures, including actions to promote the involvement of young people in school life and the community. Schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, and cultural events, to develop their social and personal skills. Youth work in Portuguese schools promotes academic success. To achieve this goal, schools provide support measures such as individual tutoring and mentoring and initiatives to foster positive relationships between students and teachers. (Instituto Português do Desporto e da Juventude, I.P. 2022.) Youth work in Portugal is recognised as essential for social and human development, providing young people with the resources and support they need to become active, engaged, and responsible citizens.

All funding from the state is based on laws and regulations with strict observance of public criteria, reports, accountability, and follow-up. Youth work in Portugal is funded through various means, including government grants and subsidies, as well as European Union funding. The Portuguese government allocates significant funding to youth work through IPDJ, which oversees and supports youth organisations and programmes. The European Union also provides funding for youth work initiatives in Portugal through programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund. (European Education and Culture Executive Agency 2021.)

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Greece



A definition of youth work

Youth work is a type of non-formal education that is taught using a range of pedagogies and delivered in different ways. Although there are many different goals for youth work, social and personal development are frequently regarded as being of the utmost importance (Furlong 2013).

There is no official legal framework or specific definition for youth work in Greece, despite existing legal provisions related to youth issues. Youth work is recognised as a social practice integral to education and welfare efforts, supporting young people in their transition to adulthood. Youth work in Greece refers to any act that aspires to involve the young generation in coordination programmes, including recreational, educational, or social activities. The whole concept of youth work is defined as the set of activities that deliberately seek to influence young people in terms of their development in the wider social whole. Its main objective is to empower young people to develop and acquire skills, take initiative, actively participate in social and political issues, and finally become more autonomous and independent in general.

In many countries, youth work has been institutionalised and recognised as a profession. However, that does not apply to Greece yet. Youth work is practised by NGOs, youth organisations, and informal groups. As far as the educational part of the youth workers is concerned, it is acquired through the specialisation offered by relevant seminars, Erasmus+ Youth programmes, or additional specialisation after obtaining a relevant degree (e.g., Social Sciences). (Giannaki 2014, 103, 104.)

The history of youth work in a nutshell

Youth work in Greece began in the early 20th century, focusing on engaging young people beyond formal education. Private charities initially played a crucial role, expanding to include sports clubs, scouting, and religious organisations. The 1930s saw the formation of the National Youth Organisation, but it dissolved during the German Occupation. The United Panhellenic Organisation of Youth actively contributed to resistance efforts after World War II. After the fall of the dictatorship in 1974, significant developments occurred. The constitution emphasised the state's duty to protect the youth, leading to the establishment of the General Secretariat for Youth in 1983. This marked a shift towards leisure time as crucial for socialisation. Various policies and initiatives, including social tourism programs and youth discount cards, were implemented, addressing diverse youth needs. In the contemporary era, legal conditions focus on various aspects, including employment, sports, education, and family. Despite lacking an official definition or legal framework, youth work is recognised as integral to educational and welfare efforts. Youth work involves a range of activities, with a focus on leisure time and targeted initiatives for disadvantaged groups. Key actors include the General Secretariat for Youth, NGOs, and local authorities. The main areas of youth work action include career services, youth information, programs for disadvantaged youth, cultural education, social care, sports, and international initiatives, contributing to the safe transition to adulthood. (Giannaki 2014, 94-102.)

The relationship between youth work and schools

In Greece, the absence of an official establishment of youth work within schools is notable, emphasising the lack of a defined role for youth workers in the educational setting. Despite legal provisions related to youth issues, there is no official definition or legal framework for youth work. Nevertheless, youth work is acknowledged as a vital social practice integral to educational and welfare efforts, contributing significantly to supporting young people's safe transition to adulthood.

The scope of activities encompassed by youth work is extensive, covering health, social support, counselling, education, training, personal development, information, career services, and more. However, it predominantly aligns with leisure-time pursuits, such as artistic and cultural programs, outdoor recreation, and sports, creating a space for youthful experimentation and cultural development. Youth workers in Greece typically engage with individuals aged 15 to 29, occasionally extending their services to those aged 13 to 15 or 25 to 30.

Notably, there is no specific education and training for youth work, and there are no nationally recognised qualifications. However, individuals aspiring to work with young people can acquire relevant professional qualifications, such as higher education degrees in social work, social sciences, or educational sciences and pedagogy, encompassing fields like primary education, early childhood education, special education, and social pedagogy. (Giannaki 2014, 100, 102.)

Common perceptions of youth work in schools

Even though there is no official provision for youth work in Greek schools, various organisations and initiatives provide youth work services to schools. For example, the Hellenic Youth Council is a non-governmental organisation that works with schools and youth groups to promote active citizenship, social responsibility, and youth empowerment. (H.N.Y.C. 1998.) In addition, the Greek Youth Hostels Association provides educational programmes and workshops for schools and youth groups. (Greek Youth Hostels Association 2017). All these initiatives emphasise the importance of peer support and cooperation, encouraging students to engage in group projects, community service initiatives, and volunteering activities. These experiences enrich their learning and cultivate empathy, teamwork, and a sense of responsibility towards others and society. Moreover, they are instrumental in addressing various challenges faced by young people, including academic pressure, social discrimination, mental health issues, and substance abuse. Through counselling services, mentoring programs, and targeted interventions, professionals in youth work strive to provide personalised support and guidance to students, helping them overcome obstacles and realise their full potential.

Youth work is still a growing field in Greece, and there has been increasing recognition of the importance of youth work in schools in recent years. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in Greece has developed policies and initiatives to frame youth work in schools, including the creation of a National Youth Strategy that emphasises the importance of youth work in schools. (Democracy and Education 2004.)

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A COMMON APPROACH TO YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE YWIS PROJECT

Youth work is becoming increasingly important in national and European policies. Its responsibilities range from strengthening social inclusion and promoting civil society to improving employability and preventing health risks for young people. The sector is actively engaged in ongoing efforts to raise its quality and recognition, with numerous national, regional, and local initiatives across Europe. These efforts aim to provide resources that facilitate the development of quality in youth work. The overall goal is to enable youth work to increase its impact on the lives of the youngest generations and in society. This drive for improvement stems from a growing realisation that the current resources and support allocated to youth work fall short of growing expectations. Despite its inherent nature as a platform for non-formal and informal learning, which often takes place in leisure settings, youth work receives limited support compared to other entities in the educational sector. (European Commission 2015, 7.)

Despite the cultural, social, and historical differences between European countries, which, as described, have influenced the practices and development of youth work in countries such as Finland, Estonia, Portugal, and Greece, different approaches to youth work in schools have been

implemented to support the personal and social development of young people.

YWIS partner countries agree on the youth work's crucial function of establishing links between the youth, their families, the school, and the community, constructing a holistic network of support stronger than the one that schools can accomplish independently. By fostering connections and collaboration, youth workers can address multifaceted issues in a way that goes beyond the scope of educational institutions (McLatchie et al., 2023, 6). Youth work is acknowledged as a means of promoting active citizenship, social inclusion, and youth empowerment.

Another common factor between YWIS partner countries is the recognition of the importance of trained professionals in youth work, not only youth workers but also volunteer youth workers. Youth work requires trained and competent professionals who can apply non-formal learning principles and design and implement programmes that meet the needs and interests of young people (Evrard & Bergstein 2016, 26.) However, some differences are visible regarding the qualifications of the youth workers: while in Finland and Estonia, professional youth workers are required to have a degree in youth

work or a related field, in Portugal and Greece, youth workers are trained through specialised seminars and programmes, without access to a formal college degree.

Despite the progress made in these countries, there is still a need to bring youth work into schools across Europe while maintaining the same quality. Many European countries still have a long way to go in recognising the benefits and results that youth work has on young people's education and development. The lack of institutionalisation and recognition of the activity, the clear definition of the concept, the activities to which it applies, its methodologies and the training that supports it constitute a challenge for the development of youth work in schools. Finding a middle ground to overcome these challenges is crucial to ensuring that all young people have access to quality youth work services. As we go through the commonalities of youth work in schools among the YWIS partners, it is clear that the shared goal is to create supportive environments that promote the holistic growth and self-fulfilment of the younger generation. Through collaboration and the exchange of experiences, YWIS aims to strengthen the impact of youth work in schools in shaping the future of societies.

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PART 2

GOOD PRACTICES OF YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS

*We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build
our youth for the future.*

(Roosevelt 1940)

DEFINING GOOD PRACTICES

According to the European Commission, good practice refers to methodologies, approaches, or activities that, based on research and evaluation, have demonstrated effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, or transferability (European Commission 2021). However, there is debate as to whether there is a single better approach. Strategies continue to evolve and are regularly updated, reflecting a dynamic and ever-changing environment in terms of what best practice is. (Serrat 2008, 1.) The suitability of a practice varies depending on the context; what may be considered the best approach in one scenario might not be as effective in another. It's essential to comprehend the context in which you are working and implement practices that are most suitable for that context, focusing on the practices that best fit the given situation (Ambler s.a.).

Collecting and Selecting Good Practices in the YWIS Context

In the YWIS project, good practices were collected through an open questionnaire (see Appendix 1), which was disseminated in various ways by the partners. Several professionals answered this call and shared their work with YWIS. Good practices were requested on the following themes:

- Sustainable development and faith in the future of young people.

- Democracy education and participation.
- Holistic students' well-being work, individual work, and digital guidance tools.
- Strengthening the sense of community in everyday life at schools, attachment to the studies, and actions against loneliness and bullying.

A panel of judges, defined by the partners, comprised of a teacher, a youth worker, a project manager, and a representative of a local public body from the different partner countries, considered the cultural contexts and scope of the various methodologies for applying youth work in schools and other institutions.

An effort was made to select practices tailored to different contexts, from initiatives that can also be implemented in countries where youth work in schools is not particularly established to inspiring examples for those where youth work in schools is a long way off. The good practices presented benefit from this diversity of standpoints, providing a comprehensive and balanced view of youth work in schools.

From individual guidance to group dynamics that can include the entire school community and beyond, this wide range of practices differs, for example, in the effort and resources needed to implement them or in the role that youth work itself plays in their implementation. It

should be noted that some of these methods have been developed and worked on by different parties over several years.

The key to reading and implementing these practices is to recognise and understand the unique situations you find yourself in and adapt these approaches accordingly. Select the practices that align with your specific needs and customise those practices to fit the demands of your situation. (Ambler s.a.) May these good practices offer realistic perspectives, inspiring practical and effective approaches in the vast field of youth work.

The journey of meaningful youth work is both an art and a science - a balance of empathy, dedication, and a belief in the power of positive engagement. **Trust** is the key to meaningful relationships. Invest time in building it. Authentic connections thrive in a trustworthy environment, becoming the basis for nurturing guidance, advice and support. **Empowerment** is at the core of working with young people. Skip traditional roles and create spaces where active participation is not only encouraged but expected. This approach lights up interests and lets young people design their own futures. Embrace **curiosity**. In the dynamic field of youth work, curiosity triggers a culture of continuous learning, reminding you and the young minds you guide that knowledge is a constant exploration. **Resilience** is as valuable a skill as any other. Acknowledge challenges, be a pillar of support and cultivate mental and emotional well-being. In doing so, you will defend the skill of returning stronger in adversity.

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OVERVIEW OF YWIS GOOD PRACTICES

Embarking on the journey of youth work involves navigating diverse strategies and interventions to foster young individuals' growth and development. Within the scope of the YWIS project, the classification of best practices serves as a compass, guiding practitioners in designing initiatives that suit their needs. Each good practice is classified according to the categories below (adapted from Sapin 2013).

Non-formal Education—Beyond Classroom

Boundaries: Non-formal education emerges as the foundation of youth work, extending learning beyond the traditional classroom setting. This category offers a broad spectrum of activities, from alternative education and mentoring to outdoor pursuits. Sustainable development initiatives, such as gardening projects and community clean-ups, underline the commitment to fostering a sense of responsibility and environmental consciousness.

Individual or Group Advice and Guidance—

Nurturing Well-being: Youth work goes beyond sharing knowledge; it involves providing counsel and guidance on personal and social matters. Services ranging from counselling on mental health, sexual health, and drug use to career advice and housing assistance fall under this category.

Participation—Empowering Youth Voice:

Encouraging young individuals to actively engage

in decision-making processes, whether through youth councils or other participatory activities, fosters a sense of agency and empowerment. This category highlights the importance of involving young people in shaping the programs and initiatives that directly impact them.

Support—Building Inclusive Communities:

Recognising specific groups' unique challenges, youth work extends its reach to support structures, creating spaces for shared experiences and understanding. This includes groups for young parents, young carers, and identity-specific groups.

Leisure—Balancing Growth and Fun:

Youth work acknowledges the importance of leisure in the developmental journey. Leisure activities, from cafes and youth centres to sports and arts engagement, offer spaces for socialisation, creativity, and skill development. Media-related initiatives, such as internet cafes and radio stations, are entering the digital world and connecting with young individuals through platforms with which they resonate.

In practice, these classifications serve as a toolkit, allowing those involved in youth work to tailor interventions based on the specific needs and aspirations of the youth they serve (see Appendix 2). Each of the four themes (sustainable development, democracy education, well-being, strengthening community) is briefly

opened before the good practices themselves are reviewed. Although it was chosen to divide the good practices into four different themes, it is recognised that in everyday school life, the themes co-exist, overlap and influence each other. Many good practices selected for this publication could also be placed under more than one theme. As we explore the specific examples provided in each category, it becomes evident that the richness of youth work lies in its ability to adapt and innovate, creating a supportive ecosystem that nurtures the potential of every young individual.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development can be described as a form of progress that fulfils the current generation's requirements while safeguarding future generations' capacity to satisfy their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). Sustainability encompasses social, economic, political, and natural dimensions, recognising the limits of our planet's resources and the necessity of addressing ecological overreach (European Union s.a.).

Sustainable development in schools and educational institutions

Education serves as a catalyst for raising awareness about environmental issues, their consequences, and the actions needed to address them. Through education, students can be equipped with the knowledge and ecological literacy necessary to make informed decisions and change their behaviours regarding specific environmental concerns. Environmentally literate individuals can better recognise the interconnections between local issues and global environmental challenges. Formal education can provide the foundation for this ecological literacy, offering knowledge, vocabulary, key concepts, and historical and philosophical background. (Walls & Benavot 2017, 405-406.) However, a global survey of teachers conducted by UNESCO and Education International reveals that there are significant

challenges to overcome. While many teachers are motivated to make a positive impact, a concerning quarter of formal educators do not feel adequately prepared to teach themes related to education for sustainable development. Furthermore, fewer than 40% of teachers surveyed feel confident in teaching the severity of climate change despite the overwhelming consensus among 95% of teachers that this topic is important or very important to teach. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2021, 4). The challenge for schools and educational institutions is to create a comprehensive and systematic response that meaningfully, consistently, and effectively addresses sustainability issues. With this, education can play a pivotal role in the transformation towards more environmentally sustainable societies when complemented by other initiatives. Education is fundamental in the journey towards a more sustainable and environmentally conscious world. (Walls & Benavot 2017, 409.)

Why is it important to address sustainable development?

We are facing the greatest generation of young people in history. According to the United Nations, there are 1.8 billion individuals aged 10-24, and projections indicate that this number will continue to rise. Today's youth are actively

seeking to strengthen the resilience of their communities. Not only do youngsters express a desire to contribute, but they are already taking steps forward, coming up with inventive solutions, driving social progress and provoking changes in the political landscape. Serving as agents of change, they mobilise with a shared commitment to drive forward the Sustainable Development Goals, striving to improve the well-being of individuals and promote the health of the planet. (United Nations s.a.) To achieve this, young individuals must acquire and hone green skills, a diverse set of abilities, and knowledge focused on promoting environmental sustainability. These competencies, which embrace various areas, including renewable energy, waste reduction, conservation, and sustainable agriculture, empower youngsters to actively engage in ecologically conscious practices, devise inventive solutions for environmental issues, and actively participate in the shift towards a more sustainable and environmentally friendly economy, becoming key contributors to sustainable development. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2023.)

Youth work for sustainable development in schools and educational institutions

A collaborative effort is needed to ensure that teachers are well-equipped to address critical global challenges in the classroom. Governments, education policymakers, academics, youth workers, educators, and teacher trainers must work together to provide the necessary training, resources, and support. This will help nurture a generation of well-informed students capable of tackling the complex global issues of our time.

It's a collective responsibility to prepare the next generation for a better, more sustainable future. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2021, 4.) Revolving around the principle of sustainability, youth work stands alongside formal education and family. It holds a significant role in guiding young individuals through their transition to adulthood and fostering their active participation in society. Youth work, deeply rooted in a tradition of nurturing young minds and advocating values like justice and equality, is crucial in education for sustainability. The exploration of citizenship, interdependence, diversity, intercultural dialogue, social issues, and sustainability itself forms the foundation for shaping the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes governing the youth's interaction with the world. (Keen et al. 2018, 15-16.)

How can sustainable development be enhanced in schools?

Numerous schools are already at the forefront of pioneering efforts to instil conservation values and foster an appreciation for natural resources among students. After recognising education's critical role in shaping environmentally conscious individuals, schools should go beyond traditional academic curricula to incorporate initiatives that promote sustainability and environmental stewardship (Alayyan 2023). Moreover, evidence suggests that schools should strengthen the connection between learners and the natural world and foster a more profound sense of belonging to the places and communities they are connected to (Walls & Benavot 2017, 409). Fostering collaborations with other educational institutions, government agencies, the private sector, civil society, and

international organisations is key. Sharing best practices and creating synergies for sustainability education builds partnerships based on shared vision and open communication. (Alayyan 2023.) Enhancing sustainable development in schools involves adopting a holistic and integrated approach based on non-formal education methodologies, such as providing experiential learning opportunities through field trips, projects, and community service initiatives, allowing students to actively engage with sustainability concepts (Alayyan 2023; Villain 2023). Next up are effective practices that youth workers and teachers in schools and educational institutions have found beneficial for promoting and cultivating sustainability.

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1. Minimising Food Waste



Classification: non-formal education, leisure.



This good practice was started in Lappeenranta Youth Services, Youth Centre Rientola, in 2018. In Lappeenranta, the same practice is now being practised at the Lauritsala School and Youth Centre (started in 2022).

Food production and consumption significantly impact the state of the environment and the use of natural resources. Yet, we throw a lot of edible food in the garbage; in that way, all the environmental burdens created by the production chain have been caused for nothing. (FAO 2020.) Below is a description of a good practice that reduces food waste and promotes environmental awareness and responsibility among young people. It also offers young people a way to take easy environmental action and influence the school environment's development. With this, the theme of sustainable development is brought into the everyday lives of children and young people, and good practices can preferably be implemented in schools and educational institutions as ongoing practices.

In Finland, school meals are free of charge for all pre-primary and comprehensive school pupils, as well as for upper secondary school and vocational students. Young people often take school meals for granted and do not always appreciate them, so a lot of food is left over in schools. This good practice is an example of cooperation between schools and youth centres. The school kitchen contacts the youth workers at the youth centre if there is any leftover school food, and the youth worker picks up the leftover food from the school canteen. This food in question is served free of charge to young people in the evening in the youth centre. By taking the food to a different environment and offering different spices, young people seem to like it more. In addition to reducing food waste, eating together helps young people develop their social and personal skills. During the meal, it is also a good opportunity to talk with the young people about things concerning them.

What to consider: Agree on things with the school/kitchen staff. Discuss how to transport and store food in a practical and efficient way. Also, ensure that any leftover food is recycled appropriately.

DID YOU KNOW? Reducing food waste is one of the UN's (s.a.) Sustainable Development Goals (goal 12; responsible consumption and production). Since 2020, the UN International Food Waste Day has been celebrated on 29 September, providing an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the theme in schools and educational institutions (FAO 2020). For example, you can pilot the good practice above in your own work.

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2. A Vision for a Sustainable Future



Classification: Non-formal education, individual or group advice and guidance.



This practice is part of practical future coaching methods developed in the Ohjaamo Olkkari 2.0 project (2021-2023) in the South Savo region, Finland. The European Social Fund funded the project.

This good practice allows young people to reflect on their own agency and responsibility in shaping their future. The exercise develops young people's future thinking and their social, communication and personal skills. In developing future thinking, an exercise of this kind aims to stimulate thinking about the future and to reflect on how past events have shaped the present. Equally important is to consider how different possible future scenarios depend on choices made today. This exercise combines future thinking and guiding in a new way. The feedback from the young people involved has been good. They have found this exercise interesting and useful in thinking about the future and their own agency and influence. The exercise is perceived as fun and inspiring, and young people often find creative methods effective and enjoyable.

This exercise applies exercises in the framework of futures guidance and future awareness and is intended as a tool for envisioning a sustainable future. This exercise is suitable for anyone over seven and can be applied in various ways.

What material is needed: 2 photographs, one from the past (for example, 50 or 100 years ago) and one from the present. The photographs should depict the same place or city. Paper and some writing/drawing tools are also needed.

What to do: The exercise is simple: Ask the participants to look at the photographs and reflect: What has changed in 50 or 100 years? What has changed for the better and the worse regarding sustainability and environmental well-being? What actions and inventions have changed the world?

Continue the exercise by imagining how the place will change in the next 50 or 100 years (you can decide how far into the future you want the participants to look). What will the place look like? What will happen there? What kind of things would you like to see there? What are the people like? How has the world become more sustainable?

Ask the participants to draw their own visions of the future on paper. The future scenarios can be discussed together. The idea is to imagine things that seem impossible today. At the end of the exercise, you can reflect on What actions are needed to move towards change? How should values, attitudes, and practices change? How can I personally influence the future through my actions and choices?

DID YOU KNOW? In recent years, young people's faith in the future has increased slightly in Finland, even though many young Finns are very pessimistic about it (Kiilakoski 2021, 75). Faith in the future is an important factor affecting life satisfaction (Kallunki & Lehtonen 2012, 369). To support young people in strengthening their faith in the future, we urgently need positive images of the future to counterbalance a world full of threats.

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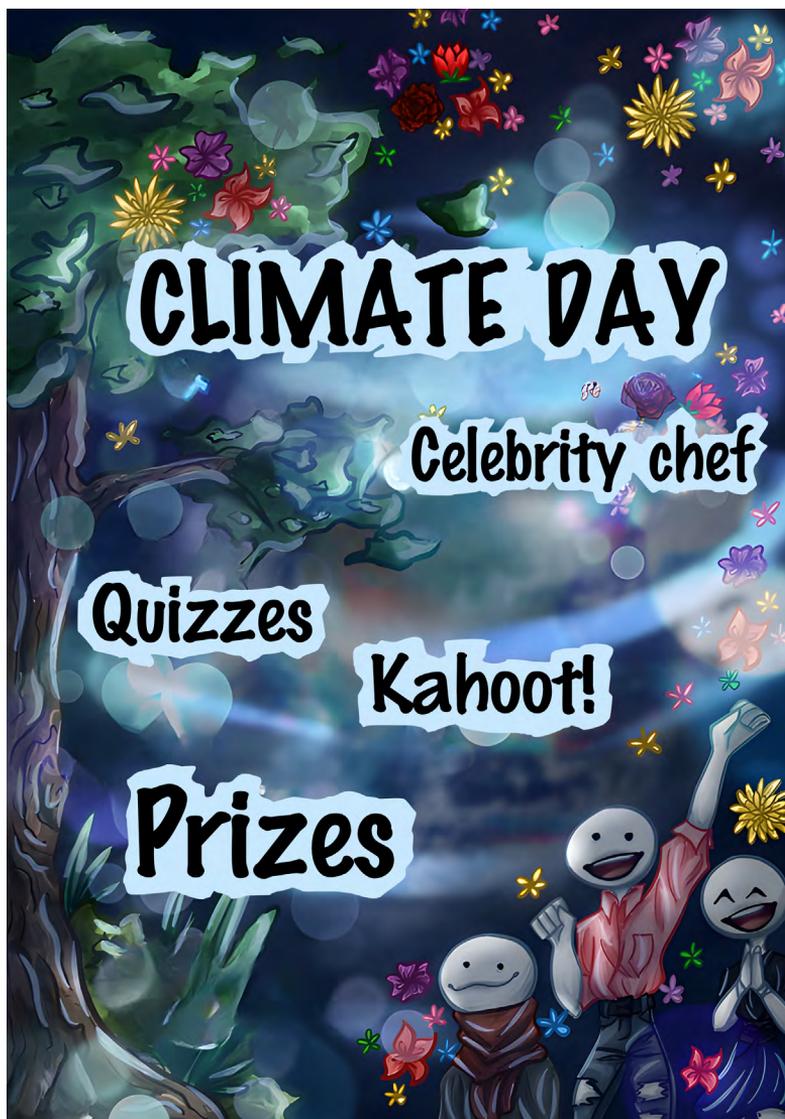
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3. Climate Spring



Classification: Non-formal education.



At the Rantakylä school in Mikkeli, the school youth worker and students participated in a Youth Work Building Climate Hope project. The workshop, organised as part of the project, enabled voluntary students from the secondary level to implement a spring term-long project with various events and activities at school and in their free time, which they named Climate Spring.

Below, you can find five different activities, which can be organised as a series of events or each one separately. Many young people have a strong desire to make a difference. Organising these events with the support of a school youth worker can encourage them to work towards slowing climate change.

Climate workshop

This workshop can start with presentations of experts dealing with Climate change, followed by an idea-collecting phase using Post-it notes. The participants can give practical ideas of what can be done in their own schools to slow climate change and save natural resources. The facilitator then reads the ideas out loud, and ideas on the same topic can be grouped together. The participants discuss the ideas and select a few for further development. This can be done so that everyone has three votes to give with marker pens to different ideas (not their own). Eventually, an action plan will be formulated to promote the ideas. The aim of the workshop is to raise awareness and give young people tools to work together on a project for the climate and the environment.

The Climate Day

When planning a Climate Day, it is important to let the young people bring up as many ideas as they want. Involving young people guarantees a participatory feeling for all school children. The program of a Climate Day can include a theme-related Kahoot for secondary school children (7-9 grades) and posters created by young

people around the school with information via QR codes on climate-related topics such as recycling, emissions, transport, vegetarian food, etc. The young people who make the posters and the Kahoot learn a lot more about the topic, but the young people who read the posters and participate in the quizzes behind the QR codes get new information. One attractive way to promote the theme during Climate Day is by serving vegetarian food to the whole school. This might require external funding. Afterwards, it's important to collect feedback from participants who took part in this kind of different school day, for example, whether the young people found the vegetarian food tasty and whether they would like to see it served at school again.

Earth Hour Day

The Global Earth Hour is every March. It can be part of the Climate Spring activities. The students write promises to the world on drawn paper candles and put them on an illustrated tree in the foyer. The pledges are usually related to the theme of sustainable development, such as eating vegetarian food, reducing consumption, or reducing electricity use. The student body board can carry out the activity, and the candles can be displayed for several months in the foyer. The aim is to raise young people's awareness of Earth Hour and environmental activities. In this activity, the young people organise and run the day from the planning stage to its completion. That way, it's guaranteed that it becomes a day that "looks like them". Young people can write their opinions on climate action and tell others how they can influence climate change.

Climate dinner menu competition

This playful competition can be part of the Earth Hour event. A competition is launched by the student board or a group of volunteers with the help of a school youth worker. The task in the competition is to come up with an eco-friendly three-course dinner. The teachers or a nearby restaurant owner can decide the final winner. Young participants are encouraged to be creative and come up with a plant-based or otherwise more environmentally friendly three-course meal. This encourages young people to think about more ethical food options and provides information about the topic. The competing proposals of the dishes are presented to other students. The winners are awarded in a sustainable way.

What to consider: Sometimes, you need extra funding for certain school activities. Be active and build networks to find out how to get supporting funds from youth organisations, local action groups, foundations, etc.

DID YOU KNOW? In 2020 and 2021, the Climate Change Power project financed 100 youth climate projects, which were planned and executed by the youth themselves. These kinds of events were funded: an escape room, a climate café, collecting trash, cooking vegetarian food, planting trees, climate workshops for schoolmates, a book fair with the theme of climate and environment, and street events. (Talvitie & Puurula s.a.)

Clothes exchange market

During the Climate Spring, a clothes exchange market can be organised at the school. This can be organised by the student body board. Young people are allowed to bring and take away each other's clothes at the market. The necessary equipment can be borrowed from a flea market or other organisers of similar events. During the clothes exchange market, videos can be shown on the theme of sustainable development, for example, on how old clothes can be refurbished and recycled.

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4. Click and Grow



Classification: Non-formal education.



Click & Grow was founded in 2009 in Estonia. Mattias Lepp is the founder of Click & Grow. After reading a NASA report about growing plants in space, Mattias Lepp became inspired to develop the first-ever indoor garden that took care of plants automatically. After working with universities around the world to fine-tune the technology, the concept of the Click & Grow Smart Garden was born. (Click & Grow 2023.)

The Smart Garden 3 is an innovative indoor garden that cares for itself and grows fresh, flavourful herbs, fruits, and vegetables for you. Click and Grow offers biodegradable plant pods that have seeds and nutrients inside. (Click & Grow 2023.) All the classes from 1-9 have their own Click and Grow systems in their classrooms. The class will be a team with the class teacher or with the school youth worker, who will select what herb, fruit, vegetables, or flowers they want to grow in their class. The Selection process is a good way to learn teamwork skills. All the students have to agree on what their class wants to grow. Youth workers help them reach a consensus. When the right product is selected, then make an order on the web page and wait for it to be delivered. Put the pods on the system, add water, and let it grow. All the class members make sure that the plant has everything it needs to grow. Students have to add water, see if the growing environment is right, etc. Youth workers are making sure that youngsters do not neglect the plants. The youth worker, together with the students, can observe the plant's growth, and they can discuss the growing process. When the herbs, fruits or vegetables are ready, then it is possible to use the products in the cooking lessons. When youngsters see how a vegetable or fruit grows, the likelihood is greater that they will taste and eat it more willingly. This method is a way to introduce youngsters to different plants. If the class is growing flowers, decorating your class with them is possible.

What to consider: You should have funding for this good practice. Salme Primary School got funding from the local municipality's hobby education and hobby activities project. The Click and Grow web page has a Smart Garden 3 setup guide.

DID YOU KNOW? Today, 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas. Indoor plants are proven to improve health through consumption, reduce stress, and improve air quality and overall happiness. (Click & Grow 2023.)

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5. Celebrating the International Day of Forests



Classification: Non-formal education, leisure.



In EPAMAC, a Professional Agricultural School, this activity is usually organised in November, since on 23rd November it's celebrated The Native Forest Day (EEA Grants Portugal s.a.); it may also be held as part of the celebration of the International Day of Forests on March 21st (United Nations s.a.) or at other times. The main point is that the time suits the school's schedule and favourable weather conditions are met.

This is a holistic practice that combines reforestation efforts with educational awareness. The main goal is to engage students, promote collaboration between the school community and contribute to the long-term preservation of native forests. This activity makes it possible to address the ongoing environmental challenges, such as the destruction caused by fires. Particular emphasis is given to planting native species; examples in Portugal include oaks, strawberry trees, chestnut trees, laurels, cork oaks, etc. (EPAMAC, s.a.). With this activity, students take responsibility for forest care and environmental conservation. The long-term impact of this initiative is not only the physical reforestation but also the cultural shift towards a more environmentally conscious society.

Engaging with forests has been observed to have significant mental health benefits, fostering increased positive emotions while simultaneously reducing stress, depression, fatigue, and overall anxiety levels. The experience of being in a forest environment has been linked to increased self-esteem, renewed vitality, and enhanced attention capacity. Particularly notable are the positive effects on children's mental and social development, underlining the importance of exposure to nature in their formative years. (FAO, 2020).

Who to invite: The primary participants, students, should be invited to participate actively in the celebration. They will play a central role in tree-planting activities and awareness campaigns. Involve teachers from different disciplines to integrate environmental topics into their curriculum leading up to the event. They can also supervise and guide students during tree-

planting activities. If you want to hold a broader event, you can invite parents, families, and local community members to participate in the celebration.

Who to collaborate with: Collaborate with environmental experts or representatives from environmental organisations to provide guidance and resources, lead educational sessions and assist in organising the event. Extend invitations to local authorities, such as municipal officials or environmental agencies, to garner support and showcase the school's and student's commitment to environmental sustainability. Partnership with local businesses to offer logistical support, such as tree procurement and other necessary materials. Lastly, permissions, approvals, additional resources, and grants should be sought for such initiatives near relevant government agencies.

What to consider: Ensure the initiative's sustainability by creating a long-term plan to maintain and monitor the planted trees. Document the progress and impact over the years, involving the broader school community in the celebration to maximise awareness and participation.

DID YOU KNOW? Over the years, the Native Forest Day project has led to the planting of more than 400 new trees in the region of Marco de Canaveses, in Portugal, with a particular focus on reforesting areas that have been devastated by fires, covering approximately 1.2 hectares.

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6. Ecosystems and Biodiversity Preservation – “Sea Starts Here”



Classification: Non-formal education.



This program is available to every municipality and educational institution in Portugal participating in the Eco-Schools network (O Mar Começa aqui s.a.). The Foundation for Environmental Education manages this global initiative, which has been implemented in Portugal by ABAE (now called ABAAE—Associação Bandeira Azul de Ambiente e Educação) since 1996. Its goal is to motivate and acknowledge the outstanding efforts made by schools in promoting Environmental Education for Sustainability (Eco-Escolas s.a.).

The "Sea Starts Here" project engages youth in addressing the critical issue of improper waste disposal affecting water ecosystems. This initiative emphasises active citizenship, encouraging students to creatively express the environmental impact of waste on drainage systems and spreading the message that everything that falls to the ground ends up in the sea. (O Mar Começa Aqui s.a.). Through multidisciplinary integration, students conduct research, culminating in visual representations painted next to school gutters. The project extends beyond classrooms, involving the community in a collective effort to raise awareness and promote sustainability, creating a lasting impact on environmental consciousness among youth.

What to do: Ensure that key stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, and local authorities, are on board and establish collaboration with local or national environmental organisations, such as ABAAE in Portugal. These partnerships will provide the necessary framework and resources for the project. Conduct an introductory session about topics such as the contamination of waterways, water cycle, and marine pollution, among others. (O Mar Começa Aqui s.a.). If possible, try to integrate the project into the school curriculum, particularly in subjects like Sciences, Arts, Citizenship, or similar. Allocate time for students to research the challenges oceans face and the consequences for life. This will allow students to understand the scientific aspects to support the creative process. The youngsters should create an artwork/visual representation to be painted next to a gutter or storm drain at the entrance of the school facilities and/or in its surroundings. It is suggested that, for example, a competition be organised to decide which images will be painted by the participants. (O Mar Começa Aqui s.a.).

What material is needed: It is recommended that a water-based acrylic exterior paint, ideally one designed to be applied to cement, brick, or stone, be used. Alternatively, paints that are more suitable for children or chalk can be used; however, they will be less durable.

DID YOU KNOW? 218 million people are at risk of more severe and frequent flooding due to plastic pollution blocking drainage systems, which represents 3% of the global population, equivalent to the populations of the UK, France and Germany combined. Of these, 41 million are infants, elderly people or people with disabilities who are at particularly high risk of suffering severe health impacts. (Tearfund 2023, 21).

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7. Environmental Sustainability in Fashion



Classification: Non-formal education.



This activity was promoted by the Goethe-Institut in Greece. The Goethe-Institut in Greece, serving as the Federal Republic of Germany's global cultural institute, has been fostering German-Greek cooperation, the study and teaching of the German language, and cultural exchange since its establishment in 1952, making the Goethe-Institut Athen the oldest in the network. (Goethe Institut s.a.a.)

This good practice empowers students by fostering awareness and critical thinking about Fast Fashion. Through engaging activities, it encourages creative expression, highlights the environmental impact of clothing choices, and promotes the values of sustainability. Students learn about the difference between Fast and Sustainable Fashion and actively participate in designing eco-friendly clothing. The personalised badges or stickers which students will produce serve as a tangible reminder, sparking reflections on how individual choices contribute to a greener and fairer future. This interactive session aims to instil lifelong values, emphasising the importance of considering the environment in everyday decisions, especially in the realm of fashion. (Goethe Institut s.a.b.)

What to do: Begin with a brief discussion on clothing and why we wear different types of clothes. You can show images or illustrations of various clothing items and ask students to share their thoughts on their favourite types of clothing. Introduce the term "Fast Fashion" in simple language, explaining its meaning and discussing the impact on the environment and the importance of making mindful choices when buying clothes. You can show examples of Fast Fashion and Sustainable Fashion and engage the students in a discussion about the differences they observe and what makes a piece of clothing sustainable. Then, they can create drawings or illustrations of clothing items under each category using markers and crayons.

What material is needed: A board or flip chart, images or illustrations representing different types of clothing, writing and colouring material and paper.

What to consider: You can include a craft activity by inviting the youngsters to decorate

small badges or stickers with symbols or drawings representing sustainable choices. They can wear these badges as a reminder to make eco-friendly clothing choices. Don't forget to do a debriefing for the students to share their drawings and express what they learned.

DID YOU KNOW? In Europe, it's estimated that around 20% of clothing purchased online is returned, meaning that for every five pieces sold, one is sent back. It's estimated that between 22% and 43% of all clothing returned from online shopping is destroyed. Approximately 4-9% of all textile products introduced to the market in Europe are discarded without ever being used. This equates to an annual destruction of about 264,000 to 594,000 tonnes of textiles. (European Environment Agency 2024.)

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DEMOCRACY EDUCATION

Democracy education refers to the process of preparing individuals to be informed, active, and responsible citizens in a society. The goal is to instil an understanding of democratic principles, values, and practices and to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for meaningful participation in civic and political life. Democracy education can take place in formal settings, such as schools and educational institutions, as well as through informal channels like community organisations and online platforms. It plays a vital role in shaping individuals into active and engaged participants in democratic societies, contributing to the health and sustainability of democratic governance. (EUDEC s.a.) In this context, the convergence of democracy and the commons in education amplifies the principles of participation, equity, and sustainability. Through participatory decision-making processes, stakeholders collectively govern the allocation and use of educational resources, ensuring that they serve the common good. This bottom-up approach promotes transparency, accountability, and social cohesion within educational communities. (Pechtelidis & Kioupkiolis 2020.)

Democracy education in schools and educational institutions

Democracy education in schools and educational institutions is vital to preparing

students for active and responsible citizenship. This involves integrating civic education into the curriculum, covering topics such as government structures, individual rights, and the historical evolution of democracy. Emphasis is placed on developing critical thinking skills, enabling students to analyse information and engage in informed decision-making. Practical civic skills, such as effective communication and problem-solving, are also cultivated to empower students in community engagement and public discourse. Classroom activities like debates and discussions provide opportunities for students to express their opinions and understand diverse perspectives. Furthermore, democracy education fosters an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and promotes respect for others. Through simulations, mock elections, and community service projects, students gain hands-on experiences in the democratic process and learn the importance of civic participation. Media literacy components are integrated to teach students how to critically assess information sources in the digital age. (EUDEC s.a.)

Why is it important to address democracy education?

Democracy relies on an informed and engaged citizenship. For that, education equips individuals with the knowledge and critical

thinking skills necessary to understand the complexities of democratic systems, make informed decisions, and actively participate in civic life. While at the same time, it fosters a sense of shared values, and understanding and promotes social cohesion. It helps build tolerance and respect for diversity, essential components of a thriving democratic society. Democracy Education prepares individuals to contribute positively to their communities and the broader society as it preserves and strengthens democratic institutions. Informed citizens are better equipped to hold leaders accountable, participate in political processes, and actively contribute to the democratic governance of their societies. Moreover, democracy education will contribute to the development of responsible and ethical citizens, instilled with a sense of civic duty and social responsibility. In an era of rapid technological advancements and information overload, democracy education also addresses the importance of media literacy. It helps individuals navigate the digital landscape, critically evaluate information, and distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources, safeguarding the integrity of democratic discourse. Democracy education is a cornerstone for the sustainability and vitality of democratic societies, ensuring that the principles of democracy are understood, valued, and actively upheld by the citizenry (EUDEC s.a.).

Youth work for democracy education in schools and educational institutions.

Youth involvement in democracy education within schools and educational institutions is pivotal for cultivating a vibrant civic culture. By serving as peer educators, students can share their insights on democracy, critical

thinking, and civic engagement in ways that resonate with their peers. Initiatives led by students, such as debates, mock elections, and community service projects, provide tangible examples of democratic principles in action. Collaborating with educators, youth can contribute valuable perspectives to enhance the effectiveness of democracy education methods. Leveraging digital platforms, participating in student government, and engaging in community outreach further amplify the impact of youth-driven democracy education efforts. Advocacy for inclusive education, media literacy campaigns, and initiatives promoting global citizenship showcase the comprehensive approach youth can take to foster a deeper understanding of democracy. By actively participating in these endeavours, youth enrich their civic understanding and contribute significantly to the development of an informed, engaged, and responsible citizenry within the educational landscape. (EUDEC s.a.)

How can democracy education be enhanced in schools?

Enhancing democracy education in schools requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond textbooks and lectures. Integrating democratic principles into the curriculum across various subjects, educators can employ interactive teaching methods such as debates, simulations, and group discussions to encourage active student engagement. Real-world applications of democratic concepts, including discussions on current events, help students see the relevance of their learning. Inclusivity is crucial, ensuring that democracy education represents diverse perspectives and backgrounds. Extracurricular activities

like student government and community service projects provide practical experiences that reinforce classroom learning. Ongoing professional development for educators, technology integration, and assessments that evaluate students' understanding contribute to the effectiveness of democracy education. Additionally, fostering partnerships with local organisations, involving parents, and incorporating global perspectives enrich the learning experience, emphasising the importance of democracy both within and beyond the school walls. Ultimately, a multifaceted approach that combines curriculum development, interactive teaching methods, and community involvement is key to cultivating informed and engaged citizens through democracy education in schools. (EUDEC s.a.)

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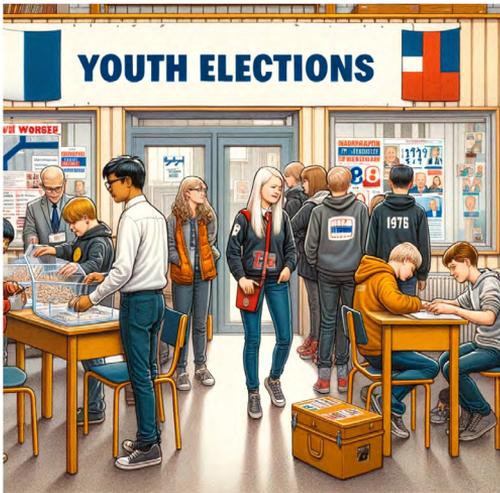
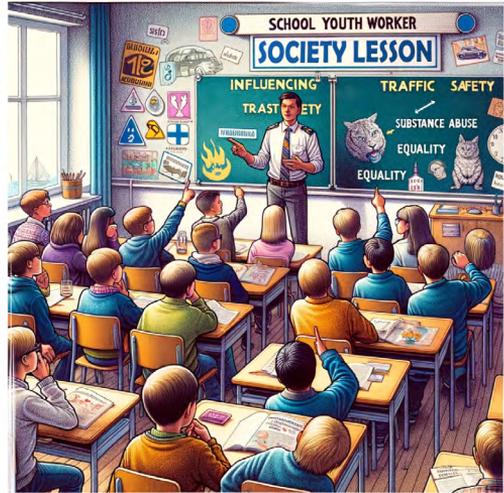
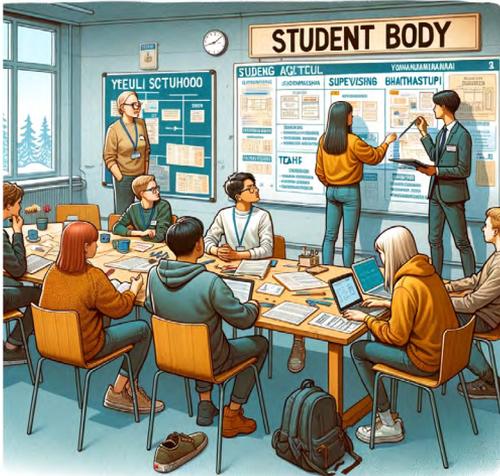
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8. Four Democracy Education Practices in One School



Classification: Non-formal education, participation, leisure.



The Ylämylly school in Liperi operates in three units. The good practice presented here has been implemented in the Patteristo unit (grades 7-9), which has around 450 pupils.

Democracy education is a very topical issue in the current global context. In Finland, democracy education for children and young people is highlighted in the National Democracy Programme, the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme, and the basic education curriculum (Tujula 2023, 13). Many schools and educational institutions are working hard to promote it. The focus is on participation, the experience of belonging to a community and society, and the opportunity to influence common issues.

Four different good practices that promote democracy education are presented below. These have all been implemented in one school, with youth work as an integral part. However, the practices are independent of each other, and democracy education can also be promoted by, for example, choosing one to implement and adapting it to suit your school.

Student Body activities

The school youth worker is involved in guiding Student Body activities and coordinating the activities with the supervising teacher. Tasks are shared according to their schedules, and most activities are jointly managed. Both attend weekly board meetings, as well as at the meetings of the board's chairmanship. Four times a school year, a meeting is held with the principal to discuss current observations and topics that concern both pupils and staff. The teacher and the school youth worker bring the Student Body board greetings to these staff meetings, and the board of chairmanship presents issues at staff meetings if necessary.

There are two ways of electing members of the Student Body: by voting, one representative

from each class is elected. In addition, any student can sign up for the activity. These pupils are interviewed by the school youth worker and the supervising teacher before the final selection is made. In addition to the various initiatives taken by the Student Body, they also maintain a breakfast kiosk twice a week, and the coffee machine, for example, is paid for by the Student Body. An event and communication team has also been set up, which is responsible for these activities and supervised by the school youth worker and the teacher, who share responsibility. Several events and theme weeks are organised each year. The youth leaders of the youth facilities, working in connection with the school, are often involved in the events organised during their free time.

Around 40 pupils are involved in Student Body activities. However, some events can be organised by those interested, even if they are not on the Student Body board. Surveys and workshops are used to gather the views of all pupils in the school on a particular issue, which can then be taken forward by the student body. The pupils can participate in these workshops/surveys during recess, guided by a school youth worker or during the class supervisor's weekly recesses. Student Bodies are a visible part of the school's daily life, with pupils being active and many participating in the activities. The school youth worker groups the student body board twice a year and acts as an equal counsellor for the school community, together with the teacher.

Youth elections in conjunction with the national elections.

The school youth worker, together with the history and social studies teachers and the 9th

graders, organises youth elections in conjunction with the national elections. The voting place is the youth facilities located by the school. In the run-up to the elections, young people can find out about the candidates to be elected, party themes and voting practices. The school youth worker is also responsible for elections outside school hours when secondary school students under 18 can vote. The school youth worker guides election officials in their work, collects results and shares information about the elections and their results together with teachers and pupils, including through youth work communication channels. Youth elections are, first and foremost, a learning and teaching event for young people: Young people learn about elections, parties, and candidates and get hands-on experience in voting. It also provides important information on what young people think about elections and influence.

Society lessons for 8th graders

The school youth worker teaches society studies (2 hours) to each 8th-grade class every year. The social studies lessons include issues such as influencing, traffic safety, substance abuse and equality. The lessons encourage young people to take responsibility for their own actions and provide information about their rights. The lessons are functional and participatory/inclusive. The school youth worker is responsible for planning and guiding the lessons. Practical arrangements must be agreed with the school staff.

Visitors and theme weeks

Guests are sometimes invited to visit during the recess. The visitors come from different fields,

such as 4H, parish youth work and police, or represent different professions, such as neuropsychiatric coaches or sports instructors. In the coming school year, the youth worker can invite different experts to the theme weeks to meet the pupils during recess, e.g., during anti-racism week, substance abuse prevention week, traffic safety week, etc. Through the visitor, pupils can find hobbies, peer support, new perspectives, and ways of doing things.

DID YOU KNOW? In Finland, student bodies/councils are compulsory in comprehensive schools, and students must have the opportunity to participate in school activities and express their opinions on matters related to their status as students (Tujula 2023, 13). Research shows that the whole school community, both pupils and staff, benefits from pupils having a say in their own school. Pupils develop their interpersonal skills and increase their self-confidence. The pupils' happiness also increases. (Davies et al. 2005 cited in Tujula 2023, 17.)

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9. Experience Narratives from (write your suburb, school or place here!)



Classification: Non-formal education, participation, leisure.



This model was developed in cooperation between the Youth Research and Development Centre Juvenia of the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences and the LUT University in Lahti Mukkula suburb Finland using art-based action research (Jokela & Huhmarniemi 2018) and co-research (Kulmala et al. 2023). The project was called Kokemustarinoita Mukulasta - Experience Narratives from Mukkula (Lintumäki et al. 2022), and it was funded by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment's Lähiöohjelma 2020-2022 [The Suburban Research and development program 2020-2022]. The project staff included Aki Lintumäki (Juvenia), Jarmo Rinne (Juvenia) and Anne Pässilä (LUT).

Experience Narratives from Mukkula Lahti (Finland): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRiSsB6Ftw>

This good model is based on a socially engaged art process. It promotes the participation and inclusion of young people. The process is based on artistic work using photography, video art and creative writing to create a socially engaged video artwork that expresses young people's experiences of their environment. The model also includes a launch event for the video work and a discussion panel where young people can make their voices heard. Local political decision-makers will be invited to the event and the panel to discuss young people's participation and inclusion. The video artwork is intended to stimulate a dialogue between young people and political decision-makers. This model is a concrete way to promote young people's participation and inclusion at the local level. It also provides an understanding of these phenomena. The whole process aims to make young people's voices better heard in their environment.

Art-based methods can inspire young people and generate tacit knowledge about their environment (Leavy 2020). The model has been developed using a research-based approach in real-life situations. It can be used by any youth or community worker and is almost free of charge.

The description of the process:

1. Getting to know the operating environment

- Reaching (out to) the young people
- Identifying the collaborators
- Building relationships with political decision-makers and youth professionals

2. Starting the fieldwork

- Getting acquainted with young people
- The selection of arts-based methods
- Agreeing on common goals and time schedules

3. Photography tour to the environment

- Interpreting, using photography, places that are meaningful to young people.

- Sharing experimental knowledge between young people and youth workers as well as co-learning

- Making photographs for a video artwork

4. Creative writing at the library

- Interpreting photographic footage through creative writing

- Deepening the young people's experiential knowledge using dialogues of photos and text

- Writing texts for the video artwork

5. The planning of the video artwork and the discussion panel

- Designing together the form and contents of the video artwork (see an example of a video artwork at this [link](#))

- Brainstorming the launch event of the (video) artwork and the contents of the discussion panel

- Agreeing on the division of responsibilities for the event

6. Launch event of the video artwork and the discussion panel

- Introduction to the background of the project to the audience and keynote speeches

- Watching the video artwork and discussion panel

- The final summary of the event and a creative writing exercise

Who to collaborate with: School and educational institution staff, organisations, authorities, and stakeholders. Take advantage of regional actors. Think about who you could cooperate with in this context.

What to consider: This good practice requires commitment and time to achieve the best results. It consists of six stages. The role of the youth worker is to encourage, support and guide young people through all six stages. Ongoing dialogue is important.

DID YOU KNOW? The art process enables an equal encounter between adults and young people, allowing the young person to evolve from passive to active actors. The art process also provides a means of breaking free from the rules and constraints of everyday life and broadening the young person's worldview. Young people can learn new things about themselves and see future possibilities in different ways. (Åstrand 2017, 84-85.)

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10. The Youth Council of Saaremaa Municipality “Youth Cafes”



Classification: Non-formal education, participation.



“Youth cafe” is inspired by the World Cafe method. The World Cafe is a method which makes use of an informal cafe setting for participants to explore an issue by discussing it in small table groups. The idea behind this is to create a space that supports ‘good conversation’, where anybody can talk about things that matter to them. The discussion is held in multiple rounds of 20-30 minutes, with the cafe ambience intended to allow for a more relaxed and open conversation to take place. (Involve 2023.)

The Youth Café takes place once a year and is organised by the local youth council. There is cooperation with the Estonia National Youth Council, local municipalities (invite politicians and active community members, school directors, youth workers, teachers, specialists, entrepreneurs, etc.) and Saaremaa Gymnasium. Youngsters themselves prepare the event, starting with project writing, sharing tasks, choosing different topics (transport, education, mental health and welfare, environment, democracy, equality, etc.), looking for volunteers, compiling a media plan, meal and coffee breaks, facilitator, ice-breaking games etc.

What to do: Create a “special” environment, most often modelled after a café, where people feel invited to contribute. Small round tables covered with a tablecloth, plenty of paper or a flipchart paper tablecloth, coloured pens. There should be 3–6 chairs at each table. As an introduction, the host begins with a word of welcome and an introduction to the World Café process, setting the context and explaining the etiquette of the café. The process begins with the conversation for the small group seated around a table. (Wageningen University and Research 2023.)

It is up to the organisers how long the conversation around one table will last. When the time is up, each member of the group moves to a different new table. A table host stays at the table with 1–2 youngsters, coordinating the discussion around the table and making notes. They will welcome the next group, and a new discussion with new youngsters can start. All the tables have their own topic, which are discussed in this table. The young people should propose the topics to be discussed at the tables. For example, it can be current problems and topics that concern youth lives and their needs. After

the event, gather all the thoughts and make a summary that can be passed on to politicians or the National Youth Council.

Who to invite: Politicians and active community members, such as school directors, youth workers, teachers, specialists, entrepreneurs, etc.

Who to collaborate with: National Youth Council, local municipality, school student representatives, and community members.

DID YOU KNOW? The Youth Council is an advisory participation council consisting of young people. Youth councils enable young people to participate in the decision-making process and protect their interests in the areas concerning them on local and national levels. (European Commission 2023.)

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11. Participatory School Budgeting



Classification: Participation.



The Participatory School Budgeting (OPE) program is a Portuguese initiative that empowers students to engage in development projects to actively enhance their schools. Students are invited to develop clear proposals that must improve the school through the purchase of goods and/or services and the costs of implementing them. These proposals are voted on by the students themselves. (Orçamento Participativo das Escolas s.a.c)

OPE provides an opportunity for students to voice their ideas, participate in decision-making processes, and contribute to improvements that benefit their educational environment and, by extension, the entire school community. It empowers youth to take a proactive role in shaping their educational experience. This program aims to foster a spirit of citizenship and value students' opinions and argumentative capacity (Orçamento Participativo das Escolas s.a.a). They are encouraged to generate ideas, garner support from their peers, and seek votes from fellow students.

What to do: As a real electoral process, it will need a structured and transparent voting mechanism with a defined regulation and timetable that should include the following:

- presentation of the initiative
- development and presentation of proposals
- dissemination and debate of proposals
- voting
- dissemination of results
- planning and implementation of the winning project.

To ensure the proposals represent the collective will of the student body, require that each proposal be endorsed by at least 5% of students with voting rights. This ensures that only well-supported and widely accepted ideas proceed to the voting phase.

Who to collaborate with: In Portugal, the Participatory School Budgeting is funded by the Portuguese Government, reaching a maximum total value of €1 for each voting student from the school. Government grants and funding opportunities are specifically designed for educational initiatives in all countries. Many governments allocate funds for

projects that enhance student engagement and school improvements. Connect with the local municipality or city council to inquire about available funding for educational programs. Ideally, it should be possible to allocate a portion of the school's budget to support the OPE program. However, schools can explore various avenues to secure funding for this initiative, such as reaching out to local businesses or corporations that may be interested in sponsoring, organising community fundraising events, exploring partnerships with non-profit organisations, collaborating with parent-teacher associations to raise funds within the school community, among others.

DID YOU KNOW? Between 2016 and 2018, more than 5,000 proposals were submitted by Portuguese students, and more than 200,000 students took part in the votes each year (Orçamento Participativo das Escolas s.a.a).

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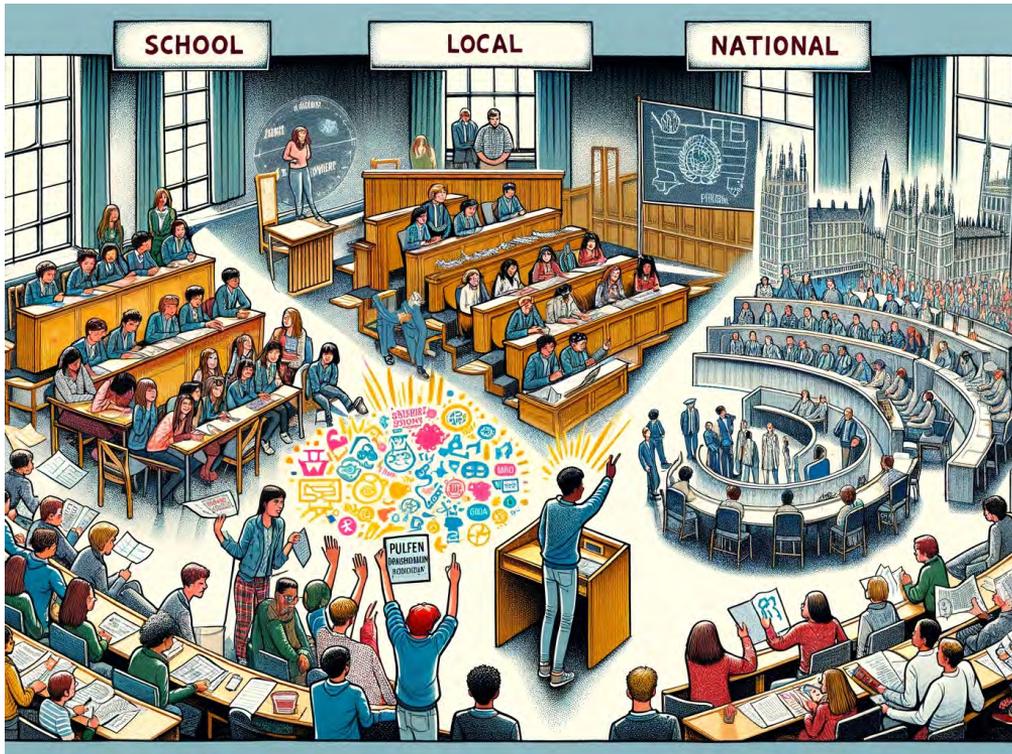
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12. Three Programs for the Participation of Youth in Decision-Making Processes



Classification: Participation.



These mechanisms for the active participation of young people at the school community, local and national levels place the power of decision-making squarely in the hands of its youngest citizens. The suggested programs actively engage youth in shaping their educational environments, municipalities, and even the nation's political landscape. Taken together, these initiatives are an example of how, through schools, it is possible to empower youth. Not only do they foster a spirit of active citizenship, but they also instil democratic values from an early age. All the initiatives presented involve support for students from teachers, youth workers or other professionals who can provide guidance.

Active Participation at the School Level

Student Associations defend the principle of student agency within secondary schools. It serves as a representative structure for students, allowing them to actively engage in school governance, proposing and organising activities, competitions, and partnerships. Crucially, the members of the Student Association are elected annually through a democratic process involving the entire student body of the school. Students organise themselves in lists to be elected, prepare a campaign and the election itself. The initiative empowers students to take responsibility for their school's agenda, teaching them the essence of democratic engagement and the value of active citizenship. The student association represents all the school's students within the school's board.

Active Participation at the Local Level

Municipal Youth Assembly is a program that can be promoted by the City Council, encouraging young students to be active contributors to their communities. Students representing their schools should present innovative ideas, foster civic intervention, exercise their right to citizenship, and uphold the values of democracy. The aim of this activity is to create a platform for young citizens to voice their opinions, helping them recognise the significance of their contributions to community life. Each participant school from the municipality must elect five students, according to criteria to be defined by students/teachers, to be able to constitute a "School Bench" and present their motion on a given topic.

Active Participation at the National Level

Young People's Parliament is an institutional initiative that the governing bodies, like the Assembly of the Republic (the Parliament of Portugal), can adopt to ignite the interest of young people in civic and political participation. Its implementation involves the organisation of several phases during the school year: Discussion of the annual theme in school; Electoral process for the school session; School Session, where the school's Draft Recommendation is approved; District/Regional Sessions; National session where the national youth deputies meet to approve, after debate in committees and plenary, the final recommendation on the theme of that edition. (Assembleia da República s.a.).

DID YOU KNOW? Between the European elections of 2014 and 2019, the involvement of the younger demographic (under 25 years old) increased by 14 percentage points, reaching a participation rate of 42% (Zalc et al. 2019). The European Parliament Youth Survey 2021 indicates that the primary motivations for young people to vote in the European elections include the sense of duty as a citizen (32%), the desire to take responsibility for the future (32%) and the opportunity to have their voices heard (30%) (European Parliament 2021).

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This good practice, taken from the *Compasito Manual on Human Rights Education for Children*, focuses on helping children understand the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by introducing them to specific articles through creative illustrations.

What to do: (drawn from Flowers et al. 2009, 118-121)

- Begin by discussing children's rights to assess the group's familiarity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). If unfamiliar, start with a simpler introduction to children's rights.
- Split the children into small groups (2 to 4 people), providing each with two Cards with Children's Rights, paper, and pens. Have them read the rights aloud, choose the most important one, and explain their choice. Merge groups of up to 8 people. Repeat the process.
- Create a visible list on a flip chart with the "Less Important Rights" and "Our Rights", narrowing down the rights considered most vital.
- Discuss the difficulty of choosing, factors influencing decisions, and whether opinions on the importance of rights changed. Revisit the "Less Important Rights" list, discussing the consequences of their abolition and how their loss would affect individuals personally.
- Debrief by emphasising the principle of universalism in human rights, discussing why everyone needs all their rights, and illustrating how rights are interconnected with examples. Encourage children to reflect on how all rights are essential, regardless of individual priorities, and to consider situations where "less important" rights might be crucial for certain children.

What to consider: When working with younger participants, further clarify certain rights, avoiding legal terms that can be more difficult to understand. As the facilitator, be sure to accept the group decisions without comment, letting any objections come from the children themselves. Search for real-life or fictional examples of situations in which children's rights may have been violated or protected to enhance understanding. (Flowers et al. 2009, 119.)

DID YOU KNOW? *Compasito* has been divided into thirteen themes: Citizenship, Democracy, Discrimination, Education and Leisure, Environment, Family and Other Alternative Forms, Gender Equality, Health and Welfare, Media Information and the Internet, Participation, Peace and Conflict, Poverty and Social Exclusion and Violence. Each one is closely connected to specific human rights, and they are so intertwined that focusing on one inherently connects to others. (Flowers et al. 2009, 29.)

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14. Six Thinking Hats of Commoners



Classification: Non-formal education, participation.



This methodology is also featured in the "Training of Trainers" Handbook. This good practice was part of the initiative under the Erasmus+ Socio-cultural Learning of Youth in Mobile Societies project (SLYMS) - 2018-1-EL02-KA205-004039, aimed at offering non-formal and informal education opportunities for youth and community organisations, focusing on teaching life-relevant knowledge and skills, particularly to those who are disadvantaged and marginalised. (Mitzzy, J. et al. 2019, 1, 78.)

This activity is an effective model for shared understanding, communication, and collaboration. It is particularly relevant when tackling problems that pertain to local concerns, such as environmental issues or community support. It encourages youngsters to take on the roles of each other and collaboratively find solutions. The concept of a "thinking hat" serves as a metaphor for adopting different perspectives on thinking.

What to do: Clearly explain to the participants that each hat colour represents a distinct way of thinking. Assign each participant a hat colour, or if in larger groups, they can take a second hat of each colour. This assignment dictates the perspective from which they should approach the discussion.

Hat colours example based on Mulder (2023):

White – This hat focuses on gathering and analysing available information.

Red – Participants should focus on emotional responses, including both intuitive feelings and gut reactions.

Black – It represents caution and is used to identify potential flaws or obstacles. Participants are encouraged to adopt a critical perspective, identifying the downsides or risks associated with it.

Yellow – It's about maintaining a positive stance throughout, looking for ways to work and succeed, and documenting all positive outcomes.

Green – It creates a space where judgment is suspended, allowing for an abundance of creative thought and the exploration of new possibilities.

Blue – The person wearing the blue hat acts as the session's facilitator, ensuring that the discussion remains productive and on track, determining when and how long each hat should be worn.

Mulder (2023) offers a structured approach for facilitating discussions among participants, emphasising a specific sequence in which individuals contribute based on the colour of the hat they're metaphorically wearing. Central to this methodology is the role of the Blue Hat, which is tasked with initiating and concluding the dialogue.

What to consider: This method can be applied to a local problem (e.g., contaminated water, a bridge breaking down, not enough fish in the lake, or families in poverty). Participants can pretend to be from different places like the countryside, cities, or towns and work together to solve the problem. Using this good practice in a group is time-consuming. Even with this method, people might still have disagreements, and there could be conflicts over differing viewpoints.

DID YOU KNOW? Edward de Bono pioneered the "Six Thinking Hats" technique and authored a book on it in 1985, establishing the foundational framework for this approach (Mulder, 2023).

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15. Sociocracy



Classification: Non-formal education, participation.



Sociocracy is a governance and decision-making methodology that aims to provide a more inclusive and equitable approach to organisational management. It distributes power, promotes collaboration, and fosters consent-based decision-making. Thermi Municipality selected this methodology for its Youth Council. This decision positioned the Youth Council as the first of its kind in Europe to adopt the sociocracy method, highlighting its importance at a European level. (Youth Council of Thermi Municipality s.a..)

Sociocracy is often seen as a more agile and responsive alternative to traditional hierarchical structures or consensus-based decision-making and can create more dynamic and collaborative work environments. Its organisational structure borrows elements of Neighbourhood Parliaments, which started in India and are spreading to various European countries. These elements emphasise the neighbourhood-community level of the municipality and a single link (one representative from each local community of the municipality) in the General Circle of the Youth Council of the Municipality (Youth Council of Thermi Municipality s.a.).

What to do: (drawn from Youth Council of Thermi Municipality s.a.)

- Sociocracy organises people into circles representing specific functions or domains within an organisation. Each circle has its aims and responsibilities. Circles are connected through double linking, meaning that at least one person is represented in the next higher circle, ensuring communication and feedback flow between levels.
- Decision-making in sociocracy is based on seeking consent rather than consensus. This means a proposal can move forward if no one in the circle has reasoned and paramount objections.
- Individuals are elected to specific roles within circles based on their skills and experience. This model can absorb as many people as wish to participate in the Youth Council and has no numerical limitation.
- Circles hold regular meetings, during which feedback is provided, decisions are made, and the circle's work is reviewed. This creates a

continuous feedback loop and adaptability. The Council members' training makes the project simultaneously a laboratory of democracy and active citizenship.

The Sociocratic Circular Method ensures that everyone has a voice, is heard, and actively participates in the decision-making process. This creates a culture of dialogue where opinions are based on arguments rather than authority or majority rule. Decisions are made based on consent rather than following a majority vote that divides participants into 'winners' and 'losers'. It challenges traditional hierarchical structures by promoting horizontal and participatory processes, where power is distributed evenly among participants. Additionally, its dynamic nature allows for adaptability to changing circumstances, ensuring the process is ongoing and responsive to new facts. This method democratises decision-making and cultivates a more engaged and informed community. (Youth Council of Thermi Municipality s.a..)

What to consider: As a facilitator of the Sociocratic model within a Youth Council project, the youth worker will serve as a guide, ensuring that the principles and methodologies are understood and applied effectively. This involves, for example, facilitating the circle meetings. Additionally, the youth worker will be a mentor, providing support and guidance to council members as they navigate their roles within the structure.

DID YOU KNOW? The term “sociocracy” has its roots in Latin and Greek etymology. The literal meaning of the term sociocracy is “rule of the companions”: socio – from Latin socius – means “companion” or “friend”, and the suffix -cracy – from Ancient Greek κράτος (krátos) – means “power”, or “rule”. Combining these elements gives rise to the concept of governing or organising society in a collaborative and cooperative manner. (Sociocracy 3.0 s.a.)

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WELL-BEING WORK

Mental health concept and well-being

Mental health is a state of mental well-being. It is an integral component of health and well-being. Mental well-being enables people to realise their abilities, cope with stress, and learn and work well. Together, it helps us make decisions, build relationships, and shape the world we live in (World Health Organization 2022).

Defining objective well-being with a single definition is challenging because it's hard to get a complete understanding of an individual's well-being. We can use happiness as synonymous with subjective well-being, which can be defined as how individuals rate the quality of their lives (Singh et al. 2023, 11, 12, 13). In the collected examples of well-being practices, we focused on emotional, social, and physical well-being. Emotional well-being can be defined as the overall state of a person's emotions, encompassing their ability to manage ups and downs, maintain positive relationships, and find fulfilment. This definition includes both positive emotions like happiness and the capacity to cope with negatives such as stress. This publication approaches social well-being as social well-being pertains to the quality of relationships, connections, and involvement in one's community. It involves having supportive networks, a sense of belonging, and meaningful interactions, underscoring the significance of healthy social connections for overall happiness and life satisfaction.

Why is well-being work being important in schools?

Schools can directly contribute to supporting the well-being of students, teaching them relevant thinking skills in various subjects. The same activity also helps students better understand and apply the subject knowledge they are learning. (Ots 2014.) Experiences in school can be crucial to the development of self-esteem, self-perception, and health behaviour. Schools have an important role in supporting young people's well-being and acting as buffers against negative health behaviours and outcomes. (Inchley et al. 2016.) When the school atmosphere is cheerful, and the school staff is content, it also positively influences the students. Promoting well-being and development cannot be confined to the classroom alone; attention must be paid to the entire institution - the school climate. Students, parents, and school staff influence the school climate, reflecting the school's overall goals, values, relationships, and teaching methods. Therefore, the school climate encompasses the physical environment but is also shaped by the experiences of various stakeholders in the learning process and communication. (Noorte Vaimse Tervise portaal 2023.)

Well-being work in schools

Next, various proven effective practices are introduced through which youth workers in schools and youth centres can promote and develop well-being. Children spend a large part of the day and year at school, so the experiences there, the relationships created and being involved influence young people in their lives. Schools influence the adoption of healthy behaviours, and these experiences enhance their social connectedness and sense of belonging as well as their self-confidence and motivation for productive participation in society in the future. (World Health Organization 2021.)

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16. Mental Health Promotion Posters and Strength Cards



Classification: Individual or group advice and guidance, support.



MIELI Mental Health Finland is a Finnish mental health organisation whose mission is to promote mental health, provide support for emotional and mental distress, and prevent problems related to mental health. It is one of the oldest active mental health NGOs in the world (Mieli s.a.).

The Mental health posters and Strength cards have been used for years as tools for teachers, student welfare services and youth workers to improve young people's mental health and emotional well-being. The posters and strengths cards can be used as a basis for many exercises, working with individuals and groups. The materials cover topics such as naming and recognising emotions, safety nets and coping skills. The exercises also help young people to develop their interaction and social skills. The materials have been developed at MIELI Mental Health Finland in collaboration with professionals and are available in English. The posters have also been translated into many other languages. Their content is based on researched evidence. MIELI has been training professionals working in schools to use these materials for several years, and they aim to build a society where people can learn mental health skills and talk about mental health safely without stigma. Finland has been successful in integrating mental health skills into the primary school curriculum, and posters and strength cards are one tool to reinforce them.

The poster “Hand of Mental Health”

The poster encourages young people to reflect and discuss their everyday choices and their impact on their mental well-being. For example, how do sleep and rest, food, relationships, emotions, and physical activity affect our mental well-being? The poster helps you identify, care for and strengthen your physical and mental resources. The mental health hand is one way of describing the different aspects of well-being in everyday life. Just as the hand needs all the fingers to function, mental health is maintained

by taking care of the different aspects of well-being through everyday choices. If any one finger is out of play, it impairs the functioning of the whole hand.

The poster can be found at <https://mieli.fi/en/materials/hand-of-mental-health/>.

What to do: Make sure the space is calm and conducive for reflection. Provide writing utensils and paper for all participants. Start by reflecting on the last few weeks. Finger by finger, go through the questions related to each of them and answer in writing “yes” or “no” to them. For example, the questions under “The thumb”, which represents rest and relaxation, are: Have you slept enough? Did you wake up refreshed and rested? Have you been able to concentrate on your tasks during the day? Have you had time to relax and unwind? Have you also had “me time”, i.e., time for yourself?

In the same way, go through all the themes in the hand (see poster), followed by:

- Look through the answers to the questions on each finger. If you answered “yes” to most of the questions, i.e., at least three out of five, leave the finger up. If you answered mostly “no” to at least three out of five, put your finger down.
- Finally, see how many fingers are left up.
- With the remaining fingers, take a pencil and write your signature “with your mental hand.”
- Look at your signature: Does it look like yours? If it does, great! If not, think about what you could do to get more fingers up in the coming weeks.
- You can also follow up by doing the same “test” in two or three weeks.

The poster “Coping Skills”

The poster helps young people become aware of issues that contribute to their mental well-being and resilience, for example, by reflecting on their own coping skills. A healthy mind can cope with everyday disappointments and possible crises. It is important to discuss coping skills with children and young people and consider ways of practising and strengthening them.

The poster can be found at <https://mieli.fi/en/materials/coping-skills-poster/>.

The poster “Roller Coaster of Emotions”

The poster helps examine emotions, how to deal with them and how to put those emotions into words.

The poster can be found at <https://mieli.fi/en/materials/roller-coaster-of-emotions/>.

What to do: Look at the poster image. There are six basic emotions: anger, love, fear, sadness, joy, surprise. Each basic emotion contains many different nuances.

- Reflect on the past week. How many different emotions have you experienced in the past week? Think about how the different emotions are reflected in you.
- If you have experienced a challenging emotion, what has helped you release it? Is your way of releasing the emotion one that does not harm yourself or others? (For example, the coping skills on the coping skills poster are good ways of dealing with challenging emotions.)

- What emotions have you noticed in your friends over the past week? How can you identify different emotional states in others (e.g., tone of voice, facial expressions, body posture)?

The Strength Cards

Strength cards increase positive self-awareness and self-esteem by examining and discussing personal qualities and strengths. Strength cards can, for example, be useful in discussion groups or study/career planning. The cards contain 24 different strengths. In addition to the Strength cards, you can download a list of ideas (available at the link) for activities and use. <https://mieli.fi/en/materials/strength-cards/>

DID YOU KNOW? The School Health Promotion Study provides monitoring data on the health, well-being and services of children and young people in Finland. The 2023 survey is based on nearly 247,000 responses from children and young people. According to the results, about one-third of girls in grades 8 and 9 of primary, secondary and vocational education experienced moderate to severe anxiety. Compared to previous years, the results show an increase in anxiety, especially among girls in grades 8 and 9. Less than 10% of boys of the same age have experienced anxiety between 2019 and 2023. (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, s.a..)

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17. M-Crew – a method to prevent and intervene in bullying



Classification: Non-formal education, individual or group advice and guidance, participation.



The M-Crew -method emerged in 2014 in cooperation with youth work and comprehensive education at Martinlaakso Comprehensive School (Finland). According to the national School Health Promotion study, Martinlaakso school has the lowest bullying rate of all 19 schools in Vantaa with upper grades. The M-Crew method has proven good results and has attracted national interest in Finland. Over the past year, its practices have been successfully disseminated through various online webinars. Kari Järvinen, a school youth worker at Martinlaakso School, and the school lecturers Kalle Salokannel and Satu Sorvari developed the M-Crew method.

M-Crew is an effective practice for engaging young people in preventing and intervening with bullying. The method is implemented in cooperation with pupils, youth work and school staff. The method is flexible and can be used to create locally appropriate practices. In addition to preventing and intervening with bullying, the model empowers the young people involved, allowing them to take more responsibility and be seen in a new role. The aim is to promote safety in schools and make anti-bullying work visible by involving young people. It also promotes a sense of community in the school and strengthens and develops multi-professional cooperation.

M-Crew has many interfaces for tutoring activities and can be used, for example, to develop them. It can also be introduced in schools as a completely new method of anti-bullying work. It is desirable to involve a youth worker from the youth services or a school youth worker who can commit to working time to implement the activity. (Järvinen et al. 2021, 135–140.)

This method is based on pre-assigned young people (8th and 9th graders) volunteering to “patrol” the school premises during recess and spend time with the other school’s students. Participation in the M-Crew activity is voluntary, and a commitment is made for one academic year. Young people from diverse backgrounds, representing the school and district demographics, are encouraged to participate. (Järvinen et al. 2021, 135–136.) The selection process will seek to consider young people who would benefit from being involved and who would not normally participate in similar activities on their own initiative.

Young volunteers walk in pairs daily in the school’s corridors and yard during recess. There are 1-2 “walking shifts” per pair/week; the youth worker can accompany them if possible. They talk and hang out with the students at school. They also intervene in “minor” bullying situations, which are often resolved on the spot. They monitor the general atmosphere and report their observations to M-Crew’s instructors, who take the more severe bullying cases for further action if necessary. In addition, they also represent the school at various events and visit different classrooms, talking about the M-Crew activities. There are also specific meetings for those young volunteers, organised by the M-Crew instructors. (Järvinen et al. 2021, 139.)

The role of the M-Crew instructors is very important in the implementation of M-Crew. The instructors are responsible for planning and organising the activities. They mentor and guide the young volunteers in the activities and tasks and support them in the school’s everyday life by, for example, asking how the volunteers are doing, talking with them and being easily accessible. The instructors also organise separate activities for the volunteers, such as different meetings and events to get to know each other better and as a thank you (e.g., by organising a movie night for them). (Järvinen et al. 2021, 140.)

Process description: (drawn from Järvinen et al. 2021, 136–138)

- The selection of new members of M-Crew takes place in the spring. The school staff and the young people currently involved in the activities make proposals for “new” volunteers. The aim is to get 10–12 young people (from 8th to 9th grade) to participate in the activity.

- Remember also to select M-Crew instructors from the school staff and youth services who are interested in supporting young people's growth and willing to commit to M-Crew's activities.
- "Grouping the new M-Crew group" using different grouping methods (e.g., camping) to get to know each other better. It is important to go through the rules, responsibilities, and obligations for participation so that young people understand what they are committing to. The complexity of the phenomenon of bullying and the forms it can take should also be discussed. Each volunteer signs a contract agreeing to abide by the common rules of the M-Crew method. It is essential to create the conditions for communication and to distribute M-Crew hoodies to the young volunteers. The hoodie is always worn when working on an M-Crew "task". This is important in terms of the activity, as it is how children and young people recognise the M-Crew members.
- Once a year, feedback is collected from students (survey) and school staff to evaluate M-Crew activities.

What to consider: This good practice requires commitment and time from young people, school staff and youth workers to achieve the best results. After the implementation, the aim is for the method to become an ongoing practice.

DID YOU KNOW? The School Health Promotion study provides monitoring data on the health, well-being and services of children and young people in Finland. The 2023 survey is based on nearly 247,000 responses from children and young people. Bullying in schools is quite common in Finland, and unfortunately, according to the results, the number of children who are bullied at least once a week has started to rise. Just under one in ten pupils in the fourth and fifth grades and the eighth and ninth grades of basic education had experienced weekly bullying by other pupils. (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare 2023.)

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18. Outdoor Classroom and Class



Classification: Non-formal education.



An outdoor classroom refers to spaces outside the traditional classroom where learning occurs. Learning outside is beneficial to students' well-being and is a great way to renew their enthusiasm for learning. (Twinkl 2023.)

Salme Primary School has an outdoor classroom so that teachers can take lessons outdoors. Youth workers can use the class during the break time or after school. Youth workers can organise many non-formal activities, such as team-building exercises, games, group work, workshops, and discussions. Youngsters will be outside and in a different environment than usual. Teachers can link formal lessons with non-formal education. Outdoors, they can use different methods to make school lessons more interactive. Fresh air and moving outdoors make youngsters more receptive to the topics the youth workers and teachers are going through. Youngsters like when lessons are different, and they are learning more.

Learning outdoors is a fun, novel experience for kids and helps them focus once they return to the classroom (Suttie 2018). The new theoretical knowledge can be applied in practice. A non-formal environment helps children feel more relaxed and does not create as much tension as can happen in a school classroom. Outdoor classrooms also provide children with opportunities to develop their social skills and emotional literacy. By playing with their peers, they polish their communication skills and build their ability to interact well with others. They can also develop social bonds and friendships through their shared experiences and enjoy building relationships in an easy-going environment. These friendships can also help students while working in indoor classrooms and make their overall school experience more enjoyable. (Twinkl 2023.)

What to do:

- Leisure time activities: Different games, team building activities, discussions, workshops.
- Art: Youngsters can use everything they find in nature to create a picture.
- Mathematics: Youngsters can roll snowballs, find their diameter, and calculate the area of

a yard; the possibilities are endless.

- Science, geography, physical education, physics, and chemistry can all be taught outdoors and outside the classroom.

Who to collaborate with: Local companies and entrepreneurs. You can use the natural environment and invite specialists in the field to speak in the classes, during breaks, or after school.

DID YOU KNOW? One of the physical benefits of the outdoor classroom is the development of a healthy attitude towards living an active lifestyle. Children are encouraged to engage in regular physical activities with their peers by playing outdoors regularly. By enjoying outdoor play, children begin to establish healthy habits that could help reduce their chance of struggling with health conditions such as diabetes and obesity. (Twinkl 2023.)

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19. The School that Invites You to Move – Two activities



Classification: Non-formal education.



The educational innovation program Liikuma Kutsuv Kool (The School that Invites You to Move) was created based on the international science, research, and development of the movement laboratory of the University of Tartu and the experiences of schools participating in the program. It aims to support schools in offering the joy of movement to students and teachers every school day. The Salme Primary School and Kuressaare Hariduse School are two institutions that are part of the program. (Tartu Ülikooli Liikumislabor 2023.)

Movement is both a necessity and an opportunity. Research shows that better opportunities to have physical activity in different places at school are associated with greater enjoyment of school and better academic results. In today's sedentary age, movement is not a natural part of the day for children but needs conscious guidance and encouragement, including during the long school day. (Tartu Ülikooli Liikumislabor 2023.)

The Challenge of Movement

Kuressaare Hariduse School started the Challenge of Movement during COVID-19 restrictions. The aim of the challenge was to get students outdoors and give them extra motivation. The first challenge took place in May 2020, and the purpose was to collect as many kilometres as possible during the challenge period. The results were compared to those of other schools daily. They set the goal for 40,075 kilometres in one week as it's the perimeter of Earth. They gathered over 2732 responses from 781 people (students + school staff). In 2021, they gathered movement minutes and got 5710 responses from 810 people. In 2022, they gathered steps and got 1389 responses from 370 people.

What to do: You should choose the period for the challenge and inform school members about this kind of challenge. Make rules and give students and school staff information on how to participate. Participants must have a device (phone or watch) with which they can gather kilometres, steps, or minutes. You can give recommendations about what app

participants can download into their phones for the challenge. You can use a form that the participants can fill in to get the data about people's steps, kilometres, or minutes. Make an Excel table where you can enter the participants' results. Also, it is useful for making summaries and helps to find the best participants. For extra motivation, the challenge winners can receive awards. There can be different categories - best teacher, best participant, best class, best student from each class, best from the school level, etc.

VUNKiga to school

Salme Primary School came up with the movement VUNKiga to School, an activity to promote moving among students and school staff. The objective is for young people to walk to school rather than being driven by their parents. Different activities can be linked to this activity - individually and as a group. For example, two groups — one consisting of students and school staff gathered a certain distance away from the school, and the other formed in front of the school — are set to begin walking towards each other at a specified time. Upon meeting, they will then return to the school as one group. You can determine the distance to be covered and the walking pace.

What to consider: You can boost the activity by going to nature and collecting garbage in the forest or on the roadside, linking it to interpersonal communication and teamwork skills, adding orientation, or creating a playful output (treasure hunt).

DID YOU KNOW? All children and young people between the ages of 5 and 17 should be actively moving for 60 minutes every day. This is a prerequisite for their health, development, and learning ability. Studies show that less than half of Estonian children exercise enough. By day of the week, there is a big difference between school days and weekends—physical activity is significantly lower on the weekend; only 29% are sufficiently active. (Tartu Ülikooli Liikumislabor 2023.)

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20. I am...



Classification: Individual or group advice and guidance, support, leisure.



The “I am...” activity was developed with 39 students in the 1st cycle of education (6-10 years old) of Escola Básica de Ladário (Primary School). However, it can also be adapted for younger people in higher age groups. Each class had a weekly 1-hour session facilitated by two carers with training in the area.

”I am...” is a transformative activity that takes a holistic approach to supporting the students’ personal growth and development. It focuses on a very special theme—self-awareness as human beings. Through guidance meditation, it aims to assist youngsters in recognising their unique qualities, nurturing their talents, teaching them to express their gifts within the world, and helping them grow in a balanced way.

In this activity, the facilitators integrated the students’ routine methodologies, such as guided meditation, conscious breathing, yoga postures, mindfulness games, and art and music therapy, to offer them tools for self-discovery. The different sessions took place both inside and outside the classroom whenever weather conditions allowed.

All the students, teachers, and parents involved have shared the positive changes that meditation and mindfulness practices have brought to their lives. They have nurtured their personal growth and contributed to an overall sense of well-being. This early introduction of mindfulness practices at a young age helped lay a strong foundation for self-awareness and personal development, enhancing their academic performance and fostering the growth of better individuals (Oaklander 2015).

Who to collaborate with: Benefit from the existing staff at the school or youth centre. Someone with the necessary training may be able to facilitate the sessions. Otherwise, it will be necessary to seek collaboration with meditation and mindfulness instructors to provide the training sessions. Additionally, encouraging parental involvement through parent-teacher associations or similar will ensure that the mindfulness practices can be reinforced at home.

DID YOU KNOW? One in seven youngsters in the world aged 10 to 19 is affected by a mental disorder. Conditions like anxiety and depression can impact school attendance, having negative repercussions on students’ learning. The repercussions of untreated mental health issues during youth extend into adulthood, exerting adverse effects on both physical and mental well-being. (World Health Organization 2021.)

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21. SMS+Green Care



Classification: Non-formal education, support.



The "SMS+Green Care" project is a collaborative initiative promoted by Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Marco de Canaveses (SCMMC) in partnership with EPAMAC (Marco de Canaveses Professional School of Agriculture and Rural Development) implemented between 2019 and 2022. It was supported by funding from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation within the Aging in the Community Program framework. "SMS" is a Portuguese acronym that stands for "Mobile Health Service". (SCMMC s.a..)

This good practice aims to take a significant step towards improving the well-being and general physical and mental health of the younger and older generations. Implementing a project like SMS+Green Care involves combining the domains of environmental connection and intergenerational bonding.

The project is driven by a philosophy centred on the principles of "Love, Walk, and Learn." These principles guide the design and execution of activities that go beyond the conventional boundaries of education. Instead, they encompass the holistic well-being of the elderly participants and the educational enrichment of the students. This project is a testament to how the intersection of agricultural practices with social well-being can create a positive, lasting impact on students and the broader community.

What to do: Inspired by the project, form a bridge between generations organising horticultural activities such as cultivating aromatic herbs and engaging youngsters and senior participants in therapeutic "forest baths". This kind of collaborative activity provides students with a unique lens through which to view agriculture, showcasing the evolution of farming practices over time. The intergenerational relationship between the students and the elderly has proven to be mutually enriching, transcending traditional boundaries of education. (Silva 2022). The program's reach can be considerably expanded by creating tangible outcomes which should be adapted to the type of activities organised. For example, a book of traditional recipes was created in Portugal, symbolising the amalgamation of generations with shared values for nature, culinary expertise, and a commitment to healthy eating practices.

DID YOU KNOW? Forest bathing, or *shinrin-yoku*, is a Japanese practice that involves immersing oneself in a forest or natural environment to promote physical and mental well-being. It focuses on sensory connection with nature, reducing stress, and enhancing health through mindfulness and relaxation in natural settings. It can be as simple as a nature walk or involve guided meditation sessions. (Fitzgerald 2019).

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22. Creative Writing



Classification: Non-formal education.



This good practice is designed to be flexible, allowing for adjustments based on the student's skill levels and available class time. It aims to foster a love for descriptive writing and provide students with practical tools to make their writing more engaging and immersive. (IEK DELTA 2018.)

This good practice provides more than just literacy benefits. It enhances language skills and encourages creative thinking, serving as a means of personal expression and shaping one's identity. When young people develop narratives and explore various points of view, they develop empathy, analytical skills, and the ability to communicate effectively. This comprehensive growth improves their personal experiences and sets a solid foundation for success in their studies and future professional careers. Creative writing goes beyond the limits of formal, technical, or academic writing. It is a style of writing in which authors have the freedom to express their creativity, build imaginary scenarios, bring characters to life and build stories in an artistic and creative way. The main aim of creative writing is to entertain, evoke emotions, and engage readers through storytelling. (IEK DELTA 2018.)

Creative writing, with the support of a youth worker, can significantly enhance pupils' well-being in schools. This good practice focuses on developing essential life skills. Through storytelling, pupils develop communication skills, empathy, and active listening. This collaborative approach creates a supportive environment where students feel heard, valued, and inspired to explore their creativity for personal growth.

The subject known as "The Art of Creative Writing", classified in the Applied Arts, focuses on the techniques and methodologies used by authors in writing novels and short stories, respecting certain guidelines and conventions. Mastering these concepts and respecting these guidelines allows youngsters to improve their creative writing skills. (IEK DELTA 2018.)

What material is needed: Writing supplies (notebooks, pens, or laptops), a variety of images (printed or projected), a whiteboard, a timer, story prompts, or sentence starters.

What to do:

- Begin the session with a brief discussion on the importance of descriptive writing. Explain how vivid descriptions enhance the storytelling and engage the reader's imagination. Share examples of descriptive writing from well-known authors to inspire the participants.
- Show several images to the participants and ask them to choose one that sparks their imagination. Encourage them to focus on sensory details and, in 5 minutes, write down as many descriptive details about the image as possible (colours, shapes, textures, emotions it evokes, etc.).
- Divide the participants into small groups, assign each group a common theme or setting (e.g., a mysterious forest, a bustling city, an abandoned mansion) and ask the groups to brainstorm descriptive details collaboratively, building on each other's ideas.
- Choose one of the group-generated themes and ask the students to write a descriptive passage setting the scene individually. Encourage them to incorporate the sensory details they brainstormed. Emphasise the use of strong adjectives, analogies, and metaphors.
- Encourage students to exchange their writings within their group and provide constructive feedback suggesting improvements. Ask participants to comment on what they found vivid or memorable in their peer's writing.
- Provide students with a variety of creative writing prompts or sentence starters. Let them select one and develop a short story or scene. Encourage them to experiment with different genres and tones.

DID YOU KNOW? Annually, between 500,000 and 1 million books are released. If we include self-published authors, the total number of new book titles published is close to 4 million. (Talbot 2022.)

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STRENGTHENING THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Cohesion with other people is important for everyone. The way people relate to other groups varies depending on whether they are part of the group. Relationships between different groups can be positive and contribute to a sense of community. The emotions experienced by individuals play an important role in the development of a sense of community. In building a sense of community, mutual trust and interaction between community members or members of different groups are important. (Finnish National Agency for Education s.a.)

Community in schools and educational institutions – belonging to the school community

In addition to providing opportunities for young people to make a difference, schools are also expected to provide a sense of community. A school that works for the community has practices and an operational culture that enable young people to work together as valued and accepted members of the school community. It is also necessary to create structures that allow young people to feel that they are part of something bigger. The school community is a special place because it gathers many different young people together, which can create

situations and conflicts that could otherwise be avoidable. The school differs from youth leisure facilities in that you cannot always choose who you are with. When we talk about the whole school, we often mean the formal community that is expected to operate in a non-violent and respectful way. However, different communities work side by side in the school, and students form their own communities that both include and sometimes exclude, for example, bullying. (Kiilakoski 2012, 34, 35, 42.) Groups are, therefore, very important in schools and educational institutions, and the existence of a community does not guarantee the formation of a sense of community. The sense of community does not emerge by itself but must be guided and requires conscious action to promote it (Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 79). In addition, it would also be important to assess which factors prevent a community culture from being achieved.

Why is it important to strengthen the sense of community?

The importance of the work done for the sake of community can be seen in youth studies. It is known that from a well-being perspective, it is very important to focus on the group and community experiences of young people.

(Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 82.) The 2015 PISA survey asked about experiences related to well-being. The target population was young people aged 15 in 72 countries or regions. Overall, students' sense of belonging to their school seems to have declined since the beginning of the millennium. (Väljjarvi 2017, 19.) The experience of community is also linked to overall well-being. Students with a low sense of belonging to school also had lower levels of satisfaction with their lives. On the other hand, students with a strong sense of belonging to their school were also significantly more satisfied with their lives than average. (Väljjarvi 2017, 18-19; Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 82.) Membership in the school community matters for the young person's experience here and now and for future life paths (Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 82). Strengthening the sense of community is important from many perspectives: it has an impact on learning, relationships with friends, conflict resolution and the prevention of mental health challenges (Kiilakoski 2012, 36). These are all relevant for education providers in terms of strengthening attachment and motivation in the school community, not to mention the impact they can have on young people's life path and well-being. When young people themselves are asked what causes their exclusion from school, they often cite feelings of loneliness and problems of belonging to a group.

Youth work to strengthen community in schools and educational institutions

Legislation, education systems and ways of implementing youth work vary between countries, making it a challenge to describe

the role of youth work in strengthening the community in schools in a way that is recognisable in all countries. But youth work in schools and educational institutions can position themselves as the implementers of school well-being and bring to schools, among other things, competences related to youth encounters and group dynamics (Kiilakoski 2014, cited in Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 76). Strengthening peer and group relations and increasing school spirit is important. Schools and educational institutions need professionals who work with groups based on supporting young people in their daily lives and the well-being of the whole school community. Youth work in schools and educational institutions is the community expert, the professional group that has the time, the skills, and the opportunity to promote community in groups and schools. They have time to meet, listen and hear young people. As stated earlier, the promotion of group relations and equality is central to youth work, and youth work methods emphasise functionality and fun (Kiilakoski 2021, 219). However, youth work does not promote these things alone; it is done in parallel with other professionals in the school. It can be said that youth work is becoming increasingly important in schools and educational institutions (Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 76).

How can the community be enhanced in schools?

It has been found that community is fostered by giving groups the opportunity for positive and sufficiently long-lasting contact. In school communities, this means trying to form and work with different groups for a sufficiently long period and organising activities between

different groups where each group member is relevant to the realisation of the activity. It is important to emphasise, for example, the principles of equality and non-discrimination. It is also relevant to enable sufficient contact between people within the same group to create experiences of identification. Research shows that positive experiences of identification with individual members of a group improve attitudes towards other members of the same group. For example, positive emotional experiences with people who speak a different language make it easier to overcome prejudices. (Finnish National Agency for Education s.a.)

Next, different good practices are presented through which youth workers in schools and educational institutions can promote and develop a sense of community.

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23. Future Café for 9th Graders in the Spring



Classification: Non-formal education, individual or group advice and guidance, participation.



The topics discussed at the Future Café are varied and flexible, and they can be anything that young people consider important in relation to school transitions. For example, students can address current societal phenomena, locally or at school. This good practice was initiated at Mertala Unified School (grades 1.-9.) in the city of Savonlinna.

This good practice aims to lower the threshold for access to secondary education. The idea is that the young person receives information that helps them to make the transition to a new educational institution. A multidisciplinary event organised together, where young people find that they are not alone in their thoughts and worries, can also be a good way of promoting cohesion between young people. This is a good opportunity to target and work with a whole age group in the same school. The feedback from the young people involved has been positive. Feedback from adults in the school is that it is a worthwhile, enjoyable event.

The youth worker, preferably with other school staff and ninth graders, plans and organises a Future Café in the Spring. The event takes place in the school, and the chosen classroom will be decorated to resemble a café. The aim is to create a relaxed atmosphere where young people and invited guests can meet over a cup of coffee. The invited guests will give introductory speeches at the beginning of the event. When thinking about who to invite to the café, be sure to include young people from school to ensure that their views are heard. For example, tutors talking about their peer experience when they started their studies, what preconceptions they had and how it all worked out in the end can already be meaningful for young people to hear.

Who to invite: Organisations, authorities, and stakeholders. Take advantage of regional actors. Think about who could be your partners in this context. If possible, you can also invite a support network to the future café if the studies or life are not going well. For example, in Finland, staff have been invited from Ohjaamo, a one-stop Guidance Centre for people under 30 years of age, where they can get help in matters related

to work, education and everyday life. Outreach youth workers have also visited the Future Café and told students about their services. The local youth work has visited and informed the young people of their availability during the summer and presented the youth services activities for the summer.

Who to collaborate with: Take advantage of existing groups in schools, such as the youth council, student welfare, etc. Also, consider actors outside the school. For example, you can ask a local shopkeeper if they can provide cookies, buns, or coffee for the occasion.

DID YOU KNOW? In Finland, compulsory school attendance was extended in 2021, and the aim is for everyone to complete upper secondary education. Every person leaving basic education is obliged to apply for upper secondary or preparatory education. Compulsory school attendance continues until the student reaches the age of 18. (Finnish National Agency for Education s.a..)

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24. Get acquainted – Be genuinely present – Listen



Classification: Non-formal education.



This way of work may promote interaction between pupils and teachers. Feedback from school staff suggests that they, too, felt they had learned things from the youth worker's way of working with young people. Things that they might not otherwise have thought of. The approach promotes a sense of community within the group but also develops the whole school community. This good practice was initiated by Janne Häyrinen, youth leader at Anttola Unified School (grades 1-9.) in Mikkeli.

This good practice concerns the way a youth worker meets young people in schools and colleges: it is not so much what is done as how it is done that is highlighted. This can be understood as a way of working that improves young people's communication skills, increases their trust in adults, and enhances their openness. It consists of three different principles, all of which are interlinked and work in parallel.

1. Get to know the young people

The basic idea is that the youth worker needs to get to know the young people to develop a relationship of trust. Once a relationship of trust has been established, it becomes much easier to guide the young person through different situations, both negative and positive. Try to spend time in spaces where young people are already. Take advantage of school recesses and lunchtimes. If you don't have your own room at the school, make sure you can use the school facilities, for example, for one-to-one conversations or small group work.

2. Be genuinely present

Make sure you are easily accessible and that young people know where to find you. Actively reach out to young people and be yourself. You are not in the school to assess the student's achievements; you are there for the young people. Be genuinely interested in young people's lives and discuss things that are not related to school itself with them. Be an active actor; don't stay on the sidelines. It is important to give young people the feeling that you are genuinely interested in them and that you care about their well-being.

3. Listen

Focused listening requires active participation (Tainio 2009, 176). Listening and being present are prerequisites for building a trusting relationship with the young person. Through focused listening, you also tell young people that you are interested in them. Listen and hear what young people have to say.

Who to collaborate with: You should aim for multidisciplinary cooperation with the school staff. Be proactive and ask where collaboration could be useful. Consider also whether, for example, the parish or municipality offers services that you could take advantage of and with whom you could cooperate for the benefit of the young people in your school or educational institution.

What to consider: This approach requires commitment and time to achieve the best results. Young people and their well-being are at the centre.

DID YOU KNOW? In Finland, youth work in schools and educational institutions is carried out with a relatively high staff input. According to a survey conducted in 2021, full-time youth work in schools was carried out in about 25% of the municipalities. (Kivijärvi et al. 2022, 52.)

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25. Amistamo – Mobile Ideas



Classification: Non-formal education, participation, leisure.



The Cultural and Sports Association of Finnish Vocational Education and Training, SAKU, was founded in 1949. The association's mission is, for example, to promote well-being, working together, and enjoyment of life through vocational education and training. (Saku s.a.a). The regional Amistamo events were created in the ESF-funded Combo project coordinated by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, in which SAKU was a co-implementer (Saku s.a.b).

The Amistamo event is aimed at tutors, prospective tutors, and student union members in educational institutions. This good practice offers students the opportunity to plan and implement an event for their peers under guidance. Amistamo is a physical activity event focusing on grouping/group building. The intention is to generate new ideas for tutor and student union activities and provide ready-made models for student group building days, sports days, and leisure activities. It also provides a great opportunity to network beyond the boundaries of your own school community and get to know students from other educational institutions. Activities organised in the educational institution and working together promote friendship and a sense of community and make school more enjoyable.

The Amistamo event is carried out by the tutors themselves, who, at the same time, get to learn teamwork and event organisation skills. Each Amistamo event is different, as new young people and schools are involved in planning and implementing the content each time.

At the Amistamo event, participants will be able to try out different group-building activities at the activity checkpoints. In addition, the instructors of the activity checkpoints will give the participants tips on how to use the activities in their own educational institution, for example, when they wish to group new students, raise classroom cohesion, or organise activities during recess. The idea is that the tutors from one educational institution will design the content of the activity checkpoints, and tutors from other schools will come and try them out. Youth workers can be involved in guiding and supporting the tutors in the planning and the event itself. In addition, an idea bank with

instructions and pictures will be compiled from the activity checkpoints held and distributed to other educational institutions to support tutoring activities.

An illustrative example of an Amistamo event:

The theme of the day: Promoting community spirit through various exercises.

Programme:

9.30 Arrival and breakfast

10:00 Start of the day together

10.30 Start of the Amistamo activity checkpoints (where different exercises are done related to the theme of the day)

12.00 Lunch

13.00 The Amistamo activity checkpoints continue

13:45 End of the day together

14:00 Safe journey home

An example of a confidence-building exercise (Saku 2022):

What material is needed: a rope/string that the group members hold on to as they walk along the track. Scarves to blindfold the members. Barriers on the track. e.g., steppers, benches, and tyres.

What to do: Build an obstacle course in the gym. The members of the group grab a rope, and everyone but the first person is blindfolded. The group walks along the track, holding onto the rope. The first person in line instructs the others, and everyone in line instructs the person behind them using the instructions from the person in front.

DID YOU KNOW? Grouping strengthens the group's sense of togetherness and motivation and should be an ongoing activity throughout the studies. In Finland, where there is constant access to vocational education and training and the possibility of starting studies all year round, it is very important that grouping takes place frequently enough.

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26. Strengthening the School Community through Premises Solutions



Classification: Non-formal education, individual or group advice and guidance, participation, leisure.



The Ylämylly school in Liperi, Finland, operates in three units, which include pre-primary education and primary education in grades 1-9. The following good practice comes from Ylämylly school, the Patteristo unit.

The following example shows how facilities can affect how youth work is carried out and the opportunities for youth work, young people, and the school community when youth facilities are close to the school. In many schools, though, the reality is still far from this. However, the example below can serve as an inspiration and can be easily implemented on a smaller scale. Below is a description of how the premises solutions have been implemented in one school. In Ylämylly school, the goal of having school staff and youth work function seamlessly together to strengthen the community and well-being of the whole school has been achieved beyond expectations.

The Ylämylly school was completed in 2021, and the design was already based on the idea of making the building a place that promotes community and brings the “whole village” together. Youth work, a library, as well as a comprehensive sports hall were seen as structures that would support the community. The youth work facilities were earmarked for school youth work during the school day. Its location is central, at the heart of the whole school. The glass-walled solution was chosen for the simple reason of making youth work a visible part of everyday school life and thus raising awareness of youth work.

The youth facilities in the school include a games hall, where billiards, ping pong, air hockey and table football bring together many young people during recess. The youth facilities have a wide range of equipment and modern technology, enabling a wide variety of youth activities in the school. During recess, the youth worker organises the program in collaboration with the

recess operators (Finnish: Välkkäri), the student body board/council and supports students. Much is planned together with the pupils, and activities such as Kahoot competitions and weekly mid-term bingo are very popular with the pupils. Relaxed and fun-filled recesses, games days, arts and crafts days, sports days and “Friday games” ensure that there is something for everyone.

Teachers can reserve the space (youth work facilities) for shared time with their classes from the school youth worker. Together, they agree on the activities to be carried out in the space, and usually, the lessons include a group activity led by the school youth worker. The facilities also allow for a variety of grouping activities to be held.

What to consider: Strengthening community spirit and promoting multidisciplinary cooperation can also reduce loneliness among young people. The youth work facilities offer lonely pupils the opportunity to meet new people and to spend time with the school’s youth workers. The support students, the student body/council, and the recess instructors usually notice if a pupil is lonely at school and, together with the school youth worker, try to intervene, for example, by encouraging lonely pupils to come to the youth room during recess to spend time with them. This allows lonely young people to find their place in the community, make new friends, and participate in activities during break time.

DID YOU KNOW? According to the results of the School Health Promotion Study 2023, in Finland, about one-fifth of the girls in the 8th and 9th grades of basic education and general upper secondary schools felt lonely quite often or constantly. Boys of a similar age were less likely to experience loneliness (9-10%). (Helenius & Kivimäki 2023.)

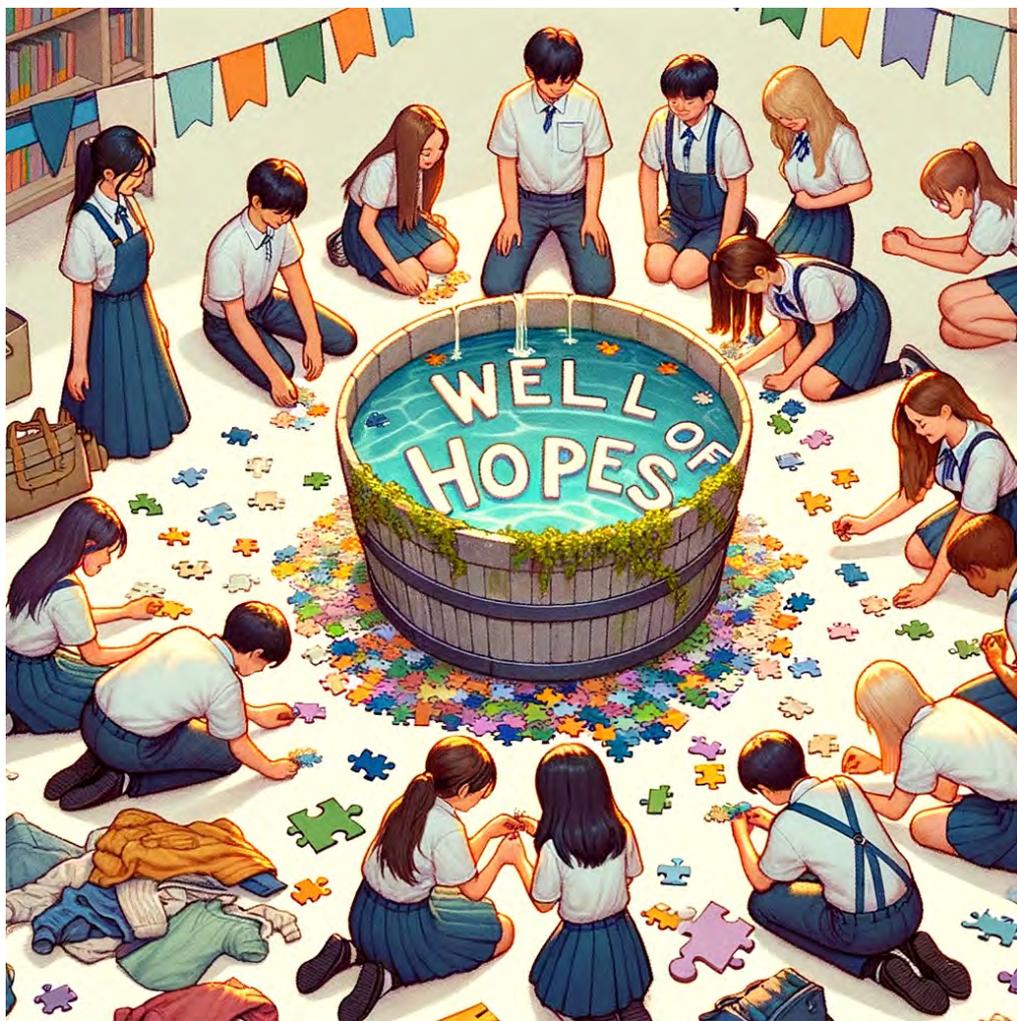
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27. Supporting Group Dynamics



Classification: Participation.



According to the experiences in Together Forward, a project run by Juvenia Youth Research and Development Centre in Finland, it's important to build multi-professional cooperation in the planning and implementation of group-building activities for students. In most cases, educational institutions have their own tutoring students to help newcomers adapt to their new school. These tutor-students and school students' unions can also plan group building events.

Group building is important in the transition between educational levels. These good practices aim to support group dynamics and are particularly suitable for first-year students in vocational education and gymnasiums.

For young people, it's important to feel accepted in a group. Getting to know the group members enables young people to be themselves in the group. Interaction, team spirit and safety are important factors that influence group dynamics. Young people can contribute to good group dynamics by observing and paying attention to the environment, the group, and the group members. They can contribute to a sense of safety and inclusion through their actions. (Rautiola 2022.)

Some easy group building exercises developed by the Together Forward project:

From pieces to groups

Use puzzles to divide the whole group into small teams. For example, roll up an old wall calendar, glue coloured paper behind the pictures, laminate and cut it into jigsaw pieces. You can plan the number of pieces and puzzles according to the size of the groups. When you start this game, instruct each group member to grab one piece and look for pieces that belong to the same puzzle (according to the colour on the back of the picture). And let's see - the completed puzzle is the new group!

Well of hopes

What material is needed: a wishing well, e.g., a bucket covered with beautiful fabric or a word cloud using a Mentimeter.

Each person answers the question (e.g. three words): what do you wish for from tutors/ school/ student union? The answer sheets to be taken to the well can be shaped like a droplet. If you use a Mentimeter, the participants can write on their phones or school computers. Finally, take cards from the wishing well or open a word cloud for joint review and discussion. The wishes of the new students are genuinely valued and put into practice during the academic year.

Message of encouragement

Form an encouraging message on the ground/ floor for other students. Use only those objects and pieces of clothing that come off you at that moment. Check that the message includes something from each student in the group and the group leaders. Photograph and pass on the goodwill messages through the most used channels in your school. They are just each group's own personal, in-the-moment outputs to bring good mood and encouragement.

DID YOU KNOW? In the Finnish Youth Barometer 2022 young people were asked to tell what things had helped them to cope with difficult situations. The most frequently repeated answer was **friends**. (Kivijärvi 2023, 27.)

References

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28. Artistic Renewal of Public Spaces



Classification: Non-formal education, leisure.



In Vila Boa do Bispo, Portugal, the area where a staircase is decorated with illustrated tiles has been a hub for organising photography exhibitions, volunteering activities and community events over the years. Regarding crochet, what makes this initiative truly special is that the local population has taken on the responsibility of periodically renewing the tree decorations in the town square.

The core of this good practice is to facilitate collaboration between different generations. It is intended that through the realisation of Artistic Workshops, youngsters can learn from the experiences of older community members. This project bridges generations, instils a sense of pride in the community, and actively engages students with their surroundings. The organised activities can be an opportunity to let the participants learn more about their region's intangible heritage and share some traditional arts and crafts with them.

Tiles Painting

After listening to the stories and experiences told by elders, youngsters can illustrate small tiles with the local heritage, such as stories, landscapes, foods, and monuments. Afterwards, these tiles can be used to adorn the school premises, youth centre, or public place, providing a visually captivating tribute to the town's heritage.

Crochet Activity

Provide collaborative sessions in which seniors from the community actively collaborate with students, sharing the art of crochet. Together, they can develop ornaments to decorate the trunks of the trees around them. The public display of youngsters' work instilled a sense of responsibility and belonging in the participants, strengthening their connection to the community and preserving its intangible heritage.

DID YOU KNOW? Providing older generations with the opportunity to share their wisdom has a positive impact on the younger generations, developing essential life skills, introducing them to new relationships and offering them valuable support to overcome various obstacles and barriers in their lives (Pillemer et al. 2022).

References

Pillemer, K., Nolte, J., Schultz, L., Yau, H., Henderson, C. R. Jr., Cope, M. T. & Baschiera, B. 2022. The Benefits of Intergenerational Wisdom-Sharing: A Randomized Controlled Study. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19 (7). Journal. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390%2Fijerph19074010> [Accessed 15.11.2023].

29. Musical Chairs as a Commons



Classification: Non-formal education, participation, leisure.



This good practice is inspired by the famous and traditional "Chair Game", also known as "Musical Chairs".

This game is structured to explore the concepts of collaboration, resource-sharing, and community management through a three-part experiential workshop using a modified version of the musical chairs game from the democratic scope of the commons (Pantazis 2020).

What to do: (drawn from Pantazis 2020)

- Start by playing some rounds of the traditional version of the game, leading to reflective discussions on the competitive dynamics, strategies, and personal experiences. Emphasise the game's competitive and exclusionary nature to introduce the concept of resource competition in society.
- Discuss the concept of the commons to highlight a transition from competitive individualism to cooperative community engagement without disclosing the specifics of the upcoming activity.
- Introduce the modified rules. For the commons-based version of the game, participants still move around the chairs to music. However, in this version, all participants remain in the game even as chairs are taken away. The goal shifts to working together to make sure every participant has a place to sit when the music stops, emphasising inclusive seating arrangements and collective problem-solving.
- Following each round, initiate discussions centred on the themes of cooperation and ensuring everyone is included. Highlight the fundamental concepts of the commons, relating these ideas back to the activity. Examine how working together, pooling resources, and fostering inclusivity play crucial roles. Invite participants to contribute their thoughts and reflections on these matters.
- To finalise the activity, split participants into groups and assign which one is a real-world case study on managing commons (e.g. community issues like water scarcity and

environmental challenges). Foster innovative collaboration for creating shared management rules based on commons principles, followed by presentations on their strategies. Conclude with a reflection on the activity, discussing how common principles can be applied in everyday life.

What to consider: Adjust the duration of each section based on the group dynamics and the level of engagement. Encourage open dialogue and active participation throughout the activity.

DID YOU KNOW? While the beginnings of "Musical Chairs" remain a mystery, it was initially known as "Trip to Jerusalem." Theories about its origins include it being derived from the ancient Greek game "Phyllopodion" or the French "Chaises Musicales." The game has been adapted worldwide, known as "Where's the Throne?" in Australia and "La Silla Caliente" (The Hot Seat) in Mexico, showcasing its global appeal and the diverse interpretations it has inspired. (Haight 2024.)

References

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AFTERWORD

Over the last decade, youth work has become an increasingly important part of European policy, and there are many efforts at national, regional, and local levels to raise the role and recognition of youth work in communities. Alongside other traditional forms of youth work, youth work in schools and educational institutions is also becoming more common. School youth work is preventive welfare work that supports the well-being of young people and can react to and address current phenomena and challenges young people face. It, therefore, also supports learning. Although the primary target group of this publication is youth work professionals, with the aim of also reaching school staff, policymakers and other interested parties, it is important to note that the ultimate beneficiaries of developing quality youth work are young people. Youth work in schools can make a difference in young people's lives. If well designed and implemented, youth work in schools can be an asset for both young people and the school education community. However, the conditions for doing school youth work vary widely between different countries.

This publication briefly outlines the different starting points and contexts for implementing school youth work in four countries: Estonia, Finland, Greece, and Portugal. The focus, however, is on presenting good practices on youth work in schools and educational institutions collected from the above countries.

The publication also aims to raise awareness of youth work, strengthen its role, and define its role in schools and educational institutions.

We hope that this publication will inspire youth workers around Europe to test, mix, and try something new in their work with young people. In particular, we would like to see them piloted in school communities, in cooperation with young people and, where possible, other school staff. This requires adaptability, flexibility, and an open mind to new ideas and methods.

Regardless of its scale, every experiment and achievement is important and can be the start of something larger and more impactful. In some settings, youth work in schools may involve, at most, one-off visits that bring joy and success to young people's lives at the time, if at all. However, it should be noted that long-term impact can only be achieved if solutions, objectives, methods, and cooperation are discussed together within the community and adapted to the country's circumstances. This requires understanding, commitment, dedication, management, support, and structures that enable new ways of working. And a genuine belief in the transformative power of positivity. Then, there is also a greater chance that adequate resources will be allocated to youth work in schools.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Questionnaire (collection of good practices)

Section 1 “About YWIS”:

Informative section with a brief presentation of the project and its themes and the definition of a Good Practice according to the United Nations.

Section 2 “About You”:

2.1) Name:

2.2) Age:

2.3) Gender:

2.4) Country of Residence:

2.5) Role:

Organization Representative

Project Manager

Volunteer

Other option

Section 3 “About Your Organization”:

3.1) Organization Name:

3.2) Type of Organization:

Local Public Body

Local Action Group

NGO

Public Policy Institution

School

Other option

3.3) Number of People Actively Involved:

Section 4 “About Your Work”:

4.1) Name of the Good Practice:

4.2) Country of Implementation:

Estonia

Finland

Greece

Portugal

Other option

4.3) Field of Work:

- Sustainable Development
- Democracy Education
- Well-being Work & Quality of Life
- Strengthening the Sense of Community
- Other option

4.4) Age Groups Engaged

- 3-6
- 7-12
- 13-17
- 18-24
- 25-30

4.5) Short Description. Summary of the practice/project (Background, Objectives, Impact and Results)

4.6) Implementation Period. When did the practice/project take place?

4.7) Type of Partners Involved

- Local Public Bodies
- Local Action Groups
- NGOs
- Policy Institutions
- Schools
- Other option

Impact & Results

4.8) Qualitative Impacts.

My Practice/Project...	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Changed the Organizations' Practices			
Educated my community			
Engaged all age groups			
Involved external stakeholders			
Improved Participant's Lives			
Developed Social/Communication/Personal Skills			

4.9) Quantitative Impacts. *Example: How many students have you reached? How many teachers have you*

engaged? How many resources have you used/collected/saved?

4.10) Results. Or those expected, in case this is a recent practice/project.

4.11) Media & Communication. Please share with us *links* or *media* resources to learn more about your work.

Financial Information

Please share with us the financial resources that you need to implement the project.

4.12) Project/Practice Cost

4.13) Means of Funding. *Example: Erasmus + Programme, National Funds...*

Summary

Share with us some final statements about your practice.

4.14) Why do you consider your practice/project Good?

4.15) How was your practice/Project Innovative?

Section 5 “Thank You”:

5.1 Do you have images or photographs illustrating the shared practice/project?

Yes

No

5.2 Do you authorize us to share the practice/project as well as the photographs shared in the Handbook that will be created within the project? Please contact us in case you need more information about the Handbook or the use of the images.

Yes

No

Sharing photographs and illustrative images

Please send the images or photographs illustrating the shared practice/project to ywisproject@gmail.com

Thank you.

5.3) Can we contact you? In case there are any questions, or we would like to know more about what you shared.

Yes

No

5.4) Would you like to present your practice within the YWIS project activities?

Yes

No

5.5) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 2
Categorisation of good practices

Good Practices Classification	
Type of Best Practice	Activities Example
Non-formal education	Alternative education, mentoring, training in outdoor pursuits, sports and social facilities, homework clubs. Sustainable development related: Gardening and clean-up projects, park and playground design, mural creation, recycling, sustainability efforts.
Individual or group advice and guidance	Counselling services, sexual health, information about drug use, mental health counselling, careers advice, housing assistance, signposting to relevant services and support.
Participation	Participatory activities, decision-making processes, youth councils, fostering a sense of agency and empowerment.
Support	Young mothers'/parents'/fathers' groups, young carers' groups, mental health groups, identity-specific groups.
Leisure	Cafés, youth centres, sports activities, indoor games, art methods, social networks. Media related: Internet cafés, radio stations, DJ facilities, local newsletters, drama, music and art studios, social networks.

Good Practices	Type of Best Practice				
	Non-formal education	Individual or group advice and guidance	Participation	Support	Leisure
1. Minimising Food Waste	x				x
2. A Vision for a Sustainable Future	x	x			
3. Climate Spring	x				
4. Click and Grow	x				
5. Celebrating the International Day of Forests	x				x
6. Ecosystems and Biodiversity Preservation - "Sea Starts Here"	x				
7. Environmental Sustainability in Fashion	x				
8. Four Democracy Education Practices in One School	x		x		x
9. Experience Narratives from (write your suburb, school or place here!)	x		x		x
10. The Youth Council of Saaremaa Municipality "Youth Cafes"	x		x		
11. Participatory School Budgeting			x		
12. Three Programs for the Participation of Youth in Decision-Making Processes			x		
13. Most important to whom?	x		x		
14. Six Thinking Hats of Commoners	x		x		
15. Sociocracy	x		x		
16. Mental Health Promotion Posters and Strength Cards		x		x	
17. M-Crew – a method to prevent and intervene in bullying	x	x	x		

Good Practices	Type of Best Practice				
	Non-formal education	Individual or group advice and guidance	Participation	Support	Leisure
18. Outdoor Classroom and Class	x				
19. The School that Invites You to Move - Two activities	x				
20. I am...		x		x	x
21. SMS+Green Care	x			x	
22. Creative Writing	x				
23. Future Café for 9th Graders in the Spring	x	x	x		
24. Get acquainted - Be genuinely present - Listen	x				
25. Amistamo – Mobile Ideas	x		x		x
26. Strengthening the School Community through Premises Solutions	x	x	x		x
27. Supporting Group Dynamics			x		
28. Artistic Renewal of Public Spaces	x				x
29. Musical Chairs as a Commons	x		x		x



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