Quality assurance handbook

How to **apply an intersectional** and **human rights-based approach** to the **evaluation of youth projects**

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Introduction

The "Quality Assurance for All?" project was born out of a shared desire to improve the way we do youth work. For the partner organisations behind this project, “quality” means more than just efficient project planning and delivery - it means ensuring inclusion and representation of diverse voices at every level. This is an approach that builds on the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps' horizontal priority of Inclusion & Diversity. Through this project, we have chosen to expand on this priority and develop a quality assurance model grounded in intersectionality and human rights.

Approaching our work through Intersectionality and Human Rights Education (HRE) may be one of the most comprehensive ways to ensure that inclusion and diversity are respected throughout.

We believe these frameworks should shape not only our organisational missions and working methods, but also the aims and objectives of our projects and activities.

But, putting those values into practice can feel overwhelming. It’s not always clear where to start - which can lead to the temptation to work with relatively homogeneous groups, or to focus only on one specific marginalised community (often depending on the team’s expertise or lived experience).

Although this can deepen the knowledge of, and support for, that group, it can also make it harder to address the needs of communities with multiple, intersecting identity markers.

That’s where this handbook comes in - offering an intersectional and human rights-based approach that can be adapted to your organisation’s mission and context. By providing clear areas of focus, guiding questions, and levels of progression, it helps you evaluate how inclusion and diversity are reflected in your work, and how you can keep improving.

We see this handbook as a starting point - whether you’re reviewing your overall organisational practices or the design of a specific project, this handbook is here to guide your quality assurance journey in a way that centres equity, participation, and accountability.

About us

Throughout this handbook, we'll use the term 'we' when referring to the five partner organisations behind the "Quality Assurance for All?" Project

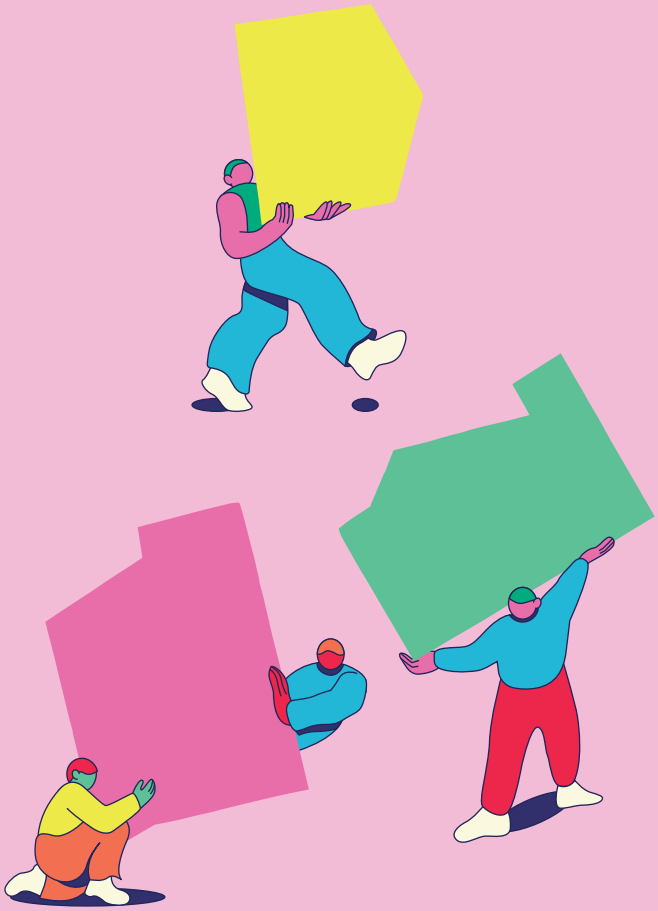
co-financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union and the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe.

These partner organisations are:

- Human Rights Youth Education Network (Belgium)
- Giosef Torino (Italy)
- Ofensiva Tinerilor (Romania)
- the European Institute of Education and Social Policy (France)
- Idee in Fuga (Italy)

When we say 'us' or 'our', we are referring to organisations within the field of youth work, including the project partners. When we say 'you' or 'your', we are addressing our readers within the field of youth work.

This handbook was born from our project partners' questions



- How can we **monitor** the quality and impact of non-formal education and youth work by using tools developed **by and for young people?**
- How do we **integrate** an intersectional and human rights-based approach to this **process?**

As we explored these questions, we realised the value of sharing our learnings with others. By making this handbook available, we hope it can encourage collective learning, reflection, and dialogue on how to ensure the quality of youth work, together with youth workers, funders, trainers, and young people themselves.

Each of our partner organisations brings a unique mix of expertise – from youth-led project work, to non-formal education, research, or grassroots organising – shaped both by professional practice and lived experience. This diversity inspired the content of this handbook, which can offer you practical tools, questions, and ideas for building stronger, more inclusive youth programmes, wherever you're starting from.

Who is this handbook for?

➔ This handbook was designed for **civil society organisations doing youth work**, of different sizes and different levels of experience, **who want to evaluate their organisational structure and/or the impact of their activities and projects.** Within the field of youth work, we are particularly addressing organisations that work outside of the formal education sector – although some areas of the handbook might be of interest for those working within schools, as well. Based on the principles that guide us, this handbook is particularly relevant for organisations working towards Human Rights Education, social justice, and anti-discrimination from an intersectional approach.

➔ This handbook can be used by youth workers, organisational boards, staff members, project managers, and young people volunteering in youth organisations, regardless of anyone's level of experience in evaluative practices.

➔ You may decide to use all of the handbooks' sections to evaluate your organisation as a whole, such as its internal structures and practices and/or its projects and activities. It is also possible to only refer to parts of the handbook that are particularly relevant for your organisation's work.

➔ Regarding its geographical scope, this handbook was built by project partners, based upon their experiences across the European context. However, organisations working within other regions may also find this resource useful, particularly if collaborating with European programmes such as Erasmus+.

Scope and purpose

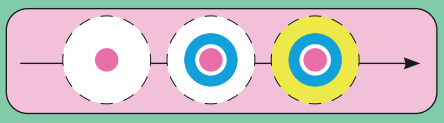
While there are a number of quality assurance models used in other sectors, few have been developed specifically for non-formal education and youth work, and we were unable to find any that **explicitly** integrate an intersectional and human rights-based approach. By introducing these approaches into the quality assurance process, we hope this handbook fills that gap and helps organisations in our sector (of non-formal education and youth work) improve in quality, through ensuring that diverse voices are heard and reflected. We also recognise that quality assurance and evaluation require both a commitment to collective reflection and improvement, and the allocation of adequate resources (e.g. time, budget, personnel). Therefore, the main aim of this Quality Assurance handbook is to provide civil society, non-formal education, and youth work organisations with an **accessible** and **easy-to-use** tool for evaluating the quality of their organisations and/or projects and activities.

An important feature of the handbook is the inclusion of progression levels, designed to make evaluation more approachable and adaptable to different starting points. Here, quality assurance is understood not as a one-time check, but as a continuous process of growth and reflection.

We have identified five key areas as the minimum requirements for ensuring quality in both organisational functioning and project delivery:

1. Management
2. Communication, Engagement, and Outreach
3. Project/activities' Design and Implementation
4. Risk Management and Mitigation
5. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

Each of these areas comes with a set of criteria, grouped into three levels:



Core, Extra, and **Cherry on Top** (corresponding to beginner, intermediate, and advanced). These progression levels are designed to support your organisation in identifying current strengths and spotting areas for further improvement - at a pace that suits your context and resources.

The Quality Assurance Handbook timeline

July 2024 - February 2025

A first draft was co-created by our partner organisations. It was then piloted internally and shared with 30 youth workers, trainers, and young people during an international training held in Belgium in February 2025. Participants in the international training also analysed the draft and provided feedback so that we could improve the handbook.

March 2025 - July 2025

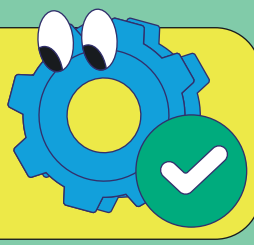
Additional feedback was gathered through a piloting phase, when participants of the international training used the handbook to evaluate the quality of their organisations' structures, projects, or activities.

Now

By piloting this handbook outside of the partnership, we could gather feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders, which we then integrated into the finalised handbook.

We remain open and eager for feedback - so do feel free to be in touch if you have any thoughts, ideas, or concerns!

We encourage every organisation using this handbook to, also, adopt a participatory approach in your process of reflection, adaptation, and learning, with regards to your internal practices and the implementation of your projects/activities.



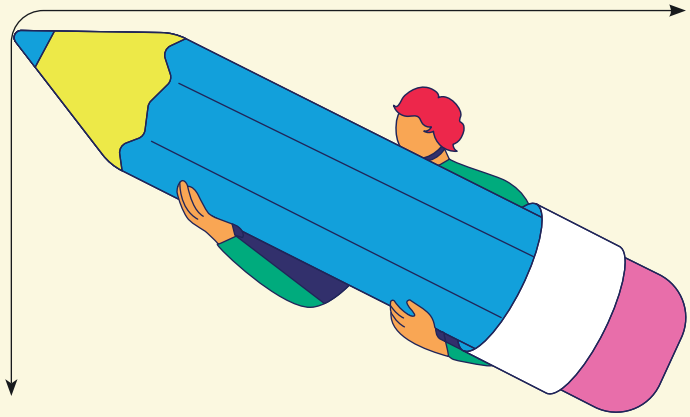
What are the limits of this handbook?

Each area, and set of criteria, were developed based on our partnership's experiences in youth work, so this handbook may not be universally relevant – it has its limitations, both in terms of the language and concepts used, and regarding the contexts in which it can be applied. For example, the examples found throughout the handbook may seem limited to certain types of projects within the range of the Erasmus+ programme (such as training courses, seminars, youth exchanges, or study sessions).

We view this handbook as a starting point; we began with what we, first-hand, know best and are most familiar with. Through this process, we developed initial, guiding questions to ask ourselves while conducting an evaluation. These questions can be adapted, or supplemented, based on your organisations' needs. We hope for this handbook to be dynamic – shifting and adapting in language, concept, or context.

The members of our partnership decided not to include areas related to youth work competences (such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours in developing educational programmes, facilitating individual and group learning, or showing intercultural competence, etc.). For these areas, several valid competence handbooks are already available and ready to be explored and applied. Instead, **we decided to focus on pedagogical and methodological aspects for implementing projects/ activities**.

Last but not least, in regards to intersectionality, we are aware that our partnership does not, and cannot, represent diversity in its entirety. Certain identities and points of view were not (or are under) represented by our project partners. We tried our best to build a handbook that could be as representative as possible, but, nevertheless, it has still been written based upon approaches to Western/European youth organisations, and frameworks that reflect Western models of evaluating organisational and project quality.



Understanding Our Approach

But first things first – we should define what we mean by intersectionality and Human Rights Education approaches.

We understand intersectionality as an approach that can help us better grasp the complexity of young people's lived experiences, and how to navigate (and tackle) the power dynamics that affect them. This concept was developed within Black feminist discourse by advocates and scholars of the field. The term 'intersectionality' itself was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. According to Crenshaw, "intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149). IGLYO provides a clear example of how this "metaphor" impacts our daily lives:

"We can be **lesbians** who have **minority ethnic backgrounds.** We can be **gay** and **living** in **poverty.** We can be **transgender** with a **(dis)ability.** We can be **bisexual and Muslim.**"

The intersections are endless and cannot be considered independently from one another, since they constantly interact with each other and often reinforce the oppression each brings. Social, cultural, and biological categories such as gender, sex, race, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. interact on multiple and simultaneous levels and it is this interaction that contributes to social inequality, injustice and discrimination.

IGLYO, 2014

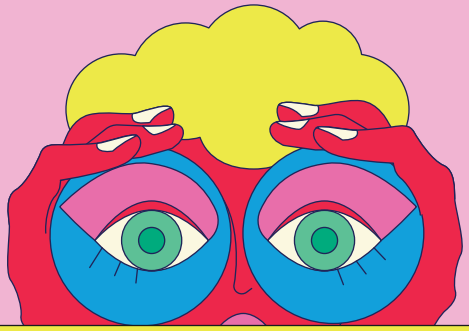
Human Rights Education (HRE) is grounded in **critical pedagogy**[1] and the principles outlined in the Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People[2] by the Council of Europe. These principles promote a **participatory, experiential, and learner-centred** learning experience for all, aiming for a process in which educators/trainers and learners **work together around the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to human rights**. Human Rights Education promotes a **holistic** experience, meaning that learning is not only for the development of intellectual potential, but also encompasses other dimensions – e.g. emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative, and spiritual development. Another key aspect of Human Rights Education is providing **a safe(r) space for learners** to identify, express, and confront their own beliefs and values with their peers, enhancing their connection with others (Council of Europe, 2012).

We understand that Human Rights Education may be considered a somewhat 'unsafe' practice in certain contexts. Youth and civil society organisations operating in complex social and political environments might be exposed to some level of risk if they openly address human rights in their activities. One thing that plays to our advantage is that many Human Rights Education principles are also found in non-formal education practices. For example, values such as tolerance, solidarity, and respect, or skills such as critical thinking, advocacy, and communication, may also be part of non-formal education activities, without needing to explicitly focus on, or outwardly call your program or activity, Human Rights Education.

We believe that applying both Human Rights Education and an intersectional approach can help better integrate diversity and inclusion into our work. This can encourage a shift from 'reactive' approaches to a 'proactive' one, embedding **conscious inclusion** into our organisations and minimising the **hidden labour**[3] of systematically marginalised and oppressed groups.

In practicing reflexivity, your team should remember the values expressed by your organisation, and the corresponding attitudes and behaviours. The principles at the heart of your organisation should be the starting point for all organisational activities, internal and external – for example, how professional relationships with the staff/team are built, how the association is managed, and how we navigate our own individual practices. We should be ready to practise what we are preaching.

Intersectionality can guide organisations' reflections on the alignment between our values and our practices regarding inclusion and diversity. Human Rights Education, on the other hand, provides us with methods and tools to make our practice more inclusive and meaningful to all people involved.



Now, how do we make sure that we are aligning our practices with the values that we express?

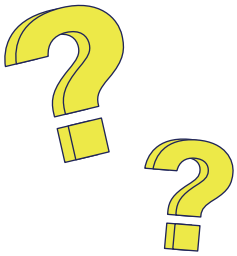
Cultivating effective, value-driven management in our organisations encompasses several areas of work. First, we need to ensure the coherent coordination of projects, programmes, advocacy initiatives, and services. Second, it's essential to foster strong relationships, both within our organisation and with external **stakeholders**[4], including public authorities, educational institutions, the private sector, trainers, and other civil society organisations. Third, a comprehensive understanding of the political, historical, and cultural contexts in which our organisation operates is essential for navigating the complex landscape of youth NGOS, to ensure informed decision-making and the achievement of long-term objectives.

[1]Critical pedagogy can be understood as a radical approach to education, seeking to transform oppressive structures in society using democratic and activist approaches to teaching and learning (Braa & Callero, 2006)..

[2]See: https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass

[3]All the extra work that a disabled person (or a person of another marginalised group) needs to do in order to navigate an ableist and discriminatory society, such as actively checking in advance if there are any physical barriers in a place one would like to access, or managing or manipulating the presentation of one's marginalised identity to others in order to achieve their goals.

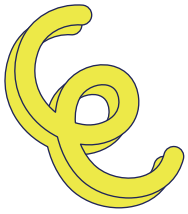
[4]We understand the concept of "stakeholder" not only as external actors that participate in our organisation's life (e.g. donors, funders, participants, communities we work with, etc.), but also as internal actors – i.e. our organisation's staff/team members, volunteers, and trainers and facilitators that are usually worked with.



You may be wondering: how do we make sure that we are effectively managing these three areas?

This is where **quality assurance plays** an important role; it can help us manage our organisation and, at the same time, ensure that diverse voices are being truly **included and represented** throughout decision-making processes. Keep in mind that there is not a single definition of what quality assurance is within the context of non-formal education and youth work. Quality assurance can be "the actions taken in order to make certain that you have the level of quality that you have decided on" (European Commission et al., 2017, p. 84). It could also be "a dynamic process used to ensure that the learning outcome will satisfy the requirements for quality" (European Youth Forum, 2013, p. 37). Ultimately, how we structure a quality assurance process will depend on **how we and our organisations understand quality**. For the development of this handbook, we identified three levels for the evaluation of quality:

1. **The quality of an organisation's structures and working conditions** (within legal, organisational, and social contexts): human resources, including competences of trainers and training of staff, educational, availability of financial, infrastructural, technical, and other resources, etc.
2. **The quality of organisational processes** (the way in which an organisation tries to achieve its objectives): the selection, design, and organisation of processes' contents and methods, the consideration of learners' needs, the guidance of learners, the relationship between trainers and learners, etc.
3. **The quality of an organisation's outcomes and impact** (the impact of the learning processes proposed in activities): the learners' development of competences (i.e. knowledge, skills, and attitudes), values, and the capacity, motivation, and commitment for learners to apply the acquired competences in future learning and work (Fennes & Otten, 2008).



We already assess quality at one, or several, of these levels in our organisations. Therefore, we're familiar with evaluation processes at the organisational and project level. So, we asked ourselves:

How do we apply what we have learned to improve our organisation, and our projects, in a democratic and participatory way? And most importantly, how do we make sure that diverse voices are included and represented when improving quality?

Quality assurance and evaluation should encourage youth work organisations to employ mechanisms of accountability and improvement that fit the needs and realities of our practices. We need democratic mechanisms in order to build accountability and improvement processes that are developed **by and for young people**, acknowledging the diversity of contexts, practices, identities, and lived experiences that we represent.

An intersectional and human rights-based approach to quality assurance would allow us to put democratic and participatory processes into place, which also seek to understand and remedy asymmetries of power and privilege within our organisations and activities – so that we can develop a truly empowering narrative that speaks to young people.

We are certainly aware of the challenges of assessing effectiveness in the context of civil society and youth organisations. Demonstrating the quality of the work we do is related to how difficult it is to measure the diverse contexts, processes, and outcomes in non-formal education environments (Fennes and Otten, 2008). We should be consistent and rigorous in how we evaluate, while at the same time being mindful of the costs attached to the process (Bond, 2012). Another important challenge is that quality assurance and evaluation processes should both produce results that are relevant for different stakeholders involved in our organisation, while also making sure these stakeholders take ownership of this process. This means that a democratic and participatory approach to quality assurance is essential, and that the technical aspects are similarly important for revealing key aspects of failure or success (Bond, 2012).

Bond (2012) proposed a list of "core principles for assessing effectiveness in non-governmental organisations". These principles refer to technical and social aspects that are essential for obtaining results that are useful for accountability and learning. Some of these principles underline the importance of approaching quality assurance by including and representing diverse voices in the process:

1 Voice

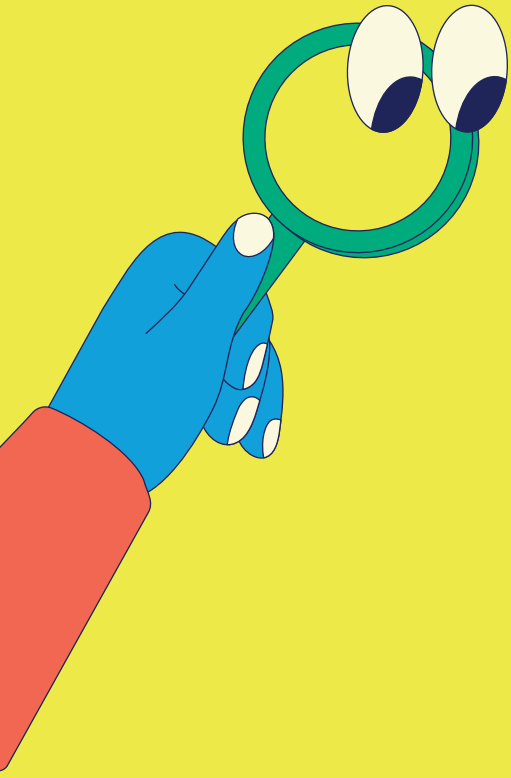
"Ask target groups for their perspective on the success of an intervention"

2 Inclusion

"Understand how different groups are affected by an intervention (e.g. project or activity)"

3 Transparency

"Be open about the methodology and sources used, the results achieved, and strengths and limitations of supporting evidence"



4 Triangulation

"Collect the views of different stakeholders when drawing conclusions. The process of triangulation helps deepen and widen understanding but also provides validation to a particular judgement"

5 Contribution

"Understand not only if change has happened, but also how, and what our contribution was"

These principles are interconnected with the main principles of Human Rights Education as well as of youth work – for example, ensuring that the communities we work with are represented throughout the evaluation process ('Voice') can also help strengthen the triangulation process and the sense of ownership among participants in the evaluation ('Transparency').

The core characteristics of **youth work**,

1. the enablers of intersectionality,
2. the key principles of **Human Rights Education** (explained in the previous section)

are the foundations of this handbook.

According to the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio[5]

there are **6 main characteristics** that can help in defining the scope of youth work.

[5]See https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-essentials.

Youth work is

value driven

Youth work is not supposed to be based on the purpose of economic profit, but rather on the value of inclusion, with the aim of contributing to building a more just and cohesive society, which should be the ultimate impact expected from any youth work project or activity.

youth-centric

Youth work practice should not adopt a "top-down" approach, but rather a "bottom-up" one, working on the basis of the needs and aspirations of young people, identified by young people themselves. It should be based on real-life concerns of youth, and youth workers are expected to be knowledgeable about youth issues and to respectfully consider youth as equals.

voluntary

Youth work, as opposed to the formal education system, is never supposed to be obligatory, and relies on the voluntary participation of young people. This means that youth work is based on a participatory approach, and youth workers should be willing to share power and decision-making; most of all, youth work is supposed to be accessible to all.

develop-mental

Youth work is intended to support the growth and development of young people, from a personal, social, and ethical perspective. This means that through youth work activities and projects, young people should acquire and develop competences and tools that can support them in becoming adults, in taking decisions for their personal lives, in navigating social relationships, and in analysing their reality with critical thinking.

self-reflective and critical

Youth workers should be concerned about the quality of their practices and strive to ensure that their projects and activities are doing their best to live up to their intended mission.

relational

Youth work seeks authentic communication with young people, with awareness of intercultural dynamics, aiming for solidarity within and among communities.

As mentioned, this model has been built with the 8 enablers of intersectionality in mind, as listed in the Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit (UN Women, 2021). Applying an intersectional lens to this handbook – and to quality assurance, in general – allows various human rights to be connected, addressing the multiple forms of discrimination that people experience. As a result, substantive equality and inclusion can be achieved, and no one is left behind.

According to the Intersectionality Toolkit, the process of applying intersectionality to our practices encompasses three steps: analyse (the context, the needs, the practices), adapt (our work and our practices), and assess (the results of applying intersectionality to our practices). To guide us through these phases, we can refer to the following principles, or enablers, of intersectionality:

We must consider and combine all enablers in our work. Implementing only some, and neglecting others, will limit our understanding and growth, while sustaining certain systemic or social exclusions or biases. **We've added the "Do No Harm" principle from the feminist evaluation field to this list of enablers of intersectionality**. According to this principle, an evaluation process should support the creation of a space that is "safe, open and inclusive to diverse voices, views and perspectives."[8]

[6] "Accessibility," Site Glossary, World Institute on Disability, https://wid.org/glossary/.

[7] While an organisation can take concrete measures to increase the accessibility of their work, this process is never complete and should be reflective and ongoing.

[8] See the "Gender equality and empowerment measurement tool part 1 – Training guide": https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/assets/pdfs/funding-finance-ment/gem-tool-training-guide.pdf

How to navigate/ use this handbook?

This handbook might seem overwhelming, with many areas, many questions, or seemingly unrealistic levels of progression. We are aware that quality assurance and evaluation can be time-consuming, but it shouldn't be a burden to do, so we've constructed this handbook to make these processes more accessible. This handbook is designed to be flexible - you can use all five quality areas or just focus on one, depending on your needs. For example, you might want to evaluate your organisation as a whole, or just look at a specific project or activity. The right starting point will depend on the size of your organisation and the context you're working in. It's completely fine to begin small and grow from there. As mentioned earlier, evaluation takes time and resources. Each of the five **areas** are broken down into **sub-areas** (different elements you may want to explore). The sub-areas can help you reflect, more specifically, on where your strengths lie and where there may be room for improvement. In some cases, the sub-areas are split between organisational and project/ activity levels to help you apply the criteria where it fits best. Within each sub-area, you'll find three **Levels of Progression**: Core, Extra, Cherry on Top. Each level includes guiding questions, criteria, and examples to guide the evaluation process. Not all sub-areas have all three levels - if we could not define a clear 'Extra' or 'Cherry on Top' level, we intentionally left it out. If your organisation is currently situated at the Core level in some, or all, areas, that's completely OK! This tool is here to encourage ongoing reflection, rather than to judge.

Core level

refers to what we understand as the basic criteria our youth organisations should fulfil in order to ensure the quality of the organisation and projects/ activities, including, to some extent, evaluation and feedback practices.

Extra

comes as an "intermediate" level of practice – meaning that our youth organisations already have some evaluation and feedback practices in place. At this level, intersectional and/ or human rights-based approaches are already included in organisational practices and project/activities to some extent.

Cherry on top level

puts forward a set of criteria in which intersectional and human rights-based approaches are integral to evaluation and feedback practices. We encourage you of course to explore further and go beyond this level!

The Appendix are organised as follows

Keywords mentioned throughout the manual are highlighted in pink

these are defined in **Appendix 1 - Glossary**

Keywords or concepts highlighted in green are tools to help you get started with specific texts

you will find these in **Appendix 2 - Toolbox**

Area 1

MANAGEMENT

- (a) Staff and team management
- (b) Recruitment
- (c) Contracts
- (d) Professional development
- (e) Safety and well-being
- (f) Internal communication flow
- (g) Resources
- (h) Funding transparency
- (i) Sustainability and Human Rights concerns

(a) Staff and team management

Within the NGO sector, staff and team management involves organising, supporting, and collaborating with a diverse range of contributors - such as paid staff, volunteers, or external collaborators (Lewis, 2001, p. 14–34). In a hotline, for example, teams often include both salaried employees and volunteers working together in a non-hierarchical structure. While such environments can support shared decision-making and solidarity, they may lack certain intentional frameworks (e.g. collective decision-making models, communication protocols), which can allow harmful power dynamics, lead to intensified emotional labour, and increase the risk of burnout.

From a care-based perspective, effective team management goes beyond efficiency or productivity; it means cultivating transparent, inclusive, and accountable practices that value the well-being, safety, and interdependence of everyone involved. The table below offers a framework to assess your team's approach to staff and team management. Your organisation may find itself between levels, or facing unique contextual needs — this tool is here to support reflection and adaptation rather than providing a one-size-fits-all evaluation.



	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ How well do the staff of your organisation understand each other's roles and responsibilities? ○ How does your organisation approach leadership, and how would you explain its leadership style?	○ Does your organisation foster a culture of open communication and collaboration among staff? ○ Does your organisation keep records (e.g. minutes, reports, photos) of meetings and decision-making processes?	○ Does your organisation actively include individuals from different backgrounds? ○ What does the decision-making process look like in your organisation? ○ How does your organisation encourage clear communication and adaptability?
Criteria	↘ The staff understand their roles and responsibilities and collaborate effectively as a team. ↘ An organigramme visualising the organisational structure is available.[1] ↘ There is an easily accessible list outlining the organisation's trainers and facilitators across different projects/activities, alongside their expertise and background. ↘ Titles and contact information related to staff are made available on the organisation's website.	↘ A culture of open communication and collaboration among staff is fostered. There are regularly scheduled staff meetings where different perspectives are welcomed, and decision-making processes include everyone's input. ↘ Records (e.g. minutes, reports, photos etc.) of decision-making processes and outcomes, meetings, and evaluations between the organisation's staff, activity/project participants, trainers, and facilitators are kept. Evaluations refer to self-assessment sessions, reflection sessions, feedback collection and/or debriefing sessions.	↘ The diversity of backgrounds among the NGO's staff and stakeholders is reflected in their varied cultural heritage, professional expertise, gender representation, socioeconomic status, and geographic origins. Including individuals from different backgrounds strengthens the NGO's ability to tackle complex issues and connect with diverse communities. ↘ The rules and processes for organisational decision-making are made clear to everyone in the organisation. ↘ Different mechanisms are in place for updating roles, tasks, and expectations when necessary, fostering clear communication and adaptability within the organisation.
Tips and Examples	✳ Hold regular team meetings to review staff responsibilities and update everyone on the progress of organisational activities. Use shared documents or project management tools (e.g. Trello, Asana) to stay coordinated and transparent. ✳ Make sure your organigramme is easy to read and updated regularly. Include names and roles where possible and keep the file in a shared folder, or link it to your organisation's internal platform. ✳ On your website, include a "Meet the Team" or "Our Staff" section. Add names, roles, and email addresses (or contact forms) for key staff. Make sure the info is consistent and kept up to date.	✳ Create a safe space where staff can feel comfortable sharing ideas and feedback. Encourage active listening and mutual respect, especially during meetings or team discussions. ✳ Use structured formats, like roundtable discussions or brainstorming sessions, to ensure everyone has a chance to comfortably contribute and feels welcome doing so. ✳ Consistently schedule weekly meetings, making sure there is always time set aside for updates, open discussions, and collective decision-making. Rotate who leads the meetings amongst your staff, to promote shared ownership. ✳ Document the key points made during meetings and decision-making processes within shared folders or platforms (e.g. Google Drive). ✳ After activities or projects are completed, hold short reflection sessions with staff, trainers, and participants. Use tools like surveys, open discussions, or feedback forms.	✳ When forming working groups or planning activities, actively include a range of perspectives and backgrounds. Welcoming diverse perspectives supports your NGO in understanding complex challenges. ✳ Roles and responsibilities don't need to be set in stone. Create an easily accessible platform (like a shared document) to reflect on what's working or what may need changing within your organisation. Making space for open, shared reflection can help your team become more engaged and responsive with one another.

[1]An organigramme in this context represents a visual representation of the organisation's structure, showing the hierarchy and relationships between staff, volunteers, and external associates. It includes profiles of each member, highlighting their roles, expertise, and responsibilities, which helps clarify the organisation's structure and facilitate communication. (Brewer, 2022)

(b) Recruitment

In the NGO sector, recruitment refers to the structured process of identifying and engaging suitable individuals for various roles, including staff, volunteers, interns, and trainers (Rashid, 2024). Our recruitment processes aim to centralise transparency and a strong commitment to diversity, actively working to eliminate biases such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, migration status, or socioeconomic background. A strong, transparent recruitment process has clear procedures for outreach, hiring, promotion, and contract termination – all of which should be aligned with the organisation's mission and values, while also applying an intersectional and human rights education-based lens.

In certain contexts, like community-based initiatives, recruitment relies more on community recommendations, rather than job postings. Community recommendations maintain trust and confidentiality, which are important to center within initiatives that work with sensitive, or potentially hostile, topics. To take the safety and inclusion of both potential recruits and existing team members into account, your recruitment strategy should be grounded in your organisation's values. Balancing transparency and openness, while also protecting your staff and service users within high risk contexts, can be challenging – which is why an ethical and adaptable approach to recruitment is important.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ What does your organisation's recruitment process look like, and focus on? ○ Does your organisation have a transparent and fair recruitment process? ○ How is information about your recruitment process shared?	○ Are all job openings in your organisation made public and accessible to everyone? ○ How does your organisation ensure that its recruitment processes are fair and open? ○ In high-risk contexts, how does your organisation's recruitment strategies balance openness and transparency while protecting staff and community members?	○ Do you keep records of your recruitment process? ○ If your organisation does keep records of the recruitment process, what is the importance of these records? If your organisation does not keep records, how come?
Criteria	↘ A transparent recruitment and selection procedure is in place. ↘ A transparent procedure for addressing potential biases that may arise (related to gender, age, background, class, disability, migration status, etc.) is defined and understood by all members of the organisation.	↘ The job opening is made public for everyone to apply. Trainers and facilitators may be invited to participate in a tender process based on funding programmes, using their existing networks and complementary areas of expertise. ↘ CVs and Motivation Letters are required of all applicants.	↘ The organisation ensures that records (such as minutes, reports, and photos) are maintained to document decision-making processes, meetings, and periodic evaluations of the board. Keeping such records is essential for accountability, transparency, learning, and continuity in leadership.
Tips and Examples	✳ Use neutral, welcoming language in your recruitment and focus on the actual skills and experience that are needed for the role — not only someone's completion of formal education, or their amount of years within a specific role. ✳ After each recruitment cycle, take time to reflect: What worked? Where might bias have slipped in? Use feedback to improve the process over time.	✳ Publish job openings on your website, social media, and other relevant platforms to reach as many people as possible. ✳ Let applicants know you want to understand both their professional experience (CV) and what drives them to apply (Motivation Letter). This gives everyone a fair chance to tell their story beyond bullet points.	✳ For every meeting, assign someone to take clear and structured notes, it will come in handy for all involved and allow people to revisit points made. ✳ Create simple templates for meeting minutes, reports, and evaluation summaries.

(C) Contracts

A contract is a formal, signed agreement between an organisation's representative and an individual engaged in a specific role for this organisation, such as a staff member, volunteer, facilitator, trainer, or someone providing a certain resource. A contract clearly outlines the roles, responsibilities, working hours, duration of engagement, and other essential terms of the individual's role. A contract exists to protect the rights of both the organisation and the engaged individual, by establishing mutual expectations and accountability.
While formal contracts are standard practice in many NGOs, they may be less common in grassroots or semi-formal settings, where legal registration can be limited.

But, written agreements can be important for clarifying expectations, defining boundaries, and addressing critical elements like confidentiality and consent, even within less formal contexts. By creating different contract templates, which can adapt to different kinds of environments, you can encourage transparency and trust regardless of your organisation's legal status.



	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	◯ What role do contracts play in your organisation's context? ◯ Does your organisation use any form of contracts or agreements? If not, how come, and what is used instead?	◯ Does your organisation have a procedure for creating contracts and agreements?	◯ Does your organisation review and update contracts and agreements? ◯ Is there a system for tracking and managing updates made to contracts and agreements?
Criteria	↘ No formal contracts exist in your organisation. Written documents exist for some people, such as staff members or key volunteers, but these documents may lack specificity on the roles, tasks, and expectations for both the organisation and the staff member/volunteer. ↘ There is no standard format or process for creating contracts or agreements put in place, leading to inconsistencies across different teams, projects, activities, etc.	↘ A standard procedure is in place for creating formal contracts or written agreements for all staff members, volunteers, facilitators, trainers, and people providing certain resources.	↘ All written documents, including contracts and agreements, are comprehensive, explaining the roles and tasks, as well as performance expectations, evaluation criteria, etc. ↘ The agreements' standardised templates are regularly updated based on legal requirements and best practices. ↘ Contracts are updated to reflect changes in roles and responsibilities.
Tips and Examples	✳ Write out an agreement with anyone working with your organisation – even if it's simple. ✳ Keep such written agreements consistent, using the same format for all staff, volunteers, and collaborators across projects.	✳ Create one standard contract or agreement format that you can customise for different roles. ✳ Before anyone signs these contracts, go over the agreement together, to make sure everything's clear. This can also be a great moment to build trust, and clear up any questions.	✳ Develop a standardised template that includes sections outlining the main information (e.g. tasks, performance expectations, evaluation criteria), while also leaving room for personalising the agreement when needed. ✳ Set a time for regularly reviewing and updating contracts, so it will not slip your mind.

(d) Professional development

Organisations should provide staff, interns, trainers, facilitators, and volunteers with professional development (PD) opportunities. These opportunities can develop and enhance skills and knowledge – particularly related to human rights education, intersectionality, and youth work – related to their roles and responsibilities in the organisation.

Supporting your staff's professional growth should extend beyond occasional trainings; it involves offering PD activities during working hours, facilitating the creation of development plans, and ensuring equal access to learning opportunities.

The topics within PD activities don't only need to include technical skills, but can also cover soft skills, trauma-informed approaches, and identity-based violence prevention—areas that many practitioners, particularly those working with systematically marginalised communities, have expressed the desire to continuously learn.

Organisations should also be mindful of the risk of burnout. Working with communities in sensitive contexts can place high emotional demands on staff and volunteers. Burnout can reduce one's well-being and motivation, and weaken a programme's impact. As part of PD, you should address this risk by encouraging healthy work-life balance, offering peer support, and fostering practices of self and collective care. Through such measures, you can help ensure your staff's resilience.

To be sure that your organisation has long-term impacts, it's important to have a well-defined PD strategy, an intersectional approach to advocacy and programming, and a strong, motivational management framework. The questions and criteria below can support you in reflecting upon your organisation's approach to PD and management.

*Examples of PD opportunities for staff in youth organisations may include workshops and training programmes, seminars and conferences, online learning platforms that offer certifications, networking sessions, partner-building activities, mentorship programmes and peer learning activities, or job-shadowing opportunities and study visits.

*Examples of PD opportunities for leaders of youth organisations may include peer mentoring and coaching sessions, networking and relationship-building seminars or conferences, decision-making and risk-management training courses, team building and motivation training courses,or study visits.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ How and where is professional development brought into your organisation? ○ How well does your organisation's management guide and oversee staff's PD efforts, ensuring that they align with the organisation's mission and strategic vision?	○ Does your organisation allocate time for PD activities during work hours? ○ What attention is given to avoiding burnout among staff and volunteers?	○ What type of strategy or plan does your organisation have for staff's professional and personal development? ○ How well does your organisation promote a culture of continuous learning among staff and volunteers? ○ Does your organisation apply an intersectional lens to its advocacy, programming, structures and decision-making processes?
Criteria	↘ Staff members, interns, trainers, and volunteers are given time to participate in professional and personal development activities. ↘ Participating in trainings, e.g on human rights education, intersectionality, or youth work, is optional and primarily up to the individual staff member, volunteer, etc.	↘ Staff members, interns, and volunteers are provided with dedicated time and space during working hours to participate in personal development opportunities relevant to their role. The organisation supports the creation of staff's professional and personal development plans, aligning the PD opportunities with the needs of the organisation and with the career goals of the staff and/or volunteers. ↘ Preventing burnout is essential in a sector where emotional and psychological demands can be high.	↘ Your PD strategy is well-defined, providing access to a wide range of opportunities for staff, interns, and volunteers, focusing on topics like human rights education and intersectionality. ↘ PD initiatives align with your organisation's mission and contribute to its long-term progress. ↘ Sustainability is at the core of your PD strategy (e.g. financial sustainability, sustainability of PD skills, and organisation's sustainability). ↘ Your advocacy efforts include coalition-building with other organisations working towards social change, recognising that collective action strengthens movements' impact.
Tips and Examples	✳ Allow staff, interns, trainers, and volunteers to choose development opportunities that coincide with their interests. ✳ Create a learning-friendly environment.	✳ Give staff, interns, and volunteers the space to grow by allocating specific time during working hours for personal and professional development. ✳ Address burnout before it starts, prioritise staff/volunteer's well-being by promoting taking breaks during the work day, and creating a supportive environment where mental health is taken seriously.	✳ Build connections with other organisations, and experts who can assist with PD efforts. ✳ Managers can oversee their team's development, offering opportunities that support staff/volunteer's personal and professional growth, and are aligned with the organisation's goals. ✳ Make sure learning is an ongoing part of your organisation's work culture.

(e) Safety and well-being

Safety and well-being refers to the safe and inclusive working conditions offered to staff members, interns, and volunteers[2]. Supporting the emotional well-being of your organisation's staff/volunteers is fundamental to providing a safe working environment. In emotionally demanding fields, prioritising your team's well-being is essential. You can make space for your team's vulnerability and resilience by offering peer support systems, grounding practices, and regular debriefing sessions. You can also co-create well-being plans, at both individual and team levels, to foster sustainability, emotional safety, and long-term engagement. Your organisation could turn to external funding opportunities, such as the European Solidarity Corps, for well-being initiatives, resources, and support services which promote respect and empowerment[3]. Unlike corporate settings, where financial incentives are a centralised motivator, the motivators among NGOs' staff/volunteers are tied to shared values, social impact, and community. Therefore, organisational leaders should take an active role in cultivating environments where people feel safe, valued, and emotionally supported. This includes recognising challenges such as the chronic stress of surveillance, risk of burnout, and the presence of mental health stigma, particularly in regions where such issues remain taboo. A proactive and sensitive approach to safety and well-being is not only ethical, but essential to the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of your NGO.



	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	◯ How is the safety and well-being of your organisation's staff and volunteers discussed? ◯ Does your organisation have a written charter that outlines staff rights and employer responsibilities in relation to health and safety?	◯ What kind of procedures are in place for reporting and addressing health and safety concerns? ◯ Does your organisation evaluate accessibility regularly, updating its practices accordingly?	◯ Do options for additional support exist?
Criteria	↘ The organisation recognises the importance of staff/volunteers'/trainers' physical and mental health and well-being. ↘ A basic charter on staff rights / employer responsibilities for health and safety is available in written form and is accessible to all. ↘ The organisation implements basic physical and digital accessibility measures for activities, programmes and events.	↘ Policies that support physical and mental health, such as flexible working hours, stress management trainings, or wellness programmes are in place. ↘ The organisation provides accessible materials and ensures venues and platforms meet accessibility standards.	↘ Options for additional support (workshops, training courses, seminars, or mentors with specific areas of expertise etc.) are made available to staff members. ↘ Guidelines on physical and digital 'accessibility' are integrated into organisational planning and activities. ↘ In emotionally demanding roles, organisations implement structured well-being support mechanisms, including peer support systems, grounding practices, and regular debriefing sessions.
Tips and Examples	✳ Make sure everyone has easy access to your health and safety charter — because a healthy team is a happy team! ✳ Make sure that all your activities, programs, and events are physically and digitally accessible. Simple methods are much appreciated.	✳ When your team feels good, they perform their best. Support your team's well-being by holding regular check-ins and feedback sessions, and offering initiatives like flexible hours, mental health resources, or team-building activities. ✳ Make sure all materials are easy to access and understand, and ensure venues and online platforms meet accessibility standards.	✳ Encourage your team to regularly participate in peer support groups and debriefing sessions, and collaborate with them to develop personalised and group well-being plans.

[2]This understanding of safety and well-being is derived from national legislations and international labour standards, see International Labour Organization at: https://www.ilo.org/international-labour-standards.

[3]https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/safety-and-health-work#areasofwork

(f) Internal communication flow

For organisations:
Internal communication flow refers to the establishment of clear channels for official and informal communication (e.g. work emails/phones) while considering safety and confidentiality. It also involves setting boundaries around communicating during working hours, in order to respect everyone's time, and creating protocols in case of emergencies. Holding regular staff meetings, either in-person or online depending on availability, is also important for internal communication flow.

For project and activity:
Internal communication flow in projects and activities refers to the establishment of clear and specific channels for both official and informal communication between team members, facilitators, and participants. It takes into account the context of the work, ensuring the safety of members, confidentiality of documents, and other relevant considerations. (Szczudło et al., 2018, p. 54-58).
Designing internal communication systems that are both effective and sustainable in the long run is important for supporting a team's well-being and for organisational clarity. Clear communication policies can outline expectations around availability, response times, and emotional labour, so that staff and volunteers do not feel pressured to be constantly reachable, especially in high-stress environments. Establishing these boundaries through formal communication protocols promotes transparency, protects mental health, and contributes to a more resilient and respectful work culture.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ What is the internal communication flow of your organisation? ○ What is the internal communication flow within your projects and activites?	○ Are rules and limits around communication clear? ○ Is your private life respected?	○ How well does your organisation define and communicate its official and informal communication channels? ○ Does your organisation provide guidelines, or training, to staff and volunteers regarding effective and respectful communication practices? ○ How well does your organisation support staff and volunteers in separating personal and professional communications?
Criteria	↘ Staff members, trainers, and volunteers may have access to work emails or phone numbers, but they've created them themselves, and they may not be used consistently for official communications. ↘ Staff members are encouraged to follow guidelines that outline how to effectively use communication channels in order to ensure clear, respectful, and secure interactions.	↘ Clear boundaries on communication during working hours are set, and the expectations of responding outside of these hours is made clear. It is important to remember that some staff may feel pressure to respond to all messages, at any time, which can lead to burnout.	↘ The organisation's communication policy/strategy clearly defines official and informal channels. ↘ Staff and volunteers receive training or other guidance on effective communication practices. ↘ Boundaries for working hours are clearly set, including guidelines on when it is appropriate to communicate outside of these hours. Flexibility to address emergencies is also taken into consideration. ↘ There is a strong emphasis on ensuring safety, confidentiality, and respect for personal time. ↘ Staff and volunteers are encouraged to maintain clear boundaries between personal and work-related communications and are provided with secure channels to prevent any confusion or potential privacy concerns.
Tips and Examples	✳ Create guidelines that set clear expectations for when, and why, your staff needs to be reachable. ✳ Always communicate with respect and clarity.	✳ Clearly communicate working hours and response expectations for messages sent outside of these hours. ✳ Encourage staff to disconnect after hours. ✳ Lead by example.	✳ Clearly define formal communication channels (e.g. emails or meetings) versus informal ones (e.g. chats), and communicate these distinctions to your team. Be sure important information is shared through official channels. ✳ Create and share clear guidelines on work hours and response times to prevent burnout and ensure your team maintains a healthy work-life balance. Respect your team's time and privacy.

(g) Resources

Resources refer to any materials, tools, or assets that are used to support the work or activities of an organisation, project, or team. These resources can include documents (e.g. reports, templates), tools (e.g. software, equipment), data (e.g. research findings), training materials (e.g. presentations, manuals, t-kits), financial resources (e.g. budgets, funding), human resources (e.g. skills, expertise of staff or volunteers), or physical resources (e.g. office supplies, equipment) (Themudo, 2000, p. 5-16).

In the context of a project or activity, resources are provided to those involved, making sure they have what they need to contribute effectively and achieve the project or activity's intended outcomes. In this section, we noted that the levels 'core' and 'cherry on top' were the most important and made the most sense, but it is possible that your organisation finds yourself somewhere in the middle!

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ What resources does your organisation use? ○ Where does your organisation save resources like materials and documents?		○ What is a resource bank? Do you use one? ○ Are the tools and infrastructures within your organisation reliable and inclusive? ○ Does your organisation have policies on sharing / intellectual property?
Criteria	↘ A simple folder or drive has been created to store essential documents and materials. ↘ Basic physical resources, including essential equipment, materials, and workspaces, are made available to support fundamental operations and participation.		↘ A well-organised resource bank exists, using platforms like Google Drive, or external hard drives, with clearly labelled folders and documents accessible to staff, trainers, and volunteers based on their roles and needs. ↘ Your resource bank includes a range of materials, such as training manuals, project templates, best practice guides, and financial resources. It is regularly updated to reflect current needs. ↘ Well-equipped and spacious environments provide the necessary tools, comfortable workspaces, and reliable infrastructure to help people work effectively and feel included. ↘ Different degrees of accessibility to materials are offered to different people, ensuring that sensitive materials are protected while still providing broad access to necessary information. ↘ The organisation has comprehensive policies regarding Open Source sharing and intellectual property, which are communicated to all staff.
Tips and Examples	* Create a simple folder or drive for storing essential documents and materials. * Make sure that all staff and collaborators can access the basic physical resources that they need.		* Regularly update the resource bank with manuals, templates, and best practices to ensure it stays useful. * Offering different degrees of accessibility (or, access levels) to different users is important to be sure that sensitive materials are being protected. * Create comfortable, inclusive spaces where everyone feels supported and able to give their best.

(h) Funding transparency

For organisation:
On an organisational level, transparency involves sharing relevant information about its funders and donors, including their names, the purpose of their contributions, and the programmes or initiatives that they support. This helps build trust and accountability with external stakeholders.
Despite ongoing challenges, particularly for LGBTQ+ organisations facing limited systemic support and the need to adapt continuously to crises, maintaining funding transparency is essential for fostering resilience, trust, and lasting impact.

For projects and activities:
In the context of a project or activity, funding transparency means making the details of a project's financial support available to relevant stakeholders. This ensures transparency and allows participants, and the broader community, to understand the funding structure of specific projects. (Cabedo et al., 2017, p 2-14).

	Core	Extra	Cherry on top
Guiding questions	○ How does your organisation practice transparency? ○ What information does your organisation offer regarding funding sources?	○ Is there a strategy for communicating funding sources? ○ Does your organisation provide updates?	○ What tool are you using to outline funding sources?
Criteria	↘ Information regarding funders, donors, or other funding sources is published on an official channel (e.g. your website), which is easily accessible.	↘ A strategy for communicating funding sources is developed, detailing what information is to be shared, with who, and how often. ↘ The organisation regularly updates its stakeholders regarding funding sources, and any changes to those sources, promoting open communication.	↘ An annual report outlining funding sources is produced and made accessible to all interested parties.
Tips and Examples	✳ Make funding transparency a priority by clearly publishing information about funders, donors, and funding sources on your website.	✳ Create a clear communication plan. ✳ Make a habit of keeping your stakeholders updated.	✳ An annual report provides a clear overview of an organisation's activities, financial status, and funding sources. It can help build trust with external stakeholders, and it shows that your organisation is using resources responsibly and as intended.

ⓘ Sustainability and Human Rights concerns

Making environmentally conscious decisions in your organisation's purchasing process involves selecting services, materials, and resources that minimise negative environmental impacts. This can include using washable dishes instead of plastic, opting for recycled paper, reducing printed documents, and choosing reusable rather than single-use items (Tuménaitė, 2021, p. 13-18).
When purchasing services, materials, or resources, it is also important to take human rights concerns into account. For example, you can be sure that the production and supply of any purchased items respects human rights standards. This can include researching the origin of materials to ensure ethical production practices, supporting companies that hire individuals with disabilities, or considering fair labour practices in the supply chain. (Goldman, 2020)
This principle already closely aligns with the core values of teams engaged in rights-based work. Sustainability must be understood as care for people, energy, and resources.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	◯ How does your organisation practice sustainability? ◯ How does your organisation taking human rights concerns into consideration?	◯ Does your organisation have any guidelines for environmentally friendly purchasing? ◯ What efforts does your organisation make to reduce waste?	◯ Is there a zero-waste policy in your organisation? ◯ Does your organisation use eco-certified products, green energy, or ethical suppliers?
Criteria	↘ Inconsistent purchasing of eco-friendly materials or services. ↘ There are limited formal policies to support environmental sustainability in place.	↘ There are formal guidelines or policies in place to ensure environmentally friendly purchasing decisions. ↘ Suppliers that offer eco-friendly products may be preferred, even if costs are higher. ↘ Active efforts to reduce waste are made. Staff are aware of the organisation's sustainability goals and are encouraged to make environmentally responsible choices.	↘ Environmental sustainability is considered an important value, and every purchasing decision is made with a strong emphasis on minimising environmental impact. ↘ The organisation actively seeks out suppliers that respect eco-friendly practices. ↘ A zero-waste policy is in place and the organisation constantly seeks innovative solutions, such as using eco-certified products, green energy, and ethical suppliers, or favouring online meetings rather than in-person ones, which require travel. ↘ Accessibility, sustainability, and efficiency are prioritised when choosing between in-person meetings and online meetings.
Tips and Examples	✳ Choosing eco-friendly materials and services isn't only good for the environment — it's a smart and ethical decision for any organisation that promotes social justice and human rights values.	✳ Even if it costs a bit more, think about investing in a healthier planet. ✳ Involve your staff in reducing waste. When everyone's on board, small steps lead to big changes.	✳ Today, environmental sustainability and zero-waste policies aren't just trends — they're essential to saving our planet. ✳ Organisations that adopt zero waste models inspire others to follow.

Area 2

COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

a Communication

Within an organisation, communication is used to inform and promote any activities, projects, or updates, aiming to reach target groups, citizens, stakeholders, or the broader media. Having a communication strategy can support you in reaching the right audience: this includes a communication plan, clear messaging, and using the most effective communication channels for your context.

An inclusive communication strategy - one that is open and accessible to young people, and that acknowledges the many, multiple, intersecting identities they hold - can strengthen your organisation's impact. It is important to acknowledge that our communication methods can always evolve. If communication overlooks or misrepresents certain groups, they may feel alienated or excluded. By adopting a sensitive and proactive approach, you can identify and remove barriers both while developing your communication and while implementing them.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	◯ Are you familiar with communication and visibility strategy/plans? ◯ Does your organisation have a communication and visibility strategy/plan? ◯ What tools does your organisation use to promote its work and activities?	◯ What tools does your organisation use for both online and offline visibility? ◯ How does your organisation's communication strategy consider the diverse backgrounds and needs of your audience? ◯ Is there a staff member within your organisation who is responsible for communication-related activities?	◯ Is your organisation familiar with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)? ◯ How does your organisation consider your website's accessibility?[1] ◯ Does your organisation regularly review and update its communication strategy to ensure it remains effective and inclusive? ◯ In what ways does your organisation's communication strategy consider the principles/practices of inclusive communication? ◯ Does your organisation have a communication manager, or a staff member, whose role is to maintain the organisation's communication? ◯ Are graphic designers involved in preparing your communications? If so, how? If not, why not?
Criteria	↘ A general text explaining your organisation's mission is available on your website and in any of your organisation's printed materials. ↘ Your organisation has established basic channels of communication and tools for visibility (e.g. a website/a social media profile.)[2]	↘ Your organisation has a strategic communication plan. ↘ Your organisation's mission statement, values, objectives, and benefits are clearly shared in all materials, online and offline. ↘ Your organisation seeks out resources to support your communications, like: ➲ **Staff/volunteers** with skills in communication (e.g. graphic design, social media management, etc.) ➲ **Budget** for printing, design, translations, hiring professionals ➲ **Digital tools & platforms** (e.g. project management or graphics design tools, like Trello, Slack, Canva) ➲ **Knowledge resources** (e.g. guidelines/ toolkits/trainings on communication and storytelling) ➲ **Networks**: partnerships with other organisations/media contacts that can amplify your message ↘ See this footnote for tips for organisations with limited budgets![3]	↘ Your organisation's messaging is inclusive, tailored to different audiences (e.g. for youth, trainers, educators, parents, community organisations, etc.) ↘ Your communications strategy doesn't only share information, but actively seeks to **influence how stakeholders think and act**. This means identifying what actions you want stakeholders (e.g. funders, youth, parents) to take, and designing messages, channels, and tools that encourage those actions. For example, you might want funders to support your work, parents to trust and engage with your activities, or young people to participate in your programmes. A strong communication strategy tailors messages to each group so they feel informed, motivated, and empowered to act in the desired way. ↘ Your organisation has a communication manager, or someone in a similar role, who develops/oversees the communication strategy. ↘ Your organisation has a designated graphic designer for preparing communication materials.
Tips and Examples	✳ A communications plan is a strategic document that outlines an organisation's objectives, key messages, channels and communication activities. It is a tool that helps ensure consistency across all communications. ✳ Do not panic if you do not have such a plan. Many organisations already have a clear and structured communication strategy/plan. Start from there! Check our *references* to have some examples.	✳ Keep in mind that people communicate in different ways. Some people may prefer digital platforms, and others might prefer offline/print communication. Addressing these differences will allow you to engage with a broader audience. ✳ Make it as easy as possible for your audience to know how to reach you. Be sure that your website, social media profiles, phone number(s), or physical office location are easy to find. ✳ Offer multiple, accessible options for connecting and communicating with your organisation (e.g. hosting face-to-face meetings, offering phone conversations, or connecting through social media). ✳ Providing a variety of communication options helps you to address your audience's range of preferences and circumstances, creating a stronger and more inclusive connection.	✳ An inclusive communication strategy lays the groundwork for meaningful change and growth within your organisation. To create an inclusive communication strategy, your organisation can ask the following questions: ➲ Where do we want to head? ➲ Who do we need to engage? ➲ Who is being left out from our activities or events? ➲ What are our goals? ➲ How do we intend to achieve them?

[1]Some free platforms that your organisation can use to create websites and promotional materials include CANVA, UNICORN PLATFORM, TILDA.

[2]To check if your website is accessible, you can use these tools (among others): https://www.accessibilitychecker.org/ and https://accessibe.com/accessscan

[3]If your organisation has a limited budget, you can leverage free tools (like Canva, or Mailchimp), adapt and recycle your content across online platforms, build partnerships with other organisations, or local media outlets, to share communication channels, and focus on consistency (e.g. post once a week).

(b) Engagement and outreach

The terms 'outreach' and 'engagement' are often used interchangeably, but they carry different meanings, particularly within youth organisations committed to inclusivity. Outreach typically refers to one-way communication, designed to raise awareness or share information. For example, hosting a workshop at a local school, introducing young people to your organisation's programmes. Engagement, on the other hand, refers to a two-way, interactive dialogue that values and makes space for the voices and perspectives of young people. For instance, during an outreach event, creating opportunities for participants to ask questions, share ideas, or co-create solutions transforms a one-way interaction into meaningful engagement. By combining outreach and engagement, a youth organisation can foster a sense of belonging among the community it serves, and ensure its initiatives are inclusive and responsive to their needs[4].

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ What is your organisation's approach to connecting with the community you intend to serve? ○ How do you work with this community to ensure your organisation is inclusive and impactful? ○ How does your organisation collaborate with other, like-minded organisations?	○ How does your organisation attract participants for various projects/ events/activities?	○ Does your organisation have members and/or partnerships? ○ What does your organisation do to improve its outreach to specific groups, making sure they're aware of your services and resources?
Criteria	↘ Your organisation has created a clear and concise presentation, explaining your organisation, to be shared with the community you intend to serve. ↘ Your organisation has identified other organisations with shared values and objectives. ↘ Your organisation has created focus groups with community leaders and stakeholders, which gather feedback on how your initiatives can be presented in an inclusive way.	↘ A strategic plan is available. A strategic plan guides your organisation's future direction by effectively communicating goals and objectives to funders, sponsors, partners, staff, and members, and enhancing support and participation.	↘ Your organisation actively builds connections and networks for reaching, and engaging with, a diverse audience.
Tips and Examples	✻ For your organisation to be inclusive and impactful to the youth community, you can consider implementing these key strategies: ➔ Create a concise presentation that effectively communicates your organisation's mission, which you can share with the community/community leaders. Include engaging visuals and success stories to highlight your impact and resonate with diverse audiences. ➔ Identify local businesses and organisations that share similar values and objectives related to youth engagement and inclusivity. Work towards connecting with these businesses and organisations, establishing collaborations or connections for uplifting your organisation's work. ➔ Invite community leaders and stakeholders to join a focus group for discussing the perceptions of your organisation. Gather feedback on how you can present your initiatives so that they emphasise inclusivity, and reflect the needs of diverse youth populations.	✻ A strong communication plan should have: ➔ GOALS · What do you want your communication to do? (e.g. raise awareness, attract participants) ➔ TARGET AUDIENCES · Who are you trying to reach? (e.g. youth, funders) What engagement do you want from them? ➔ KEY MESSAGES · What do you want your audience to remember about your organisation? ➔ CHANNELS AND TOOLS · Which channels will you use? (social media, print materials). Adapt channels to the audience you want to reach. ➔ ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES · Who is responsible for communication within your organisation? ➔ TIMELINE AND ACTION PLAN · A schedule for communications (e.g. campaigns, event promotion). ➔ RESOURCES · What budget/ tools are available? · If low-resource: focus on free digital tools, volunteer support, and partnerships ➔ MONITORING AND EVALUATION · How will you measure your communication's effectiveness? (e.g. social media engagement, number of participants reached)	✻ Building personal connections and networks is crucial for reaching diverse and marginalised audiences. Here are some tips for doing so: ➔ PERSONAL OUTREACH: Proactively contact organisations that support systematically marginalised youth, and schedule one-on-one meetings to discuss your programmes or answer any questions. ➔ ENGAGE COMMUNITY LEADERS: Young people may feel like certain opportunities are not for them. If you connect with community leaders, they can promote these opportunities, and this mindset could be shifted, boosting participation. ➔ COLLABORATE: Partnering with various, like-minded organisations can help you better understand the barriers faced by systematically marginalised youth, leading to tailored solutions. ➔ REACH YOUNG PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE: Instead of waiting for youth to approach you, deliver information to locations they frequent, such as schools, skateparks, community centers, or online platforms. ➔ ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN NETWORKS: Build relationships with influential figures in young people's lives, like teachers and community leaders, and keep these connections active and consistent.

[4]See: https://shareyoursci.com/outreach-and-engagement/

Ⓒ Storytelling

Storytelling transforms factual information into compelling narratives that can emotionally resonate with your audience. By reflecting the values, identities, and aspirations of your target audience, storytelling can encourage a deeper connection with your organisation's communication, making messages memorable and impactful. When storytelling is tailored to specific contexts—like social media, face-to-face interactions, or events—it becomes a powerful tool for building trust, inspiring action, and encouraging active participation.

	Core	Extra	Cherry on top
Guiding questions	○ How does your organisation communicate with its target audience? ○ How familiar is your organisation with inclusive language (gender-sensitive, sensitive to people with disabilities, culturally sensitive, etc.)?	○ When does your organisation promote its events (e.g. beforehand, during, afterwards)? ○ Does your organisation communicate the full narrative of an activity—explaining not only what happened, but also why it mattered, who was involved, and what impact it created? ○ How are the contents (programmes, activities, etc.) and values (intentions, objectives, background, etc.) of your organisation communicated?	○ How do you consider the diversity of your audience when deciding what information to communicate? ○ How do you consider inclusivity within the structure and display of your content (graphics, colours, font size, etc.)? ○ Do you offer content in multiple formats (e.g. audio, video, text) to accommodate different learning styles and preferences?
Criteria	↘ Your organisation's communication highlights achievements and activities using clear, inclusive language.	↘ Your organisation's communication uses inclusive language to present project activities before, during, and after their implementation, creating a clear narrative of their objectives. ↘ The contents and values of your organisation are clearly expressed throughout your communications.	↘ Your organisation's external communication is diverse and accessible, representing a range of identities, cultures, and perspectives. ↘ Your organisation's activity descriptions are free from gender and other biases and use inclusive language that considers diverse identities and avoids exclusionary terms.
Tips and Examples	✻ **INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TIPS** ➲ Use gender-neutral terms instead of gendered words ➲ Apply person-first language (e.g. "I," "we," "us," "our") unless otherwise requested ➲ Use descriptive adjectives when relevant (e.g. when advertising an event is for a specific community, name that community with appropriate terms) ➲ Refer to the LGBTQ+ community using the appropriate terms, rather than outdated or medical language ➲ Say "person" or "human" where "man" is used as default ➲ Choose non-stigmatising expressions (e.g. "sexual orientation" instead of "preference") ➲ Highlight resilience over victimhood: (e.g. "survivors" instead of "victims") **START IMPLEMENTING CHANGES** ➲ Represent a range of identities, cultures, and perspectives in your promotional materials, social media content, and other public-facing communication. ➲ Evaluate the descriptions of your activities, and make sure that they are inclusive of diverse identities. Question whether your language seems to be addressed to well-educated, able-bodied, or high-income participants.	✻ It's okay to tell your audience what activities you have realised, what objectives your organisation has achieved. ✻ Create an overarching narrative of your project by sharing the planned activities before they take place, while they are implemented, and present the results after being completed. ✻ Sharing the content of your organisation is essential for informing and educating your target audience, but conveying your organisation's values is just as important for building trust and loyalty. Clearly communicating both content and values helps establish transparency, allowing stakeholders to feel valued and understood. Your organisation's reputation and impact can be enhanced as a result!	✻ To create more inclusive messaging, consider these elements: ➲ **RELEVANCE:** Ensure your information is applicable to all participants. Avoid assuming that one group's needs reflect everyone's. If you're addressing a specific segment of your community, clarify that while also providing relevant information for all groups. ➲ **REPRESENTATION:** Strive to include diverse voices and experiences. Highlight stories/experiences from various demographics. ➲ **PROACTIVITY:** Seek out and create relevant information for your audience. If certain topics often come up, develop content that addresses them, and share it widely. ➲ **FEEDBACK:** Encourage feedback to assess whether your content is truly effective/inclusive. Be open to suggestions and invite follow-up questions. ✻ Tips for writing in accessible, plain language: ➲ **Write for your audience**: Focus on their needs. ➲ **Personalize your message**: Use "you" and "your" to create a relatable tone. ➲ **Use active voice:** This makes sentences clearer (e.g. "The dog chased the cat" instead of "The cat was chased by the dog"). ➲ **State the main message first**: Start with the most important information. ➲ **Keep sentences short:** Each sentence should convey a single idea to be easily and quickly understandable. ➲ **Simplify language**: Avoid jargon (specialised language) and explain complex terms. ➲ **Prioritise design**: Use visuals and certain formatting styles, like headings and lists, to support your message and improve its readability.

(d) Target groups

When developing a communication strategy, it is important that your organisation defines its target group. It may be tempting to claim that your audience includes everyone, but having a vague target audience can make your communication less effective. In order to use the most effective communication channels and create relatable content, your organisation needs to understand the unique needs of characteristics of your audience - particularly those systematically marginalised or overlooked. This is especially important within digital communications, where the exclusion of certain groups may be harder to detect. If your digital communication has any exclusionary elements, your organisation's initiatives may not be able to reach all of the groups you'd like to work with. Various forms of systematic exclusion and marginalisation should be considered when defining your target audience and determining how you can reach them (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, mental health, neurodiversity, experiences of abuse or neglect). By clearly defining your target group, your organisation can ensure that your communication is inclusive, accessible, and attentive to the diverse realities of the community you intend to serve.[5]

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ Who is your target audience?	○ How do you proactively seek out relevant information for communicating with your audience? In what ways do you consider systematically marginalised communities when communicating with your audience?	○ How does your communication strategy take the diverse backgrounds and needs of your audience into account? ○ How do you ensure your communication strategy is effective and inclusive over time?
Criteria	↘ Your organisation's target audience is clearly identified . Your organisation takes non-visible identity markers into account, as well as forms of discrimination that are not legally recognised (for example, fatphobia). ↘ Your organisation uses an intersectional approach when addressing your target audience.	↘ Your organisation's communication is accessible and meets the diverse needs of young people from all backgrounds.	↘ A communication strategy has been developed that is fully accessible and inclusive, ensuring it considers the diverse needs of all audiences, including people with disabilities. ↘ Your organisation regularly reviews and updates your communication strategy when noticing that it may not be as effective or inclusive as it could be.
Tips and Examples	✻ You may face certain challenges when identifying your audience. You can take the following points into consideration through this process: ➲ **NON-VISIBLE ASPECTS OF IDENTITY:** Not all forms of exclusion are visible, making it difficult to recognise the unique needs of young people (for example, exclusion related to trauma, education level, or economic status). ➲ **LEGALLY UNRECOGNISED DISCRIMINATION:** Some forms of exclusion are not legally acknowledged, so their experiences of stigma or discrimination go unnoticed. ➲ **INTERSECTIONALITY:** Individuals can have multiple intersecting identities that influence their experiences and social positions. This means that various aspects of someone's identity could make it difficult to engage with your content or participate in your activities, if you do not take various forms of exclusion into account when designing them.	✻ When planning your message content, consider the following elements to enhance inclusivity: ➲ **RELEVANCE:** Ensure your information is applicable to all audience members. Avoid assuming that one group's needs reflect everyone's. If you're addressing a specific segment of your community, clarify that while also providing relevant information for all groups. ➲ **REPRESENTATION:** Strive to include diverse voices and experiences. Highlight stories from various demographics and address issues that affect different communities, particularly those that are systematically marginalised. ➲ **PROACTIVITY:** Seek out and create relevant information for your audience. If certain topics often come up, develop content that addresses them, and share it widely. Work with your team to address the challenges faced by the community you're working with, and promote positive change. ➲ **FEEDBACK:** Encourage open feedback to assess whether your content is truly effective and inclusive. Be receptive to suggestions and invite follow-up questions. ➲ **TRANSPARENCY:** Be clear about conditions affecting young people, such as finance, housing, and travel. Adding an inclusivity statement to your opportunities can significantly impact participation, especially by inviting applications from people with disabilities and fostering a welcoming environment.	✻ When creating an inclusive communication strategy and considering diverse audiences, here are some steps to think about: ➲ Set clear and practical objectives applying the SMART framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) to your strategy. ➲ Regularly review your communication strategy to ensure it stays relevant and effective. ➲ Encourage your staff and stakeholders to provide feedback in order to improve your organisation's communication practices. ➲ Work with a diverse team, in order to develop a strategy that fosters respectful, effective communication both internally and externally.

[5]Eurodesk, "Guide on Inclusive Communication in youth information services", 2023

ⓔ Collection of communication data

The success of your organisation's communication doesn't only depend on how messages are crafted and delivered – it is, also, important that their effectiveness is systematically evaluated. This is where **data collection** plays a big role. Analysing the reach, impact, and cost-effectiveness of your organisation's communication provides valuable insights into what strategies are working, and which areas need improvement. Data collection, also, provides stakeholders with accountability and supports your organisation in making informed decisions within future initiatives. By regularly reviewing the metrics and outcomes of your communication, your organisation can adjust its communication strategies, make better use of resources, and increase the impact of your efforts. By integrating communication tools, storytelling, and data-driven evaluation, your organisation can more meaningfully, and sustainably, engage with its audience.

Even if your organisation has limited resources, there are ways to collect and evaluate useful communication data! Many social media platforms (like Instagram) have **free, built-in analytics**, and Google Analytics can help **track your website's reach and engagement for free**. You can also use Google Forms or Microsoft Forms to **create surveys** to gather feedback. There is, also, always the option to **collect direct feedback** during, or after, any activities your organisation hosts. Each of these options can allow you to track basic **indicators**, like how your social media interactions, newsletter sign-ups, or number of participants. Qualitative evidence—like short interviews with stakeholders—offers meaningful perspectives, too. These approaches all require little or no budget, but still provide valuable information for assessing your organisation's communication.
You can find more information about the general data collection process for evaluation purposes in Area 5 – Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	◯ Do you regularly monitor the responses and engagement of your audiences across your various communication channels? ◯ How does your organisation monitor the responses/engagement of your audience, across your communication channels?	◯ How do you receive feedback from your audience? ◯ How does your audience's feedback impact your approach to communication?	◯ How often do you assess the accessibility and inclusivity of your communications and services to ensure they cater to a diverse audience?
Criteria	↘ Systems are in place to monitor audience responses or collect user feedback. ↘ Communication adjustments are made when necessary.	↘ Systems are in place to collect feedback from audiences through specific channels or platforms, including input from target groups. ↘ Your organisation regularly monitors engagement metrics, and adjusts communication strategies based on audience feedback. ↘ Your organisation periodically evaluates the accessibility and inclusivity of your communications through data analysis processes.	↘ A comprehensive and systematic approach to reviewing communication analytics and audience feedback is in place. ↘ Your organisation uses detailed data insights and key performance indicators (KPIs) to guide strategic adjustments and future investments. ↘ Regular evaluation meetings and content reviews are held to ensure that your communication materials meet inclusivity standards and best practices.

Tips and Examples

- ✻ Establish specific channels and platforms to gather feedback from your audience, especially from young people
- ✻ Encourage feedback actively and make it clear that their contributions are greatly appreciated
- ✻ Develop a system for reviewing your organisation's communicational content, with a designated individual or team responsible for assessing and approving communication materials
- ✻ Consistently review and update your organisation's content revision process and strive to meet best practices and inclusivity standards.
- ✻ Arrange regular evaluation meetings
- ✻ Identify key performance indicators (KPIs). For example: number of visits on your organisation's social media profiles, total number of followers, number of views on a video, number of unique users on your organisation website
- ✻ Analyse data and insights
- ✻ Establish action items / objectives
- ✻ Track the progress of your communication strategy and make necessary adjustments

Area 3

PROJECT/ACTIVITIES DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION[18]

(a) Questioning power structures and dynamics

In our organisations, we need to question who holds power in different situations, and how that power shifts depending on context and identity. This applies to every part of our work – with our participants, within teams, and across the wider structures we operate in. With participants, for example, a facilitator usually holds authority over a group; but what happens if they're younger than the participants, or if their ethnic background, gender, or other identity markers affect how their role is perceived? The same reflection is needed within our working teams. Who has decision-making power? Whose perspectives are centred? Without this, the power dynamics built into our structures can go unnoticed and unchallenged.

Two of the enablers from our introduction — relational power, and working in a transformative, rights-based way – are key here. Simply avoiding harm isn't enough; if our projects don't aim to challenge systems of inequality or foster transformation, we risk reinforcing the status quo.

Addressing power dynamics can shape the way projects are designed and implemented, including which sources of knowledge shape our approach to the project, and what our objectives are. When thinking about sources of knowledge, we can consider the questions posed by "critical education": Are we drawing from a range of perspectives? Whose voices are we including? Is lived experience part of our source of knowledge? Linking intersectional and human rights-based approaches to the real experiences of the people involved is what makes our work genuinely transformative.

[18]All of the sub-areas that follow, including the criteria for the levels of progression, are based on the design and implementation of specific projects and activities, rather than on organisations' internal processes.



	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ Have you taken societal power structures, as well as dominant political and cultural narratives, into account throughout the design process? *(e.g. Are you considering European colonial history while working in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation? Are you considering the islamophobic nature of some Western narratives while working with youth with a migrant background?)* ○ Are you aware of possible power dynamics within your team, and among the group of participants, and do you have any measures in place to address and challenge them? *(e.g. Do you openly acknowledge the power imbalances within your group? Are you making sure that you grant people equal space for expression and participation in decision-making?)*	○ Are you using diverse resources to build your knowledge, including knowledge produced by under-represented communities? *(e.g. What sources are you using to build a project on feminism? Are they only coming from white academics, or are you considering the work of Black feminists, disabled feminists, and collective grassroot movements?)* ○ Are you providing support for your participants to link human rights and intersectionality with their specific contexts/realities? *(e.g. Are you asking participants how they can concretely connect each activity's topic with their local context?)*	○ Are you explicitly tackling the roots of inequality in your projects and activities? *(e.g. Are you applying a gender-transformative approach – one that goes beyond simply including different gender identities, but actively challenges the social norms, power dynamics, and structural inequalities that allow gender-based discrimination to continue?)* ○ Do you hope for your projects and activities to produce change, preparing young people to challenge the status quo?
Criteria	↘ Basic knowledge of the concepts of power and power structures / dynamics is present among the team working on the project or activity. ↘ Power dynamics within the team, and within activities among participants, are recognised and addressed when they become evident.	↘ Your project's content and objectives are shaped by the backgrounds of your participants and team members. ↘ Power dynamics are openly addressed from the very beginning of the project or activity. ↘ The role that power structures play within knowledge production is recognised when selecting the resources needed to prepare for a project or an activity. ↘ The objectives of your activity or project focus on transforming participants' understandings of, and experiences with, power structures and power dynamics.	↘ Power structures and dynamics are explicitly addressed both in a project/activity's objectives and design. ↘ Specific measures are in place to address and challenge power dynamics within the working group and among the participants. ↘ The content needed for the project/activity integrates diverse materials, including resources from marginalised communities and individuals. ↘ Qualitative indicators are used to assess the level of change in participants.
Tips and Examples	* Make sure your team is informed on how power dynamics work (e.g. connect them with books, workshops, etc. on the topic if seemingly unfamiliar), and understands which groups and identities are particularly disadvantaged in your context. * Based on the identities represented within your team and within the group of participants, ask yourself who usually holds more power and how can you challenge this paradigm (e.g. if there's a white, cisgender, male trainer with a group of young women, this replicates a power dynamic that needs to be acknowledged and tackled).	* When you seek out certain resources to prepare an activity or project, be sure to ask yourself who wrote these resources, and from what perspective. (e.g. if your activity is centred on the rights of Roma communities, make sure you're also using resources produced by members of this community). * Make sure to define the level of change you want to see in participants based on their context and needs – and be ready to monitor this throughout.	* According to the concept "critical education", learning should try to transform the oppressive structures in society, rather than reinforcing them. Therefore, make sure that your project/activity provides young people with tools and resources for noticing oppressive and unfair dynamics, and tackling them. * Once you define the type of change you aim to see in your participants, make sure to do an assessment at the beginning of your project/activity to create a baseline. You can, then, compare these results with results of a final assessment done at the end. * Be aware that changes in attitude can take time. You could schedule follow-up meetings with participants to check in on the mid- to long-term effects of your project.

ⓑ Analysing needs and defining objectives

A 'needs analysis' is an important step for defining the objectives of youth projects and activities. An intersectional approach recognises that a person can hold multiple identities and experience multiple forms of oppression at the same time – so, it is important to remember that their needs can be diverse, sometimes even conflicting, and may shift depending on the context or moment in time. A human rights-based approach encourages participants to be involved from the start of a project's design phase. This can help us challenge any existing power structures (for example, between young participants and facilitators) and give participants the space to voice their needs or perspectives. It's also important for youth organisations to connect with collectives, associations, and communities that work closely with the specific youth groups they want to reach. This way, the project can better capture the diverse needs of the group and respond accordingly. Any tools or methods used to gather these needs should be accessible and easy for the participants to engage with.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ Does your team typically identify the needs of your target group before designing an activity or project? ○ Do you look into pre-existing surveys completed by, or social research on, the target group you want to involve while designing a project or activity?	○ Do you consider diverse perspectives, identities, and contexts when analysing the needs of your target group? ○ Are you using the results of previous project evaluations to complement the needs you are considering for new activities? ○ Are you consulting young people at least once a year to update your needs analysis?	○ If you want to identify the needs of a specific group of young people that you're not yet working with, do you know where to look for collectives, organisations, communities that are run by, or work with, them? ○ How much are you involving your participants in defining the objectives of a project or activity?
Criteria	↘ When defining the objectives for a project or activity, the needs of the target group are considered. ↘ When a target group is difficult to reach and their needs cannot yet be heard face-to-face, desk research is done to learn about needs of this group that have been collected in a previous time. ↘ The objectives of a project or activity are clearly communicated to the target group.	↘ Specific measures are in place for documenting groups' possible needs as they emerge within ongoing projects and activities. ↘ Projects are shaped by needs that have emerged within previous activities. ↘ A group's needs analysis is updated on a regular basis by periodically consulting young people, to be sure it stays relevant. ↘ Young people are invited to evaluate the relevance of a project or activity's objectives. ↘ In collecting the needs of a target group, diverse perspectives, identities, and contexts are considered. ↘ Relevant organisations and professionals are contacted and asked to support the collection of a new target group's needs.	↘ Members of the target group are actively involved in co-designing the objectives of a project or activity. ↘ Several steps are in place for deepening your understanding of a target group's needs (e.g. desk research, evaluation from previous activities, participatory activities). ↘ In collecting the needs of a target group, diverse perspectives, identities and contexts are considered and integrated into the defined objectives. ↘ When analysing the needs of a hard-to-reach target group, a network of collectives, organisations, and communities run by, or working with, them is consulted.
Tips and Examples	* Before defining the objectives and core content of your project or activity, make sure to ask your target group if they think that what you have in mind is relevant to them, or explicitly ask them what they need.	* In every project/activity, make sure to explore additional needs of your target group, so that you can consider them within future projects. Be ready to take notes if new needs emerge in the project/activity, and highlight them in the final report of your project. * Make sure to organise a workshop or any other non-formal education activity (online or in-person, anonymous or not, spoken or written) at least once a year, to make space for your target group to voice their more recent needs. * If you want to start working with new target groups, make sure to involve any organisations or groups that have already been working with them, so that you know what has already been done, and where you can contribute.	* Every time you design a new project or activity, make sure to include your target group. Together, decide what objectives are most relevant and how to reach them. * When you perform a needs analysis for a target group, consider all of the identities that are visibly present (and/or that participants decide to share with you), and be sure to consider these diverse needs through an intersectional lens. For example, when you work with groups of young migrants who have recently arrived, some needs may be universal– like learning the language– but others depend on other identity components. Young migrant women might need something different than young migrant men, and young migrant queer people might have other specific needs, etc.

C Designing methodology and pedagogy

Adopting an intersectional and HRE-based approach in the youth field requires a deliberate and intentional choice of methodology and pedagogy, aligned with the needs and objectives of the organisation and its projects.

Using an intersectional lens shifts a project's design phase from being 'reactive' to being 'proactive'. This means that the methods that we've chosen are thoroughly considered before a project or activity begins, rather than reacting to challenges as they come. To be proactive, we can rely on pre-existing knowledge, the results of the needs analysis we've done, the aim and objectives we've set, and our awareness of the various identities, hidden or not, that our participants may have.

The considerations that help create a 'proactive' project can, also, help us build a 'safe(r) space' that caters to the needs of the people involved as much as possible. A **'safe(r) space'** can also support the process of facing any challenges or conflicts that arise in the group or throughout the project. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach for creating a safe(r) space, since it depends upon the specific needs of the group, but you can find general guidelines in the **Toolbox** section.

	Core	Extra	Cherry on top
Guiding questions	○ Are you aware of different methodological and pedagogical frameworks and their characteristics? ○ Are you familiar with the concept of 'safe space'?	○ How often do you question the methodology and pedagogy you usually adopt? Do they respond to participants' needs? ○ Do you know how to adapt the methodology being used if needed? ○ Are you familiar with the concept of 'safe(r) space'?	○ Is the methodology/pedagogy you adopted coherent with the "critical education" approach and transformative outcomes you'd like to reach? *(e.g. Did you choose a methodology that requires young people to be sitting down and passively listening to a trainer? Or, are you using methodologies that allow young people to make their own choices, bring up topics of their choice, etc.?)* ○ How do you work towards building a safer space for your project/activity from the very beginning of the design phase?
Criteria	↘ Your team has a basic understanding of different methodological and pedagogical frameworks and their characteristics. ↘ For each project or activity, a suitable methodological approach is chosen in order to reach the defined objectives. ↘ The concept of 'safe space' is addressed during the implementation of the project or activity.	↘ Your team has a high level of awareness of different methodological and pedagogical frameworks and their characteristics. ↘ For each project or activity, a suitable methodological approach is specifically chosen in order to reach the defined objectives based on the target group's needs. ↘ The chosen methodology is adaptable, in order to meet the target group's needs -- both before the project begins, and during the implementation phase. ↘ The concept of 'safe(r) space' is addressed during your first interaction with the participants, before the project implementation.	↘ For each project/activity, the most suitable methodological approach is deliberately chosen and shaped by an intersectional and HRE-based lens. ↘ Young people from target groups are actively involved in the co-design of the methodology and pedagogy for a project or activity. ↘ The concepts of 'safer space' and/or 'brave space' are explicitly addressed during the design phase, and influence the choices made during the design phase and during implementation.
Tips and Examples	* Take time to explore and experiment with different educational methodologies, so that you can select the one that is most suitable to the group and the established objectives. * Introduce the concept of a 'safe space' at the very beginning of your project or activity. Depending on the time you have[2], make sure you actively involve participants in defining what they need to feel safe, and how the group can meet those needs in order to make the space as safe as possible for everyone *(e.g. co-creation of ground rules, defining mechanisms for giving/receiving feedback, use of inclusive language)*	* Make sure to ask yourself whether you're choosing a specific methodology (e.g. forum theatre) just because it's the one you feel more comfortable with, or because it's really the most suitable choice for the objectives you want to reach. * Follow the developments of/seek information on different methodologies (e.g. digital resources). * Make sure to emphasise the difference between a 'brave' and 'safer' space, and aim to reach a consensus with your group regarding the measures you can take to make your space safer.	* Ask participants what methodologies they want to experiment with. Make sure you adapt the chosen methodology to the needs of the group *(e.g. adapting outdoor education to accommodate participants with mobility limitations or impairments)*. * When collectively agreeing upon how to co-create a safer space, think about aspects that can support the group if conflict arises among participants. This can support them in feeling safe and prepared to constructively address conflict.

[2]If time is scarce, you can use the "Communication Support Tool" to propose a few core points, and then ask the participants to add or edit what has been suggested. You can find the Tool here: https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4509/Communication%20support%20tool.pdf

ⓓ Implementing accessible activities

An intersectional and HRE-based approach can help make activities more accessible. Here, we don't only understand accessibility in terms of a space's physical accessibility (which is covered in sub-area 3.F). Accessibility is also related to the learning environment, group dynamics, and education methods and approaches.

A key first step in creating an accessible initiative is to make time for both self-reflection and group reflection throughout the entire project or activity. This gives participants space to process their learning and well-being and offers the training or facilitation team valuable feedback. The team should be ready to make adaptations as needed, making the space more accessible for everyone involved.

Another crucial factor is how you communicate with participants — both in terms of the language and the visuals that you use. What you say or show, and how you do so, can unintentionally alienate or exclude marginalised communities, including ethnic minorities, queer people, youth with disabilities, and neurodivergent young people. By combining self and group reflection with thoughtful, sensitive communication, we can improve the safety and accessibility of youth initiatives.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ Have you made an effort to identify the accessibility needs of the participants before the project/activity begins? ○ Are the methods and tools that you're using accessible for a diverse group of participants?	○ How does your methodology make time and space for group reflection, and for the expression of a diverse range of needs? ○ Do you adopt inclusive language, and visuals, within your communication?	○ Are you prepared to adapt your methods and tools based on the feedback you receive, and the needs that arise, within the group? ○ How do you stay informed on developments in inclusive language?
Criteria	↘ During the implementation phase, the learning and physical needs of participants are taken into account. ↘ During the implementation phase, space and time is made for methods and tools to be adapted or replaced, based on the group. ↘ A dedicated space and time for individual and/or group reflection on learning is given to participants at least once per project/activity. ↘ A conscious effort is made to avoid discriminatory language.	↘ A dedicated space and time for individual and/or group reflection, and for providing project/activity feedback, is set regularly. ↘ Your methodology ensures that diverse needs are taken into account – both at the beginning of implementation, and those that come up later. ↘ Alternative tools and methods have been prepared before the implementation of the project or activity, in order to support diverse needs. ↘ Inclusive language, and visuals, are consciously adopted.	↘ The diverse needs of individuals with disabilities are taken into account and assistive measures are arranged in advance (e.g. accompanying persons, interpreters, etc.) ↘ Participants' feedback on methods is explicitly solicited during project/activity implementation, and your team adapts accordingly. ↘ Participants are asked their communication preferences, for all group interactions, in advance. ↘ Participants are given dedicated space and time for individual and group reflection on a regular basis. ↘ Space/time for expression is fairly and equally distributed, and the power dynamics that may affect this are collectively discussed (e.g. sharing space/power dynamics are addressed in the collective guidelines you create with the group at the beginning of the activity). ↘ Participants have full agency on how much, and what, they'd like to share. ↘ Inclusive language is consciously adopted, and selected visual materials do not replicate any oppressive stereotypes of minority groups.
Tips and Examples	* No matter how meticulously you analyse the needs of a group of participants, there will always be space for last minute surprises. Be ready to adapt your methods, tools, and spaces to any sudden, specific need that arises (e.g. a mobility impairment, neurodivergence, etc.) * Make sure you avoid any language that includes stereotypes, or is in any way discriminatory. If such language is used within the group, take the opportunity to explain why this is not acceptable. If someone addresses any terms or expressions that you've used, explaining why they are harmful, be open to questioning your knowledge and redefining your practice.	* Make sure you have "plan B" alternatives for any activity or tool that is not fully accessible, so that it is easy to adapt if needed. * Be sure that the group's established guidelines for respectful and inclusive communication are mutually agreed upon. If you notice they're not being followed, you can collectively revisit them and propose they be adjusted or edited however needed. * Set a specific time for participants to reflect on the activities, both individually and in groups, to provide your team with feedback. Provide guiding questions to support the reflection when needed.	* Accessibility doesn't only mean a ramp at the main entrance. Make sure you check in with all participants in advance, to ensure the maximum level of accessibility and accommodation for different needs. Most European Programs have a dedicated budget for this, so do not hesitate to involve extra staff (e.g. accompanying persons, sign language interpreters) * Make sure to set up a dedicated time for the group to provide you with feedback, even anonymously. Make sure to discuss this feedback in the team and, if necessary, adapt your work accordingly. * During group discussions, ensure that the space to express oneself is equally shared[3], and that no participant is dominating the conversation. Simultaneously, monitor that no participants are speaking on the behalf of communities/identities that they are not part of, and if this happens, encourage them to reflect on why they think they can do so, and where else they could turn for this insight, without putting any other participants on the spot.

[3]There are tools available online to support the observation of distribution of time and space for expression in groups with different identities represented. For example, the Xarxa d'Economia Solidària (XES) developed one based on gender which can be found here: https://www.economiasolidaria.org/recursos/119434/. The manual at this link is in Catalan, but in the Tools section of our handbook, there is an English translation available

(e) Building a balanced team

When applying an intersectional and human rights-based approach, it's important to consider not only the skills and competences of team members, but also their identities, lived experiences, and how these intersect with power relations. A person's identity - and how it positions them within systems of power - can strongly influence the work they do with youth, as well as how they are perceived and treated by both the team and the participants. Teams with members from diverse identity groups - including those who are systematically marginalised - bring broader perspectives, richer expertise, and a wider range of methodologies. A team's diversity can also allow young participants to see themselves reflected in the team, which fosters trust, understanding, and contributes to creating a safer space. Organisations should also make a conscious effort to avoid tokenism[4] – or, bringing people into the team as symbolic representatives of their identities, rather than as meaningful contributors. An intersectional and HRE-based approach requires us to question and adapt our behaviours, ensuring our internal practices reflect the values we promote. Representation alone is not enough - we need to create conditions where all team members have influence, respect, and opportunities to contribute.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ What level of diversity is represented in your working team? ○ Are you aware of what voices, experiences, perspectives are missing or underrepresented? ○ How do you ensure that a human rights based approach is applied to both your participants and your working team?	○ Are you ready to be transparent and acknowledge the limitations within your team, both in terms of competences and representation? ○ Do you ensure that there is an equal and fair distribution of space of expression and decision-making within the team members?	○ Do you have any measures in place to integrate the missing voices, experiences, and perspectives in different phases of your work? ○ Are you aware of the power dynamics within your working group, and do you have any measures in place to address and challenge them? ○ Do you have specific and shared strategies for addressing and managing possible conflicts[5] within the team?
Criteria	↘ The team is as diverse as possible, according to the possibilities granted by the organisation size and context. ↘ The team is willing to research and build knowledge on the aspects that are missing or underrepresented in their team. ↘ The possibility of conflict within the team is acknowledged. ↘ The same HRE and intersectionality-based approaches applied towards participants are also applied to the working team.	↘ The team is as diverse as possible, and team members have a good level of thematic competence on aspects which are unrepresented. ↘ The possibility of conflict within the team is acknowledged, and any conflicts that arise are effectively addressed. ↘ An equal and fair distribution of space of expression and decision making is ensured within the team members.	↘ The team is diverse and balanced both in terms of representation and competences. ↘ There is awareness on what aspects of identity remain unrepresented in the team and a network for support is established in order to include those perspectives in the preparation phase. ↘ Power dynamics and structures within the team are acknowledged, and a plan for conflict prevention and management is in place. ↘ Coherence between a team's values and behaviours is ensured. There is structured space and time dedicated to discussing this within the team and providing feedback to one another.
Tips and Examples	* When defining the working team for a project or an activity, you must consider the competences of the professionals involved. Nevertheless, it's important to be aware of the role that identity plays. If a team is homogeneous in terms of lived experiences, many perspectives are likely missing. * Make sure you have as much diversity represented as possible, with particular care to the identity components touched by the content and objectives of your activity *(e.g. if you have a project on anti-racism, it would be ideal to have at least one team member who is part of a racialised community)*. * If this is not possible, make sure to consult with professionals, activists, and communities representing the identities who are not present in the team to prepare for your project (either in person or through their publications).	* When there are diverse identities within a team, it's essential to consider internal power imbalances. It's not enough to invite a professional that belongs to a marginalised community if you do not grant them equal space for contribution and decision-making. *(e.g. ensure that all team members are equally heard when working on the programme design, and that there is a fair distribution of sessions to facilitate)* * Recognise and address the role that social and cultural power structures are playing in the team's dynamics. Through a participatory process, take measures to prevent these power structures from being reproduced within the team. Staying aware of how power dynamics can hinder cooperation, and actively tackling this, can help avoid tokenism *(e.g. if you invite a Black person into a team for a project on anti-racism, but the white people in the team are making all of the decisions and taking up space, you are not really creating, or contributing to, an intersectional project/activity)*.	* Make sure you build a team with an intersectional approach, not only in regards to representing certain identities, but also considering the intersections between different marginalised identities. * Make sure you are transparent with your group, acknowledging what identities are missing from the team, and which perspectives may be under-represented. Do your best to reach out to under-represented communities while preparing for the project or activity. * Make sure you 'walk the talk'. Adopt practices and behaviours that are in line with the intersectional and human rights-based values being brought into the project or activity – both towards the participants and among the team members.

[4]In the Intersectionality Toolkit (2014) published by IGLYO, several tools can be found to assess the matter of representation in relation with power positions in organisations and groups – in particular, the activities "Who belongs?" (p. 15) and "Intersectionality checklist" (p. 16) can be useful. They can be found here: https://www.iglyo.org/resources/intersectionality-toolkit

[5]For more information about conflict management and risk prevention, see section 4 of this handbook.

(f) Ensuring an accessible and sustainable space

Using an intersectional approach can widen our understanding of 'accessible space', applying not only to physical and sensory disabilities, but also to learning disabilities, mental or cognitive disabilities, neurodivergence, socio-cultural identities, etc.
Two things to keep in mind when striving for an accessible space are: 1) conduct a needs analysis, where you consider any potential barriers and identify how they can be addressed before your project begins[6], and 2) use local, or international, accessibility checklists[7] to evaluate how accessible your space truly is (e.g. entrance design, signage, lighting, etc.). It's important to look at our physical spaces in new ways, outside of our lived experiences.
It's not always possible to make a space, project, or activity fully accessible to everyone, and at times, different needs may conflict with each other. In such cases, the goal should be to work together to find solutions through solidarity, flexibility, and collective responsibility. This approach, inspired by the principles of universal design, seeks to create environments that work for as many people as possible, while still responding creatively to specific needs. An intersectional and HRE-based approach also sees environmental considerations as a collective, shared value – your activity or project can be measured by its environmental impact.

[6]A needs analysis can involve expert organisations (e.g. disability rights groups) and your participants, who can shar first-hand perspectives on what your space may need.
[7]You can check the SALTO I&D online publication "No barriers, no borders" (2003 – last updated in 2008) for specific guidelines and checklists for different kinds of disability (pp. 88-103): https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-913/NoBarriersNoBorders.pdf

Tips and Examples

Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
* According to 'universal design', make sure your project or activity is held in a barrier-free building, even if you don't know whether there will be participants with mobility impairments. Make sure to explicitly communicate this in your call for participants and/or your infopack. * Make sure to ask participants for their consent before adding them to whatever digital means you are using to communicate with each other.	* Remember to consider accessibility beyond mobility impairments. Make sure that the facility you are selecting to host your project or activity has accessibility measures in place for people with sensorial disabilities, neurodivergence, etc. * Make sure that environmental practices are one of the criteria you use for selecting a facility for your project or activity.	* Make sure you address accessibility with the participants, so that inclusion becomes a collective mission. * Make sure that participants know who is going to be at the project or activity in advance, particularly if there are participants that are part of marginalised communities – some participants may be uncomfortable being the only minority in the room, whether based on race, disability, queerness, or anything else. * If you take specific measures regarding food choices (e.g. a vegetarian or vegan diet for all), make sure you communicate it to your participants in advance, to lower the chance for conflict. If conflict arises, make sure you address it, trying to find a balance between respecting participants' needs and standing by value-based choices.

Area 4

RISK MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION

a Emotional safety & wellbeing

b Conflict management

c Data protection

This area explores how youth work organisations can effectively identify, manage, and reduce the different kinds of risk that may affect young people, staff, and the organisation as a whole. In this context, risk refers to any situation or dynamic that could cause harm—whether physical, emotional, relational, or legal—and affect the participation, development, or well-being of those involved. We also understand risk as the lack of adequate systems, knowledge, or preparation for addressing sensitive situations.

The goal of this section is to provide clear strategies that youth organisations can implement in order to foster safer, more inclusive, and supportive environments.

We recognise that risk may impact people in youth work differently. For this reason, the practices and recommendations outlined here take into account:
- Young people, particularly those from systematically marginalised or underrepresented backgrounds
- Staff members, including youth workers, educators, volunteers, and facilitators
- Organisational systems, such as internal policies, codes of conduct, and response mechanisms

a Safety, inclusivity & wellbeing

Safety, inclusivity, and well-being are qualities that can help create environments where all young people feel protected, valued, and empowered to thrive. Creating a safe environment requires protecting individuals from discrimination, harassment, and harm, while fostering spaces of mutual respect and open dialogue. To create an inclusive environment, safety measures should address the unique challenges faced by systematically marginalised groups, and support both their physical and mental health. Using an inclusive approach within your organisation can help guarantee that the diverse needs of all young people are being recognised – fostering happiness, health, and a sense of belonging for everyone. Similarly, an environment that fosters well-being nurtures the mental, physical, and emotional health of young people, supporting them in navigating challenges and reaching their potential.

This section outlines the essential steps that youth organisations can take to ensure the emotional and physical safety of both young people and staff. It is important to distinguish:
- Safety measures for young people (e.g. child protection, anti-bullying policies)
- Safety and well-being at work for staff (e.g. harassment procedures, staff well-being charters)
- An organisation's responsibilities in setting and upholding these standards

This section encourages organisations not only to react to risks but also to actively prevent them by creating safe, welcoming, and affirming environments for everyone involved.

Guiding questions

Core	Extra	Cherry on top
What measures does your organisation have in place for ensuring the health and safety of its staff?	How does your organisation create physically safe spaces/activities (that take intersectionality and HRE principles into account)?	What policies does your organisation have that specifically address the target group that you work with (child protection policy, gender equality plan)?

Criteria

Core	Extra	Cherry on top
A basic charter on staff rights / employer responsibilities regarding health and safety is available in written form and made accessible to all.	Your organisation has a clear policy/document, outlining procedures for creating safe spaces for young people in both physical and online environments, before, during, and after activities. The use of inclusive language[6] within your space/activities is emphasised to staff and participants.	Your organisation's policies are available on your organisation's website and are accessible to all.[7]

Tips and Examples

Core	Extra	Cherry on top
A code of conduct should outline 'good practice' guidelines that all workers are encouraged to promote, while also outlining 'unacceptable practices', which would not be tolerated and would lead to disciplinary procedures. A code of conduct helps to set clear boundaries, and ensures volunteers understand the behaviour that is expected from them.	Reflect on your own biases and consider how they may influence your interactions, especially with young people. If you're unsure where to start, seek feedback from colleagues. Engaging in a bias exercise can also be beneficial. For example, ask yourselves these questions in regard to an aspect of your identity: • How has this aspect of my identity influenced who I am today? • What key experiences have shaped this part of my identity? • What cultural privilege is associated with this aspect of my identity? • What beliefs have I internalised about myself and others related to this identity? • How might my biases have been influenced by these factors? Create positive norms and expectations each time you begin communicating with youth (e.g. asking permission before taking action, shared decision-making and autonomy). When establishing these norms, establish common definitions so that they are mutually, and clearly, understood. Use inclusive language. Use person-first language and avoid any stigmatising terms. If you're uncertain about something, take the initiative to research or consult a colleague. Recognising and affirming the gender identity and sexual orientation of youth is essential for inclusion. Be mindful that the pronouns or names a young person uses with you may differ from those they use with their family, and they may not be ready to disclose this information to them. Always ask how they would like to be addressed around family members, and understand that they might not feel comfortable sharing their pronouns at all. Additionally, review your intake forms to ensure they are inclusive. Gender-related questions should move beyond a binary framework to include non-binary and gender non-conforming identities, allowing for multiple selections.	Here are some policies, and their explanations, for you to consider implementing into your organisation: Child Protection Policy: A child protection policy is essential for all groups working with children (young people under the age of 18). Anti-Bullying Policy: Dealing with bullying can be a complicated issue, as it may be unclear what is actually happening. Creating a positive, inclusive and open environment is the key to preventing opportunities for bullying to develop. Proactively including anti-discrimination work in your programme and immediately challenging any discriminatory attitudes will help generate an atmosphere that doesn't tolerate bullying. Rewarding positive and inclusive behaviour (e.g. young people welcoming a new member) further promotes a safe environment for young people. Gender Equality Plan (GEP): A policy document that aims to implement actions and projects that reduce gender inequalities and enhance the diversity of those who study/work at your organisation, promoting gender balance and fostering an inclusive organisation culture.

[6] https://www.ukyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/02-Making-safe-spaces-for-young-people-Top-Tips.pdf

[7] To start drafting such documents, check international/already developed policies in the **Further Readings** section.

(b) Conflict management

Disagreements, misunderstandings, and conflicts are natural, inevitable aspects of collaborative environments, but how these conflicts are addressed and managed determines their impact. Effective conflict management involves identifying the root causes of friction, fostering constructive dialogue, and implementing strategies to prevent escalation. Whether through informal discussions or formal mediation, managing conflicts with sensitivity and fairness ensures a harmonious environment that benefits all participants. This section aims to provide a foundation for recognising, responding to, and transforming conflict in ways that promote learning, trust, and cohesion.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ Does your organisation identify, and distinguish between, different types of conflict (staff-staff, youth-youth, staff-youth)? ○ How does your team discuss conflict management?	○ What guidelines does your organisation have for managing conflict 1) between staff; 2) between young people in your organisation; and 3) between both?	○ Has your organisation prepared a formal plan for conflict management?
Criteria	↘ Your team understands the difference between dissent and conflict (e.g. dissent could be team members disagreeing on a project idea, vs. conflict, which could be a staff member shutting down a colleague's ideas, making them feel undermined). ↘ Your team has a basic awareness of the common causes of conflict across different roles (e.g. staff-to-staff, youth-to-youth, staff-to-youth).[8] ↘ An internal document on conflict management is available.	↘ Your organisation has internal guidelines/ procedures for resolving conflict, including inclusive communication practices and support mechanisms for youth.[9]	↘ An internal document on conflict management in intercultural situation, with an intersectional approach, is available.[10]
Tips and Examples	✳ Not every disagreement is a conflict. Learn to distinguish between healthy debate (dissent) and damaging tension (conflict). An emotionally charged debate doesn't always indicate conflict. Disagreements often stem from varying experiences and perspectives. When relationships remain intact, these exchanges can be signs of a healthy dialogue, and leading to better decision-making. In contrast, conflict arises when differing needs and interests clash, creating emotional tensions that disrupt working relationships. ✳ RECOGNIZING CONFLICT When observing two employees arguing, consider whether it's a conflict or a spirited discussion. Be alert for signs such as: ➔ A lack of understanding and respect due to differing opinions, beliefs, or values. ➔ Emotional tensions that harm relationships and cooperation. ➔ Confrontations, open arguments, and aggression, which are clear indicators of conflict. ➔ **Dissatisfaction or frustration with others' performance or decisions that can escalate into conflict.** ✳ Train staff to spot early signs of conflict: emotional withdrawal, repeated tension, or miscommunication. ✳ Encourage open communication and clarify roles and expectations within your staff. ✳ Regularly debrief after activities to prevent unresolved issues from escalating. This should be done both among staff and participants.	✳ Create shared group agreements that include how to handle disagreement and respect boundaries. ✳ Teach basic conflict resolution skills (e.g. active listening, "I" statements, cooling off strategies). ✳ Let youth practice resolving their own minor disagreements through guided role-play or peer support.	✳ Check the documents indicated in the footnotes.

[8]See the **T-kit on Social Inclusion** from the chapter on "Conflict management" at www.youth-partnership.net or www.salto-youth.net/TkitInclusion/

[9]See the Conflict Resolution Strategies for Inclusive Leaders: https://www.stkate.edu/academics/women-in-leadership-degrees/conflict-resolution-strategies

[10]See Footnote 8.

(c) Data protection[11]

Data protection makes sure that any sensitive information that is collected about, or from, young people is safeguarded from misuse, corruption, or loss. To protect collected data, you should implement secure systems meant for protecting personal data and comply with legal frameworks such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which guarantees the right to data protection. However, protecting personal data is not just a legal requirement – it's a key part of risk management. In youth work, we often collect different kinds of sensitive information about young people and staff: names, contact details, images, demographic data, opinions, and personal stories. If mishandled, this data can put individuals at risk of exposure, misuse, discrimination, or loss of trust. That's why data protection is a critical tool for safeguarding privacy, dignity, and well-being.

Having clear data protection policies helps avoid and reduce several kinds of risk:

- Legal risk, by ensuring compliance with frameworks such as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Ethical risk, by respecting the right to consent, privacy, and anonymity
- Reputational risk, by preventing data leaks or misuse that could harm people's trust in the organisation
- Psychological risk, by protecting vulnerable individuals from being identified, misrepresented, or retraumatised.

Data protection becomes especially important when working with systematically marginalised or at-risk groups, for which the sharing of personal data (e.g. gender identity, country of origin, disability status) could expose someone to unintended harm.



	Core	Extra	Cherry on top
Guiding questions	○ Does your organisation use informed consent forms for activities/projects? ○ What data is your organisation allowed to collect?[12]	○ Does your organisation disaggregate data?[14]	○ Does your organisation have a data protection officer? ○ How does your organisation store data?
Criteria	↘ Your organisation makes sure to receive a signed informed consent form before collecting data. You should request informed consent from youth before taking their photograph, using their private information, involving them in activities or consultations, or using their artwork/ statements.[13]	↘ Clear data protection policies are in place. ↘ Your organisation knows how to disaggregate data, making sure that information can be broken down to highlight trends and disparities among different groups. This is crucial for inclusive data collection, because it helps to identify and address the specific needs of systematically marginalised or underrepresented populations within your organisation.	↘ A data protection officer (DPO) is appointed.[15]
Tips and Examples	✳ Some examples of when you should get consent from the young people you work with are: - Before taking their image whether that is a photograph, video, or voice recording. Consent should be given to A) take the photo and B) use the photo at that time. If the photo is used at a later time, consent should be sought again - If you need to use or exchange their private information - Before taking them on an excursion - Before their involvement in a consultation or focus group - Before using their artwork or words - Before being interviewed by the media	✳ Collective or aggregate data can be broken down or disaggregated, for instance, by: gender, urban/ rural location, income, socio-cultural or ethnic background, language, geographical location, or age groups. Fully disaggregating data helps to expose hidden trends. For example, it can enable the identification of vulnerable populations, or it can help establish the scope and visibility of a problem affecting certain populations.	✳ Tips for secure data storage: - Using storage software that encrypts files, making them unreadable if intercepted, and create encrypted backups of important files - Ensuring only authorised staff can access sensitive files, and set different access levels (e.g. read-only vs. edit) - Requiring staff to use 2 Factor Authentication when logging into systems with sensitive data - Hosting data on secure servers rather than personal laptops - Keeping print consent forms/ participant records in locked cabinets with restricted access ✳ The primary role of a data protection officer is to ensure that an organisation processes the personal data of its staff/participants ('data subjects') in compliance with applicable data protection rules.

[11](Article 8(1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the 'Charter') and Article 16(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provide that everyone has the right to the protection of personal data concerning themselves. See: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-data-strategy_en. https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-budgeting/step-1-collect-information-and-disaggregated-data-target-group?language_content_entity=en.

[12]https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-data-strategy_en

[13]https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-budgeting/step-1-collect-information-and-disaggregated-data-target-group?language_content_entity=en

[14]Data collection practices that are transparent and compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) are key to building trust with the organisation's users. Here's official information about "what data can be processed and under which conditions": https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/rules-business-and-organisations/principles-gdpr/overview-principles/what-data-can-we-process-and-under-which-conditions_en

[15]To know more about then appointing a DPO and how to properly store data read here: https://www.edps.europa.eu/data-protection/data-protection/reference-library/data-protection-officer-dpo_en

Area 5

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

a Designing a monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework

When managing an organisation, the **monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) cycle** can help prioritise learning within your organisation and, beyond this, using this learning for improvement. The MEL cycle includes a collaborative process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. For youth organisations, MEL represents an opportunity to evaluate your programmes, projects, and activities at different points in time. Through this, you can gain a better idea of what is working/what is not working and why, and how to use the lessons you've learned for improving your practice.

Certain criteria or tips within the 'Extra' or 'Cherry on top' levels may be difficult for organisations with limited resources – if this is the case for you, don't worry! Striving for, or reaching, the 'core' (or 'Extra', depending upon your circumstances) level will, also, greatly benefit your work. We do what we can with what we have.

	Core	Extra	Cherry on top
Guiding questions	○ Does your organisation allocate time to reflect on management practices? ○ Does your organisation allocate time to reflect on project implementation practices? ○ Do you use the results of these reflections for improving your organisation's work?	○ Does your organisation have a framework to evaluate your internal quality? ○ Does your organisation have a framework to evaluate your projects/activities? ○ How does your organisation address power dynamics that may emerge during an evaluation process?	○ How is your organisation integrating a participatory, intersectional, and/or human rights-based approach to evaluation?
Criteria	↘ Your organisation's objectives include clear achievement aims and targets. ↘ Alternatively, your organisation has clear objectives for targeted project proposals ↘ Your organisation adapts its work based on the evaluation results of earlier experiences (e.g. programmes, projects, etc.) ↘ Team members take opportunities to reflect on what has worked well, and what needs to be improved, in organisational management and project management	↘ A standard monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework exists for evaluating organisational quality and/or project/activities. The framework is developed and used by team members and aims to clearly represent the vision/mission/goals of your organisation ↘ There is a standard power analysis procedure for understanding how power is distributed in your organisation, and for ensuring that all team members have a voice in the evaluation process. Most of the team members in your organisation participate in this process (for more information on how to do this, check the Toolbox section). ↘ The monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework for projects/activities clearly states how the representation of diverse voices and lived experiences within the project/activity are measured.	↘ An official MEL policy is developed with the community(ies) served, and team members, considering intersectional and human rights-based approaches. ↘ A power analysis is conducted at least 1x a year. All team members participate. ↘ Roles and responsibilities of organisation's decision makers are clear. Periodic consultations are held to ensure accountability and offer equal opportunities for leadership. Internal reports are done to address power dynamics. ↘ MEL framework is reviewed periodically (e.g. every two years) to ensure accessibility, inclusion, and representation, including team members, youth workers, trainers, and participants in the process. You reflect upon the accessibility and representation of your MEL framework (e.g. through focus groups, individual interviews, etc.).
Tips and Examples	* If you are getting started on your first evaluation process, check out the manuals/toolkits for quality assurance/evaluation in youth work listed in the Toolbox section. * **There's no one-size-fits-all approach** to MEL frameworks. Most importantly, consider **how your organisation understands 'quality'** and **what you want** to evaluate to check that you're achieving your quality goals. * You can start by answering the following questions (as explained in the T-kit on educational evaluation in youth work): ➔ **What characteristics do you associate with good "quality" in your organisation/projects?** (e.g. "participants' development of active listening" is a common characteristic of good quality youth projects) ➔ **What are the standards needed to comply with these characteristics?** (e.g. if participants are taking turns to speak, they're developing 'active listening'. If this is not happening, the standard may not be fulfilled) ➔ **What quality indicators can help us measure if criteria are present?** We can use qualitative or quantitative indicators to measure a quality standard (e.g. number of participants satisfied with a group dynamic, or ways that participants interact in their free time)	* A monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework is usually developed at the same time as the project design. Most of the time, it includes the following elements: **1) a theory of change; 2) a logic model/results framework; and 3) a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan** to evaluate projects, with a timeline, budget, and roles. You will find more details about these components in the Toolbox section. * Some tips to keep in mind when you develop your MEL framework are: ➔ Completing needs assessments and/or baseline studies can help reveal forms of exclusion within a project, and inform you on how to address inclusion gaps within designed activities. ➔ The indicators listed in the results framework (of a project and/or programme) and MEL plan are disaggregated (separated) by gender, age, location, nationality, disability, etc., based on the project context. ➔ You have identified any assumptions, or risks, in your theory of change and results framework, including intersectional barriers/risks that could prevent the achievement of certain intersectionality-related outcomes. A **mitigation plan** has been developed. * It's important to understand how power is distributed and used within your team using a power analysis exercise (see the Toolbox section for an example). * It's important to **keep record** of the changes and improvements made – e.g. in official documents or reports – so that all stakeholders involved in your organisation can access them at any point in time.	* To introduce an intersectional and human rights education approach to evaluation, it's best to take things one step at a time. Once you have done a power analysis exercise, you may want to do an inclusion and diversity assessment to explore whether different groups feel represented in your projects/activities, and if so, to what extent (see the Toolbox section for an example). With the results from both evaluations at hand, you can already initiate some improvements in your organisational and project management practices, addressing any inclusion gaps or the underrepresentation of specific groups. * If your organisation has enough resources to develop an official monitoring, evaluation, and learning policy, that is great! Ideally, you're able to develop this policy with as many stakeholders as possible, to be sure your evaluation approach is intersectional and participatory. Having an evaluation policy means that you will, also, need to have periodic reviews to be sure your approach to evaluation is still credible, accessible, and representative to/of the communities you work with. You can be sure that your organisation monitors these points by having specific objectives and indicators in the policy itself (e.g. having indicators that track stakeholders' level of satisfaction with evaluation practices/tools). * A monitoring, evaluation, and learning policy provides guidelines and tools for an organisation to conduct any evaluation process. A useful list of what should be considered when developing a monitoring, evaluation, and learning policy is offered in the United Nations Evaluation Group *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (2016).

ⓑ Implementing a monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework

Within the MEL cycle, you may want to use your evaluation results for either 'formative' or 'summative' purposes. If we want to check whether we're moving in the right direction, or if we want to improve things **while we implement our project**, we will do a 'formative' evaluation. On the other hand, if we want to do an evaluation **at the end of the project** (for example, once a training has ended), we will do a 'summative' evaluation. The point of a 'summative' evaluation is to assess how well our project achieved the objectives/goals we set at the beginning. Ideally, after completing a 'summative' evaluation, we can use its results to learn and improve our future activities, so that we don't repeat the same mistakes and can strengthen the practices we now know are effective ('Formative versus Summative Evaluation', n.d.).

	Core	Extra	Cherry on top
Guiding questions	○ How often does your organisation collect internal feedback from team members? ○ Do you collect feedback about your projects/activities from participants?	○ Does your organisation have an internal feedback mechanism? Is this mechanism participatory? ○ Do you have guidelines for collecting feedback from participants of your projects/activities?	○ How does your organisation ensure inclusion and accessibility while collecting feedback? ○ How can the participants of your projects/activities contribute to improving your evaluation processes?
Criteria	↘ Occasional efforts are made to gather feedback on organisational and project management (e.g. yearly feedback meetings). ↘ There are occasional evaluations of projects/activities (e.g. following the request from donors/funders).	↘ **A basic feedback mechanism** is open to all team members (management, team members, volunteers, etc.). Most team members use it periodically (e.g. once a year). The feedback mechanism (online or offline) that is put in place considers diversity issues. For example, neurodivergent participants are offered different feedback mechanisms depending upon their needs. ↘ There are **guidelines** to ensure that you are collecting feedback using **participatory** approaches (e.g. an internal checklist, a document with the steps to follow, etc.). These guidelines also address accessibility and diversity issues to some extent. ↘ A basic feedback mechanism is open to all participants in your organisation's projects/activities (e.g. an evaluation done at the end of your activity). Most participants use it. The feedback mechanism (online or offline) that is put in place considers accessibility and diversity issues. ↘ Your youth organisation has developed guidelines to ensure that the feedback being collected using participatory approaches is good quality (credible and representative of diverse voices). The guidelines also address accessibility and diversity issues.	↘ **A structured feedback process** is open to all team members (e.g. hotline, forum, etc.). All members use it consistently. The process is given a specific amount of time and resources (e.g. a person/team manages the feedback and analyses the information collected). ↘ Your organisation has established **guidelines on inclusion and accessibility** to ensure that internal feedback collection is based on participatory approaches. These guidelines gather information from diverse voices – i.e. the information represents most, or all, of your team members and their lived experiences. ↘ A structured feedback process is used consistently in your projects/activities (e.g. all projects are evaluated before, during, and after implementation). Periodically, you collect relevant information from participants to improve the feedback process itself (e.g. participants in your projects are consulted on the quality of your feedback process [see Vignette] and whether they have suggestions for improvement). Project participants have an active role in maintaining the quality of the feedback, since they offer diverse perspectives to the collected information.

Core → Extra → Cherry on top →

Tips and Examples

GETTING STARTED WITH FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Once you start reflecting about what 'quality' means to your organisation and the projects you do, the time will come to do your first feedback and evaluation processes!
Small organisations might benefit from tools such as:

1. Anonymous surveys (using a trusted and encrypted online platform or, if the number of participants is low, pen and paper is OK)
2. Feedback forms asking people what they have learned from, or their level of satisfaction with, a project or activity
3. Self- or peer-assessment exercises among team members

If your organisation has the capacity, you could also consider opening a hotline for participants to submit anonymous feedback over time. It's important to ensure that everyone can access whichever tool you choose, and that there is someone in charge of collecting and processing all feedback.

Some questions to get you started in 'formative' and 'summative' evaluations (as listed in the handbook "Making sense of evaluation", in our References section):

- **FORMATIVE EVALUATION QUESTIONS:** Are you doing what you planned? Is it being done well/is it working as expected? Are the changes you wanted to see happening, or are there signs of this change beginning? If the changes seem to be happening, to what extent are they directly a result of your initiative?
- **SUMMATIVE EVALUATION QUESTIONS:** Did you do what was planned? (How much did you do?) Was it done well? Did the planned changes happen/are they on track to happen? (Is anyone better off?) Are the observed changes due to your initiative? (Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, 2018, p.7)

You can find templates for surveys and feedback forms in the Toolkit for youth workers developed by the Erasmus+ project "Youth Work 2.0". For self- and peer-assessment, we recommend checking the SPAM (Self- and peer-assessment Model) developed by the youth services within the capital cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa (Finland). Their model is based on reciprocity – youth organisations are assessed by other youth workers, and vice versa.

HOW TO ENSURE YOUR EVALUATIONS ARE PARTICIPATORY?

Participatory approaches are a staple of youth work and, therefore, an essential part of feedback and evaluation processes. Being involved in evaluations should feel meaningful and beneficial for stakeholders – keep in mind that stakeholders are giving their time to be involved in your evaluation process. You will find more information about participatory evaluation in the Toolbox section.

HOW TO DEVELOP GUIDELINES THAT ADDRESS ACCESSIBILITY AND DIVERSITY?

If your organisation already has a feedback mechanism in place, **do you have any guidelines to ensure inclusion and accessibility throughout the feedback process?** This is a crucial point – this is one way you can introduce an intersectional and human rights-based approach to your feedback or evaluation processes.

In order to develop your own guidelines, you can start by reflecting on the following questions:

- What should you do if the participants can't access the feedback forms or evaluation process (e.g. online forms are inaccessible to those without the necessary equipment, participants are not provided forms translated into different languages when necessary)? Have forms and processes been adapted to ensure all participants are included?
- How can you ensure that participants' identities are protected (meaning that their safety is guaranteed if they participate in an evaluation process)?
- What should you do if a participant experiences discomfort or distress during an evaluation?

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REPRESENT A DIVERSE RANGE OF PARTICIPANTS' VOICES IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS?

This is a key question that can help you identify and address asymmetric power relations (for example, between management and trainers/volunteer staff; between participants and trainers; etc.). For example, if the decision-making process within your organisation is not representative, the well-being of your team members may be affected, and ultimately, so can the team dynamics and the project implementation. Using tools such as the **power analysis and the inclusion and diversity assessment** (see the Toolbox section), you may be able to identify where your team members need more guidance or support. Remember: how your organisation designs, collects, and uses its feedback must be deliberate. In other words, the needs and priorities of your project/activity participants must be represented/included in the feedback process (e.g. participants may want to address additional power dynamics that they observed during the project, though this was not part of the initial evaluation plan).

TO INTRODUCE AN INTERSECTIONAL LENS TO YOUR FEEDBACK OR EVALUATION PROCESS, YOU CAN START BY:

- Applying accessibility-related questions to your project/activity; ensure all participants feel welcomed and respected; ensure all participants are able to participate and express their opinions; safety is ensured throughout participation; etc.
- Ensuring the designed tools (and questions) are sensitive to local communities, their culture, and social norms.
- Establishing a periodic review of MEL tools to identify and correct any unconscious biases, or insensitive framings, within the tools' questions (e.g. in surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.)
- Considering how the person(s) in charge of monitoring and evaluation can integrate intersectionality into evaluation processes, and what their capacity is for doing so (e.g. how much background/knowledge do they have in terms of intersectionality, and if necessary, how could any gaps be filled?).

Imagining a participatory approach to check the quality of your evaluation tools

Your organisation would like to check the quality of your evaluation tools, and see whether / to what extent they are coherent with inclusion and diversity principles. Your organisation works with young LGBTQIA+ communities, including people with refugee status. In order to ensure a participatory approach in the evaluation, your organisation asks stakeholders involved in your organisation's activities (i.e. team members, volunteers, trainers, participants) to become 'data collectors'. Since your organisation doesn't have a person in charge of monitoring and evaluation, you ask an external expert in evaluation, from another youth organisation, to support and train your 'data collectors'. In order to collect feedback on your organisation's evaluation tools, the data collectors organise small focus group discussions with 2 or 3 people from a similar geographical and cultural background to one another, who have participated in your organisation's projects. Having people from the same background helps to build trust between participants and towards data collectors, which can allow for a more in-depth collaboration. This can also help data collectors with developing competences (e.g. cultural sensitivity, self-awareness) to participate in future evaluations within your organisation.

C Learning from the results of evaluations

The monitoring, evaluation, and learning cycle supports individual, collective, and organisational improvement. For example, our organisation may want to improve the internal management practices, making them more inclusive or democratic. We may, also, want to learn from any mistakes we've made during a project we previously implemented. We could also use a monitoring, evaluation, and learning cycle to identify any internal or external factors that may be making our work more difficult.



	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ How are the results from internal evaluations used? ○ Do you use the results from project/activity evaluations to plan future projects?	○ How do you ensure that all team members participate in internal evaluations? ○ How do you ensure that participants in your projects/activities take active part in evaluations?	○ What are the roles and responsibilities for those in charge of conducting evaluations? ○ How do you make certain that evaluation results are shared with the people concerned?
Criteria	↘ There is some evidence that the results from team evaluations are used to improve organisational practices (e.g. small, visible changes implemented in your organisation). ↘ Selected members of the team participate in the evaluations and analysis of results (e.g. less than 50% of the team). ↘ There is some evidence that project/activity evaluation results are used to inform future project planning.	↘ There is concrete evidence that evaluation results are always used to improve organisational practices (e.g. in internal documents, or in visible changes implemented in your organisation). ↘ Most team members participate in the evaluation and learning processes (e.g. approx. 75% of the team). ↘ Some roles and responsibilities are assigned to 1) team members who are accountable to funders and 2) stakeholders from the community(ies) your organisation works with. ↘ There is concrete evidence that feedback from participants and project/activity evaluation results are used to inform future project planning (e.g. the feedback is included in an annual report). ↘ There is concrete evidence that project/activity evaluation results are shared with participants in your organisation's activities (e.g. evaluation results are sent by email or via a newsletter, copies are printed, etc.).	↘ There's a procedure for using the results of team evaluations to improve internal organisational practices. There's a clear timeline for reviewing / applying the changes suggested in evaluation results. ↘ All team members participate in the evaluation and learning processes. ↘ There are clear roles / responsibilities assigned to team members and to stakeholders from the community(ies) your organisation works with (e.g. who collects data, who oversees the evaluation, etc.) ↘ There's a procedure for integrating project/activity evaluation results into your future projects, in which participants' feedback informs future planning. ↘ There's a strategy for sharing project evaluation results, which considers their accessibility. All participants in your organisation's activities are informed about, and have access to, the results. ↘ Your organisation plans its future work in alignment with the evaluation findings and recommendations, to strengthen accountability towards the stakeholder community(ies) you work with.
Tips and Examples	✳ If evaluation is an integral part of your organisation, you are off to a good start! However, an important part of conducting an evaluation is making sure that you are using the results **for learning and improvement over time**. ✳ It's important to **keep track of how results are being used**. What are the results telling you? Is your organisation integrating this information? Are you using project evaluation results for improving future activities? ✳ One way to keep track of how results are being used is by including evaluation results in annual reports, memos, or other internal documents from your organisation. You may want to organise dissemination/ sharing sessions to show your stakeholders the results. Here, you could also receive validation of your findings (e.g. your stakeholders strongly agree with the results). ✳ In order to develop a well-structured dissemination strategy for sharing evaluation results, you may want to use tools such as the Evaluation Use and Influence Plan	✳ **DISSEMINATING RESULTS IN A MEANINGFUL WAY** Once you have the results of your evaluation, what do you do with them? Sharing the final evaluation report of your project with donors and partner organisations is fine, but what about the project participants? When you start thinking about evaluation, it's important to also think about how the results will be used for learning. You may want to reflect on the following: ➲ How will the different communities you work with use the results? ➲ What do you think are the best ways to share the collected information? Have you ensured inclusivity and accessibility? ✳ The following tips can help you introduce an intersectional lens in the dissemination of evaluation results: ➲ The language you use in your different dissemination materials is suitable for different stakeholders (e.g. while you communicate results to government officials in a formal manner, you communicate them in a more child-friendly manner when communicating results to children). ➲ When designing the communication channels for evaluation results, think of the languages your audience(s) speak, their literacy levels, channels they have access to, disabilities, and cultural norms that may affect communication.	✳ When thinking about how to learn from the results of your evaluations, consider the different communities that joined your organisation's learning sessions/events, and reflect upon what you learned about your projects/ activities as a result of these sessions. ✳ These learning sessions/ events can request feedback on the MEL process itself (e.g. Did people feel their voices were being heard?) ✳ When sharing your evaluation results, you can note how the recommendations may affect different communities, and how your organisation plans to respond to this. An example is the UNAIDS Evaluation Management Response Template. ✳ If your organisation has the capacity, you may want to think about **long-term knowledge management strategies** – or, collecting methods for creating, sharing, and managing your organisation's knowledge and information. With a management strategy, you can make the best use of your organisation's knowledge in order to reach your goals. ✳ An example of knowledge management in the youth work context is the handbook "Crossing Bridges – Transfer & Anchor", developed within the Erasmus+ project BRIDGE (Breaching Reservation and Improving Dialogue through Generational Exchange).

ⓓ Conducting data collection and analysis

In the context of an evaluation, the process of collecting data (i.e. information) **is one of the key moments for introducing an intersectional and human rights-based approach**. There is a wide range of data collection methods (e.g. questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, audiovisual methods, peer- and self-assessments, etc.), and it's easy to find information about how to use them. However, it is not only about the method that you choose to use. From the very beginning of your data collection process, it is important to keep in mind that we are asking people for their time and effort in order for us to gather the information we need – so, we must be accountable, and uphold ethical behaviours throughout the data collection process.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ How do you collect data (i.e. information) for evaluation purposes?	○ To what extent does the data that you collect reflect the diversity of voices in your organisation, and in your projects/activities?	○ Who is participating in the design of data collection and analysis protocols?
Criteria	↘ Evaluations are conducted on an ad hoc basis using a range of data collection methods. ↘ There is some attention given to the procedures and protocols used for collecting and analysing data within a project/activity.	↘ There is an organisational evaluation protocol for **data collection and analysis**. A contextual analysis is included in the protocol addressing how social, economic, cultural, and political factors may impact the organisational mission and objectives. ↘ There is a data collection and analysis protocol for project/activity evaluation purposes. A contextual analysis is included in the protocol, addressing how social, economic, cultural, and political factors may impact the aims of your project/activity, and the lived experiences of participants in the evaluation.	↘ A data collection/analysis protocol for internal evaluation is co-designed by your team, and is used consistently. ↘ Your organisation periodically reviews its data collection/analysis protocol to discuss its relevance, inclusivity, and representation (e.g. yearly review). ↘ A data collection/analysis protocol for project/activity evaluations is co-designed with the participants, and is used consistently across programmes. ↘ Your data collection/analysis protocol is translated into several languages to ensure accessibility to all participants.
Tips and Examples	✳ If you're new to data collection, our state-of-the-art report lists the most common methods/tools for evaluation in the youth sector. ✳ If you're familiar with data collection, but you'd like to apply an intersectional and human rights-based approach, **some tips:** ➔ Do a **contextual analysis** to address how social, economic, cultural, and political factors may impact the project/activity, and the lived experiences of the evaluation's participants. Check out the Intersectionality Context Analysis tool in the UN WOMEN Intersectionality resource guide and toolkit ➔ Use a **mixed-methods approach**, combine quantitative and qualitative methods, e.g. mix a survey (quantitative) with interviews (qualitative) ➔ Collect disaggregated data (e.g. break data down based on participants' age, gender identity, etc.) and analyse the categories in relation to each other, noticing any patterns ➔ Use **indicators** to track changes among systematically marginalised groups. See the **Toolbox** for details on developing indicators through an intersectional and human rights-based approach ➔ List your **ethical considerations**, e.g. how you plan to ensure participants' safety throughout the evaluation ➔ Address the **accessibility** of your data collection methods (e.g. are you keeping all participants' needs in mind throughout the evaluation?) ➔ Address the **limitations** of your data collection methods, and discuss what was *not captured* by your methods, and the impact this may have on your results.	✳ If your organisation wants to strengthen its intersectional approach to data collection, these tips may help: ➔ Before data collection, consider testing out your tools with representatives from systematically marginalised communities. ➔ Train data collectors on intersectional and ethical principles to data collection. ➔ Consider how different communities are represented in your sample group. This is an essential step to ensuring that your data represents the voices of different communities, which can be demonstrated later, during the analysis and reporting stage. ➔ Consider deliberately over-sampling underrepresented groups to ensure their experiences are captured. ➔ Consider alternative data collection techniques involving programme/project participants with low literacy levels or digital access barriers, as needed. ➔ Consider recruiting data collectors reflective of the community's diversity (e.g. women, youth, people with disabilities, refugees, etc.). For cultural sensitivity in some communities, female beneficiaries feel more comfortable talking to a data collector of the same sex, particularly when addressing sensitive topics such as gender-based violence or sexual reproductive health and rights. ➔ While analysing data, look out for patterns of exclusion, unequal access, or different impacts across identity groups.	✳ Once you have gained some experience in doing evaluations and collecting data, you may want to think about how you can involve the communities you work with, especially those from systematically marginalised groups, in the **co-design and evaluation** of your projects/activities. You can start by asking them: ➔ What ideas or questions do you have for the evaluation? ➔ What may be the most appropriate methods for evaluation, within the context and the communities being worked with? ➔ What resources may be needed to make evaluation more inclusive and accessible? ➔ How can we analyse data and analyse the level of community/stakeholder involvement? ➔ How can stakeholders support the identification of recommendations or action steps? ✳ Your evaluation should always follow general norms such as utility, credibility, impartiality, ethics, and transparency (see the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System for more information about these norms).

(e) Role of the evaluator(s)

This handbook has emphasised the importance of a participatory approach to evaluation, which means including different voices from the very beginning (i.e. from the design phase of a project/activity). However, there should be at least one (or more) person(s) in charge of implementing the evaluation process, each having clear roles and responsibilities. It's very important that the person(s) doing the evaluation address any asymmetrical power dynamics between themselves and the participants, and among participants. This requires doing an in-depth self-reflection before, during, and after the evaluation cycle.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ Is there a person responsible for evaluations in your organisation?	○ How do you ensure that the person(s) doing evaluations use/address power fairly? ○ How do you ensure the credibility of the evaluation results?	○ Does the evaluator(s) have the possibility to improve their competences?
Criteria	↘ There are person(s) in charge of conducting organisational evaluations, assigned on ad hoc basis. ↘ The roles and responsibilities for organisational evaluations are assigned on an ad hoc basis. ↘ There is no specific person(s) in charge of conducting project/activity evaluations.	↘ There are clear and specific roles and responsibilities for the person(s) in charge of conducting evaluations within your organisation and in your projects/activities. ↘ Ethical standards and measures are included in the data collection and analysis protocol, to ensure responsible use of power and resources (See Toolbox for further explanation). ↘ A mechanism is available to the person/team in charge of conducting evaluations to address potential biases and increase credibility of the evaluation process.	↘ The official monitoring, evaluation, and learning policy establishes clear roles and responsibilities for the evaluator(s), including ethical standards and measures to ensure responsible use of power and resources. ↘ The person/team in charge of conducting evaluations in your organisation has access to competence development opportunities (e.g. seminars, trainings).
Tips and Examples	✳ WHO IS GOING TO LEAD THE EVALUATION PROCESS? The guide "Planning and Managing Feminist Evaluations" lists the following guidelines for the person(s) in charge of planning, conducting, and managing an evaluation (Global Affairs Canada, 2024, p.15): ➔ Assess any potential types of harm, or risks, involved in the evaluation, particularly for less powerful stakeholder groups, and document safeguarding/protection measures ➔ Be sure that evaluators have the necessary knowledge of principles regarding the prevention of, and response to, sexual exploitation and abuse and have experience in safeguarding, and adhering to, the highest ethical standards, including securing informed consent from participants ➔ Take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of vulnerable populations and adhere to ethical data collection standards ➔ Ensure that those collecting data are representative of the population that is being asked to provide data.	✳ You should consider whether your organisation needs external support from independent evaluators, and has the resources for this. An external evaluator may be useful if you would like to focus on the accountability of your results, and within your team; an external evaluator can help strengthen the independence and credibility of your evaluation process. If your organisation does not have the resources to hire an external evaluator, you can collaborate with other organisations that have experience and can offer support, contact researchers working in the youth work field (e.g. the Pool of European Youth Researchers at the Youth Partnership), or get in touch with us! :) ✳ Regardless of who is in charge of the evaluation process, anyone involved in your organisation (e.g. staff, volunteers, participants to your projects, etc.) should have a place at the table, so that the results are credible and useful for all stakeholders. The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and how their input will be used, should always be made clear. This is important, since not all stakeholder feedback can be used within final decisions, or, sometimes, the organisational leaders may make decisions that are not fully aligned with some stakeholder's feedback.	✳ Part of an evaluator's task when clarifying their roles and responsibilities during the evaluation process is to establish a list of competences that your organisation considers essential – including knowledge about intersectionality, skills to conduct a power analysis, etc. This will help ensure an alignment between your organisation's expectations for the evaluator, and the evaluator's capacity to respond to these. ✳ Inspiration may be found in the guide "Planning and Managing Feminist Evaluations" about the role of an evaluator (Global Affairs Canada, 2024, p. 27). The evaluator: ➔ Reflects on their own characteristics and worldview and how these may affect the evaluation. ➔ Is a facilitator of the co-production of knowledge, committed to truly participatory approaches. ➔ Upholds the highest ethical standards in evaluations, and ensures protections for vulnerable groups. ➔ Encourages partners and stakeholders to give their own meaning to data/refrains from imposing their own interpretation. ➔ Takes an activist stance (e.g. relates data to causes that your organisation considers important). ➔ Takes into account the project's local context and brings this context into methodological considerations

ⓕ Ethical considerations

There are several ethical principles to keep in mind when planning and conducting an evaluation. Everyone involved in the planning and implementation of an evaluation should agree on the ethical principles that guide your work. You will find some principles to get you started, and further explanation of some criteria points, in the Toolbox section.

	Core →	Extra →	Cherry on top →
Guiding questions	○ How do you ensure the safety of people taking part in your evaluations? ○ How do you protect the information you collect?	○ How do you make sure that power dynamics in the evaluation process are addressed? ○ Do participants understand the relevance of the evaluation (for your organisation and for themselves)?	○ How does your organisation deal with challenges related to an evaluation process? ○ How do you ensure that the participants of your evaluations develop a sense of ownership over the process?
Criteria	↘ There is some attention to ethical considerations (see the Tips and Examples section below). ↘ There is some analysis of potential risks in the evaluation, in particular for systematically marginalised and vulnerable groups (e.g. children, asylum seekers, migrants, refugees, Roma, LGBTQIA+, etc.), and some planning for how these risks will be addressed. ↘ There is some evidence of document and data safeguarding practices.	↘ There are clear guidelines to ensure that evaluations follow ethical considerations. ↘ A standard power analysis procedure exists to understand how power dynamics might affect the evaluation and ensure that potential challenges are addressed (e.g. regarding participants' time and the cost of their participation). ↘ There is evidence (e.g. a written trace/documentation) that your organisation has considered how findings from an evaluation will benefit participants (how you will 'give something back' to them).	↘ The official monitoring, evaluation, and learning policy includes clear guidelines about ethical considerations, potential risks, and power dynamics. ↘ There is a procedure for referring individuals to support providers during an evaluation if needed (e.g. psychological support in case of distress). ↘ Participants are engaged not only in data collection and analysis, but also in making sense of the findings, taking into consideration their diverse interests and perspectives.

Tips and Examples

* Some ethical principles to keep in mind when you start doing evaluations (Global Affairs Canada, 2024, p.14):
  - **Intentionality**: consider the utility and necessity of an evaluation
  - **Conflict of interest**: avoid conflicts of interest in all aspects of the work, upholding the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, honesty, integrity, and accountability
  - **Interactions with participants**: appropriately and respectfully engage with participants throughout evaluation processes, upholding the principles of confidentiality and anonymity and their limitations, dignity and diversity, human rights and gender equality; following privacy protocols to protect the privacy of individuals with respect to their personal information; and the avoidance of harm
  - **Evaluation processes and products**: ensure accuracy, completeness and reliability; inclusion and non-discrimination; transparency; and fair and balanced reporting that acknowledges different perspectives
  - **Discovery of wrongdoing**: report the discovery of any apparent misconduct
* Tools such as informed and voluntary consent forms are essential to ensure these ethical principles are respected. Data privacy measures (e.g. where, when, how and why data will be used for analysis and use of findings) are also a must, especially if the communities you work with are at any kind of risk.
* Another important aspect to include in your reflections is **data ownership and safeguarding**. This means clarifying where data will be stored (online/offline), who will have access to it, and ensuring protection via passwords or encryption, among other measures.

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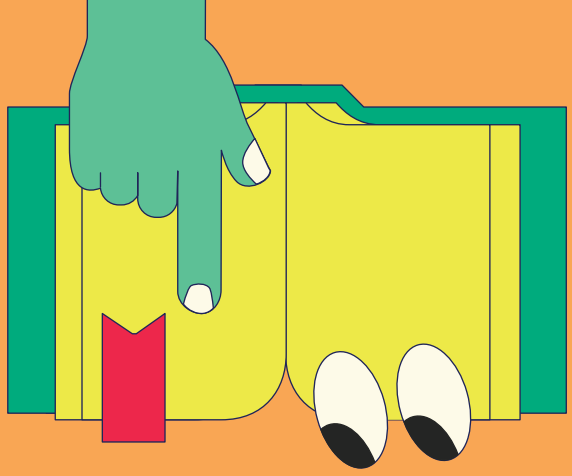

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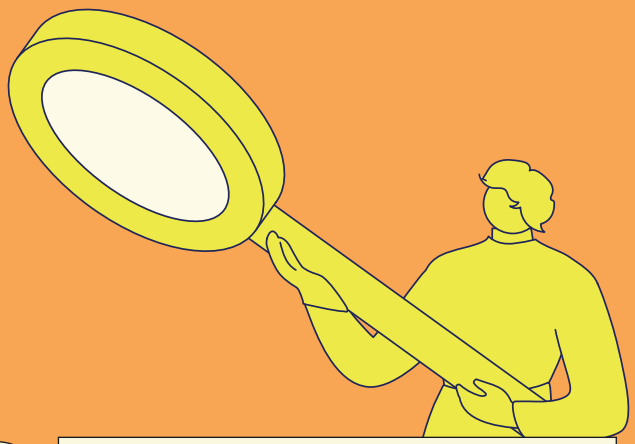

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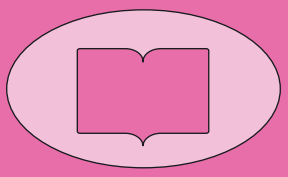
Appendix 1
Glossary



Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality is rooted in Black feminist discourse, advocacy, and scholarship. Though intersectionality has been practiced for centuries, this term was officially coined in 1989, by Kimberlé Crenshaw. According to Crenshaw, "intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking."

Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149

Accessibility

Intentionally designing environments, projects, and communications so that all people can participate fully and equitably - regardless of their identities. While the concept originally comes from the disability rights movement, accessibility in youth work also includes how we plan activities, share information, set expectations, and adapt based on participants' needs.

Bias

A tendency to prefer or overlook certain people or ideas - often without even realising it. Bias can be explicit (we're aware of it) or implicit (we're not aware of it). These biases can relate to race, gender, class, religion, ability, and more.
According to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing (2023), everyone has biases. It's crucial to recognise and challenge them - especially in youth work, where they can shape which young person feels safe, included, or heard.

Brave space

A concept extending beyond the traditional ideology of 'safe space'. 'Safe spaces' aim to provide refuge from discrimination and harm, whereas brave spaces encourage confrontations with bias and the constructive challenging of perspectives through courageous conversations. Brave spaces acknowledge that discomfort and growth go hand-in-hand; by stepping out of one's comfort zone, meaningful progress towards inclusivity can be achieved."[1] Both concepts hold value, serving different needs depending on the community and/or context

[1]The Oxford Review - OR Briefings: https://oxford-review. com/the-oxford-review-dei-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-dictionary/ brave-space-definition-and-explanation/

Care

Care is often understood as the act of nurturing, such as supporting someone in feeling safe or in being able to thrive. In a broader sense, care can be seen as a collective, interdependent practice that sustains the well-being of people, communities, and the planet. This includes emotional, material, and political dimensions – from how we run organisations, design youth projects, and build community, to how we care for ecosystems and future generations. This broader understanding draws inspiration from feminist, queer, and decolonial perspectives, as well as The Care Manifesto

The Care Collective, 2020

Context

'Context' refers to the individual, social, political, economic, and geographical factors that influence how people experience the world at a given time and place. In monitoring and evaluation, analysing context means looking at these factors to understand how they may affect the quality and impact of an organisation, project, or activity. Since these factors shift with time and location, context analysis helps us identify the different factors that contribute to power relations.

Critical education/critical pedagogy

First theorised by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in the 1970s, critical education/pedagogy is understood as a radical approach to education that seeks to encourage learners to become critical thinkers, questioning and challenging existing power structures and social injustices. For example, in a critical education setting, a workshop on climate change may, also, explore how pollution disproportionately impacts low-income or systematically marginalised communities, and what a collective response may look like.

Disaggregated data

Collected data that have been broken down into sub-categories such as gender, age, migration status, region, or education level. Disaggregated data helps us understand how different groups are affected by a programme, policy, or activity. For example, if a youth training programme reaches 100 participants (aggregated data), disaggregated data shows how many were young women, LGBTQI+ youth, or young people with disabilities. This breakdown is important within an evaluation, because it reveals inequalities or barriers that may be hidden when only looking at aggregated data, or total numbers.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

A regulation which governs how the personal data of individuals in the EU may be processed and transferred. Adopted in 2016, this regulation updated and modernised the principles of the 1995 Data Protection directive. This regulation entered into application on 25 May 2018. The GDPR defines:

Individuals' fundamental rights in the digital age ➔ Obligations of those processing data ➔ Methods for ensuring compliance ➔ Sanctions for those in breach of the rules

Informed Consent

Put simply, consent is giving permission for something to happen. Consent can be given in different ways (e.g. written, verbal, audio-recorded), as long as it's accessible and understandable for everyone involved. In youth work, using a written consent form that is signed that can be kept on file is best practice[4].

[4]When is consent valid? - European Commission. (n.d.). Retrieved 28 January 2025, from https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-topic/data-protection/rules-business-and-

Learning

The 'L' of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) refers to the intentional use of the findings from a monitoring and evaluation process. It means that data or feedback isn't just collected for reporting, but to help everyone involved understand what worked, what didn't, and why. Learning happens when the results of a project or activity - both the intended and unintended - are used in the decision-making processes of an organisation or initiative e.g. to shape future programmes, strategies etc.

Evaluation

An assessment conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, analysing both expected and unexpected results of an activity, project, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2016). Using criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, an evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that can be incorporated into the decision-making processes of organisations and stakeholders.

UNEG, 2016

Formative evaluation

A process of gathering and analysing feedback during the development or implementation of a programme, project, or product, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in order to make adjustments that improve the quality and effectiveness of the programme or product[2].

[2]EvalCommunity: https://www.evalcommunity.com/career-center/formative-evaluation/

Hidden labour

The range of extra work that a person with disabilities (or a person of another marginalised group) must do to navigate an ableist and discriminatory society[3]. This can include tasks like researching whether a venue is physically accessible, or adjusting how one presents aspects of their identity (e.g. gender, accent, neurodivergence) in order to be accepted, stay safe, or access opportunities.

[3]Witty Wheels. (2020, July 5). Che cos'è l'hidden labour of disability. Witty Wheels. https://wittywheels.it/2020/07/che-cose-lhidden-labour-of-disability/

Key performance indicators (KPIs)

A method for measuring/quantifying the performance of a specific objective/initiative over time. KPIs provide target goals for teams to strive towards, milestones to gauge progress, and insights that can guide the staff within an organisation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A continuous examination of the progress made towards a project's objectives and overall management of resources (e.g. budget, team, equipment, etc.). Monitoring can help reveal potential challenges to the implementation process, as well as adjustments that need to be made.

United Nations Evaluation Group, 2016

Neurodiversity

Neurological diversity, referring to the diversity in how people experience and interact with the world around them. Neurodiversity is often used in the context of the autism spectrum, as well as other neurological or developmental conditions such as ADHD or learning disabilities. Neurodiversity understands that there is no "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and neurological differences are not viewed as deficits

Baumer & Frueh, 2021

Participatory evaluation

An approach to evaluating projects, programmes, or policies that actively includes the people affected by the work being done. Instead of being done on/to people, participatory evaluation is done with them. The level and type of involvement can vary, but the aim is to share power, and ensure that an evaluation reflects different perspectives.

Project/activity evaluation

An evaluation that will help us understand to what extent the way in which we try to achieve our objectives (e.g. contents, methods, and resources used) are aligned to the expected impact (e.g. competence development, raising awareness, etc.).

Reasonable accommodation

The implementation of any necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments when needed, ensuring that people with disabilities experience enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others (UN Women, 2021).
Within inclusive practices, spaces are designed proactively – diverse needs are anticipated and incorporated, rather than waiting for participants' requests.

Summative evaluation

A type of evaluation conducted at the end of a programme or project, assessing its overall effectiveness. Summative evaluations can be done internally (by the project team) or by an external evaluator. Summative evaluations are often used to "inform decisions about future programme or project development, as well as to determine whether or not to continue funding a particular programme or project".

[7]EvalCommunity: https://www.evalcommunity.com/career-center/summative-evaluation/

Systemic oppression

The structural disadvantages that certain groups experience based on their identity (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, background, etc.), while members of the dominant group experience certain advantages, stemming from historical circumstances[5].

[6]National Equity Project: https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/lens-of-systemic-oppression

Organisational quality

The quality of organisational structures, defined as the "general conditions under which educational institutions and organisations are working (legal, organisational, and social context); human resources, including competences of teachers/trainers and training of staff; educational, financial, infrastructure, technical and other resources, etc."

Fennes and Otten, 2008

Power relations

Power relations refer to how power is distributed and exercised between people, groups, and institutions - shaping who has access to resources, decision-making, safety, visibility, etc. These dynamics are influenced by systems of oppression such as racism, ableism, patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism. In youth work, understanding power relations means recognising how our own roles, identities, and institutional positions can either reinforce or challenge exclusion and inequality. Power is not fixed: someone can hold power in one space (e.g. as a facilitator) and be marginalised in another (e.g. as a queer person in a heteronormative context).

Safe(r) space

The term 'safer space' suggests that a space cannot be safe in absolute terms; instead, it is a relative state of safety that requires effort and reflection[6]. A safe(r) space is a "supportive, non-threatening environment that encourages open-mindedness, respect, a willingness to learn from others, as well as physical and mental safety" (Safer Space, n.d.). In a safe(r) space, we are aware of the power structures that affect not only our own lives but also the lives of the young people and communities we work with. It's about being conscious of the effects that our powers, backgrounds, and behaviours can have on others – and taking the experiences and needs of all participants and staff into account.

[6]PeaceEdu: https://maailmakool.ee/peaceedu/lms/safer-space/

Universal design

Designing products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, specifically people with disabilities, to the greatest extent possible.

Tokenism

"The practice of placing or promoting individuals from disadvantaged groups (e.g. women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities) into high-profile roles in the organisation in order to give the impression that the organisation practises equal opportunity". Tokenism takes place when individuals from marginalised communities are included in a superficial or symbolic way, without being given any decision-making power, resources, or influence. Tokenism creates the appearance of diversity, but maintains existing hierarchies by using marginalised people for institutional credibility and legitimacy. This could be a university showcasing a racialised student on their promotional posters, while continuing to ignore systemic racism reported by students and staff within their institution, or inviting a trans youth to speak at a conference to showcase 'diversity,' while decisions are still being made by an entirely cis team.

[8] Tokenism. (n.d.). Oxford Reference. https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803104818992

Appendix 2 Toolbox

How to use this Toolbox?

This Toolbox section provides tips and resources to help you get started with a quality assurance or evaluation cycle for your organisation and projects.

Quality assurance manuals/toolkits for youth work

The following manuals/toolkits have been developed specifically for youth work organisations, although not from an explicit intersectional and human rights-based approach:

- Youth work quality systems and frameworks in the European Union – Handbook for implementation (2017)
- Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education Manual, European Youth Forum (2013)
- T-kit on educational evaluation in youth work: Tasting the soup (2007)

Participatory approach to evaluation

If you want to use a participatory approach within your evaluation, two key questions can get you started (Guijt, 2014):

- What is the value of introducing a participatory approach to the evaluation you are planning?
- Who will be involved? Would they be exposed to any risk if they participate in the evaluation?

The second question is important for questioning how you can involve participants without accidentally tokenising them. For example, sharing an online questionnaire to people from diverse backgrounds is not enough to ensure a participatory approach. In order to address the risk of 'tokenistic participation', you should reflect on whether the conditions needed for people to comfortably participate are met (Guijt, 2014). For example, is your online survey accessible to everyone it was sent to? What happens if people do not have access to the internet? Are your questions written in a way that is respectful of local culture(s) and sensitive to the realities of participants? How can you ensure that responses are being safely and securely stored?

Next, you can pose the following three questions, as suggested by Gujit (2014, p.3):

- What purpose will stakeholder participation serve in this evaluation?
- Whose participation matters, when, and why?
- When is participation feasible?

These questions are interlinked, so they should be discussed together. If any of these questions lack a clear answer, then your team can continue discussing them until a consensus is reached. According to Sette, introducing a participatory approach to an evaluation can bring certain challenges. Although they are addressable, some challenges may include:

- Carefully planning and allocating resources such as time, funding, and people. If you are part of a small organisation, you may ask other organisations in your network for support in implementing a participatory evaluation process
- Introducing a participatory approach without a clear purpose, or clear alignment with the necessary evaluation. This can be prevented by involving your participants from the beginning of the evaluation process, collectively deciding upon the purpose of the evaluation (the why), and discussing how you can ensure that their participation is meaningfu
- Only focusing on, or introducing, participation within one aspect of the evaluation process, e.g. data collection
- Lacking certain cultural and contextual understandings relevant to your evaluation, and therefore, lacking the implications that certain cultural and contextual factors may have on your evaluation design. This can be addressed by thoroughly reflecting upon the context (cultural, geographical, social, etc.) in which you are doing your evaluation with the participants, before you start your evaluation.

The UNICEF's Methodological Brief on Participatory Approaches proposes a number of guiding questions for using a participatory approach, clustered by 1) management of an evaluation; 2) developing a description of the evaluation; 3) setting the parameters of an evaluation; 4) understanding causes of the impact observed; 5) synthesising data; and 6) reporting and disseminating the information (Gujit 2014, pp.7-8).

Building a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework

There are plenty of examples for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) frameworks, but if you're new to this field, you may not know where to start. The MEL framework needs to be developed at the beginning of the project, so that you can also plan for the evaluation as part of the overall project design.

From a "traditional" approach to MEL, the three main components of a MEL framework are[1]:

1. **Theory of Change:** An overview of how, and why, a desired change is expected to take place within a particular context (Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, 2018). One approach to defining your Theory of Change is by using a problem tree to collectively identify the (root) causes, the problems, and the effects (branches) within a specific context, and reflect upon how they are related. A good template to get you started is the Arts Impact Fund's "Five-Point Guide to a Theory of Change."

2. **Logic models:** A visual representation of how your project or activity is supposed to work, explaining why what you plan to do is a good solution to the issue you are addressing. Your developed logic model should include a statement explaining how you expect to bring about change, and what you expect to see for your community as a result (Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, 2018).

Based on your theory of change, you should be able to identify the following components of your logic model (adapted from Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, 2018):

- **Inputs:** the resources that you bring to the table. Often, this is money, but it can also include people, knowledge, facilities, equipment, time, or contributions that were not purchased for the project (equipment, donations, or anything given without monetary compensation)
- **Activity:** what you do, or the process that transforms your inputs into something else.
- **Outputs:** what you produce through your activities. A rough rule of thumb is that your outputs should be countable, e.g the amount of people mentored, completed training courses, etc.
- **Outcome/Results:** the changes that come as a result of what you've done. To determine this, you will need to revisit what change you wanted to happen (your theory of change), what changes actually happened and when, and which change didn't actually happen (and why).

**A good example of how to use a logic model for youth work is in the evaluation report published by Foróige (Ireland's largest youth organisation) in 2012: "How are we doing? An Evaluation Resource for Foróige Staff".*

3. **Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan:** Once you have completed your theory of change, and possibly, your logic model, you should be able to draft a MEL plan. Your MEL plan will reflect your answers to the how and why questions that you identified, which will be helpful for developing indicators to monitor the progress you make during project implementation (see the next box for more information on indicators).

   In general, you should explain the following elements in your plan: 1) what needs to be evaluated; 2) the purpose and scope of the evaluation; 3) key evaluation questions; 4) available resources to do the evaluation; 5) risk management of your evaluation; 6) your results framework and associated indicators; and 7) a timeline for the evaluation (Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, 2018).

While these are commonly used components within a "traditional" approach to MEL, **they do not explicitly focus on introducing intersectionality and human rights within evaluation processes**. We are aware that we cannot overlook these components when implementing an externally funded project, as they are usually requested in grant application forms (e.g. Erasmus+), but we encourage you to introduce participatory approaches (see previous box) in combination with the criteria described in Area 5.

[1]Many of the definitions provided below come from the handbook "Making sense of evaluation" Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, 2018).

Developing indicators

Indicators are useful if you want to measure a quality standard that you have set for your organisational practices, projects, or activities. You can use qualitative indicators (e.g. change in attitude towards racism among participants in your activity) and quantitative indicators (e.g. number of participants that completed the full training) to see if the objectives of your project/activity are being reached.

Quality assurance processes (e.g. a project evaluation, an internal feedback mechanism, etc.) use indicators to help measure whether the different standards, or criteria, associated with (good) quality are satisfied. This means that before you determine your indicators, you will have to list what **quality criteria** need to be fulfilled. For example, you can select your quality criteria in terms of **inputs** (e.g. resources available, infrastructure, staff, etc.), **processes** (e.g. how the project is implemented), and **outputs** (e.g. concrete results you want to achieve such as the total number of participants, competences developed in a training, publications, etc.). The five areas (and accompanying criteria) included in this handbook are an example of quality areas that we consider as essential to ensure the good quality of our organisations and projects.

Generally, indicators should describe 1) **how the intended outcomes/results** are measured and 2) the **changes** that your project or activity contributes (this is why a strong theory of change is super important).

Here is an example to understand how indicators are used:

"A child has a fever, so her parents checked her temperature using a thermometer, and it found it 39°. The parents gave her medicine in order to bring the temperature down to 37°, so that the child would get better"

In this case, the **indicator** is the child's temperature, which is measured with a thermometer (the **tool**). The initial temperature (**baseline** evaluation) was 39°, and the act of giving the child some medicine was the **intervention** (or in other words, the activity implemented). The purpose of this action was to bring the temperature down (this is the **output**) to 37° (the final **target** expressed in numbers). The **expected outcome (or result)** is that the child gets better, so she can return to her normal life.

The acronym SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time Bound) is the 'classical' approach to developing indicators. However, to ensure the integration of an intersectional and human rights-based approach, indicators should also be SPICED:

- **Subjective:** Participants in the data collection have a special position or experience that gives them unique insights, which may yield a very high return on the time spent with the person collecting data. In this sense, what others see as 'anecdotal' becomes critical data because of the source's value.
- **Participatory:** Objectives and indicators should be developed together with those involved in the evaluation. For example, a project's participants are involved in their development, as well as local staff, and other stakeholders.
- **Interpreted and communicable:** Locally defined objectives/indicators may not be as clear to non-local stakeholders, so they should be easy to interpret and understand when explained. For example, if you want to evaluate a project for young people in rural areas, you could not use the same indicators from a project implemented in a big city.
- **Cross-checked and compared:** The assessment's validity needs to be cross-checked, by comparing different objectives/indicators and their corresponding progress, completed by different participants that provide information, as well as different methods and researchers.
- **Empowering:** The process of setting and assessing objectives/indicators should be empowering, allowing participants in the evaluation to critically reflect on the changes expected (that will be measured with the indicators).
- **Diverse and disaggregated:** There should be a deliberate effort to seek out different objectives/indicators from a range of communities. This information should be recorded in such a way that these differences can be assessed over time (Lennie, J., Tacchi, J., Koirala, B., Wilmore, M., & Skuse, A. J., 2011).

Below, you will find some examples of indicators using a SMART + SPICED approach for a human rights education training:

Qualitative Indicator : Change in young people's understanding of human rights

SMART:

- **Specific:** Young people can explain the concept of human rights with their own words and identify key international human rights instruments.
- **Measurable:** Percentage of young people who demonstrate a basic understanding of human rights by correctly answering pre/post-project surveys.
- **Achievable:** Groups discussions during the project will enable young people to grasp the concept.
- **Relevant:** Understanding human rights is central to the objectives of the project.
- **Time Bound:** The change will be measured at the start and end of the project (e.g., pre- and post-assessment surveys).

SPICED:

- **Subjective:** Involves young people's subjective experiences of learning and understanding human rights.
- **Participatory:** Young people are actively engaged in discussions and reflections about human rights.
- **Interpreted and communicable:** Feedback is gathered in a way that can be communicated through qualitative methods (e.g., focus groups).
- **Cross-checked and compared:** Feedback from various sessions in the training is compared over time to assess progress.
- **Empowering:** Young people feel empowered by gaining knowledge about their rights.
- **Diverse and disaggregated:** Feedback collected from different demographic groups within the youth population (age, gender, etc.) is compared.

Quantitative Indicator : Number of young people participating in human rights awareness activities

SMART:

- **Specific:** A set number of young people participate in awareness raising activities such as workshops, campaigns, or discussions (e.g. 35 participants).
- **Measurable:** The number of young people attending activities is counted.
- **Achievable:** The project attracts young people's participation
- **Relevant:** Participation in these activities is a direct measure of engagement in the project.
- **Time Bound:** The number of young people is counted throughout the duration of the project.

SPICED:

- **Subjective:** Participation reflects young people's personal interest and commitment to human rights.
- **Participatory:** Young people choose which activities to participate in.
- **Interpreted and communicable:** Participation numbers and types of activities are shared with stakeholders.
- **Cross-checked and compared:** Participation is compared across different project activities and between different groups.
- **Empowering:** Young people gain agency by choosing to participate in awareness activities.
- **Diverse and disaggregated:** Data is broken down by age, gender, and other demographics.

Another example are the quality indicators used for non-formal education activities, as listed in the Quality Assurance of Non- Formal Education manual (European Youth Forum, 2013, p.24): The assessed needs of learners & society and the mission & values of the organisation are translated into objectives

1. The objectives are reflected in the non-formal education project
2. The educational methodology selected is suitable for the learning process
3. The necessary resources are available
4. Resources are used in a sustainable, cost effective, and responsible way
5. Educators (such as trainers/volunteers/ facilitators etc.) have the necessary competences
6. Educators are prepared
7. The communication between all actors is managed effectively
8. Learners influence their learning process
9. Learners understand their learning outcomes and can transfer them
10. All actors are involved in the continuous evaluation process

Keep in mind that if you decide to use this list, you will have to think of how your organisation will measure each indicator (i.e. how you will collect evidence to determine if the intended results are achieved). For example, how will you measure whether the educational methodology you selected for your project is "suitable for the learning process"?

Some commonly used indicators within project management seek to measure: (Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, 2018, p. 30):

- **Efficiency:** Are you reaching the most people possible with the resources you have? Could you reach more people if you did things differently?
- **Effectiveness:** Are your outcomes in line with what you wanted to achieve?
- **Relevance:** Are your objectives matching your identified needs?
- **Utility:** Is the impact of your project matching the long-term objectives ?

Once you have developed your indicators, you can consider how to ensure that they, also, introduce an intersectional and human rights-based approach. To support you in this process, we have developed a checklist inspired by the "Tool Kit on Gender Equality Results and Indicators" (Asian Development Bank, 2013):

- Stakeholders understand why it is important to collect disaggregated information
- Stakeholders understand why it is important to undertake a contextual power analysis
- Project partners are aware of their responsibility to collect and analyse disaggregated information, and if needed, to strengthen it.
- Key stakeholders understand how information will be used and how it is relevant to their needs
- Indicators are easy to understand and use. Information can be easily collected using existing systems.
- The information collected will tell us whether the project objectives have been achieved for all different groups involved (e.g. in terms of gender identity, class, ethnicity, migrant or citizenship status, age, etc.)
- The information collected will tell us whether there are any significant differences in the benefits for different groups involved in the project
- The indicators help measure results in terms of equity and equality between different groups —such as participation, benefits, outcomes, and impacts
- Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to collect information
- Contextual power analyses have been used to help identify the indicators

Needs analysis

When thinking about how to conduct a needs analysis, there are two key questions:`

- What are the needs?
- Are these needs grounded in demands from the communities you would like to work with?

These questions are the starting point for identifying the needs of your organisation, the community(ies) you work with, or the participants of your projects/activities. The analysis should focus on what is needed (e.g. a competence) rather than how you will meet this need (e.g. a training). This analysis will help you identify appropriate goals, objectives, and methodologies for improving organisational quality or future projects/activities.

Link: How to conduct a needs analysis in youth organisations

Budget analysis

For a basic budget analysis, you can start with the following questions:

- How do you manage the budget for your organisation? Who is in charge?
- Do you have enough financial resources to sustain the activities of your organisation?
- How would you address an eventual deficit?

To learn more about financial management in youth work organisations, check the T-Kit 9: Funding and Financial Management developed by the Youth Partnership. Although old, it provides a good foundation to understand how to go about budget management.

Power analysis

A power analysis is an essential component to a MEL framework, integrating an intersectional approach to your evaluation. A power analysis "identifies the main types of power in a system of interest" as suggested by Better Evaluation.

This analysis identifies different types of power such as:

- **Power over:** The power of those with strength or status over others, including the ability to exclude others.
- **Power To:** The power to decide on actions and carry them out, which often comes from capacity involving knowledge, skills, and tools.
- **Power with:** The collective power achieved through organisation, solidarity, and joint action.
- **Power within:** The power from personal self-confidence linked to culture, religion, or identity, influencing what thoughts and actions are seen as legitimate or acceptable.
- **Power for:** The power derived from having a clear vision and sense of purpose.
- **Power about:** The act of passing on mistreatment to others due to fear, humiliation, anger, resentment, superiority, or arrogance.

It includes power in different forms:

- **Visible power:** Observable decision-making mechanisms
- **Hidden power:** Shaping or influencing the political agenda behind the scenes
- **Invisible power:** Norms and beliefs, socialisation, ideology

And analyses power acted out in different spaces:

- **Closed spaces:** Where decisions are made by closed groups
- **Invited spaces:** Where people are asked to participate but within set boundaries
- **Created spaces:** Where less powerful actors claim a space where they can set their own agenda

You can also check the full Quick Guide to Power Analysis developed by OXFAM.

Inclusion and diversity assessment

If you would like to conduct an inclusion and diversity assessment to explore the extent to which different groups are represented in your organisation or projects/activities, you can start with the Inclusion and Diversity Charter developed by the Lifelong Learning Platform. The Charter acknowledges that an organisation can only be inclusive if it protects and promotes diversity both within its staff and its participants.

Another useful tool is the Intersectionality Toolkit developed by IGLYO, which provides a selection of activities, for both the individual and organisational levels, to explore the concepts of intersectionality and inclusiveness.

Evaluation Use and Influence Plan

This tool is proposed in the guide "Planning and Managing Feminist Evaluations" developed by Global Affairs Canada. The goal of this tool is to promote opportunities for stakeholder involvement and iterative learning throughout an evaluation. As a result, the evaluation results can be even more useful. (Global Affairs Canada, 2024).

In order to identify the use and influence of an evaluation, you should think about the following:

- **Who should be involved in this discussion?**
- **Who are the intended end participants?**
- **What will be the use of the evaluation findings?**
- **What will be the user engagement?**
- **Who is/are the responsible party/ies?**
- **What is the timing for the evaluation?**
- **What is the follow-up plan?**

Data collection and analysis protocol

A standard data collection and analysis protocol for evaluation purposes includes the following elements:

- **Selected data collection methods** (e.g. questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, etc.) that will help you gather information to answer the main questions guiding your evaluation
- **A list of ethical considerations related to collecting information:** See the "Standard ethical considerations for data collection" box.

Standard ethical considerations for data collection

- **Request participants to sign an informed consent form** specifying information about the project, the purpose of the data collection, the data protection policy, etc. This form should be available in accessible formats (e.g. electronically and/or on paper). Also, do not forget to collect consent from the parent/caregiver of minors if you work with children! You will find more details about how to draft an informed consent form below.
- **Clarify that participation is on a voluntary basis** and withdrawal is possible at any point.
- **Refrain from collecting personal identifiers** (e.g. name, address, phone, etc.). If you need to collect personal information, make sure it is safely stored (e.g. password protected, encrypted, etc.).
- **For online data collection,** use platforms that collect as little personal data as possible from respondents (e.g. Open-Source platforms).
- **Provide the contact(s) of the person(s) in charge of data collection so that participants** can reach out if needed.
- **Avoid lengthy data collection tools/forms** that can lead to "participant fatigue" and inflict harm on the participants.
- **Introduce a complaint mechanism** (hotline, email, reference person, etc.) linked to the evaluation process, allowing participants to report any experiences of harm or misrepresentation.
- **Introduce a "Do No Harm" lens.** Avoid questions that can trigger vulnerable groups and cause potential harm. With this, we take inspiration from the Tip Sheet Gender Sensitive and Feminist Monitoring and Evaluation and Ethical Considerations (Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund).

Source: Quality Assurance Model Development Report, Quality Assurance for All project, 2024.

What is Informed Consent?

The Tip Sheet "Gender Sensitive and Feminist Monitoring and Evaluation and Ethical Considerations" defines informed consent as

> *a process by which someone voluntarily confirms their willingness to participate, after having been informed of all aspects of the data collection process. This means they must be provided with information of why questions are being asked, how data will be used or shared, how long it will take to participate, if their names and identities are protected, how participants will be protected, that they can withdraw at any time without any consequences, as well are informed of any associated risks, etc.*

According to the Tip Sheet, to receive informed consent from participants in your evaluation, you should:

- Provide an informational letter that includes: the purpose of the data collection process; the measures you will undertake to guarantee the safety of the data you collect; the contact details of someone from your organisation in case a participant needs more information, wishes to withdraw consent later, or provide feedback; and the data privacy policy you will use.
- Ensure that informed consent is received before starting the interviews, focus group, or survey.
- For minors (under 18), get informed consent from a parent/guardian and assent from the individual respondent
- Make sure that the space where the interviews, surveys, or focus groups takes place is private and safe, and are held during convenient times for all participants

If you are in the European Union, you will have to provide information about your organisation's data privacy policy, in agreement with GDPR (see Area 2 for more information about this).

Distribution of space for expression

An intersectional and human rights-based approach can help make your activities more accessible. Through this lens, accessibility is not only understood as a space's physical accessibility, but also through the accessibility of its learning environment, group dynamics, and education methods.

One of the main points to consider within a space's overall accessibility is the fair and equal distribution of space and time for expression among participants. To equally distribute space/time for expression, you must consider the possible power dynamics among the group, ensuring that societal power dynamics are not being reproduced.

There are tools available to support you in observing the distribution of time and space for expression when working with diverse groups. For example, the Xarxa d'Economia Solidària (XES) developed a tool based on gender – the English translation can be found here: Distribution Observation Tool

Safe(r) space

A "safe(r) space" is a space that responds to the needs of the people present as much as possible, and sets the conditions to face any challenge or conflict that might arise in the group.

Although there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' protocol for creating a safer space, as its development is linked to the specific needs of a group, some general guidelines can be found here:

1. **Communicate Your Values Clearly:** speak about your values upfront, ensuring all participants know the principles guiding your work.
2. **Use Inclusive Language:** choose language that respects and includes all identities. Avoid assumptions about gender, race, sexuality, and ability.
3. **Communicate x3:** clear, consistent, and repeated communication helps reduce anxiety, especially for neurodivergent folks. Providing detailed information (incl. photos) about the project, venue, team, and activities allows to prepare and feel more comfortable, leading to higher participation and engagement.
4. **Prepare Accessible Physical Spaces:** ensure spaces accommodate a variety of needs. For example:
   - Accessible venues for different physical abilities
   - Quiet areas for folks who have auditory or/and visual hypersensitivity
   - Gender-neutral bathrooms
5. **Create an Accommodating Programme:** design activities that respect different participation styles. For example, smaller group work.
6. **Freedom to Participate:** allow participants to contribute however they're comfortable - avoid putting anyone on the spot or forcing participation.
7. **Specify Levels of Participation:** mention the level of participation expected for each session or activity, and allow individuals to choose their level of involvement.
8. **Respect Autonomy & Boundaries:** give young people the freedom to set personal boundaries, and provide the space and framework for this to be supported.
9. **Introduce Non-Verbal Communication:** incorporate non-verbal methods of communication to ensure everyone can engage, including those who might be uncomfortable with speaking or writing.
10. **Use Name Tags:** provide name tags during the whole duration of the activity.
11. **Pronouns:** host a session on pronouns and their importance for feeling safe and a sense of belonging; share your pronouns and encourage others to share theirs.
12. **Avoid Assumptions:** do not make assumptions about the identities represented in your group.
13. **Do Not Tokenise:** avoid singling out individuals to represent a particular identity group. Ensure all voices are heard without pressure.
14. **Address Difficult Situations Proactively:** develop clear processes to handle harassment, microaggressions, or other difficult situations. Ensure reporting is safe and accessible.
15. **Co-create the Space with Young People:** involve young people in shaping the safe(r) space. Hold discussions on what they need to feel safe and respected, allowing them to co-manage the environment with you.
16. **Shared Responsibility:** acknowledge that maintaining safety is a collective effort. Everyone, including participants and facilitators, should be accountable for upholding the safe(r) space.
17. **Organiser's Role & Power:** while co-creating the space with young people, remember the power you hold as an organiser. Provide clear guidelines, while offering young people the power to share responsibilities.

Source: Dàtà Mgeladzé (they/them) https://www.instagram.com/_qommunity_/

Where to look for information about specific types of evaluation:

Better Evaluation. "Participatory Evaluation". https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/participatory_evaluation. Also available in Spanish.

Better Evaluation "Feminist Evaluation." https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/feminist_evaluation

Council of Europe "25 questions for applying intersectionality to a project"

European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Youth work quality systems and frameworks in the European Union – Handbook for implementation*, Publications Office, 2017, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/47615

OXFAM Canada, Guidance Note on Feminist MEAL: https://www.oxfam.ca/publication/guidance-note-on-feminist-meal/

Examples of organisational policies for safety and wellbeing can be found in:

Child Safeguarding Policy

And here are some suggestions and indications on how to create your own policies:

Template for creating Child Protection Policy

Where to look for information on how to communicate in an accessible and inclusive way about your project:

The European Commission guide – "How to communicate your project: A step-by-step guide on communicating projects and their results"

Guidelines for accessible information

Bridging the Gap "Inclusive and accessible communication guidelines

The Eurodesk Guide on Inclusive Digital Communication in Youth Information Services

This handbook is the product of a collective critical reflection, which started within the five partner organisations, and then extended to other countries in Europe, North Africa, and South-West Asia.

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Summary

The “Quality Assurance for All?” project was born out of a shared desire to improve the way we do youth work. For the partner organisations behind this project, “quality” means more than just efficient project planning and delivery – it means ensuring that diverse voices are included and represented at every level.

Co-financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union and the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, there are five organisations behind this project: The Human Rights Youth Education Network (Belgium); the European Institute of Education and Social Policy (France); Giosef Torino (Italy); Idee in Fuga (Italy); and Ofensiva Tinerilor (Romania).

Two key questions guided this project: How can we use tools developed by and for young people to monitor the quality and impact of non-formal education and youth work? How can we integrate an intersectional and human rights-based approach to this process?

The project was implemented between October 2023 – October 2025, structured around two phases: 1) A research phase, including a state-of-the-art report on quality assurance in the European youth sector, considering non-formal learning activities that address intersectionality, human rights, and common EU values. And 2) a participatory phase, in order to co-construct a quality assurance model together with youth workers, trainers, and young people participating in our organisations’ activities.

This handbook is the final output of our project, which more than 200 young people in Europe, and beyond, contributed to making a reality.