



Strategy Paper on Social Space Orientation

The logo for 'access', with the word in a bold, blue, lowercase sans-serif font. A red arrow points to the right from the 'a'.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Context / Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlighted societal aspirations to overcome poverty, enhance environmental sustainability, and increase social justice that builds on the human rights, equity, inclusion, diversity, equal opportunity and non-discrimination. In line with this universal call we strive to contributing to empowering vulnerable (young) people and support them - and the system - to unpack their potentials, increase their skills and competences, and meet their needs for participate in society. Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) many tackle **inclusion and equality**. **SDG 4** is to be translated from the international community's commitment to 'ensure **inclusive and equitable quality education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', to concrete actions and practices on the ground reaching right into our cities, our neighbourhoods, to leave no (young) one behind.

„AN 'INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE' EDUCATION IS AT THE CORE OF THE SDG 4 AMBITION,,

While we look at how to implement more equal and inclusive practices to contribute to the 2030 Agenda, we are confronted with structural inequality to the access and distribution of resources and access to quality education offers and opportunities for personal development. Common barriers to re-balance access are very often associated with gender, limited financial

resources, disabilities, language, migration background, gender identity and beliefs. To tackle concrete mechanisms contributing to inequality we address specific social and economic contexts in the three cases in Germany, Austria and Spain. Disadvantages (and advantages) passed on over generations by families contributing (limited) resources, skills and networks to their young children, can be reduced by societies by coherent interventions of organisations and institutions that embrace their responsibility and societal call to propagate social well-being, counter socio-cultural stereotypes and systematically dismantle mechanisms of exclusion of the more vulnerable (youth) groups from accessing opportunities. Disadvantaged young individuals and (peer) groups are denied access to „advantages“ by others or are not successfully accompanied towards equal access. All actors active in society, including social and cultural institutions and organisations, bear the responsibility to take concrete actions to re-design mechanisms and access structures to counter current practices of exclusion and to capitalise on the powerful (cultural) capitals of many young people in Europe.

1.2 Objectives

In Europe there are well established mechanisms to provide youth work for young people in fragile contexts, and even though youth education and youth work are not new concepts the nature of this work goes hands in hand with the evolving nature of the target group addressed: the youth. Youth work landscape, recognition and validation continuously evolve and there is today more than

ever a novel need to raise awareness on the impacts of youth work on the young people. Why is recognition and validation of youth work so important, and how is the condition of youth work in Europe at large? There is no answer fitting all contexts in the EU, this paper shed some light on the **relevance** of the contribution and **added value** of innovative and quality youth work on the lives of young people. In consideration of a shift in perspective on the role of youth in **self-determination** and their **contribution** as active citizens to the future of the societies we live in, and the relevance of youth work to ensure **equality**¹. In this light the current mechanisms of further education and training of youth work are scarce and need **enhanced public attention, and action at the policy level**.

„THE CHANCE TO BECOME WHATEVER ONE WANTS TO BE IS A CHANCE THAT SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE. BUT TODAY, TOO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE MISS OUT ON THAT CHANCE, BECAUSE THEIR FAMILIES ARE UNDERPRIVILEGED, BECAUSE THEY HAVE HAD TO MOVE FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER, BECAUSE OF THEIR GENDER OR THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION, OR BECAUSE THEY HAVE DISABILITIES. SOME ARE ENTIRELY EXCLUDED FROM EDUCATION; OTHERS FACE DISCRIMINATION, STEREOTYPING AND STIGMA IN THE SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS IN WHICH THEIR LEARNING SHOULD BE SUPPORTED.“²

This paper and the guide strive to bring together existing evidence of good practices and evidences on the current challenges experienced by youth workers in order to facilitate the understanding and appreciation of youth work on the one hand,

¹ See glossary: Equality (p. 55)

and to smooth the process of recognition and visibility of youth work as a crucial investment in our common future and societal well-being.

Strategy paper and guideline function as an **instrument to** highlights the **diversity of youth work practice**, the **variety of actors** involved, the observation on the trends in the sector, and it feature **successful youth work** and the concrete **outcomes** associated with the good practices presented. Even though the activities lead by youth workers continues to face challenges at the national level, in respect to the countries policy framework adopted, this paper strives to support the growth of the sector and align national and regional policies and funding mechanisms to the EU policies (EU Youth Agenda, EU Youth Strategy) to unpack the full potential of the sector and to contribute shaping a qualitative and innovative practice of youth work. The paper and guide are designed to further strengthen the capacity of the actors in the sector and activate other actors and institutions active in the social space: objective is to provide youth workers and educators with the tools to activate and co-create meaningful activities with (and for) young people (with a particular focus of young people in fragile contexts, emerging from disadvantaged urban communities or in a NEET situation) that lead to successful participation, empowerment and more connectedness to their communities and the youth in the EU.

² Youth report 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all, [Youth report 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all - UNESCO Digital Library](#). 10.08.2023

It is a **practical working tool** for youth work institutions and organisations working with young people, with a particular focus on disadvantaged young people. In terms of a systematic social space orientation, not only the access routes and forms of participation for young people need to be adapted, but also the structures and processes in the institutions, and the competences and of youth work actors need to evolve and continuously adjust to keep abreast of needs and potentials of targeted youth.

Central aspect is the **design of social space-oriented youth work**, anchored in the strategic framework of the institutions – including the need to re-define own role, moving away from a localisation of the institution if necessary onto the street and the neighbourhood (social space) to reach the young people exactly where they are. Element of novelty is the importance of **furthering cooperation and work in synergy with other stakeholders** across disciplines, to constitute „circles of support,, , fostering cooperation between youth work institutions and other actors present in the social space (in line with the 16 Child and Youth Report organisations and individual actors active in the following: **sports club, youth/leisure club or youth organisation, local organisation aimed at improving local community, cultural organisation, organisation promoting human rights or global development, organisation active in climate change/ environmental issues, political organisation** or political party, etc.).

Starting from a novel understanding of the concept of **active citizenship and participation**³ the **three**

case studies presented here aim at contributing practical knowledge to support institutional development. Institutions in their „new role“ as supporters of youth work in the diversity of their scope and missions, are called to contribute to the effort to ensure equal and respectful basis for action in the social space. The social space represents a safe space where everyone feels heard, and obstacles that may hinder active participation are jointly dismantled. Ultimate ambition is to work in synergy to reduce marginalisation, exclusion and isolation, to reduce disadvantages, and to foster equal access to active citizenship and participation. The role of youth workers as enabling actors to work with youth, and as multipliers to spread the message on the effectiveness of participatory practices, is to dismantle established hierarchies and top-down modes of operations which does not consider the rich diversity of skills and needs of the young people. Key is to cherish the **diversity**⁴ of the interests and potentials of the young person, and their ability to co-design programmes and activities, tailored to their diversity and their identities.

The perspectives from the three working groups in Berlin, Vienna and Valencia exemplify approaches that were piloted by the participating institutions. They were called as expert to examine challenges and potential for improvements of the methodologies applied, and benefited from international exchanges across sectors, transnational knowledge transfer with various

³ See glossary: *Citizenship and participation* (p.56)

⁴ See glossary: *Diversity* (p.56)

actors of the sector ensured anchoring of the models within the local ecosystems.

1.3 Strategy Paper

The strategy paper presents the concept for social space orientation in youth work with disadvantaged people (this includes socially disadvantaged as well as young people with physical, mental, cognitive, learning, or sensory disabilities⁵), the **needs and untapped potentials** of the target groups with a focus on Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)⁶. It illustrates non-formal education and participation models for the young people – along the priorities of the **EU Youth Strategy** inclusion, **sustainability and digitalisation - co-designed with them** on the base of their values and attitudes needed to act as agents of change. Every single young person can act in many different ways every day to contribute to communities (and the world) around them. Empowered young people are entrusted with the role of „experts of their world“, as such they are encouraged to take action, and transfer the learnings and knowledge received to their „peers“- other young people (acting in their social spaces and peer groups).

Transformative inclusive learning experiences for young individual emerging from fragile contexts is a necessity for ensuring the well-being of our societies, the future generations and our planet. By presenting the framework conditions, current legislation, regulatory aspects, EU policies and action plans in the field of youth work this strategy

paper sets the context to enhance multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary collaborations at all levels - from the level of governance to the level of all relevant stakeholder groups, such as non-governmental organisations, the academic community, the business sector, youth and others - for anchoring the social space oriented models into the practice. Broader scope is to contribute recommendations on how to link education of youth and youth workers, and support further alignment at the regional and national level of education, environment sustainable development and enhance networking and collaborations at the praxis level between different stakeholder groups, in order to ensure that efforts are mutually supported and complementary and support structural mainstreaming between research and policy.

It is important to allocate sufficient resources at the time of the post pandemic, to emphasize the role multidisciplinary cooperation can play in promoting quality youth work and quality education that fosters youth empowerment. This should lead to strengthen the power of education in making our societies more just, inclusive and sustainable.

⁵ See glossary: Disability (p. 57)

⁶ See for more information: [NEETs | Eurofound \(europa.eu\)](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu) and <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/de/topic/neets> and <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/topic/neets>

2 Strategy Paper on Social Space Orientation

2.1 The Conceptual Framework

For designing the future, we want to live in, to protect democracy and support equal access to democratic life in Europe all actors in society are called to take responsibility and translate their commitment into their practices. To ensure equal socio-cultural development and broader societal well-being, today day more than ever ensuring active access and participation of youth is crucial. Even though this has been broadly acknowledged, ratified and recognized at many levels (e.g. in line with the Global Citizenship Education) for young people - especially disadvantaged groups - opportunities continue to shrink in response to experiences of disadvantage, situation of exclusion or denial, and consolidate into a spiral of continuously growing barriers, challenges and exclusion experienced in their living contexts. Despite growing mechanisms of exclusions, young people with fewer opportunities remain interested in taking part in social life, are open to engage to reduce inequality in participation opportunities and are willing to participate to offers that are tailored to them, their skills and set of competences, and that address their interests.

Moreover, to support sustainable development and in line with the Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development⁷ there is an urgent need to place sustainable development at the core

of education and training offers -including young people and young adults, and with a growing attention to include those topics in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and non-formal and informal learning offers. This is of paramount relevance if societies are committed to truly provide all (young) individuals with equal learning opportunities for sustainable development.

Access methods presented in this paper emphasised cognitive skills and social learnings, and the importance to transfer the competences learnt into actions for the benefit of individual of the peer groups and peer communities, and for society at large. The three models presented emphasised practices leading to tangible transformations which promoted youth (both as individual and as a group) behavioural changes towards sustainable development, equality and respect for the fundamental human rights.

At the systemic level to enable smooth societal changes informed and decisive political actions are required. This paper advocates to bring about these much-needed changes in order to harness the potentials of the younger generations, our youth- to redesign our societies, encouraging democracy, encouraging equal access to the decision-making tables, and to promote sustainable development in our cities in Europe

⁷ Learn for our planet: act for sustainability ([Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development](#); [Learn for our planet: act for sustainability - UNESCO Digital Library](#))

(and beyond) based on the well-being of people and nature.

Education is the only tool to build resilience -in particular for those fragile groups. This paper advocates for a synergetic institutional approach to young learners and the formal and non-formal education community, making sustainable development tangible on the ground and in the praxis through active youth (democratic) participation. The social space oriented approaches presented in this paper have the potential to become „living labs“ for participation and active youth citizenship, furthering equity and inclusion, connections with nature and the global south, disseminating practices of sustainable consumption. The three models piloted in Berlin, Vienna and Valencia proved the positive impacts of learning as experiential, social-space and action-oriented, localised in specific socio-cultural contexts, empowering the young participants to learn how they want to live and to put in being practices they have learnt.

In the capacity building guide the models recognise the crucial role of youth educators and teachers to promote sustainable development, equity in learning and inclusion. The guide advocates to further investing in the capacity development of youth workers and educators and the responsibility of education institutions, youth and social centres to continue providing their personnel frameworks and resources to keep up with the evolving needs and preferences of the young people, and to federate their efforts with all actors of the sector to lead the necessary transformation (through education) in society.

The third model presented in the paper elucidates how to harness the potential of new, digital and ‘green’ technologies to ensure that the access, development and use of technologies is responsible, safe, equitable, inclusive and based on the sustainability principles. Here emphasis was on the promotion of open educational digital resources, open affordable software’s and technical equipment’s, conducive to empower young people as agents for change towards sustainable development. The Access model created an initial opportunity for learning (and experimenting civic engagement) through the digital tools. This provided the young actors with initial digital skills and competencies, made them confident in adopting digital tools, and to become this way co-creators of individual life and societal transformation - at the scale of their neighbourhood. Priority in this practice was given to marginalized young persons, affected by family crises and marginalised by peer individuals as a result of conflicts. Through an inclusive approach to the design and programming of a simple videogame the young individuals could test how to promote in their living environments innovative and sustainable small-scale changes contextualised and embedded in their life situation.

Building on expertise on inclusion and diversity, sustainability and globalisation, digital media, learning environments and politics, Access responds to this challenge by developing tailored and attractive **intervention models**, suitable **educational and participatory offers** along the three thematic areas of the EU Youth Strategy - **inclusion, sustainability and digitalisation**.

The restrictions caused by the Corona pandemic clearly show how quickly social crisis situations are

accompanied by or lead to individual crises. Disorientation, loss of confidence, fear of the future and self-doubt harm social cohesion. Socio-economic and democratic exclusion go hand in hand. This makes it particularly difficult for young people with fewer opportunities to find their way to become active citizens, access spaces for participation and to counter fake news, - a dangerous starting point in times of increasing insecurity, influx of anti-democratic protest and radicalisation tendencies. Working with these young people is not only the task of **youth welfare, but of all actors active in the social space.**

Addressing this groups is difficult as that they are highly fragmented. This is where Access partner organisations from Berlin, Vienna and Valencia are set up – with youth work practitioners, experts on inclusion, sustainability and digitalisation and politics. Focusing on three target groups of disadvantaged young people, the working groups **investigate how effective intervention models for them must look like, develop and test offers for learning and participation and define what is needed to be done by research and politics.** Goal is to bring forward a set of improvements in youth work at the institutional and system levels, on the one hand and ultimately to support improve the living conditions of individuals.

For designing an **inclusive youth work**, Access engages disadvantaged young people as **experts of their social spaces.** Hence all planned activities and offers of youth work are to be embedded in those spaces recognized as familiar and where relational interactions between individuals unfold: these are the neighbourhoods, the squares, the streets, the schools, as any other space (both physical or

relational) with defined qualities acknowledged as such by the young people.

Inclusion is a complex concept to define. The term inclusion in this paper is defined as a process: „actions and practices that embrace diversity and build a sense of belonging, rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential and should be respected“ (Global Education Monitoring Report 2021, UNESCO). In the practice of our work with young people the experience of exclusion is manifold. In line with ambition to contribute to **inclusive education for all young people and young adults**, - and to contribute to the SDG 4, the practices in Germany - and in Europe- of „**inclusive**“ education are historically associated with education for **young people with disabilities.** The focus on disabilities historically shaped the discourse on inclusion and inclusive education.

The equal access to education for people with disabilities - in our case with learning difficulties - was recognized as a human right in 1948. The **UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education** in 1960, specified what governments are responsible to prevent ‘nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education’ (**Article 1**). All governments are called to ensure that all young people - learners - are offered equal access to quality education in the respect of human dignity. This Article did not include **disability** among characteristics that could lead to ‘distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference’ in education. The Declaration of the World Conference on Special Needs in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994

furthered inclusive education.⁸ The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006 **guaranteed the right to inclusive education**. The ambition of the **Article 24** was to ensure the right to education of people with disabilities ‘without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity’, and all countries committed to **‘ensure an inclusive education system at all levels’**.

The article 24 focuses on the individual development of the ‘sense of dignity and self-worth’ for (young) people with disabilities. Only when their **‘personality “, „talents“ and „creativity“, „mental and physical abilities“** are developed to **‘their fullest potential’** this would enable them to **‘participate effectively in a free society’** (United Nations, 2006).

Moreover, key to fulfil their rights to access quality education ‘on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live’ is the ‘support required, within the general education system’ (United Nations, 2006).

Inclusion of young people with disabilities in education (and in the general labour market) tackle **inclusion and integration**. Ensuring access and preventing segregation

2.1.1 What is youth work

The term ‘youth work’ describes a broad range of activities, topics and measures provided by various actors in the field of social and educational settings. The core elements of youth work are: 1) focus on young people, 2) focus on individual and group personal development, and 3) focus on and

activation of voluntary participation. There is at EU level a variety of formal definition of youth work and the following characteristics are frequently describing youth work (Graphic 1).

What are the elements shaping a successful youth work practice? Based on successful youth work examples, this study recommends to strive to reach a combination of **behaviours, attitudes and methods**. Key elements for highly qualitative and impactful youth work are: 1) mutual trust and close relationship between the youth workers and the young people; 2) mobile and stationary (active) outreach to and accessibility of young people in their social spaces (neighbourhoods, peer-communities); 3) strong and continuous adaptation to the interests and evolving needs of young people; 4) ability to provide and co-design learning opportunities, define measurable goals and recognition of achievements of young people in their fields of interests and skills; 5) Safe spaces, stimulating a supportive environments where mutual trust allow young people to experience both success and failures, to make mistakes and to learn with their peers in an enjoyable and fun setting; 6) Responsibility and autonomy of young people driving their own development; 7) Partnerships/collaboration with other actors (e.g. formal education, social work).

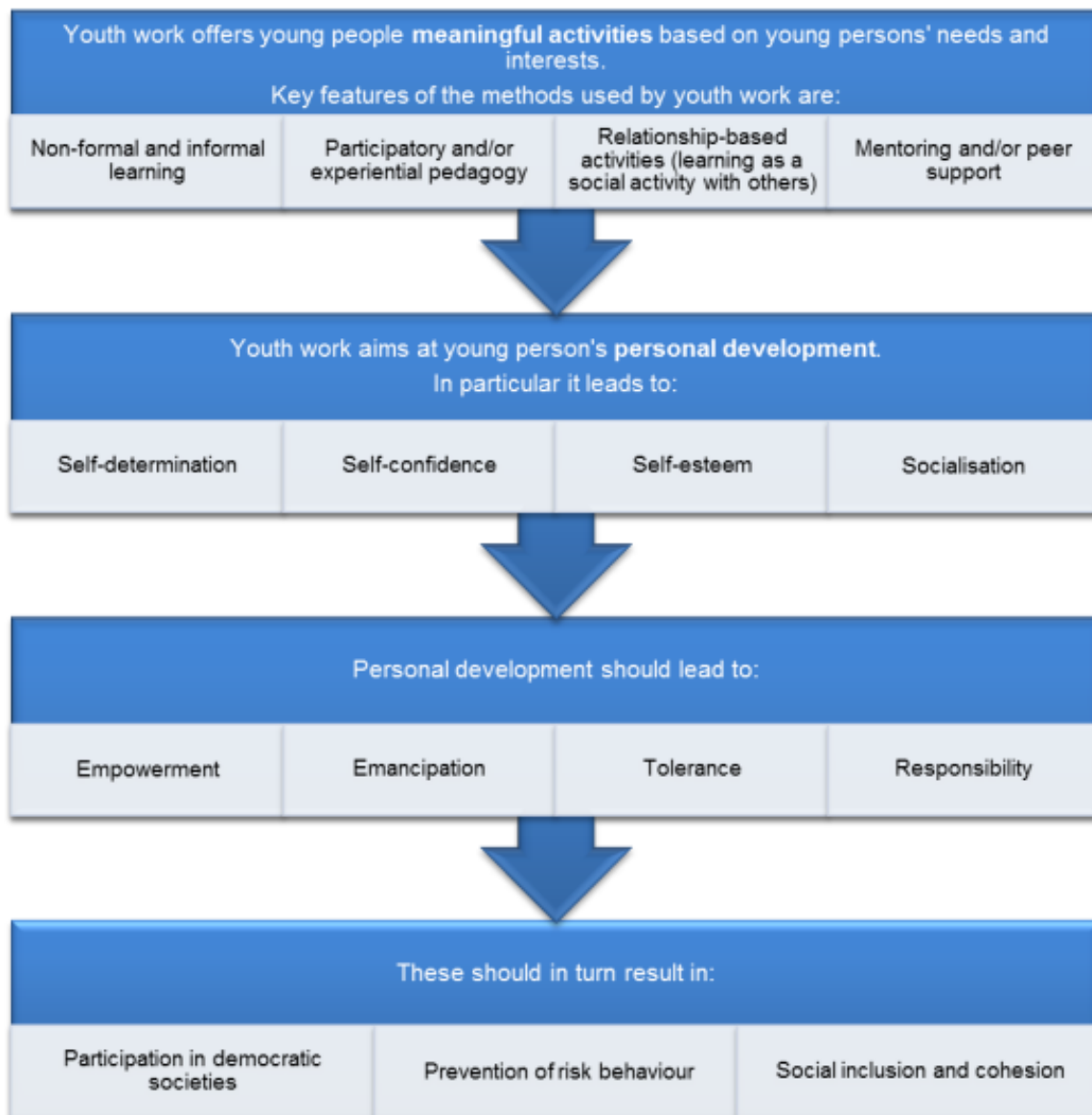
Crucial for tackling the potential of youth work is to put in place a dynamic balance between being **supportive**, fostering self-determination, empowerment and sense of **autonomy** of the young people, also enabling **mistakes** and learning from it. Young people can only unfold their

⁸ See Glossary: Special Needs (p. 56)

potentials and foster their skills and capabilities in a tailored, supportive safe space. Fostering sense of autonomy, responsibility and activation for

reaching own goals emerges in an environment conducive to **personal development**.

GRAPHIC 1



Source: Working with young people: The value of youth work in the EU ([youth-work-case-studies_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://youth-work-case-studies.europa.eu/))

A number of positive impacts of youth work with young people are as here following:

1. Development of skills and competences in a variety of areas (human and cultural capital), that would be otherwise non-tackled and remain underdeveloped;
2. Strengthening ability and interest for become actors of their communities, peer groups and network (social capital);
3. Understand, address and contribute to change particular behaviours (e.g. risk behaviours);

4. Building (positive) relationships with others (peers, actors of the social space, communities).

The need for good recognised youth work is today more important than ever as it contributes to shape our social fabric offering to the young people in need a safe space for connecting, become empowered and engage with other young people and also with older generations. It moreover helps young people to become aware of their own rights, values and potentials.

The activities presented here following were piloted and designed to offer tailored learning experiences being both enriching and fun to those individuals who are slipping out of regular educational system and have no means to access other learning opportunities. By taking part to the trainings offered in the framework of the Access project, the young people shared with other young people their learnings. These learnings contributed to the youth social values, in line with the European Youth Strategy and in line with the national frameworks of the countries where the case-studies were held.

2.1.2 Challenge of reaching young people

Even though there is no clear information at EU level on the reach of youth work, mechanisms of participation to youth work training activities or leisure programmes is not homogeneous and fragmented. As reported in recent studies some individuals and groups benefit more from access to youth work than others. Less reached and less targeted individuals and groups include those with

the highest potential to benefit from education offers and who are not reached by youth work:

1. Older age groups of young people (aged 18 and over);
2. Young people in rural areas;
3. Young people from migrant backgrounds;
4. Young people from other minority groups (e.g. disabled, LGBT);
5. Disadvantaged young people.

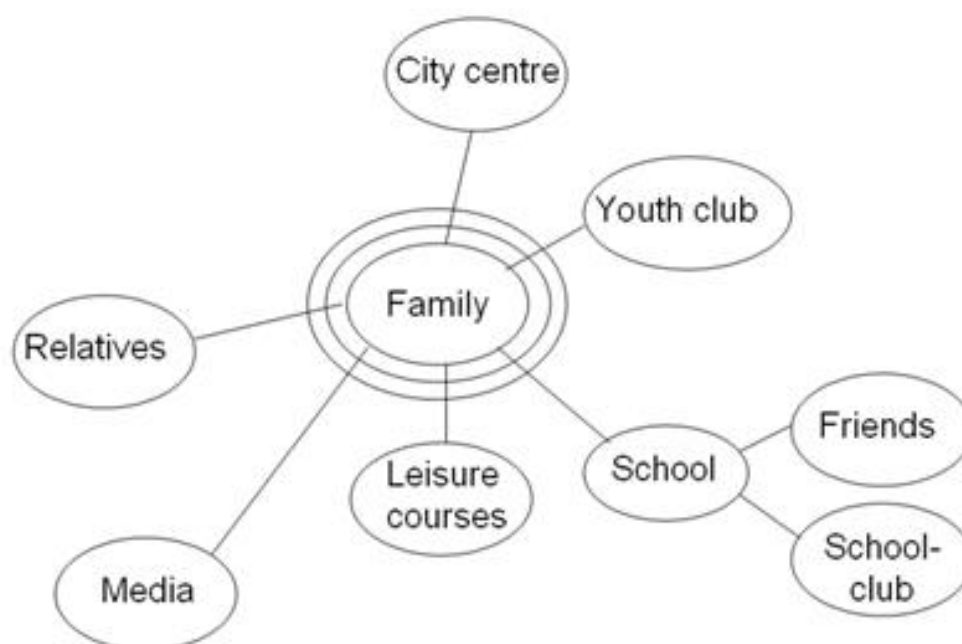
The Access project targeted some of these young people in dare need to gain the most out of youth work offers.

2.1.3 What is social space-orientation

Social spaces can be defined in different ways depending on the actors active in the field. In the 16th **Children and Youth Report** 11 social spaces are defined (day-care, school, education, university, youth work, media, family, party-affiliated youth education, armed forces, voluntary services, social movements). In the context of Access, it specifically entails the presence and exchange with youth workers. Here media, family or friends, other-affiliated individuals or groups gravitating around the youth, play a pivotal role.

Having defined the specificity and generalities of the three social spaces, this section focuses on the benefit of adopting a social space-oriented approach in youth work. Social Spaces are defined in social contexts, constituted by actions and stabilized by social structures and institutions.

GRAPHIC 2: The “Island model” by Helga Zeiher



Christian Spatscheck, Karin Wolf-Ostermann: *The Socio-Spatial Paradigm in Social Work*. In: *sozialraum.de* (1) Ausgabe 2/2009.
URL: <https://www.sozialraum.de/the-socio-spatial-paradigm-in-social-work.php>, Datum des Zugriffs: 16.03.2023

Unlike in formal education structured by institutional rules, in youth work the target groups are observed within defined open spaces, which are primarily shaped by the interaction of young individuals belonging to a peer group. The motivation for young people to enter and interact within a social space are manifold. These spaces are strongly connoted by relational interactions of young people acting in the space, and hence can be described considering the young people's perspective as actors and as makers of the space. This way it is possible to capture the subjective dimension of young people's interactions with one another, their perceptions of themselves and their role within the social group, and their values system as part of the peer group.

Social spaces relevant for youth work are defined by the following **elements**:

- **young people** belonging to the social space, specifications regarding age, gender, social origin, etc., intentions, inclusions and exclusions, type of use (activities)
- **other (peripheral) actors** active in the space (e.g. education and care staff, civil society, cultural providers, etc.), intentions and influence
- **inner structure** of the space, subspaces and their specifics (structure and dynamics)
- **normative dimension/level** of formalization: framework conditions, specifications/rules, underlying concepts/policies/strategies

- **addressability/influenceability** of the social space and recommendations for action to "the policy", supporting measures.

In the contexts of Access, social spaces analysed are heterogeneous and differ, among others, in terms of roles of the participants activating and acting in it, their non-homogeneous sense of belonging (being it voluntary/involuntary, external specifications/self-attribution), rules for participation (formalized/non-formalized), hierarchies, existence (real/imagined), clarity of demarcation, etc.

The **socio-spatial perspective** is highly relevant for work with young people, since they primarily orient themselves socio-spatially and - unlike most adults - do not or hardly orient themselves along structural and institutional guidelines. Young people always act in a variety of spaces at the same time; they open-up spaces for themselves and shape them. In doing so, they are limited by existing rules on the one hand, but on the other hand, the possibility of transgressing boundaries is always given.

Reaching out to disadvantaged young people in "underestimated spaces": Disadvantaged young people quickly slip out of the survey field, as soon as they leave formal education. **Socio-economic and democratic exclusion** are the consequences. These young people tend to be less socially active, have less trust in institutions and are more susceptible to populism, fake news, radicalisation tendencies. What makes addressing such groups

difficult, however, is that they are **highly fragmented**.

Working with these young people is not only the task of youth welfare, but of all actors active in the social space. Limited resources and lack of competencies of the "unusual actors" are critical obstacles for an effective localisation of youth work.

2.1.4 Why systematic social space orientation?

In the framework of the Access project the local working groups determined the need for participation of the involved youth, observing not only the individual himself, but also his system of interconnections **to his environment and his modus of operations in the social space**. The concept of social space orientation adopted by Access constitutes a framework for action for youth workers focusing above all on the living environment of a defined target group of disadvantaged youth. Based on the life story and the concrete living conditions (lifestyle, self-sufficiency, family, environment, Work etc.) of individuals the youth workers are in the position to determining young peoples' needs, and in discussion with them they are able to clarify and point out individual and group wishes and visions for the future, including their wish to take active part in societal and democratic processes. The observation of young people in their social spaces enables actors of youth work organisations to support young people with disadvantages to adapt their living environment to their individual needs, and to foster their ability to participate actively to social processes. Building on untackled potentials

and visions of young disadvantaged people— a support system emphasizing individual skills, interests and competences can be determined. The three local working groups observed with individual young people and interacted within the boundaries of their current habitats and social network references. This way a framework reference to their concrete life situation and contexts is defined. Having assessed the young peoples’ needs in relation to their specific life situation, including the resulting challenges and deficits they are facing as also positive aspects of

the profiles, a tailored supporting system is designed and put in place, with the close cooperation of a wide range of individuals, being them in the sphere of the family, education, work environment of associative life and institutions. To enhance young individuals’ possibility to equally access pathways of participation, inhibiting factors are listed and tailor-made solutions are elaborated collaboratively with the young people, with a focus on positive promotion of enabling and facilitating factors.

GRAPHIC 3

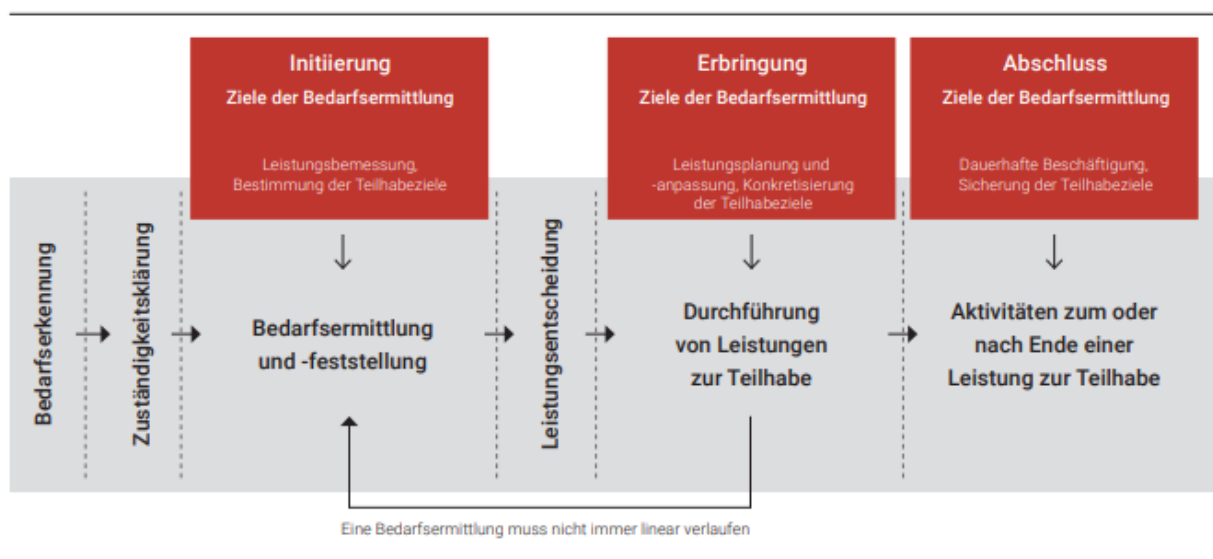


Abbildung 1: Ziele der Bedarfsermittlung im Kontext der Phasen des Rehabilitationsprozesses (modellhafte Darstellung; ohne Teilhabeplanung)

Source: [120419-Basiskonzept-Inhalt_6.indd \(bar-frankfurt.de\)](#)

2.1.5 Overview of key EU policies and programmes

The NEET phenomenon, phenomena of social exclusion and shrinking access to active participation in democratic life has wide societal, economic and political implications and impacts, both in the medium and long-term. This pushes the

repositioning of the situation of disadvantaged young people high up in the political agendas. NEETs were specifically referred to for the first time in European policy discussions in 2010 in the flagship initiative ‘Youth on the move’. The age category covered was 15–24 and was later extended to 29. The concept is now centrally embedded in the policy discourse at EU level.

- The **EU youth Strategy** is a very general overarching policy framework concerning youth opportunity and participation. A new EU Youth Strategy was adopted in 2018 and sets out a framework for cooperation with Member States on their youth policies for the period 2019–2027. The strategy focuses on three core areas of action, centred around the words ‘engage, connect, empower’. [European Youth Portal | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)
- **Youth on the Move** is a set of policy initiatives regarding education and employment for young people: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=950&langId=en>
- The **Youth Guarantee** is a policy meant to ensure that young people receive a quality job offer, further education, apprenticeship, or a traineeship within 4 months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. A proposal for a Council Recommendation on ‘**A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee**’, to replace the 2013 Recommendation extends the age range covered by the Youth Guarantee from age 24 to 29. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/youthguarantee> [EUR-Lex - 52020DC0276 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)
- The **European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan**, proposed by the European Commission in March 2021 and followed by a declaration at the Porto Social Summit in May 2021, introduced new, ambitious targets for young people, such as reducing

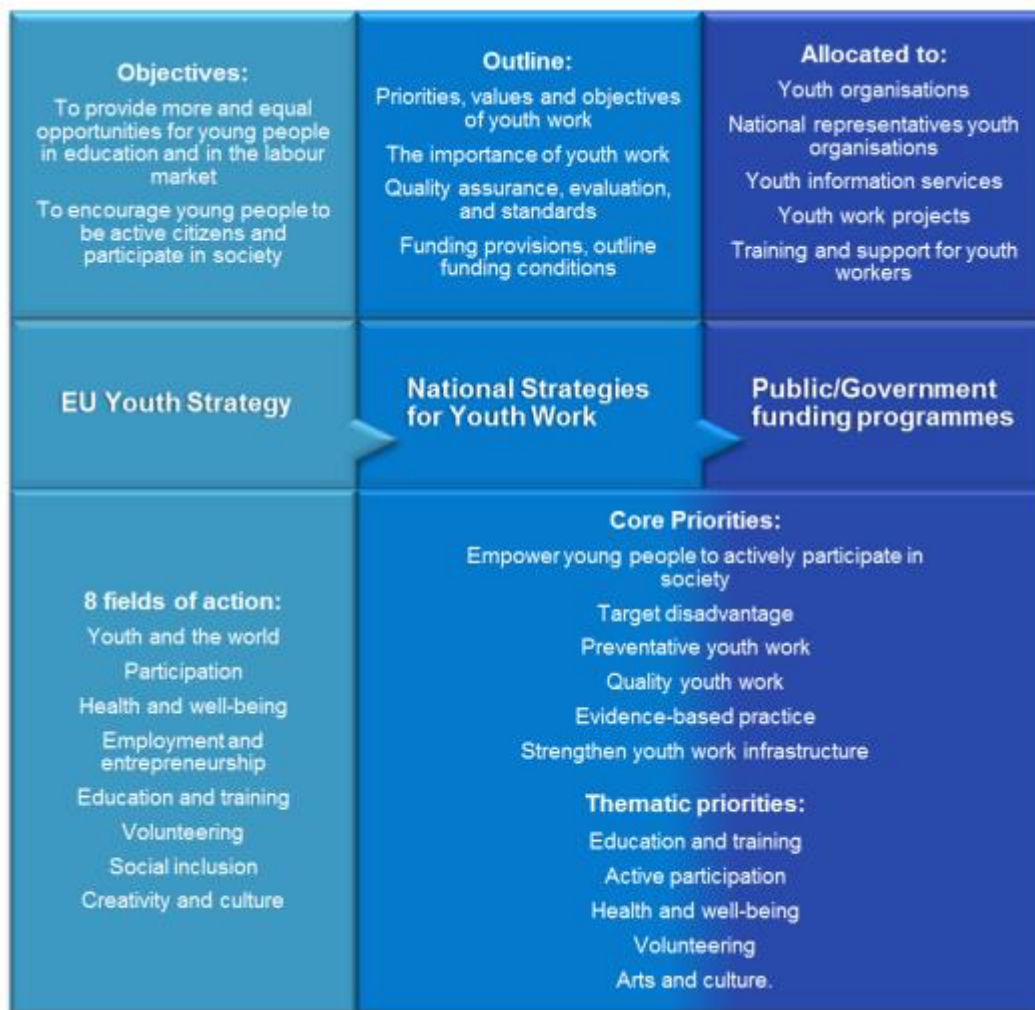
the rate of NEETs from 12.6% (2019) to 9% by 2030. [The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan \(europa.eu\)](#)

2.1.6 Supporting Frameworks. The Eu Youth Strategy and the European Youth Work Agenda

The Youth Strategy and Youth in Action support the youth work sector with policies and funding opportunities at the EU level. The EU Youth Strategy served as guideline to develop national youth policy. Here national priorities are aligned with priorities set at the EU level. In the praxis youth work is supported by legal frameworks, policies and funding tackling in different countries different aspects of youth work.

Across the three case studies the youth work comes under different legal and funding frameworks. Legal frameworks also lead to difference in recognition of youth work practices in the countries in exam. Core priorities for current and future youth work at national level are presented in national policy frameworks for youth work as in the following Graphic 4.

GRAPHIC 4



Source: Working with young people: The value of youth work in the EU ([youth-work-case-studies_en.pdf](#) [europa.eu](#))

2.1.7 Perspectives from the EU Countries: Austria, Spain, Germany

GERMANY

In Germany, the labor market is split up into various levels. The “primary labor market” (“*erster Arbeitsmarkt*”), or general labor market, is characterized by labor that is compensated with a wage paid by the employer in question. A portion of this wage is deducted to pay into the German social security system. This wage is also subject to the laws of minimum wage protection. The

“secondary labor market” (“*zweiter Arbeitsmarkt*”), on the other hand, refers to work that is not compensated with an official wage, but is rather financed through government-funded programs. This type of labor includes work in so-called workshops for people with disabilities that pay its workers a small monthly sum, which is not subject to the laws of minimum wage protection. This is because workers on the secondary labor market do not officially count as employees of enterprises, but rather solely as beneficiaries of government funding.

Young people lacking secondary school diplomas have less access to vocational training and employment on the general/primary labor market. This can potentially affect their income, which in turn influences their housing situation and their participation in society as a whole. People who have less access to the labor market due to their disabilities are entitled to various support programs in Germany.

The legal basis for these programs and the rights of its beneficiaries is Book IX of the German Social Code (SGB IX, Rehabilitation and Participation of People with Disabilities). According to this code, people with disabilities are entitled to benefits that allow them to participate in working life (§10 SGB IX). This could be, for example, through supported employment or vocational training, or the provision of an allowance that can be used to purchase specific services needed to make work and vocational training possible. All of these programs are intended to promote self-determination and equal participation for people with disabilities.

As beneficiaries of these programs, young people are granted the right to fulfill their own will and choice by §8 SGB IX. This means that they have a say in the implementation and design of the service they receive and that their demands are to be met. §29 SGB IX additionally grants the option to purchase such services independently using a so-called personal budget. This would allow beneficiaries to receive money (the personal

budget) from the benefactor (e.g. the German employment agency), which they then use to purchase their services independently from a service provider (e.g. BIS e.V.). Unfortunately, people with disabilities who apply for this personal budget often see their applications rejected, as this program is hardly granted in practice. Especially when it comes to **applicants seeking employment**, the provision of the personal budget as a resource is rather the exception than the rule.

With the educational course designed for our case study, we aim to support young people seeking employment on the general labour market. The course aims to empower these participants and helps them to plan their individual future.

AUSTRIA

In Austria, the so-called "training obligation act" has been in place since 2017. This applies to all young people up to the age of 18 who have completed compulsory schooling.

Parents/guardians are therefore obliged to ensure that young people who have completed compulsory schooling attend an education or training measure or a measure preparing them for this until they reach the age of 18.

The Austrian project target group or „sounding board“ attends such a preparing measure in the form of a VHS („Volkshochschule“) course to comply with this law.⁹

⁹ Further Information:

<https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/beratung/schulinfo/abp18.html>

https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/RegV/REGV_COO_2026_100_2_1177308/COO_2026_100_2_1234883.pdf

SPAIN

In Spain, the policies that have the youth strategy as their objective must be differentiated according to the different administrations that have competence in this matter. Obviously, the last of the strategies that they try to apply in the different state, regional and local regulations are inspired by some of the sustainable development objectives of the EU.

It is true that, if we stick to the target group that our case study focuses on, it is necessary to differentiate part of the work carried out by the administrations since there are specific plans for youth with disabilities or at risk of exclusion.

In Spain, three administrations have powers in everything that has to do with youth:

State government, through its ministries, has the capacity to legislate and manage economic funds that will capitalize in regional and local structures. We can say that Spain, in the educational field, is a country with a system similar to the federal one, called decentralized, where the regional administrations have an important autonomous capacity. One of the two ministries that has the greatest weight in this regard is that of **Education**, with the power to regulate the conditions for obtaining, issuing and validating academic and professional qualifications, as well as the subjects taught, the evaluation criteria and their expression.

The other most influential ministry in terms of youth is that of **Social Rights** and the 2030 Agenda. Within this department is the **Spanish Youth Council (CJE)**: a platform of youth entities, made up of the Youth Councils of the Autonomous Communities and state-wide youth organizations. Promotes the

participation of youth in the political, social, economic and cultural development of our State in a global environment. Currently, 60 youth organizations are part of this common project.

The **regional structure** would be the following administrative level with competences in youth. As this administrative plane descends, the policies and strategies achieve greater visibility. It is therefore not a centralized or Top-Down system.

The regional administration through the Valencian Autonomous Government (GVA) is fed with its own and central resources, and has its own legislative capacity. The three departments with the greatest influence on youth are the Equality and Inclusive Policies Department, the Education Department and Economy and Labour Department.

The Valencian Youth Institute (IVAJ) depends on the Equality and Inclusive Policies Department, which would be a body with the same name as the national CJE. Among its main tasks are the defence of social rights and freedoms of young people, the promotion of youth participation and support for its structures, promoting the provision of services to youth or promoting educational leisure activities.

The other branch that depends on this department and that does focus on youth with special needs would be social services. When we talk about more specific care (service for children and adolescents, care for functional diversity, alternative accommodation, etc.), social services are derived from the regional government.

The second regional department is **Education**. This is the umbrella in which we place the competencies and resources of regulated training, teachers, study

centers, schools, institutes, etc. In relation to the strategy for young people with **special needs**, in our regional area we have 45 special education centers (30 public and 15 private). We must remember that mainly, educational inclusion is in ordinary centers unless we talk about cases of extreme special needs.

One of the strategies in relation to youth, and especially with **special needs**, comes from the **Department of Labor and Economy** through its labor market policies. In the selection processes of the students of the projects, priority will be given to people with difficulties in finding a job or vulnerable groups, such as: women, people with functional diversity, people over 45 low-qualified people, people in a situation or risk of poverty, long-term unemployed, women victims of gender violence, people in a situation or risk of social exclusion, trans people.

The third of the administrative levels with powers and decisions in youth strategies is the **municipal** one, which falls on the town councils. Depending on the economic capacity of the municipality (mainly linked to its size) and its economic-social reality, we can find localities with a strong involvement in the field of youth or small municipalities where this concern does not exist due to its small and aged population.

In cities and medium-sized municipalities, it is very common to find multiple initiatives (with municipal resources) such as socio-educational centers where school absenteeism is combated, there are specialized child care services, psycho-pegagogical cabinet, qualification programs and professional training or support classrooms and school reinforcement. Actions focused on young people with **special needs**.

In addition, the municipality also has the power to guarantee non-specific social services: reception, social inclusion, family intervention, community action service, specific technical advice, equality, etc.

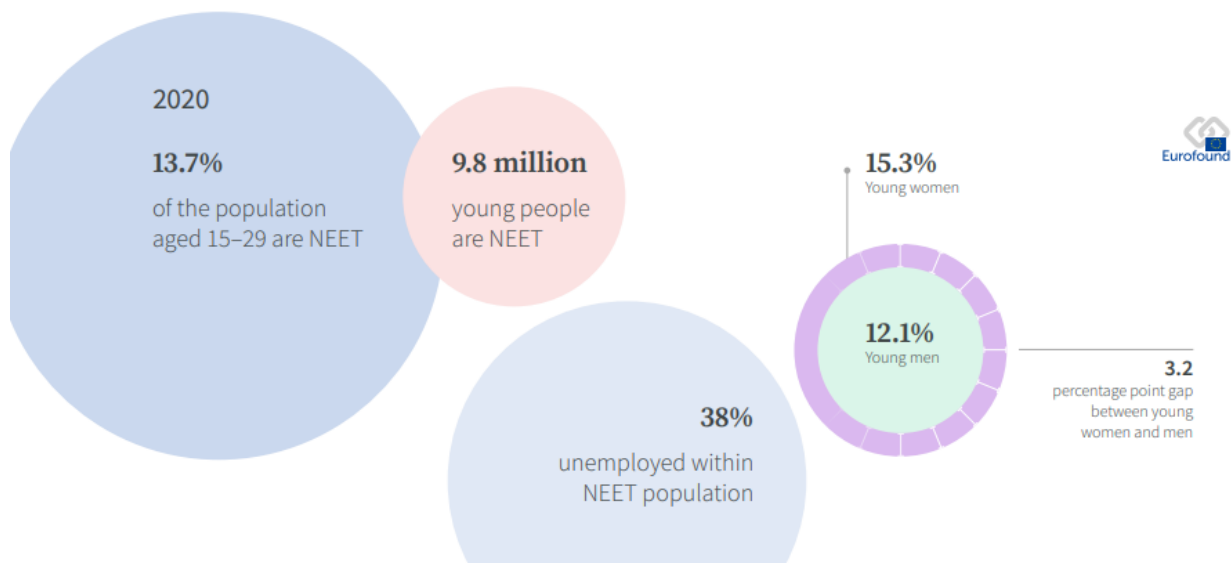
2.2 The Target Group

YOUTH AS EXPERTS OF THEIR LIFE ENVIRONMENTS

The project Access focuses on a target group of “disadvantaged youth”, young people in vulnerable situations, often in a NEET (young people not in employment, education or training) situation. More specifically, this study focuses on young people with fewer chances to achieve adequate education or socioeconomic positions due barriers and limitations they encounter preventing them to become active citizens and to engage in social contexts (in education or employment settings). The term NEETs was created in the late 1980’s in the UK. NEETs is progressively identified as a problem across Europe, as the number of young people in a NEET situation continues to grow.

GRAPHIC 5

NEETs emerged as one of the most vulnerable groups following the 2008–2013 economic crisis.



Source: [Youth in the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

‘NEET’ is not one situation, but represents an umbrella term for a range of different situations emerged by different causes. This requires correspondingly different approaches from youth workers. NEET situations are involuntary and associated with situation of social exclusion, underprivilege, exclusion from the systemic support infrastructure and offers. NEET are often disengaged and at risk of long-term damage, even more so as a result of the 2019 COVID pandemic. Youth issues continue to represent an important priority in the debate on the future of Europe.

NEET is an acronym to refer to the situation of young persons aged between 15 and 29, in Europe. The aim of the NEET concept is to broaden understanding of the vulnerable status of young people.

The term NEETs includes many very different situations to be perceived as meaningful at the practice level. Dealing with specific young people from various different situations, age groups and emerging needs, it may be perceived as counterproductive, as it homogenizes all differences and may stigmatise the quality of diversity within the group people.

„NEET SITUATION YOUNG PEOPLE ARE CHARACTERISED BY: • LESS SOCIAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION • LESS POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT • LESS TRUST IN OTHER PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS. NEET SITUATION YOUNG PEOPLE ARE “AT HIGH RISK OF MARGINALISATION AND EXCLUSION FROM THE LABOUR MARKET, ESPECIALLY THE LONGER THEY REMAIN OUTSIDE THE WORLD OF WORK”

GRAPHIC 6

The **NEET** population is a **diverse group** of vulnerable and non-vulnerable young people who are not accumulating human capital through the labour market or education, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.



Re-entrants
10.4%

Have already been hired or enrolled in education or training and will soon leave the NEET group



Short-term unemployed
20.7%

Unemployed and seeking work, and have been unemployed for less than a year; moderately vulnerable



Long-term unemployed
14.4%

Unemployed, seeking work and have been unemployed for more than a year; a high degree of disengagement and social exclusion



Illness, disability
9.5%

Not seeking work due to illness or disability; includes those who need more social support because they cannot do paid work



Family/care responsibilities
24.1%

Cannot work because they are caring for children or incapacitated adults or have other family responsibilities; 90% are women; a mix of vulnerable and non-vulnerable individuals



Discouraged
5.0%

Believe that there are no job opportunities and have stopped looking for work; at high risk of social exclusion and lifelong disengagement from employment



Other NEETs
15.8%

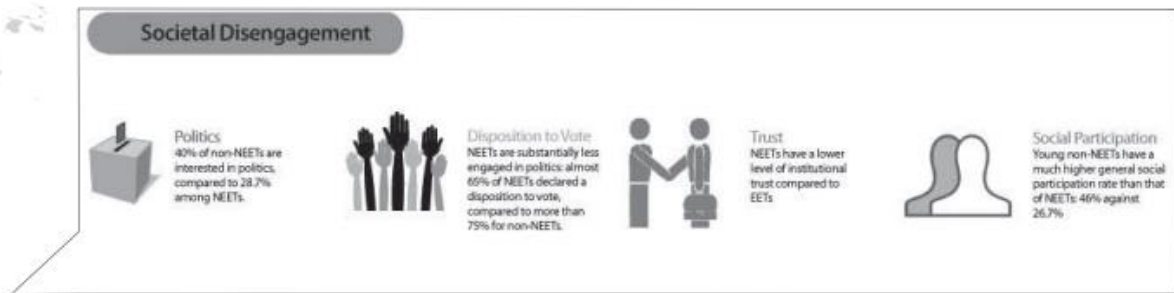
A very heterogeneous group; includes the most vulnerable, the most privileged, and those who are following alternative paths, such as artistic careers



Source: [Youth in the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

Three project teams tackle three different dimensions of disadvantages youth. In doing so, the teams consider the various forms of societal discrimination and structural inequalities that cause the disabilities and disadvantages in question (e.g. growing up in an area home predominantly to marginalized groups of society, such as the district of Kreuzberg in Berlin). “Disadvantaged youth” is used here as an umbrella category to embrace all young people with fewer opportunities than their peers, and in some cases, they are referred to as youth at risk, vulnerable youth, disconnected youth or socially excluded youth due to the social inequality they experience (Bendit & Stokes, 2003).

GRAPHIC 7



From Eurofound's 'NEETs Infographic', 2012

Source: <https://www.saltoyouth.net/downloads/417-3266/OnTrack.pdf>

In Germany, disadvantaged youth is a codified legal term that structure access rights to support and “positive action” type of programmes. While on the one hand this entails the **right to support**, at the same time it risks to becoming a label associated with **negative images** (Walther et al, 2002).

„Youth cultures“ are regarded as the relevant field in which young people identify and invent themselves, as this is informed by subjective relevance, individually appropriated life styles and collective (media and social) trends. Within „youth cultures,, the target youth explore and find ‘explorative solutions’ for some of their transition or contextual problems. By supporting youth in their pathway to creating new subjective systems the project teams accompany them in the development of their self-images, contribute empowering them by engaging them in (socio-cultural) identity work and capitalise on the creation of a unique „youth cultural capital“. The field of youth cultures also represent powerful creative sphere always emerging from the heart of urban sub-cultures. This specific self-referential and self-defined dynamic legitimates the youth within their “sub-culture”, or with their specific

„youth culture“. Youth cultures are developed in the case studies around specific music, sport, and (urban)styles. These cultures carry the high potential for (transformative and creative) forms of socio-cultural development, youth empowerment and broader integration, on the one hand and on the other carry the potential to challenge the status quo and raise awareness within local communities (and youth work) on the rich potential of youth cultures.

The **two organisations in Berlin**, BIS e.V. and GDLB, work mainly with young people with disabilities, especially people with learning difficulties. They experience discrimination on the basis of their disabilities which makes them part of the target group disadvantaged youth. “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (UN-CRP Art.1).

BIS e.V. and GDLB’s intervention model was developed for a target group of young people with

learning difficulties, who currently lack the opportunity to participate independently in working life in a way that satisfies their individual needs and preferences.

For people with difficulties in learning, it is particularly difficult to find employment on the general labor market, that is, employment with social security payments. The barriers to participation on this market are very high. Thus, many people with learning difficulties in Germany work and study in so-called **workshops for people with disabilities** (WfbM). These workshops exist as part of a system that is separate from the general labor market and have thus been criticized by the monitoring body of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Our model group comprises of young people who are not yet in education, training or employment (NEETs). The educational biographies of these young people vary, yet each share the desire to become active on the general labor market, i.e. **to participate in vocational training or regular employment.**

The participants of our case study are registered with the German employment agency as 'seeking consultation' and would like to realize their right to work on the general labor market with help from BIS e.V.

In Spain, the activity was developed to reach young people between **15 and 29 years old** in situation of vulnerability, which is the age bracket used by both

the Spanish Youth Institute and the National Statistics Institute.¹⁰

The XII Report about Poverty in Spain highlights that the worrying situation of young people "(...) *the rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion among young people between 16 and 29 years of age is 31.2. Likewise, 24.6% of young people in this age group are at risk of poverty (...). Likewise, 14.9% of those under 18 years of age are in a situation of severe poverty*".¹¹

The young people correspond, then, to a particular vulnerable collective in Spain. In the framework of this project, the objective was to tackle specifically young people in situation of vulnerability (social and economic) and with few or even absence of **digital skills**, and to propose them a training that would fit their interest and needs.

The target group of **the Austrian tandem** are young people who, for various reasons, are not in education, training or further education after completing compulsory schooling and are not in employment. These young people belong to the group of so-called NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

The young people are between 15 and max. 24 years and are attending courses as part of the AusbildungsFit/BOK-program of the VHS Vienna. In Austria, there is the so-called "Training Obligation Act". Parents/legal guardians are obliged to ensure that young people who have completed compulsory schooling attend an education or training measure or a measure

¹⁰ EAPN, Estudio Juventud 2022.
https://www.eapn.es/ARCHIVO/documentos/documentos/1672313431_eapn_estudio-juventud291222.pdf

¹¹ XII Informe sobre el Estado de la Pobreza, EAPN-ES
<https://www.eapn.es/publicaciones/511/xii-informe-sobre-el-estado-de-la-pobreza>

preparing for such a measure until they reach the age of 18.

One of these preparatory measures is the AusbildungsFit/BOK-program of the VHS Vienna.¹² There are several branches that can be chosen within the program. Our target group completes the **area of handicrafts**. The Südwind-sounding board attends the course "Handicraft: Repair and Recycling". In order to create an incentive for the young people to come to the course, there is a so-called **daily allowance** for this VHS course, which they only receive for the days on which they are present.

The reasons why young people attend such courses are manifold. In Vienna, one of the reasons is that there are **too few training places** but a lot of young people. The young people simply cannot find a training place. The companies have a large "selection" and tend to take graduates/drop-outs from further education (technical, craft or business management) schools rather than people with compulsory school-leaving qualifications. Thus, young people who for various reasons already find it more difficult than others to access training and the labour market are at an even greater disadvantage. Further reasons that make such access more difficult can be cognitive impairments, special features such as ADHD, forms of autism or dyslexia.

The social environment also plays a very strong role. Is there someone in the young person's **environment** who motivates him or her, who teaches him or her the importance of education

and training for the future and above all for a self-determined life? If the immediate environment (family, friends) and also the system (school, teachers, social workers, school psychologists, etc.) do not manage to convey this, young people often have no interest or motivation or do not see the necessity for education or vocational training.

Language barriers can also make it difficult for young people to access education and the labour market. What young people, and especially NEETS, need is perspective and motivation. They need examples and guidance on how to participate in life as an active citizen. How to shape their own lives. They need to be made to believe that their **actions have an impact** on their lives, even if they may not yet see or feel it. It is always important to listen to them and take them seriously.

They have to be **met where they are at the moment**, in a language they can understand. To do this, the mediators have to rethink their way of expressing themselves and the terms they take for granted. The young people should not be given the feeling that they are too stupid for a topic, but they should be motivated to think about something and **to deal with a topic in their own way**.

By developing a workshop on the topic of sustainability and globalization together with the sounding board, Südwind gives these young people the opportunity to create and approach a topic, which often seems very **complicated and abstract** to them, in their **own way**.¹³

Young people are quite interested in politics, social and global issues and want to get involved.

¹² Information about the course:
<https://www.vhs.at/de/projekte/bok>

¹³ Information about the workshops
<https://www.suedwind.at/workshops/>

Unfortunately, they often do not really feel addressed by the "traditional" offers or are often not reached by them. Südwind tries to bring in topics that concern **global issues**. We try to choose topics that directly "surround" young people, such as their **mobile phones, fashion or food**. Issues that affect us all, where they have the opportunity to act and where they and their actions matter, even if they are not yet aware of it. We want them to know and to get involved.

There is a need to develop **appropriate education and participation offers** to increase their participation and competence development. These offers should be tailored to their **current situation** and be **social space oriented**.

Young people should be more involved and have the opportunity to work actively on a topic and pass on information to others in their group, e.g. by holding workshops, giving a short speech or leading a discussion (**peer work**). This principle should show young people how they can shape their own lives and raise their self-confidence. This is to show them opportunities and their potential. Existing workshops form the basis for this project. Input and feedback will be collected from the participating young people and a new workshop will be developed according to their ideas and needs.

The jointly designed workshop will be interactive and the participants will have to work on the topic themselves. They will be supported by short films, excerpts from documentaries, music or contributions from social media platforms that are currently most used by the target group.

2.3 The Players

THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORKERS, STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES IN THE INSTITUTIONS

BIS e.V. and GDLB are two organizations based in Berlin. Their main focus is to support people with learning difficulties to find internships, trainings and employment on the general labour market. Participation in **working life and vocational training** is the goal. BIS e.V. and GDLB's philosophy is based on a vision of humanity that values the dignity and esteem of an individual, their right to self-determination and social responsibility, and their abilities and potential to develop. The two organizations reject any form of exclusion and are committed to a democratic society in which social diversity is understood and cherished as an enrichment of that society. This is why the organizations aim to achieve equal participation of all people in all areas of life.

BIS e.V. and GDLB cooperate mainly with schools, the German employment agency and organizations that work for equal rights for people with and without disabilities. Part of this cooperation is facilitated by inclusion workers and counsellors ("*Bildungsbegleitung*") who are stationed at secondary schools. There, these counsellors work closely and individually with students to help them plan their professional goals and identify the types of support they need to achieve them. The completion of prevocational internships with companies of the students' choice throughout the school year allow them to determine where their strengths, weaknesses, and interests lay. Based on the professional experiences made and the key competencies acquired throughout the year, the next steps toward achieving the students' goals are

planned together with the student, inclusion workers, the German employment agency and, to some extent, the school.

Südwind is an Austrian based NGO with is mainly working in 3 areas: **Global Citizenship Education, campaigning and media work**. It covers topics such as human rights, labour rights, development (especially the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)), ethical consumption, climate justice and migration. It campaigns against discrimination, extremism and hate speech.

Südwind has been working in development education and awareness raising for the last 40 years. With headquarters in Vienna and 6 regional offices, it reaches out to local actors all over Austria. Südwind has become one of the lead organizations in the field of Global Citizenship Education, Global Education, awareness raising programs for global and development issues and sustainable development (SDGs) on the national level with a strong networking role within the European organisations working in this field. The organisation provides workshops and trainings and develops toolkits, guides and exhibitions. Südwind works with children, young people and in adult education. Südwind's 6 regional offices, which are also resource centres for Global Education, provide trainings for teachers, educators, multipliers and decision makers and directly support schools on Global Education programs through e.g. workshops and educational material. The Organisation is very active in campaigning and public relations and publishes its own magazine ("Südwindmagazin") on the topics of international politics, culture and development.

The diversity of Südwind's projects reflects the complexity of North-South relations, culturally, economically, environmentally, politically and interpersonally. The association is committed to ecologically, economically and socially sustainable, future-proof development. Südwind offers seminars, further training and courses on Global Education according to the ECTS system, which are offered and held at universities of education (e.g. in Innsbruck, Graz, Linz and Vienna).

The VHS Vienna looks back on a history of more than a hundred years and allows millions of people to work on their skills and above all to overcome social barriers. With its wide range of courses and its democratic approach, the VHS Vienna offers educational approach as the basis for the further education of people with different Qualifications. Over the past 130 years, the VHS Vienna has become the largest organisation for **adult education** in the German-speaking countries.

The Vienna **adult education** centre (VHS) offers about 20,000 courses annually, in which about 140,000 people participate. Most courses are in the fields of languages and health. The Vienna Adult Education Centres are also the largest provider of **secondary education** in Vienna. There are preparatory courses for the lower secondary school-leaving certificate, for the "Matura" and the "Berufsreifeprüfung" and study entrance examination. In addition to the general courses, there are **job-oriented courses for Economic and personal development**.

The Vienna Adult Education Centres currently employ around 1500 salaried staff and 2500 freelancers / course leaders per semester.

The VHS Vienna is the largest provider of language courses in the German-speaking world. With 1500 participants and over 30.000 hours in **basic skills education** under the IEB funding programme, the VHS are also the largest provider of **basic skills education** in Austria. The activities of the VHS include also the development of **certificate programmes for trainers** and the implementation of extensive **further education programs for teachers**.

AusbildungsFit: BOK Vocational School

Target Group: adolescents and young adults **15-21/24** whose social skills, cultural techniques and knowledge of new media call for comprehensive training

The young people belong to the group of so-called NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). They have completed compulsory schooling but then left school and have not yet started (vocational) training.

One of these preparatory measures is the AusbildungsFit/BOK programme of the VHS Vienna. There are several branches that can be chosen within the programme. Our target group completes the area of handicrafts. The same young people attend the same courses for at least one year as part of the programme.

Aim: enable them to engage in further education or training

The **target** is to provide a suitable range of offers to reach and optimally support all young people in need of **competence development** before starting a (vocational) education, apprenticeship or training; or before they continue school

Funding: European Social Fund / Citizens Service of the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection

Collaborators:

- Youth Coaching (assistance programme for young people at the end of their mandatory schooling or after they leave school)
- Public Employment Service (AMS)
- Local Businesses
- Schools, Qualification Measures/Support Programmes, Adult Education Providers
- Councelling Centers, Health Care Providers

Role of trainers/ coaches: Ausbildungsfit-BOK

The task of the trainers at AusbildungsFit is the **professional guidance of the training module**. This is done by teaching and training the relevant activity (craft, gastronomy, etc...) through practical exercises. The goal is to make the competencies of the participants visible as well as to teach and practice professional competencies and working virtues. The trainers work in a **resource-oriented and self-esteem-promoting** manner.

Duties and tasks of the coaches:

- Giving professional instructions to the young people
- Teaching and training the respective activities
- Practicing the competences in the professional area and in the area of general work virtues
- Resource-oriented and self-esteem-promoting work with the young people

- Acting as a role model for the young people
- Making the competencies of the young people visible in the sense of evidence-based learning progress documentation
- Exchange of the necessary information in the context of the quarterly meetings in documented and comprehensible form
- Close cooperation with the coaches and the other trainers

3 Introduction to the Case Studies

3.1 Summary of the three case studies

THE CORE IDEA AND INTENTION OF THE CASE STUDIES IN VIEW OF THE EU YOUTH STRATEGY

This paper presents three case study as a methodology adopted to study (new) complex phenomena in a real-life situation. The purpose is not only to extend knowledge on investigated living realities with the goal to **promote transfer**. Far from intending to set unilateral standards of „best practices,, the case studies from Berlin, Vienna and Valencia provide here a detailed and in-depth analysis of the specific topic addressed, with the aim to **encourage and empower other practitioners to find appropriate solutions to the specific challenges that they face. Ultimate goal is to continue** capitalising on the experiences shared here and to encourage continuing striving to achieve a ‘just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met’ (The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

The true value of the case studies presented is to contribute to building a sustainable development paradigm: based on a combination of primary field research and secondary data three sets of information and experiences are made available to all practitioners outside the immediate situation tackled, in particular these not active in the social spaces selected.

Beyond the practitioners, other institutions (e.g. donors and policy makers) and the general public

may also benefit from the case studies, as by getting exposed to the experiences and insights presented may reach a greater awareness and become more informed on the subject, by being exposed to ‘real life’ learning and experiences on the ground.

For the exploration of case studies in the project „Access“, we follow the interpretation of the term as used in social sciences¹⁴. Here, the definition of the term „case study“ means the exploration of the "social construction of reality" („soziale Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit“) - as represented by the work of Robert E. Stake [Stake, Robert E. (1995). The Art of Case Study Research]. In line with this interpretation the three case studies in „Access“ project provide detailed insights from a practice perspective, and strive to find a balance between being too academic or too superficial, in a way to add real value to the day-to-day work of practitioners and policy makers. This work is in progress, and the results emerging from the case studies are published on the project website as they are completed.

A second added value of the case studies is that contribute with great significance to the **attitudes, competences and behaviour** of individuals and organisations engaged.

The Case Study presented were designed to:

- contribute insights into the **process** of successful cross-sector partnering and piloting

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Case_study

- contribute to **case study collection** and dissemination
- enhance professional **competencies and skills** of practitioners active in the social space and all other relevant actors active in the youth education and youth work sector
- contribute establishing **good practice** in the field of youth work in line with the EU Youth Strategy
- contributing deepening understanding on how to effectively adapt the models presented to other specific contexts, hence contributing positive changes in current operational models of youth work and youth education.

How to disseminate the results of the case studies, in a way that the results emerged in the pilots of the three case studies can be easily adapted to other contexts and in a manner suitable for a broader audience (practitioners, policy makers, academia, business, civil society, etc..).

Throughout the project Access the consortium worked in collaboration, and undertook their task in a spirit of adventure and open-mindedness. Throughout the process various opportunities were created for the tandems leading the case studies to learn from each other and to capitalise on past experiences and to revise their models in the light of new learning(s). All along the process and in the dissemination phase, all partners were encouraged to contribute and ask for feedback in a way to enhance a 'learning environment' in their respective organisations. Ultimate goal was to

ensure that outcomes from the pilot phases and learning from the activities held in the social spaces would add sustainability to the organisations (and sector) models, and ultimately would contribute to a positive systemic change, enabling up-scaling and international transfer.

The material presented in this paper is drawn from the unique work of the Access Case Studies contributed by the three tandems in Berlin, Vienna and Valencia (see chapters below). Their collective contribution comprises:

- A literature research and needs analysis
- designing, writing-up and re-working 'social space oriented' case studies
- sharing in a participatory and trans-disciplinary manner personal observations, logbooks and evaluations documenting and reflecting both lessons learnt and challenges encountered during the project.

The authors of this publication acknowledge the wealth of ideas and experiences that the work on the three case studies is able to bring into the public discussion on youth work and youth education in the light of the EU Youth Strategy.

We encourage all readers to explore in greater details the updates on the case studies published on the project website ([Results / Access – sozialraumorientierte Jugendarbeit 4.0 \(access-youth.eu\)](#)). Here all materials that the authors present in a condensed form for the scope of the strategy paper will be presented in a final form.

3.2 Notes on methodology and the qualitative approach

To tackle the complexity of the life world experienced by young people and to be enabled to identify the subjective impressions and needs - along with preferences and interests - the partners adopted special research methods for social space analyses based in the context of **qualitative research**. Some of the methods applied are presented as here following.

- **Qualitative interviews with "key persons":**

This method was adopted to grasp the views of "interesting" people (both educators and young people, or other actors of the social space) about their social spaces. Key persons were identified in the local contexts in Berlin, Vienna and Valencia (being e.g. local shopkeepers, youth workers, teachers, youth care staff, older inhabitants, etc.) based on their special experience or longer exposure to the social space . These interviews were semi-structured, and lasted between 20 to 60 minutes.

- **Peer group grids:** This method was used to grasp a better understanding of youth cultures and peer groups in the social space. Based on semi-structured questions, young people were asked about the peer groups they know or they belong to in their social space. Important elements emerged were e.g. the names of the peer group, the age of the members,

their outfit, preferred music, the behaviour and any conflicts within the group. Having collected relevant data, the results were discussed with the young people and local experts, accompanied by the youth workers or youth educators of the Access project. This method enabled the consortium to gain or to update their previous knowledge of the different peer groups in the social space, their barriers, conflictive dynamics and the possible way forwards towards participation and empowerment of young people belonging to these groups. Based on these initial assessments, improved models could be design to include the specific peer group and foster the position of the individual young people as "experts" about his social space and their scenes. Ultimate goal of this method was to reach greater levels of youth involvement and active participation. In the case of the Berlin model, peer group work was carried out with the individuals defined „circle of support,,, adults also present in the life milieus of the young people.

- **Autophotography:** young people in Berlin were asked to choose local places, to take photos or videos with their mobile phones of these spaces and to describe and discuss about the latter together with their peers or the youth workers. The places selected to be filmed and presented were the young people "everyday places". Moreover "places of special interest", or places particularly "ugly" or „beautiful“ or spaces of conflicts were also presented.

The videos represented the diversity and in-depth perspective of the young individuals on the social spaces. This constituted a starting point to grasp a greater understanding of the meaning and social dynamics present in and around these social spaces. The autophotography supported sense of belonging, stimulated greater sense of purpose and unlocked sense of mutual trust. Based on this method a smooth exchange on specific topics as e.g. „gendered spaces,,, „hidden dynamics of family/social control,,, invisible barriers of systems of beliefs and religious practices“ etc. emerged. As an example within the neighbourhood Kreuzberg in Berlin, the area of „Kotti“ was represented as a space ruled by specific groups, where family bonds and the social ties highly influence codes of conducts and perspective for the future of the young people. The group discussions were restricted to enable the young people to discuss freely in a safe-space setting. To reach a greater motivation of the youth, a public presentation of the films into a festival was planned.

- **Interviews with members or staff of institutions:** With the help of semi-structured questionnaires, youth workers, civil servants and stakeholders of the NGO sector were asked to give their assessment of their target group and the conductivity or obstacles presented by the social infrastructures active in the social spaces- in particular youth centers, socio-cultural centres, mobile or stationary youth

services). Building upon these interviews, the tandem could gather information's on the known institutions and actors anchored or acknowledged by the young people in the social space context, and the strengths (or any challenges experienced) in the local context.

In the context of the Access, the project tailors the the young people (as the peer group inhabiting the social space) as experts of their life world. They were encouraged - and deserve - to keep their unique **dignity, values, interests and preferences**. Therefore, the methods for social space-oriented approach was carried out according to **ethical aspects (to the extent possible personal data are protected and anonymised)** and all participants - both youth and youth workers - were debriefed and informed about the intentions of the project and the interests of the Access project.

Participation was in all social spaces voluntary.

Moreover, it was also important for the consortium to remain aware of aspects of **power** while designing and evaluating the results, and to keep in mind who were the **beneficiaries from the project results** and to which extend the implementing organisations (and the relevant teachers, experts, teams, etc.) have presented and clarified their interests. Also, throughout the process it was important to keep both institutional and participant's **expectations realistic**: not every training or consultation session could lead to immediate or tangible results, nor the Access project could lead to the fulfilment of all participants' wishes for empowerment, inclusion and well-being. In the framework of the Access

project all team and associated experts undertaking qualitative work in the social space selected, demonstrated a profound knowledge of the proposed approaches and capitalised on the strengths and also limitations of the methods.

3.3 Case Study: Cooperation on all levels 'Global to Local'

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

In line with the Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development, the Access team in Vienna implemented a case study with the aim to contributing to tackle the urgent need to counter the **globally interrelated challenges of our societies**: what we experience in Europe in reference to the climate crisis, raising pollution, effects of the pandemic, the raise in poverty and inequalities in urban contexts and their environmental, social and economic effects on societies (in Europe and Beyond) and our planet.¹⁵

The case study lead by Südwind and the VHS Vienna, serves as a good practice shedding some lights on how to positively tackle in the praxis the urgent call for action, and to empower youth to engage against these challenges -whose effects are amplified by the Covid-19 . Higher goal is to work in synergy across disciplines and across sectors, to operate coherent steps towards a joint transformation - lead by our youth - towards

sustainable development. Primary call was to contribute to a more just, fair, inclusive and caring society where all individual act in the respect of each other and the nature. Access proved successfully contributing through tailored education activities that youth education is leading towards **positive changes, fostering** awareness and connectedness of young people. The educational offers presented in the case study in Vienna could support the understanding of the **many dimensions of sustainable development** (for society and for the environment). Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), in line with the SDG 4 proved in the case study Vienna to contribute to **positive societal transformation**, providing young people from disadvantaged environment with the necessary **knowledge and skills**, and proved to enhance **sense of responsibility**, leading towards initial steps towards sustainable change.

The Access case study in Vienna empowered subsequently two groups of young learners to develop their **skills and competences** in collaboration and problem solving. This will later on support them to be resilient and already led them to operate **more responsible choices as citizens**. In line with the SDGs and with the ESD all actors working with young people and all education institutions in Vienna (and beyond) are called to take responsibility, to continue acting to promote **respect for the environment**, along with respect for human rights, **democracy, non-**

¹⁵ (cfr. Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development; Learn for our planet: act for sustainability, UNESCO 2022, [Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development](#); [Learn for our planet: act for sustainability - UNESCO Digital Library](#))

discrimination, equity and gender equality. In conclusion the access case study in Vienna promoted intercultural understanding, inclusion and the notion of responsible **and active global citizenship.**

DYNAMIC AND REAL-LIFE LEARNING EXPERIENCES FROM VIENNA

Südwind lead the **Case Study „Global Citizenship: Cooperation at all levels – global to local“.** With the support of the Volkshochschule (VHS) Vienna the tandem developed an educational and participatory offer in line with the principle of "global citizenship education" in the form of modular workshops, delivered in the VHS Vienna. In line with the second priority area of the EU Youth Strategy, this model researched and proposed concrete links between **global interrelationships and sustainable solutions** and the living environment of young people in NEET situation in Vienna. Both the topics and methodology addressed a **current gap in educational offers** for young people and contributes to the national framework „Ausbildungspflichtgesetz“ "**training obligation act**"¹⁶ enforced in Austria since 2017. The contents were tailored and adjusted to address the specific « social spaces » of the participants: two successive pilots were held respectively with **7** and with **12 participants.** The workshops were held at the VHS Vienna, with cooperation with the **Adult Education Centre Vienna** between November 2022 and April 2023. The contents originally delivered in formal

education settings were easily adopted into the non-formal education context of the «Handcraft Workshops», with the active involvement of the targeted youth and the educators.

The two series of workshops were elaborated in a participatory manner together with the young people of the "**sounding board**" (focus group) and the teams of Südwind. Starting point was "The journey of my mobile phone" workshop format developed by Südwind project staff. During the project methods and educational materials were introduced by an **ice breaker exercise**

Related to the topic - with the support of videos, song, pictures, advertisement, stories and anecdotes-, the topics were questioned, reformulated and reworked with the direct inputs contributed by the young people (e.g. through the scanning of a QR code, by answering a Quiz on own mobile phone, etc.). The youth provided feedback in a written form (flip-charts, blackboard, memory log...), in online surveys and in the form of **collaborative voice message.** In this participative process young people could be progressively stimulated to engage with the topics and (in some cases) take concrete actions or make (more) conscious decisions in their life. The workshops contributed to further «empower» and «engage» some of the young people, and contributed to a sense of «connectedness» with other young participants and to some extent with the young people of global south. Important element was to avoid group discussion at the beginning of the

¹⁶ The "Ausbildungspflichtgesetz" ("training obligation act") is in place in Austria since 2017. This regulation applies to all young people who have completed compulsory schooling in an age range up to 18. Parents are obliged to ensure that young people who completed compulsory schooling

continue to attend an education or training measures or any measure preparing them for life until they have reached the age of 18. Source: <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/beratung/schulinfo/abp18.html>

workshops. Instead attribute clear and concise tasks proved to be successful to activate interest and initiate building trust. As some participants are stemming from the global south, their insights and personal stories enriched and contextualized the shift in perspective, and strengthened the ability of the materials to tell the story behind the workshop. Even though the jointly developed workshop materials and formats were resulting from the «social spaces» addressed, with their specific wishes (e.g. with reduced texts and multiple pictograms, pictures, videos, soundtracks), these materials can be further developed in the course of the project into **adaptable and combinable workshop modules** to be used independently for the global sustainability topics by youth workers, educators of formal and non-formal contexts.

As a member of the Network for Vocational Assistance (NEBA), Südwind and the VHS Vienna continued to engage in exchanges with partner organisations, created a feedback-loop to input the adjustments made by the young people back into the organisations and respective networks in the youth work sector

¹⁷ „Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking“. Source: [Key competences for lifelong learning](#)

3.4 Case Study: ... and the virtual world

INTERVENTION MODEL FOR THE DIGITAL DIMENSION IN SOCIAL SPACE-ORIENTED YOUTH WORK

Digitalisation and digital technologies initiate new ways to learn, entertain, work, explore, and fulfil ambitions. As much as they enable citizens to exercise their freedoms and rights, and enable individuals to outreach beyond physical communities, geographical boundaries, and social constraints, there are also link greater challenges associated with the digital transformation. The Access case study strives to contribute to a **digital world based on European values** and act in a way so that all young people can enjoy **freedom, protection and fair access**, and no one is left behind. In line with the Europe’s Digital Decade the young people of the target group are called to gain digital competences¹⁷ and use everyday technology.

The case study is in line with the Digital Competence Framework (DigComp)¹⁸, which provided a definition for digital competences. Among the five areas identified by the DigComp the key component of digital competence tackled by the case study is „**Digital Content Creation**„ and in particular the area of „**Programming**“. DigComp is used for creating training courses and materials,

¹⁸ The DigComp began in 2010 and, since then, the EU framework for framing digital skills policy, and developing digital competence has continuously grown. DigComp is central to enhance digital skills for the whole population, and is an important tool to support the EU’s [Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027](#), in turn contributing to the priority ‘[A Europe fit for the Digital Age](#)’ and to [Next Generation EU](#).

and identifying professional digital profiles, in the contexts of employment, education and training, and social inclusion, and in the framework of the case study was adopted as a general implementation guide.

TOWARDS DIGITALLY SKILLED YOUNG PEOPLE AND SKILLED YOUNG DIGITAL PROFESSIONALS

Lead by the Musol Foundation and with the participation of the FVMP the **Case Study 3** was dedicated to the third priority of the EU Youth Strategy „the digital world”.

«Youth cultures»¹⁹ are popular across social groups and in particular for young people, as they are developed around specific **music**, sport, and **(urban)styles**. Despite there is a dare need to be connected and active in the digital world, mastering digital skills remains unattainable in some of the disadvantaged areas in the outskirts of Valencia, in the district of Burjassot²⁰, due to a variety of reasons, e.g. lack of financial resources to purchase technical equipment or to secure stable internet connection, etc.. Here strengthening the digital skills proved being a promising tool to enhance youth participation and activation, and opened up awareness for and interest in further targeting young people’s skills, interests and untapped potentials. The educator and youth workers of the center together with the experts could open pathways of access and integration of the targeted youth into active life and probably the labour market.

This case study allowed the small group of youth at risk, identified as vulnerable youth, disconnected or socially excluded youth. They were addressed by youth workers and educators of the center with the aim to address the social inequalities they experience in their neighborhood in a playful manner through the development of a simple video game with the platform **Scratch, a free online video game designing**.

To reach out to as many young people as possible, a poster was created and diffused in the street and in different institutions of the municipality (socio-educational center, cultural house, social centers, etc). A group of teenagers between **15 and 29 years old**, regardless of their condition of vulnerability emerged from social background and financial possibilities accessed the educational offer on video game programming, and could interact with each others. They were in some cases inspired by the video game professional (a woman, who was recognised as a **role model** for the teenagers) who reach them in their «social space»: the municipal socio-educational center Diaz Pintado.

The case study was conducive to

- 1) provide young people with vulnerable background with (new) **digital skills**, and raised their interest in further training to acquire additional digital competences;
- 2) promote their **participation** and **commitment** to make a step towards tackling socio-cultural barriers and challenges experienced in their living environment, by investing in their future - through

¹⁹ Cfr. Glossary (p. 57)

²⁰ Cfr. Glossary (p. 57)

the acquisition of skills, hence strengthening their future ability to access the labour market and interrupt the circle of financial insecurity and marginalisation;

3) **empowered** the young people throughout the learning and creative process and the “**peer-learning sessions**”. By shifting their position from learners to teachers /**multipliers**, the teenagers presented their work to other young people of the neighborhood, and could experience a sense of appreciation, acknowledgment of their progress and the acquired competences. Also they could serve as „new role models,, for other disadvantaged young people of the district, hence boosting their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Second objective of the case study was to provide an innovative educational intervention model based on the **social space-oriented approach to strengthen competences of youth workers and social workers** guiding young people in situations of social exclusion in the center Diaz Pintado. All along the process the social educators were exposed to and acquired in turn skills and competences to adopt and further develop the new **methodology (social space-oriented) and digital skills**.

When designing the training sessions for the case study, two main ideas were explored by the Access team:

- Young people were usually not been offered a (safe) space to express themselves nor to discuss about their life in the neighborhood. They were not usually asked for insight views, nor for solutions on how to tackle problematic and needs of their

neighborhood, hence they were never considered as „experts of their worlds“.

- The digital world is continuously booming and represents a sector with growing employment possibilities. However, young people with fewer opportunities in Burjassot too often do not have access to the necessary digital skills nor possibilities to attend official courses / training programmes to develop themselves. This exclusion continues to contribute to the „digital divide“.

Tangible results of the case study were a **written guide and a video guide** describing how to implement the pilot and use the software to create a simple video game with vulnerable young people. The materials were translated from Spanish into English and are made available on the project website for further adoption and independent use from all interested youth workers and educators.

SCRATCH TRAINING OFFER

Three adolescents aged 16 and 17 took part in the training sessions offered in the framework of the Access project. The purpose of these sessions was to empower young individuals to recognize a social issue within their surroundings, and creatively tackle it by incorporating it into a video game they were asked to develop.

The intended audience for this initiative was given six sessions, each lasting 1.5 hours, to grasp the fundamentals of video game design using the freely available online programming platform Scratch. The training content was meticulously created by

two experts from the video game industry who subsequently delivered the course to the young participants.

The sessions were structured as follows:

First session: The initial session encompassed a presentation to the participants, involving an analysis of their needs to chart their interests and existing digital skills, if any. All participants were queried about their motivation for enrolling in the course. This served as a stepping stone for delving into socio-cultural and personal themes of interest. The focus was primarily on pressing issues encountered by the young individuals, which they would be enthusiastic about addressing through their video game creations.

Second session: During this subsequent session, the group became familiar with the Scratch platform. Scratch stands as a no-cost online platform for designing video games, accessible via computers. To embark on video game creation, the only prerequisite –besides having access to a computer and to an internet connexion- is the establishment of an account to save projects. Within this session, the group was introduced to Scratch's fundamental functionalities. Additionally, they crafted and uploaded their primary character onto the platform.

Third session: The focus of this session was dedicated to character animation. The complexity level increased, as participants needed to grasp the fundamental programming and coding logic to effectively achieve this.

Fourth session: In this session, the teenagers utilized another free online platform to construct their video game's environment, including the background. Furthermore, they learned how to integrate it into Scratch. This phase allowed for enhanced creativity and was particularly appreciated by the participants.

Fifth session: Among the sessions, this one was the most demanding. Its main objective was to incorporate objects and manage collisions within the game. This session demanded comprehension of both concepts and how to practically implement them in the gaming environment. As the most intricate module, each young person managed to comprehend the concepts, execute implementations, and manifest their own concepts into their games.

Sixth session: The concluding phase of video game design was assigned to refining the in-game dialogues and perfecting the final intricacies. Within this session, the participants were tasked with elaborating on their narratives in greater depth, elucidating their stories, and devising methods to effectively convey these elements to future players. The process of defining dialogues served as a conduit for elucidating the game's themes and communicating the game's objectives to players.

At the end of the project, each young people created their own simple video-game. The thematic of the video games addressed the

personal and social experiences of the youth in their living environment

- 1 game was designed with the main character of a villain eager for power and domination
- 1 game was designed around the topic of loneliness, bullying and the importance of

friendship

- 1 game was designed around the character of the leader of a community being

Persecuted by enemies

Seventh session: A peer-to-peer interaction session marked the culmination of the training program. During this final class, the participants presented the video games they had created over the course to another group of young individuals of the neighbourhood. This twofold objective encompassed initiating discussions regarding the thematic content of the games and subsequently providing insight into utilizing the Scratch platform, along with making minor adjustments to the video games. These adjustments included modifying character speed, altering physical attributes, and introducing new elements to the game levels.

This session served as a pivotal juncture in the training program. The three teenagers who had received the training transitioned from being learners to becoming instructors during this session. Using their own words and way of expressions, they could easily transfer their recently acquired knowledge and skills to the new group of teenagers.

The peer-learning session represented a moment of public acknowledgment, affording them the opportunity to showcase their efforts and display

tangible outcomes of their work. The session culminated with a celebratory occasion, during which the three teenagers were awarded diplomas for completing the training. The event was followed by a small afternoon snack shared among all the participants.

CONCLUSIONS

Essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the digital competences fostered by the access case study:

Knowledge: The young people showed a good understanding on how digital technologies is a powerful tool to support communication, creativity and transformation in their communities and life-path. The youth become aware of their opportunities along with all limitations and risks they may face in the digital world.

The participants showed a first understanding the general principles, mechanisms and logic underlying evolving digital technologies with particular regard to the video-game programming and curiosity emerged on furthering their basic knowledge on the function and use of the software.

Skills: Young individuals in a disadvantaged situation demonstrated a strong need to acquire digital skills and to be able to use digital technologies to support their active participation as members of the local communities (and as citizenship) and to foster social inclusion, initiate collaborations with others young people and professionals beyond their immediate surrounding (hence challenging beyond their comfort zone). Moreover, they showed a great interest and

inclination in adopting creativity to address personal, social or financial goals. Digital skills provided during the training included the ability to use, access, create, program and present digital content. The young programmers were able to select and manage information, produced contents and effectively engaged with the programming software, and access the devices made available at the socio-cultural centre Diaz-Pintado.

Attitudes: Having engaged with the digital technologies and content creation tasks proposed by the instructor the young people gave proof of good reflective and critical attitude. Despite a first phase in which no or very limited interest in the offer was showed, progressively a great curiosity and forward-looking attitude emerged. The video game presented to the audience during a public event served as testimony of their digital competence evolution in the perception of the youth and educators as well as the communities.

The outlined experience proves significant within the context of the European Union's developmental agenda. The training served as a platform for fostering 21st-century competences, particularly emphasizing the crucial "4 C" skills: Critical Thinking; Communication; Collaboration and Creativity. These competences were notably refined throughout the program, showcasing the high potential of this methodology. The tailored nature of this offering is aptly suited for young individuals facing vulnerabilities, as it empowers

them to acquire skills vital both in the present and the imminent future.

3.5 Case Study: Reaching all young people

INTERVENTION MODEL FOR INCLUSION IN SOCIAL SPACE-ORIENTED YOUTH WORK

Inclusion is a complex concept, and is defined by Access for the scope of this paper as a process: „actions and practices that embrace diversity and build a sense of belonging, rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential and should be respected“²¹

In the practice of our work with young people with learning difficulties inclusion remains of complex and multifaceted nature. On the one hand the SDG 4 ambition is to bring into being **inclusive education to all youth and young adults**, on the practice (in Germany and in Europe at large) „**Inclusive**“ education is (historically and as we write) associated with education for **young people with disabilities**. Their struggle historically shaped the discourse and practice of inclusion.

Inclusion is an evolving process: „*a process of systemic reform embodying changes and **modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies** in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an **equitable and participatory learning experience** and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes*

²¹ Cfr. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2021, UNESCO*)

*without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion“.*²² (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, p. 4)

The right to access inclusive education offers goes hands in hand with societal awareness leading to a transformation in the practices in (both formal and informal) educational environments to accommodate the diversity of requirements and needs of young individuals and place further in the agenda the commitment to actively remove barriers preventing or reducing equal access to learning offers. In line with this call Access current paper and capacity building guide aims at strengthening the capacity of the youth workers and (non-formal and formal) educators to enhance their competences to reach out to all learners with their diverse needs and preferences. To bring into the practice a full and effective youth participation, Access team in Berlin advocate for accessibility, support and progressive personal achievements of all learners, with particular attention to those who are excluded or are marginalised. Self-determination in access to and progress in quality informal education without discrimination is at the core of the mission of the Berlin Tandem.

THEY ARE ENABLERS FOR INDIVIDUALS -AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES- TO COUNTER DISCRIMINATION,

²² Cfr. (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, p. 4)

REDUCING STEREOTYPES, ACKNOWLEDGE THE HIGH POTENTIAL OF DIVERSITY, STAND FOR PARTICIPATION AND CONFEDERATING EFFORTS TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND ACCESS TO WELL-BEING AND SUCCESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES.

This paper presents a good practice successfully advocating and embodying an in-depth transformation in the education offer in Berlin and in successful advocating to transform legislation and policies in Berlin for financing and delivery inclusive youth education and inclusive access to the general labour market in Berlin.

Key element of the Case Study is the Personal Future Planning (short PFP) model. It is based on person-centered methods and focuses on self-determination, participation and inclusion. **Inclusion** is the first priority of the EU Youth Strategy and is anchored on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In Germany it has a legal base on the Book IX of the German Social Code (SGB IX, Rehabilitation and Participation of People with Disabilities). GDLB supported by providing know-how for the operationalisation of the „**Personal Future Planning**“.

A modular course, applying the person-centered planning methodology and the personal future planning model, was designed and piloted in Berlin between **November 2022 and February 2023** with a group of **12 young people with learning**

difficulties. BIS is currently integrating the learning experiences and feedback received from the pilot phase into the development of the case study concept, with the goal to develop a person-centered **workbook for young people with learning difficulties.** This will contain resource-oriented, social space-oriented and person-centered methods to **empower young people** with learning disabilities and enable them to make career choices based on the principle of **self-determination.**

All consortium partners actively contributed feedbacks throughout the process, reflected on the potential and possibility to adopt the „PFP” methodology in their respective youth practices and specific case studies. During the regular (digital) knowledge-transfer and dedicated working sessions suggestions and challenges for implementation of the PFP methodology were discussed. This ensured tailored expert discussion and reflections on the national contexts (e.g. the «first» and «second» labour market in Germany, which is also reflected in the education system in Germany). Cross-fertilisation between all partners involved as an example an added value of the offering tackling potential for **prospective employment and inclusion in the general labour market**, as opposed to the practice of the so-called „workshops for people with disabilities“ where individuals are paid a very limited monthly salary, not subject to the laws of minimum wage protection. The method „PFP” and the „system of Workshop for people with disabilities“ were discussed in greater details in respect to the German context in the framework of the ME in Berlin, and the current legal frameworks for

inclusive participation in working life regulated in Austria and Spain were compared.

THE PCP TRAINING OFFER

For the case study the Bis Team designed an educational course articulated into eight modules. This course was designed to encourage its participants to reflect on their individual support systems and social spaces, their strengths and skills and their plans for the future. The goal of the course was to help them to achieve more self-determination and to strengthen their social engagement. For the methodology the Access team relied on the methods of person centered planning (PCP) and the Personal Future Planning Model. These methods enabled the participants of the case study to open up to their social space and identify the support groups that would help them to realise their goals, in this case, participation in working life and society. The planning focused on the targeted individual designing their own planning, thus achieving a **person-centered view of needs and preferences.**

PCP is a methodology that is well suited to a target group of people with learning difficulties, as it promotes self-determination and focuses on resources and strengths. It thus counterbalances the experiences of discrimination that many people with learning difficulties experience on a daily basis, such as decisions being made over their heads. Many person-centered planning methods and materials also work with **visual aids** designed for **people who lack reading and writing skills.**

The results of the educational course have been made available to youth workers, educators, teachers, political actors and interest groups to

facilitate the dissemination of the PCP method, in a way to be widely applied in important participation processes in the future, such as in participation plan procedure, career path conferences, or assistance plan discussions.

The course offered in the framework of the case study started in November 2022 and ended in February 2023. The course was targeting 10 participants who met every Monday for an hour and a half, and up to four hours (for the last module).

OVERVIEW OF THE MODULES

Module 1: the team welcomed the participants and presented the program with an overview on the upcoming weeks. Both educators and young people brainstormed on the idea and concept associated with the term future. The module was concluded with a team-building exercise.

Module 2: The participants reflected on their life so far and visualized it as a path/map („Lebensweg“).

Module 3: The group brainstormed spaces that play an important role in their life and where they spend time.

Module 4: Building on Module 3, the participants talked about barriers and obstacles faced in everyday life. The joint discussion tackled concrete possibilities to overcome some of the obstacles encountered.

Module 5 and 6: The participants talked about each young people's individual strengths and skills.

Module 7: The team discussed existing individual support system, visualizing the people in the lives of the young people using playmobile figurines.

Module 8: The course ended with a so-called **future celebration**. This method brought the results of the previous modules together. The group talked about the participant's history and biographies, dreams and ideas for the **future, skills and strengths** each young person brings to the table and what was need to realize their dreams. Usually the future celebration is an event where friends, family and other supporters come together to celebrate the future planning of one person. In the case study not, all supporters of each person very invited, as the future celebration event was planned as a group method. Therefore, the participants were planners as well as supporters. Furthermore, two educators that know the participants well joined the future celebration.

The results of the future celebration where recorded on a big poster using graphic recording. That means that in addition to the written word the group also drew pictures. This helped young people who have difficulties in reading. A short overview of the results of the future planning celebration are summarised in Graphic 8.

GRAPHIC 8

The participants listed their dreams as here following:

- to be a fighter for inclusion
- to earn money
- to have a work that is fun and were it is nice to be
- to receive good feedback
- to have a good team and nice people around them
- to have a place where to find a sense of belonging
- to become a professional: e.g. working in a café, being a coach, a photographer etc.

As a result of a mapping of participants talents, skills and strengths many were named, among others as here following:

- having a positive attitude, happy, friendly
- ability to stand up for themselves
- being strong and courageous
- being self-determined
- being authentic
- being motivated
- being ambitious

The young participants listed their needs as following:

- They need people that listen to them and that they can talk to
- they need people that see their strengths
- they need people that support them and that are there when things get hard
- they need experts, coaches, teachers, colleagues and assistants
- they need a free spirit and no pressure
- they need money
- they need to be taken seriously
- they need things to be explained in a way that they can understand it
- they need role models

The team was very happy with the results of the future celebration and with the case study in general. The feedback the participants contributed was very positive. The participants enjoyed being asked and to talk about their skills and that they could tremendously benefit from the future celebration. Even though not every method was appreciated equally by every participants - for instance the team received mixed feedback about

the „support circles“ (Playmobile) and the group setting aspect- the dis-homogeneity in the feedback gathered showed the importance to provide a wide range of methods, and to continuously fine-tune and tailor the methods to the individual needs and preferences. Another aspect that emerged during the case study and also in the feedback was privacy. Not all young people felt comfortable to talk about themselves in a

group setting. In the case study the team made the needed arrangements to offer the opportunity to work in a group or individually. None of the young people were asked to share anything if this was not wished or if this was not comfortable for them. For the „workbook“ presented in the capacity building guide the team ensured that this approach continued to be taken into account.

In conclusion the team evaluated the case study as enabling the participants to find themselves in a great space to reflect on themselves and their future. After talking with the participants, reading the feedback and also looking at the results the Access team evaluated the case study as an empowering experience for the young people. Capitalising on this experience the team continued to work further to develop a product that enables youth workers to recreate similar successful participatory offers.

In a nutshell some learnings to be further developed to inform the workbook.

Successful factors:

- Intensive preparation of each sessions
- Knowledge about the participants is important to create a space for reflection and learning
- Always having a Plan B (at least) to ensure to be flexible and creative.
- Internal differentiation of the activities, to ensure tailoring activities to the interests, skills and preferences of the learners
- Allow enough time

- Good equipment for implementation (materials/rooms/staff)
- Ask for regular feedback from the participants

Evaluation results and elements needed to be considered for the capacity building guide - workbook:

- Reflection must be practiced. The team observed that for many young learners it wasn't easy to reflect on their life.
- Individuality vs. group interests need to be considered and balanced

Accessibility: How can we make the methods as accessible as possible for young people?

INCLUSION FOR EVERYONE

The case Study in Berlin showed a successful engagement of vulnerable individuals whom are systematically prevented access or pushed out of traditional education systems through practices and decisions excluding them and leading them to marginalisation. In most cases young disadvantaged individuals are offered curricula that are not fully relevant for them in the measure they neglect the needs of young with learning difficulties- and whose learning objectives are not tailored to meet their full potentials and preferences. The targeted youth in Berlin largely suffer within and beyond education offers from stereotyping and they are denied to be allocated the needed resources to flourish and embrace the life they wish or to make independent decisions. The PCP intervention model proved positively assess the full potential of vulnerable youth, leading them to a more confident attitude towards

their competences and capabilities and boosted their ability to counter intolerance, violence and exclusion.

„EDUCATION CAN HELP BUILD INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES WHEN IT SEES LEARNER DIVERSITY NOT AS A PROBLEM BUT AS A CHALLENGE: TO IDENTIFY INDIVIDUAL TALENT IN ALL ITS SHAPES AND FORMS AND CREATE THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH IT CAN FLOURISH.“²³

Despite practices for inclusion may appear different to different organisations, youth workers or educators in different social spaces, the core challenge remains one: to approach all learners with dignity to overcome barriers and to improve learning environments and the methods applied by the educators and youth workers. Non-formal and formal education systems in Berlin proved having undertaken a few steps already, the whole local ecosystem though needs to stop labelling learners and operate a shift in perspective. Inclusion cannot be achieved targeting one vulnerable individual at a time, nor can be reached by one group of aware teachers and educators at a time. The practice showed in the case study proved that young learners with learning difficulties present a variety of **intersecting identities**. There is **not one single characteristic influencing their ability to learn**. Inclusive education models presented by the Access team targeted not only the needs of young people with learning disabilities as also encourage **a dialogue between “special” and „mainstream“**

²³ Youth report 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all ([Youth report 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all - UNESCO Digital Library](#))

education. In the bigger picture practices of exclusion that target young people with disabilities also exclude other vulnerable young people, e.g. in reasons of their gender, poverty, location in the city, or migration status. The Access team strives to contribute strengthening systems of support that are able to reach out and catch everybody, not only the ones defined ‘normal’ by their communities - or society at large. The vision of the intervention model presented in the case study in Berlin is to remove the barriers to participation and to enable equity in access to learning opportunities suitable for the needs, skills and preferences of the young people.

3.6 Impact

SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF KEY COMPETENCES

The desired impact of the Access project to raise awareness on the role and scope of highly qualitative **practices of inclusion** of disadvantaged young people within the **youth work sector** in Spain, Germany and Austria - and beyond, was achieved, to the extent that **local stakeholders** were involved into the evaluation of the case studies and demonstrated interests in initiating measurable and concrete improvements at the local and regional level.

WE NEED SYSTEMS THAT WORK FOR EVERYBODY, NOT JUST FOR THOSE WHO MEET WHATEVER CRITERIA THEIR SOCIETY DEFINES AS ‘NORMAL’.²⁴

²⁴ Youth report 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all ([Youth report 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all - UNESCO Digital Library](#))

On the participants level (target group both educators and young people) a first impact observed was the concrete shift in perspective from traditional top-down approach to youth participation and inclusion, into an increased understanding of the need to integrate **untapped youth potentials**, along with the specific youth **interests and preferences**, so that young people with fewer opportunities and youth workers interacted on a tailored, innovative and more purpose-oriented manner. To go beyond the praxis and to active organisations and all actors active in the social space to respond to the call to operate a shift towards participatory practices, a bolder commitment from a variety of actors at many levels is still needed. Only an **ecosystem working coherently as a whole** can improve access to social, cultural and economic well-being for disadvantaged youth and contribute **placing the youth perspective** in the political agendas at local, regional and national decision-making tables. The activation of the Spanish tandem (lead by the FVMP) of various actors at the municipal and province level proved a first tangible impact of the Access project in this respect. Also, the Vienna tandem could activate direct feedback and was called to further test the Access intervention model in the framework of formal education, hence grasping the opportunity to gain greater acknowledgment for the Access mission at the national and regional level, through thematic working group and expert practitioners' groups.

The early the proposed social space-oriented participation avenues would be placed into being, the earlier and the higher number of young people may be **empowered, connected and engaged** as citizens actively contributing to their (peer) communities and as agent enabled to determine in autonomy the life-decisions they choose. The participation practices based on the PCP method in Berlin proved to be

effective (for the targeted group selected), and continued to be tailored and fine-tuned as **state-of-the-art intervention models** grounded on the social space-oriented approach in Berlin in a (formal) education setting (at the organisational level and at the level of other stakeholders active in the youth work sector). Further piloting was also proposed and is in the course of validation in Spain and Austria, showing positive impacts at the organisational level and at the level of other actors active in the youth work and education sector, and at the decision-making level (in the municipality of Burjassot). Not only needs of young individuals and youth groups were identified during the practical case studies – and positively impacted the target group -, as also very importantly –**untapped potentials, preferences and skills** of young participants were acknowledged and become **relevant as intervention models at staff and organisation level**.

Better informed and **further qualified youth workers** and (formal) non-formal **educators** were the pivotal figures called to apply and test the three innovative social space-oriented interventions models. They were in turn **empowered** by an enhanced understanding of the social space-oriented approach, and the provision (in the case study in Spain) of specific new skills and methods. Secondly they were addressed as **key figures** –gate openers and informants - **to (re-)design tailored training offers** and were offered the tools to do so independently also beyond the project completion (cfr. the Access Capacity Building Guide, to be published soon). As individuals **trusted by** the young people they were in measure to effectively reach and engage disadvantaged target learners together with their peer communities in the scope of their case study.

3.6.1 Target Group Young people with fewer opportunities

Competence development of everyone was supported by and could benefit from taking place in a variety of learning environments (socio-cultural centres, formal education and youth clubs, civil society organisations, etc.). Collaboration among educators, training providers and non-formal learning stakeholders benefited from cooperation with educational and non-educational partners, the local communities and own organization's departments.

«One participant said that she never had a workshop on the topic of "environment, human rights and all that" and that she now finds it "cool".» (Extract from internal report, Südwind)

Tailored educational and participatory training opportunities were offered to address the needs of young people with fewer opportunities. The target could experience an increase in motivation to identify or to further **acquire skills by engaging in practical and creative activities** (e.g. in the field of handicraft, video game programming).

« The whole experiences focused not only on memorisation-based learning but on the development of digital competencies through cognitive and procedural learning. » (Extract from internal report, Musol)

Having embraced the learning process throughout the tailored training, and having been encouraged to independently determine their topics of interventions (based on their individual or group interests and wished methodologies), the young

people could not only strengthen their competences, as more importantly they could boost their **self-esteem and sense of purpose**, and become to a certain extent activate in **countering their experience of social exclusion, financial deprivation and marginalisation**.

«One participant kept asking: "What do you mean exactly?" when unfamiliar words were used or the wording was too "ponderous". This shows that the interest and motivation to work and understand the content was very high. The young people demanded a language from the "experts" that they could understand so that they could have a say and help shape things (in line with the "global citizenship education").» (Extract from internal report, Südwind)

The case studies applied in defined social spaces in Valencia-Burjassot, in Vienna-Alresvorstadt and in Berlin-Friedrichshain could reach young people who were otherwise not reached by conventional measures. The three models successfully accompanied the young people in founding their better self, enhancing their ability to invest towards life-choices and actions, and to some extend motivating them to become „role models,, for other young person, while acting as « multipliers » for other young people (cfr. case study in Spain) or as co-designers (cfr. case study in Austria) for the training offers. A collateral impact of the three case studies presented was -during the pilot phase- to progressively increase the interest (of others young people) in the proposed participatory offers. Access case studies initiated a path towards stronger sense of responsibility and

autonomy in determining youth visions for the future, and activated youth undertaking tangible actions towards socio-cultural and financial inclusion, awareness for sustainability and sense of belonging to a global community, and digital competences and creative thinking.

3.6.2 Target Group Youth workers

High quality and inclusive education, training and learning provide opportunities for not only young learners as also for educators and trainers to further develop their key competences.

Competence oriented training adopted in the Access case study and presented in detail the capacity building guide and refers to an approach aiming at developing relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes. Good practices promoting key competence development include support **to educational staff; and assessment and validation of competences.**

Teaching and learning approaches and environments

With the aim to improve learning outcomes and learner engagement a competence-oriented approach (among others project based, arts based or work-based learning) was adopted in the case studies. The educators involved were in turn offered the opportunity to innovate their teaching, work in collaboration with other experts and educators and could expand their skills and knowledge across-disciplines (e.g. by learning digital skills). Even though the young learners were placed at the centre of the learning offers - and they were asked to actively participate- the intermediary teachers and educators of the centres

were in turn exposed to the learning approach and environment.

Digital technologies used in the case study in Spain for example, supported the development of digital competences of both the young people and their teachers.

A combination of social and emotional learning adopted in the case study in Germany increased the overall young people's motivation and active participation and in parallel strengthened educators and social workers team key competencies expanded during cross-disciplinary working sessions and exchanges.

Access approach to support cross-sectorial cooperation (including activating academia, business and civil society organisations) is meant to become beneficial for the transition from training to the labour market, or from work back to education for re-or-up-skilling.

Access education and participation models make evident and accessible for the young participants the strong link between the content's thoughts and the current societal challenges the young people are and will be called to address, as active citizens.

The competence-oriented teaching and learning models developed by Access case study are in the process to be finalised in collaboration with different stakeholders and the learning methodology is available for a broad group of stakeholders who may wish independently to apply the models in various learning environments, promote in turn key competence development for both young learners and educators-teachers.

The educators and youth workers involved at the intermediary level in Valencia gained a deep insight on the methodology and the tools of digital programming presented in the case study. In parallel they improved competencies to further develop their work in the socio-educational centre (Diaz Pintado in Burjassot) - with the video-game programming offers, and with (new) offers tailored to the disadvantaged young people living in the district of „613 Viviendas“.

The educators involved at the intermediary level in the case studies in Vienna and in Berlin had the opportunity to test their respective models in new forms, as they benefited from Feedbacks and exchanges at the consortium level and gain additional learnings throughout the sessions held with the young learners. In the practice their proposed methods and tools were presented to the youth and adjusted in a participatory manner together with them. In doing so, the youth workers and educators gained a novel understanding of the perspectives, needs and competences of the young people and become even more engaged to further testing the case study, further present the challenges and success encountered in the process within their respective practitioners' networks and within their institutional expert working groups.

3.7 Conclusions

Non-formal and informal education is often not **inclusive or not sufficiently inclusive** to foster access and participation on equal base to those young people who, for whichever reason, are in a situation of disadvantage - may this be based on learning disabilities, marginalisation or NEET situation. Many youth educators and youth workers are not sufficiently acknowledged, nor

supported at the institutional level, or they lack life-long learning opportunities to remain abreast of the evolving nature of youth work, hence remain fit for their purpose to contribute preventing youth exclusion, marginalisation, and loss of sense of purpose in society. Educators and social workers are often not adequately prepared (in reason of lack of resources, lack of time, lack of technical and infrastructural resources, etc.) to continuously tailor their offers to a broad diversity of preferences and needs presented by the young people they are called to accompany.

In conclusion there are not sufficient resources currently allocated to youth institutions or education providers to deliver and adjust education and training offers to the growing needs and of young people, nor to improve quality and impacts of education offers in the magnitude and with the effectiveness to invert the current trend observed in Europe (and beyond). To counter this spiral, it is necessary for all actors active in the sector **to work in synergy**, to show preparedness to test and adopt new participatory intervention models (among others the three models presented by the Access case studies), and to continue to learn and to benefit from youth perspective, where young people are the experts of their living environment, hence experts of their worlds. On the other hand, it is **responsibility of local, national and regional policy and decision makers to ensure sustainable and inclusive access for all youth and young adults**.

Youth emerging from low- and middle-low income households in Germany, Austria and Spain proved

being more likely to drop out of formal education infrastructure or formal training offerings. They were successfully reached-up by Access tailored training offers. These youth often had experienced marginalisation because of migration background, religious beliefs, gender, leading them to lose trust in society and losing sight on the need to invest in their potentials. These young learners' potentialities, with their specific characteristics, values and visions, could be unveiled and strengthened by the quality and innovative offers proposed by the Access teams, at the point in which they would have no longer been reached by traditional offers. These very needed information's -and activation- were made available to them with the engagement of the local „peers,, who acted in a timely manner, as gate openers and were able to gain the trust of the young learners. Access team ensured building trust in the quality of educational and training opportunities proposed, and empowered the youth by building trust in the individual untapped capacities and potentials.

Although **regulatory frameworks** exist at the national and international level (in Europe), mechanisms of monitoring and enforcement capacity of local education and youth work infrastructure remains very often not sufficient or not flexible in a way to adjust to the evolving needs of the youth - even less so when the needs is higher or broader. As regulations are based on **registrations, licensing, certifications, limited resources** they are not sufficiently flexible to adapt to emerging nor growing needs to support **quality offers and equity of access** for disadvantaged young individuals and groups.

At the **government level** there is a need to address young learners, education and training providers, youth organisations, youth workers and teachers in a **holistic approach** as facets of a **single system**.

High quality standards of youth education offers, **equity** in access to information and opportunities - also tackling the digital divide-, incentivising **participatory models** tackling young disadvantaged people in their **social space** and responding to their needs and preferences as they evolve, would help governments - and society - **to protect, respect and fulfil the „right to education for all“** and prevent them -along with the future citizens of tomorrow - from missing opportunities to tackle well-being, sustainable social and economic development for all.

Exclusion and unbalance in access to **social space oriented and inclusive education offers** - in reason of learner's financial backgrounds, or teacher lacking of skills or lack of conducive working conditions - need to be addressed today more than ever at all levels, if we are to leave no one behind.

Inclusion and innovation should be continuously developed together by youth and youth actors in a participatory manner, and should be **presented, acknowledged and practiced by all actors** in the sector (in the social space) and beyond as *conditio sine qua non* for sustainable education and sustainable development. To achieve active participation, empowerment and connectedness in the youth education process the **needs and preferences of the young people are to be placed and maintained at the centre** of our collective efforts.

3.8 Recommendations

Access recommends to promote a **systemic institutional approach** that acknowledges that young (disadvantaged) learners and the youth education and social sector become empowered, connected and meaningfully engaged in sustainable education and sustainable social development through enhanced participation. Access team believes that this can happen when institutions become **living laboratories for participation and active citizenship**, when equity in access is secured, and gender equality, connections with and respect for the environment, and the planet is ensured. prerequisite is enabling learning process as **experiential**, action-oriented, localized in the social space, and culturally specific, allowing young people to learn from what they experience in their living environment and be empowered to live what they choose to live through their learning.

Access recommends to recognise sustainability as one of the three priorities of the EU Youth Strategy and the Education for Sustainable Development. Its scope and intervention model (tackled by the case study held in Vienna) require to act increasingly fast if climate change and equity in access to resources is to be tackled.

Access also recommends to recognize the pivotal role of youth educators, youth workers and social workers in the further development and adaptation of the social space-oriented method to contribute to and to promote sustainable development of disadvantaged youth. It is in the power and scope of policy and decision makers to

increasingly and decidedly invest in the development of their recognition and their capacity development at all levels. Only through acknowledgment, recognition and further development of capacity they will be enabled and empowered to ensure tangible impacts of the sector. Empowered youth workers and educators will sustain and contribute to advocate for the social space oriented participatory approach and accompany their institutions towards the necessary transformation of the sector.

Access recommends to harness the potential of the digital skills (and 'green' technologies), as one of the pillars of the EU Youth Strategy to ensure that the digital divide progressively reduces, and to ensure access, development and use of technologies in a responsible, safe, equitable, and inclusive environment for all. Digital skills strengthening young people`s critical thinking may contribute to an informed assessment of risks and benefits of the digital sphere. Digital skills also promote broader access to (free-of-charge) educational resources, opens pathways to employment and inclusion on progressively digital interconnected communities and digitalised labour markets.

Access recommends to empower (disadvantaged) young people as agents of change, as the main actors to embody and drive towards equity and sustainable development. Disadvantaged youth can be reached and empowered by creating learning opportunities fostering participation, trust and civic engagement. Learning opportunities are not only to provide them with competencies and tools

defined by the educators and teachers, as more importantly they have to provide tools and models to foster participation, critical thinking, co-creation skills, and the sense of purpose to initiate and progressively independently lead towards individual and societal transformation for well-being.

Access recommends to prioritize marginalized individuals and groups of youth, including young persons with (learning) disabilities, persons with migration background, young individuals experiencing conflicts within their communities or society at large. Through an inclusive approach Access recommends to promoting innovative participatory education offers contextualized and embedded in the social space, offering a safe space for individual and collective development through education.

Access recommends to mobilize social space-oriented models of intervention to combat exclusion, particularly of those individuals and groups affected by financial insecurity and need, and provide learners with relevant competencies to meet individual and societal demands, including through digital skills development and skills for sustainable development, and continue to ensure the respect of human right and the right to self-determination in the live decisions.

Access recommends to enhance multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary collaborations across actors and all institutions of the sector at all levels of governance to ensure an holistic and systemic approach, with strengthened cooperation between

practitioners and policy makers of Education and Environmental sectors, and in collaboration with all other relevant stakeholder groups - non-governmental organizations, the academia, the business sector, youth groups and youth alliances. By enhancing networking opportunities and mutual learning between different stakeholders' efforts will be mainstreamed and mutually support, synergies and complementary will be ensure.

4 Annexes

4.1 Glossary

a. Participation

There are different types of participation, e.g. political, civic, social, public, electoral or citizen participation. “Meaningful participation is dependent on people being willing and able to participate and express their voice. At the most basic level, participation means people being involved in decisions that affect their lives. Through participation people can identify opportunities and strategies for action, and build solidarity to effect change. Participation matters as a core value in open and democratic societies. Participation challenges oppression and discrimination, particularly of the poorest and most marginalised people. However, this may be challenging where people feel intimidated, lack certain knowledge or relevant language to understand and contribute, or even feel they may not have the right to participate.” (Apgar and Thorpe, 2022)

With regard to young people, “participation can refer to taking part in decision-making processes either in young people's lives or in a collective context; more broadly, it can mean taking part into an activity. Participation can refer to a process or to an outcome. Different justifications for youth participation have been offered, including respecting the rights of young people, making better decisions, enhancing democracy, and to empower marginalised young people. To promote youth participation, it is necessary to look at power relations, actual possibilities to influence decision-making in different stages of the process, the roles given to young people in the process, to offer training, and to be able not only to respond to offered agenda but also to set the agenda themselves. Participation happens within and through formal participatory structures and practices, but also in everyday situations.” (EU-council of Europe, 2022)

b. Equality

The definition of equality for the scope of this paper is in line with the definition provided by the Council of Europe: “Equality refers to the state of being treated equally, whether before the law, in policy or in practice. This includes equal enjoyment of human dignity and fundamental human rights, and equal access to services and opportunities. More broadly, equality of life chances (or ‘access’) can be distinguished from equality of outcomes, with different political and economic philosophies putting differing emphases on each end of this spectrum. Within interculturalism, equality is most closely linked to the principles of non-discrimination and inclusion, and there is particular attention paid to equity: that is, allocating resources and opportunities to each person, according to their circumstances and needs, in order to obtain a more equal outcome.” (Source: [CDADI\(2022\)33 Manual for the design of a training course on intercultural competence 2779-1790-1830 v.1.docx.pdf](#)). To be able to define

equitable access to opportunities it is important to distinguish between the terms „equality“ and „equity“. According to the Global Education Monitoring Report 2021 „*Equality is a state of affairs (what): a result that can be observed in inputs, outputs or outcomes, for example achieving gender equality. Equity is a process (how): actions aimed at ensuring equality.*“ (Source: [Global education monitoring report, 2021, Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia: inclusion and education: all means all - UNESCO Digital Library](#))

c. Active Citizenship and participation

We adopt the definition provided by the Council of Europe: „Active citizenship and participation occur when stakeholders (all individuals, including foreign residents where appropriate) have the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and the support to freely express their opinions and influence decision-making on matters that affect them. In some situations, participation may mean those who are directly affected taking the lead and driving the process.,“

d. Diversity

We adopt the definition provided by the Council of Europe “Diversity (in this context) is a range of human features which make individuals differ from one another in various ways, some but not all of which are characteristics protected by human rights law. Aspects of identity such as age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, mental and physical abilities, social class, education, economic background, religion, work experience, language, geographic location, political opinion, or family status, are among the sources of diversity. Valuing diversity is the idea that diversity can bring benefits for organisations, communities and businesses, making societies more resilient and successful, when managed with competence and in the spirit of inclusion. This can happen when diversity is considered an asset, to be promoted and included in all decision-making processes. Promotion of diversity is not a singular action but represents a vision and a philosophy of governance“. (Source: [CDADI\(2022\)33 Manual for the design of a training course on intercultural competence 2779-1790-1830 v.1.docx.pdf](#))

e. Special needs / functional needs

The term “special needs” was popularised in the U.S. in the early 20th century during a push for special needs education to serve people with all kinds of disabilities. The word “special” in relationship to those with disabilities is now widely considered offensive because it euphemistically stigmatizes that which is different. The term “special education” is still widely used when referring to public school programs, although some government entities use instead “exceptional student services.”

NCDJ Recommendation: Avoid using these terms when describing a person with a disability or the programs designed to serve them, with the exception of government references or formal names of organizations and programs. It is more accurate to cite the specific disability or disabilities in question. The term “functional needs” is preferred when a term is required. For example, “addressing the functional needs of people with disabilities” could be used when referring to a facility or program. Don’t use the term “SPED” as shorthand for special education. It’s considered offensive. AP style: The style book urges avoidance of the term “special education” and suggests trying to be specific about the needs or services in question.” Source: <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>

f. Disability

The Access team adopt the description of ‘disability’ used in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006) : *‘Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’* The Access team is aware that on the one hand the terminology is continuously evolving, and that terms such as Disability, Inclusion and Access are adopted differently in function of the different cultural, national and legislative contexts they emerged from. In the English language, preferred terminology differs between ‘disabled people’ and ‘people with disabilities’ for example.

g. Youth Cultures

The “Youth cultures” carry the high potential for (transformative and creative) forms of socio-cultural development, youth empowerment and broader integration on the one hand, and on the other carry the potential to challenge the status quo and raise awareness within local communities (and youth workers) on the rich potential of youth cultures.

h. Burjassot

Burjassot is a neighborhood where several social and economic difficulties are experienced. The neighborhood inhabitants have low economic resources and are in comparison with other districts highly affected by the crisis. The social composition of the local population present a high rate of Roma („gypsy“) community. This case study targeted the so-called „613 Viviendas“ , a neighborhood whose population is deeply affected by economic crisis, leading to very high rates of unemployment, especially the least qualified. Coupled with the local unemployment the target group additionally experienced a failure of the welfare state : the current possibilities of receiving state subsidies is very limited as also very limited is the support to access or re-integrated into the labour market. Beside the infrastructural fragility of the neighborhood and its inhabitants a growing crisis of values and identity

lead to jeopardized social integration. Loss of social acceptance and failure to integrate leads the target group to a sense of loss and lack of sense of belonging. This often lead to despair and resulted in consumption of drugs (starting from the 80's and 90's¹), further deteriorating marginalisation and social exclusion. Even though today the situation of the neighborhood is improved the local communities remain marginalised and continue to experience social exclusion.

i. Empowerment

Empowerment is helping people to help themselves. It involves a process to change power relations. On the one hand it aims to enable excluded people to take initiatives, make decisions and acquire more power over their lives. At the same time it forces social, economic and political systems to relinquish some of that power and to enable excluded people and groups to enter into negotiation over decision-making processes, thereby playing a full role in society. (EU-council of Europe, 2022). Empowerment of youth with fewer opportunities starts at the basis of society and depends on the different situations they find themselves in. It means, among other things, picking them up where they are situated at the moment and teaching them life skills so that they can shape their own lives and find their way in a changing world. Youth work can be an important bridge to education or employment in this context. However, it also means not overtaxing young people and setting expectations from the outset, but giving them the feeling that they are capable of acting within their own framework. In a global context, this means not panicking them or blaming them for global events and putting the responsibility for change on them. Young people need to be shown opportunities and what they can also demand from others (e.g. from politics and other decision-makers). Empowerment also does not mean excluding people again through complicated language or language at all. Simple language and multilingualism, real-life and clear examples are important to convey complex global issues and transform them into understandable images. In order for young people to form their own opinions, access to high-quality, trustworthy, transparent and understandable information is of great importance. Information must reach young people (digital platforms, social media,...) to prevent exclusion through difficult access or language. Young people, including youth with fewer opportunities, deal with global issues and overcoming challenges in their own way. Empowering them requires the promotion of youth initiatives at regional and local level. Glossary on youth, in: EU-council of Europe, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary> (accessed: 29.04.2022), Holcombe, S (1995) 'Managing to Empower: The Grameen Bank's Experience of Poverty Alleviation.' (Zed Books Ltd: New Jersey), EU Youth Strategy, in: Register of Commission Documents, [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/api/files/COM\(2018\)269_0/de00000000141682?rendition=false](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/api/files/COM(2018)269_0/de00000000141682?rendition=false) (accessed: 02.06.2022)

j. Vocational orientation / preparation

Vocational orientation is a process that all people go through at some point, often several times. During vocational orientation, you examine your interests and skills. You look for information about professions and training, look into job opportunities in individual professions, make a decision and come up with a plan B if your decision is not immediately feasible. In Austria, after completing compulsory schooling, young people must complete an apprenticeship. Unskilled work does not count as training. It is only allowed if it is agreed upon in the perspective or support plan. This plan describes the steps on how you can fulfil the compulsory education. Compulsory education applies until your 18th birthday and affects all young people who finish compulsory education in 2017 or later. With projects like *VHS Jugendcoaching*, *BIDE* and *BOK/BOK Gastro*, *Wiener Volkshochschulen* offer counsel, guidance and learning opportunities for youngsters and young adults to successfully plan their career.

Source: [https://www.wienextra.at/jugendinfo/infos-von-a-z/berufsorientierung/;](https://www.wienextra.at/jugendinfo/infos-von-a-z/berufsorientierung/)

k. Youth workers

“According to the Committee of Ministers of the European Union, “Youth work is a broad term, covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people’s active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making”(Committee of Ministers 2017).

As highlighted in the above mentioned European Commission report on Youth Partnership, there is a broad variety and as much vision of youth work as countries in Europe. In deed, “the diversity of youth work regulation reflects the diversity of Europe, with different national traditions leading to the development of different framework. One out-standing factor is the level of government involvement in regulating youth work. As we observed, the norm is to locate this within an appropriate government ministry, usually alongside other policy field, such as “children”, “family”, or “education”.”

Regardless the existing differences in terms of regulations, some general lines are drawn to define the mission of youth workers. In the Youth Development Strategy (2000), youth workers should support young people in their processes of growing and developing as citizens and they should work on build the capacities and strengths to fulfil the individual as well as social desire of youth. Those workers should invite young people to become and stay involved in civic issues, and support them to build themselves as active citizens.

In Spain, the difference is made between “Social workers – Trabajadores sociales” and “Social Educators – Educadores sociales”. Whereas the Social workers belong to the field of social science, the social educators belong to the social pedagogy one. The first one are aimed at promoting social

changes through the analysis and the elaboration of plans, programs and prevention of global society the social educators aimed to improve life conditions of disadvantaged people through methodologies and socio-educational tools of the non-formal education field.

In definitive, the labour of and social educator is usually closer to the beneficiaries: they facilitate access to information and to the different social services available, bring direct support during all the process and are in charge of the execution of socio-educative programs. Social workers realize a more bureaucratic work, such as the management of social centres, management and development of social projects.

In summary, while the social educator is an educational agent who intervenes in the sociocultural reality to try to improve it or contribute to the development of different groups through educational techniques, the social worker carries out an activity that aims to improve both economic and social conditions in various groups, working with those who require special attention.

It is also convenient to differentiate that, while the social educators work directly with the affected person, the social worker also works with the family environment. The educator tries to improve the quality of life of the person, as an agent of development and personal evolution. The social worker would be an agent of development and evolution within the different social or collective systems (health, occupation therapy, social assistance, etc.). Two agents necessary to improve the quality of life of a person, but achieving these goals through different channels.

However, there is a visible conflict around these professions as each one is regulated differently. Social educators are governed by education policies and their pedagogical programs, while social workers are governed by social policies. In Spain, this service to citizens can sometimes generate controversy since there are powers on the part of the different administrative layers (State, Region, City Council, etc.). While state budget is aimed at solving a series of problems, in each Region, these objectives can change depending on where the vulnerable person lives. This makes the work of both more expensive and the vulnerable person may be left without a response to their needs.”

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