



METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE

Youth For Change

Methodological Guide

The guide was created within the framework of the Youth 4 Change program, implemented by the Autonomía Foundation and Caritas Alba Iulia.

Introduction

The following methodological description is based on the objectives, methods, as well as the experiences and results achieved during the implementation of the Youth 4 Change project. In this initiative, we worked with high school students from various backgrounds in six cities in Hungary and Romania to carry out creative and community actions based on social topics that interest them. Throughout the process, both the directly involved young people and their peers, reached through their activities, developed their skills and social perspectives.

This material was created based on a series of workshops conducted with the participation of field staff, as well as professional materials, plans, and reports produced during the program.

We hope that the comprehensive approach of the methodology, and its individual elements, can inspire and support other professionals, whether they are teachers, youth workers, or representatives of institutions and organizations working with young people. We trust that through their work, they will promote social inclusion, the active citizenship of young people, and the experience that mutual understanding, joint planning and creation, and the impact on their environment can provide an attractive and joyful experience for the generation currently growing up.

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Background and Objectives

The Autonomía Foundation and Caritas Alba Iulia, which are implementing the project, have decades of experience in providing complex services and developments for disadvantaged groups, including young people and Roma, as well as in strengthening and empowering these groups. The organizations have already successfully implemented several joint projects aimed at supporting the school progress, career orientation, and labor market success of disadvantaged Roma and non-Roma youth.

In this current initiative, we built on both our own experiences and methods, as well as the recommendations from relevant literature on the subject. Personal relationship-building with young people, the use of non-formal educational tools, and collaborative project work were emphasized in our previous initiatives as well.

A new feature of the Youth 4 Change project is our intentional focus on working with young people from different ethnic and social backgrounds in inclusive groups. The contact hypothesis, supported by decades of research, has demonstrated that individuals from different social groups can change their attitudes towards each other – often stereotypical or negative ones – in a positive direction, reducing prejudices, if interaction and cooperation occur between members of these groups under optimal conditions. So, what are the criteria for these optimal conditions? There should be an equal status among the group members, a commonly accepted shared goal, the opportunity for cooperative collaboration during their interaction, and the institutional norms should support the whole process in which the group members participate, and in which the interactions themselves take place. (Allport, G. W. (1954): *On the Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley, Boston, MA; Pettigrew, T. F., Tropp, L. R. (2006): A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5), 751–783). It can further be stated that when young people have the opportunity to meet members of different social groups, share stories, and participate in a joint creative process, it can strengthen their solidarity.

Unlike our previous work, in this initiative, we involved two student groups with markedly different social backgrounds in each city, who typically came from different secondary schools. We invited these groups to engage in collaborative creation and active participation.

While previous creative projects focused mainly on developing labor market skills and shaping attitudes toward cooperation, the main goal of this project was not to achieve school or labor market success. Rather, we aimed primarily at promoting inclusion, enhancing the social awareness of young people, and strengthening their active citizenship and sense of responsibility.

The steps to achieve our goal consisted of the following main methodological steps, which will be explained in detail in the following sections:

- Involvement of students from different backgrounds and their secondary educational institutions

- Creation of inclusive groups, team building
- Exploration of social topics and identification of focused themes
- Definition and implementation of creative processes
- Sharing of the resulting creations
- Evaluation of impacts and the process

In connection with the methodological material, we also created a toolkit that includes a detailed explanation of the use of one or two tools for each theme. Our aim with this is to provide tangible tools for interested professionals, which can be used in different contexts.

It is important to highlight that we had already been present in the municipalities involved in the project through our previous initiatives. Thanks to this, we already had established relationships with some schools and institutions, local expert mentor colleagues helped with the work, and there were young people with whom we had previously built mutual trust-based working relationships.

Although these prior connections were not available at every location and with every colleague, it can generally be said that we did not arrive in any municipality „parachuting in,” without local knowledge or existing relationships.

In some locations, we built on disadvantaged young people we had previously worked with – who lived in different neighborhoods and attended different schools. In this case, the challenge was involving schools with middle-class students. Since the population and most local institutions in the city were not particularly open to Roma communities, it was not easy to find a school willing to cooperate. Initially, we were able to collaborate with a foundation-run school that used alternative educational methods, where local colleagues held several introductory sessions. However, none of the students ultimately wanted to join the program. The background to this could include logistical issues (the school was located far from the planned venue for the sessions, and many of the students came from other towns, making it difficult for them to attend). It is also likely that the social status of these students was not particularly high, and, based on our experiences, the social groups with similar status to theirs tend to be less open to cooperating with disadvantaged communities. This may stem from a fear of „slipping down” socially and a conscious separation from disadvantaged groups – so that others do not perceive them as being the same as those groups, which could lead to existential fears. In this municipality, we finally found cooperation with a school that predominantly served middle-class students living in the city. This religiously-run school placed importance on social service and cooperation with disadvantaged groups. Here, students could count their participation in the program as part of their mandatory social service, which provided additional practical motivation for their involvement. It is important to note that students could choose from several social service opportunities at the school, and some specifically chose this program. There were students who wanted to participate in order to better understand their Roma peers.

In other cities, we started from scratch, involving new institutions and students in the program. In one municipality, we were able to reach middle-class students through a foundation-run school using alternative pedagogical methods, while the involvement of disadvantaged youth was facilitated by a rural student hostel.

In Hungary, completing school community service is mandatory for all students in secondary schools that grant a high school diploma, so the certification provided for participation in the program was a significant motivation for students. This worked similarly to the aforementioned religious school, where social service was required by the students. However, it is important to highlight that students could choose from several community service opportunities, and many specifically chose to participate because of the program's content. The community creation of creative products reflecting social topics was particularly attractive to them and played a role in their decision to join.

In a third, smaller municipality, most schools refused to cooperate. It is important to understand that in Hungary, cooperation between civil organizations and schools can only occur under significant government control and with its support, which leads most institutions to refuse. This may be because the school's sponsor refuses to approve the collaboration, or because the school does not want to risk the possibility of a ban and the ensuing conflict with the sponsor. Returning to the aforementioned municipality, we were able to reach students through a student hostel, where they attended quite different schools and had significant differences in their social backgrounds.

It can be concluded that there were significant differences between locations in terms of the profiles of the institutions, the previously established collaborations with them and their students, and the method of involvement. However, the following conclusions are universally valid regarding involvement and should be taken into account by other professionals who are looking for partner institutions and students for out-of-school inclusive activities:

- When involving students in out-of-school activities, it can be motivating if the organization can provide certification for the activity as part of school community service.
- Introductory sessions help give students an idea of what kind of activities they can expect from the program and allow them to sample interesting non-formal educational programs, which may inspire them to join.
- The local colleague or mentor can be a motivating factor for young people, provided they have the opportunity to meet and get to know them during these introductory sessions, ensuring that they find the person supportive and trustworthy.
- Clearly presenting the expected activities and themes is important to ensure that young people know that it is something they will be interested in, and that they will not later be disappointed by something different from what they expected. Later on, we will explain how some people pre-defined the type of activity, targeting young people they thought would be interested in it, while others announced that the group would decide what type of creative product to create.

- Posting an announcement in the given institution. The introductory sessions provided an important opportunity for personal acquaintance and experience, which, in most cases, served as the primary source of inspiration. It is also important to present in a brief, clear, and engaging way, with attractive visuals, what the program offers, whether in printed or online materials. This could be helpful for the young people who attended the session, and even more so for those who could not attend the personal meeting. In addition to information and motivation, it is important to define the channel for further contact – where and with whom interested young people can apply.

Bringing Together Different Groups, Team Building

As previously detailed, we involved the youth groups in different towns using various methods. In some locations, we worked through two institutions that brought together young people from significantly different backgrounds, while in others, we addressed diverse groups within a single institution. There were also instances where we integrated new students into an already existing group. Our initial plan was to first work separately with groups of disadvantaged and middle-class youth. After forming local groups and carrying out mutual awareness-raising activities, we planned to create inclusive groups and have them work together. However, in practice, most locations showed that the preparation did not require as much time and effort as we had initially assumed. In places where we invited the young people to a predefined creative activity, the shared interest itself proved to be a sufficient bridge, allowing youth from different backgrounds to connect with each other without significant obstacles. In other cases, no special emphasis needed to be placed on changing the perspective of peers from different backgrounds. In one place, the local staff only highlighted to the middle-class youth that they would meet and collaborate with young people who, although living in the same city, might often travel on the same bus or spend time in the same square, yet had never interacted with each other.

Among the disadvantaged student groups in Hungarian towns, only one location considered it important to emphasize the ethnic composition of the group (mainly Roma youth) to the targeted middle-class students.

The introduction and team-building process among the young people was facilitated not by explicit and conscious social awareness-raising, but by the mutual formulation of frameworks that ensured openness and partnership, and by creating a safe, trusting atmosphere. In this environment, every participant could confidently and openly express their viewpoints, values, and challenges, regardless of background differences. Empathy, openness to others, and a cooperative attitude were essential for building the team. Establishing a common framework and focusing on shared interests and experiences played a key role in the process. The focus was placed on commonalities rather than differences, which strengthened the sense of belonging.

In locations where the type of creative activity (e.g., creative writing or video making) was defined at the outset, the participants could see each other as “writers” or “videomakers,” as colleagues and collaborators, due to their shared interest in the activity. This common ground often became more important than the social, economic, or ethnic differences between them.

In addition to shared interests, common experiences also had a team-building effect on the groups. In some cases, the two groups from the town met each other after both groups had already gone through a challenging group activity. Referring to the shared experience created strong cohesion within the newly formed inclusive group. The specific practice related to this can be found in the toolbox. However, it can generally be stated that when forming a group, focusing on previous similar experiences or using team-building exercises and games can strengthen the group. For example, if members of an inclusive group can only solve a task together, the shared “struggle,” success, or even failure can have a team-building effect. Although failure can also be team-building, there is a higher risk that participants will start blaming each other and lose motivation after the failure, especially since they often experience failure in their studies or other areas of life. Therefore, it is recommended to use activities during team-building that are challenging for the group (so not boringly easy) but that participants can successfully achieve together through cooperation and active participation. When selecting the right activities, in addition to the appropriate level of difficulty, it is important to consider the competencies required and how much these competencies are present among the members of the different groups. For example, if we are bringing together a verbally skilled group with a weaker one, it is advisable to avoid activities that require only verbal skills, as this might lead to failure for one group, and neither they nor their peers would feel they are equal, valuable members of the team. It is also crucial to think about how to balance, build on, and combine pair, small-group, and large-group tasks. Smaller tasks can ensure that every participant actively engages and doesn’t feel like a free rider, but they can also amplify competition, which might lead to fractures and conflicts within the team. Large-group tasks present the challenge of ensuring active participation from everyone, but the shared experience will benefit the entire team, which is likely to increase cohesion.

In addition to collaborative and problem-solving tasks, those that help participants get to know themselves and their peers are particularly important. To engage with others openly, with interest and in a partnership-based way, it is essential that we are also capable of doing this with ourselves. If we don’t recognize our own values and only engage with ourselves superficially, we won’t be able to develop a deeper attitude toward others. However, self-awareness can often be a difficult and uncomfortable process. Therefore, it is worth using activities and games that won’t embarrass even less verbally expressive or less introspective youth. For instance, a task asking someone to introduce themselves in two minutes may be paralyzing for many young people, especially those who are not comfortable with verbal self-expression. In contrast, asking them to trace around their hand feels much less intimidating. Tracing the hand is a simple task that doesn’t require special drawing

skills, and it provides a small sense of accomplishment. This way, young people who struggle with self-expression don't have to face a blank page. After completing the drawing, they can be asked to write down a few things that are characteristic of them.

The visual approach often inspires the thinking of young people more than a purely verbal task. For example, looking at the hand drawing can spark thoughts about oneself, such as a characteristic, experience, or even a simple fact, like having a dog or a younger sister. Written exercises combined with drawing can be performed in a safe environment, and participants only share what they feel comfortable with. This way, the activity offers both self-awareness and space for creative self-expression without pressuring anyone to go beyond their personal boundaries.

Getting to know ourselves often becomes most effective during cooperation with others. When we learn something about someone else and reflect it back to them, it enriches both of us. For example, if my peers say that I am kind, it impacts me much more deeply than if I were to claim that myself. A good tool for helping participants get to know both themselves and each other is conducting paired interviews, which will be discussed in more detail in the toolbox.

Regarding the content of the activity, discussing societal issues within the groups can also be team-building. When raising social issues, it is helpful to touch on questions that interest us as outside observers, as well as those in which we are personally involved. In both cases, conversations provide an opportunity to share something about ourselves and learn something about others.

Honest, non-judgmental opinions, as well as sharing our own feelings and experiences—enabled by a trusting atmosphere—often evoke interest and connection among group members. The realization that “I too have had a similar experience or thought” can strengthen the bonds within the group, thus increasing team cohesion.

Summarizing our experiences, we can conclude that group inclusion is primarily achieved through indirect methods (trusting atmosphere, jointly formulated frameworks, getting to know each other, shared experiences, challenges, experiencing successes, sharing thoughts, feelings, opinions, common interests), and not by transmitting theoretical knowledge about inclusion or analyzing the social situations of youth from different backgrounds. If every person is valuable and equal, then no one should be identified with a social situation, but instead, they should be approached as an individual who, like anyone else, has universal human values, uncertainties, joys, and fears. Of course, this does not mean that as facilitators, we should not be aware of the background and skills of the participants, as it is only based on this knowledge that we can select activities that provide similar challenges, enjoyment, and success for everyone, without unintentionally focusing too much on areas that highlight the disadvantages or privileged position of certain participants, thus reinforcing or disadvantaging them in relation to others.

Exploring and Focusing on Social Issues

As mentioned in relation to inclusion, social issues can be directly addressed as a topic in a session or process, but we can also highlight them indirectly. We can approach social issues differently when working on projects with young people. A social issue can appear in the content or context of creative works that the young people create, but the dissemination of these works can also be linked to social responsibility.

In one town, where the focus was on creative writing and later creating audio and graphic materials related to the written works, there was no restriction regarding the topic. It was not important for the students to create something related to a specific social issue. Here, the focus was on the interaction with vulnerable social groups, rather than the themes of the creations themselves. The young people, within facilitated frameworks, chose a vulnerable social group and an institution working with them. They met with them during the preparation phase, and they also brought the completed stories and writings to share with them. The details of this are elaborated in the toolbox.

In this approach, similar to the overall concept of the project, the focus was first on the positive outcomes of encountering and collaborating with members of different social groups, which could have a positive impact on our views about these groups. Secondly, it was important that the young people were not only placed in the roles of creators and collaborators through the creative project work, but also had the opportunity to experience an active citizenship role that brings joy and experience to their vulnerable peers.

In other locations, the focus was placed on the strengths of the young people. We raised the question: „What are you good at? What can you give to the people around you?” Based on these questions, the young people created short self-video profiles, helping each other during the process. Here, the development of self-awareness and self-esteem, as well as the recognition of one’s own active citizenship potential, was emphasized. If I know how to do something and enjoy it, I can help others. For example, I can make hairstyles for little girls if I enjoy hairdressing, or I can fix the old computer in the kindergarten if I’m good with machines. After defining their own strengths, the focus shifted to the broader environment, the city where they live. What do they like or dislike about the city? What would they change? Through these questions, the young people’s own experiences, desires, and interests led us to topics such as education or drug use. So, again, this was an indirect approach. We did not initiate discussions with the students on social issues; instead, we started with specific, personally relevant topics, and through their personal involvement and interest, we connected to broader and more complex social questions.

In some places, local staff provided input. They introduced information about specific social groups, videos, and photos that emotionally engaged and motivated the young people to care about certain topics and groups. Some also brought in topics linked to global days, or took the young people to programs related to specific themes.

In these cases, the young people were exposed to concrete social issues or groups, which inspired and guided them.

Other local staff did not provide such input, as they did not want to influence the choice of topics. Instead, they facilitated an open brainstorming session to gather topics, which were then discussed, and the topic was chosen based on the perspectives of the group members and the preferences of the majority. The details of this process are described in the toolbox.

An open brainstorming session without prior input can lead to a very creative process, but there is also a higher risk that an unsuitable topic could emerge. For example, while being personally involved in a sensitive issue can strengthen credibility and commitment, it can also pose risks if the topic is emotionally overwhelming for the participants or if revealing the final result to a broader audience could have harmful effects on the young people's image or mental health. Open brainstorming may also introduce topics that cause fractures within the group or those that, when communicated, may carry political connotations that could backfire on the students or even the institutions supporting the process.

Therefore, the orientation of young people towards social issues can happen in various ways, but it is essential to consider the approach that will inspire the group and truly strengthen their social awareness, while addressing topics and raising questions that don't have too many risk factors.

It is important, however, that we bring the topics closer to the young people not only through abstract knowledge, but through stories, perspectives, and personal connections to their own lives. Additionally, we should give the group a choice of which topic or social group they would like to focus on. This choice can start from completely open brainstorming, or we can bring specific alternatives to them, but the experience of community decision-making is crucial so that they feel the topic is truly their own and are motivated to engage with it.

Artistic Work

One of the key focuses of the initiative was for young people from inclusive groups to create joint creative works, thereby experiencing the joy of creation, expressing their feelings and thoughts about the world, and influencing their environment. The process of artistic creation, through individual self-expression, develops self-awareness, self-reflection, and in certain situations, it can have a reinforcing or even therapeutic effect—when a young person can experience being good at something or process themes that pose challenges for them. At the group level, it is also developmental for young people to exchange opinions, argue, make decisions, take responsibility, and individually contribute something to a larger whole that would be less complete without them. Alongside cooperation skills, community-based artistic activity creates

an opportunity to demonstrate the success and joy of participating in inclusive civic initiatives. The finished works can instill a sense of pride in the young people and generate positive feedback from their environment.

When choosing an artistic form, an important consideration is the young people's interests, what they might already have experience in, and what could present a new challenge for them. It is helpful to step them out of their comfort zone when selecting a genre, but it is equally important not to push them into the panic zone, which could lead to a negative experience. Of course, competence also plays a crucial role along with interest. What activities are the young people eager to engage in, and which ones are likely to provide a sense of accomplishment for them? At the same time, no group consists of young people with identical interests and skills. Some may enjoy performing, while others prefer drawing in silence. When designing activities, attention should also be paid to ensuring that all different young people can experience joy and success.

There were locations where groups of young people already engaged in regular creative activities were gathered into broader teams. For example, in one group, there was an existing interest in video making, and new participants were aware of the activities they could expect. Video making, however, offers a wide variety of tasks, where young people with different skills and interests can thrive. Those who enjoy performing can take on roles, while others can participate from behind the camera, observing, or developing the plot if they have a dramatic mindset and enjoy brainstorming. Others might work on creating or selecting costumes and props. In this way, everyone can become a valuable member of a shared team.

At the same time, even if a group is already interested in an activity and has experience in it, it is still worthwhile to broaden their horizon. In their case, music activities complemented video making, and they created a music video. It is also important to note that in community-based artistic creation, it is not necessarily only the „talented” young people in the specific artistic field who can be successful. In every artistic method, it is important to find tools that allow young people, even those who may sing off-key or have low rhythm skills, to create something valuable. In music, besides singing and playing instruments, there are many other ways to record, produce, and modify sounds, providing a sense of success without needing traditional talent or months or years of practice. Rhythm can be created using everyday objects, melodies can be woven from simple vowels, and recording and processing sounds from our environment can also be a pathway to musicality. Similar approaches and tools—those that provide experience and success, are conducive to self-expression, and do not require long-term investments—can also be applied in other art forms, such as video making or visual arts, when the goal is to provide young people in the group with experiences and joy.

Connecting video making and music: Creating a music video is often positive for young people because this genre is attractive and popular among them. However, when carrying out the project, it is worth going beyond commercial formal and

content elements, so that the young people can truly speak in their own voice, rather than copying potential role models or dominant trends. Regarding the content, it is important to facilitate young people's ideas and thoughts. The group received questions such as, „What do you like about your city? What don't you like? What would you change?“ Based on this, they created a text that brought forward topics and thoughts that were meaningful to them and that were truly worth sharing with the outside world.

The creation of the music video was a longer process. Initially, shorter videos and audio recordings were created by the group members individually, in pairs, or in groups. These activities provided professional development and short-term successes, sometimes achievable within a few hours, which provided the professional background and motivation for them to embark on the more complex task of creating the music video. Step-by-step progression was essential for both professional development and the regular experience of positive feedback.

Not only popular art forms can be suitable for attracting and engaging young people. Writing, for example, is not typically a popular creative activity among teenagers, but there are still students interested in creative writing. In one location, students were specifically invited to create written works and assemble a shared book right from the formation of the group. Of course, only those young people who enjoy writing applied here. These were typically quiet, intellectually inclined students. Writing is also not easily turned into a cooperative genre—although this is possible. The young people created their own written works and, in this process, were able to support each other's work mainly through reflection, rather than collective creation. Since the young people's interests and tastes were different, the resulting works also varied greatly in both form and content. Their creative writing skills were developed with the help of a trainer. Writing was already a comfortable activity for most of them. However, just as the other group expanded its creative horizons by adding music creation to video making, here, graphic creations and audio materials were added to the written works. Every young person in the group worked on creating visual and auditory materials, although some focused more on one area, depending on their interests and skills, while others immersed themselves in the other field. When creating the materials, the trainers in the music and graphic fields used an approach where the resulting materials did not directly illustrate the written works but rather connected to them through feelings, thoughts, and associations. The final publication contained written works, graphics, and accompanying audio materials.

At the third Hungarian location, we did not build upon an existing creative group profile or define a specific artistic genre when inviting young people to the program. Here, the request was for them to come into the program and make decisions together within the created group regarding both the social issue to focus on and the creative means of processing it. Moreover, this location did not have a year-long process, but rather two shorter, few-month processes.

As the social issues were selected through group discussions, brainstorming, debates, and voting, a similar process was followed for determining the creative genre.

In making the selection, the young people's interests were a key consideration, ensuring that young people with different skills and interests could find attractive activities within the genre, and that the creative project plan would be feasible within the available time and resources.

In the first group, two parallel creative groups focused on the topic of mental illness and issues. One team created a fictional video—where writing the story, filming, directing, acting, and sourcing related props and costumes provided a wide variety of tasks for the young people. The other group focused on creating visual art. In the second semester, this location again worked on visual art creation, including a group mural and outdoor action, and, in addition, created a rap song.

During the creative processes, a dilemma arose regarding how far the young people should go in dealing with and showcasing themes that could pose risks. This could be due to overly political connections or because they were processing personal, sensitive content that might have a negative impact when shared, either on them or the audience. In one video, for example, the topic of mental health issues and suicide arose, which affects many young people and several participants in the group. Since the young people chose this theme, it was addressed. However, when some of them wanted the film's protagonist not only to plan suicide but to actually carry it out, we initially tried to talk them out of it, and eventually, this option was excluded. Trainers considered it too dangerous, both for the mental health of the young people involved and for the audience's psyche. Ultimately, the protagonist survived in the story, as friends found and helped them. In our view, this narrative strengthens openness to peers and the recognition of the importance of helping each other—civic activity—rather than a tragic ending that might have oriented the young people towards depression and apathy.

In community-based creative processes, it is important that the young people make as many decisions as possible themselves, regarding both content and form, as well as the distribution of responsibilities and tasks. However, the trainers working with them should protect them from heading in a direction that might negatively impact them or the creation or reception of the work. This influence can be exerted through facilitated questions that encourage responsible thinking, self-reflection, and conscious decision-making. In some cases, the trainer may also need to use the tool of prohibition, but only if facilitation and the introduction of different perspectives have not been successful, and if it appears that the trainer's perception of a "bad" decision carries significant risks that outweigh the somewhat negative impact of the decision on the autonomy of group decision-making.

This also raised a dilemma in another location, where students addressing educational and drug-use issues had to ensure that their work did not become a dangerous political focus and did not stigmatize the themes, as well as the young people who raised those issues, presented them, and formulated questions and messages.

In summary, the following conclusions can be drawn about creative processes:

1. Either determine the artistic form in advance and find interested young people, or jointly select creative forms that are interesting and suited to the young people's competencies.
2. Ensure that young people with different skills and interests find attractive activities in which they can succeed and contribute meaningfully to the common result.
3. Apply tasks and activities that, on the one hand, push young people out of their comfort zone, while on the other hand, do not push them into the panic zone.
4. Provide regular opportunities for the joy of creation and success to help maintain motivation and development.
5. Combine individual and group tasks—everyone should have their own autonomous tasks, but there should also be opportunities for reflection and group decision-making.
6. Use tools that allow young people to find joy and success, even in areas where they might face challenges or failures in academic art forms. Instead of copying or meeting external aesthetic expectations, encourage and motivate them to create works based on their own vision, creativity, taste, and ideas.
7. Support responsible, self-reflective decision-making through questions and perspectives during creative processes, and only take over the decision-making if no other solution is viable.

Introductory Events and Dissemination

Creative processes on their own can significantly develop participants' self-awareness, skills, and the group's ability to cooperate. Even during the process, there are numerous opportunities for participants to experience joy and success. Young people often share their experiences of the process with their surroundings, creating a multiplier effect. However, the closure of the creative process is particularly important: presenting and disseminating the finished works to a broader audience, as well as receiving feedback from the environment, provide an opportunity to crown the entire process.

The value of the creation is truly highlighted by the fact that it does not remain only our issue but also reaches and impacts others. As a result, participants can experience the feeling of active citizenship, reflect on the journey they've taken, feel pride, and receive reinforcing feedback from their environment.

It is important that the events receive proper emphasis and visibility, and that their planning and execution take place in collaboration with the team members. This helps ensure that participants genuinely feel ownership of both the process and the outcomes.

The event venue holds significant importance. It is worth choosing a location that is attractive to young people and has prestige, whether from the perspective of the participants or the works themselves. For example, in one town, the book created by

the young people was presented in a prestigious local library, emphasizing that their creations are an integral part of culture and future cultural heritage.

It is important to decide which audience we want to address. The event can be private, attended only by the young people's friends and family, but it can also target a broader audience, including the local community, other stakeholders of similar initiatives (such as young creators, educators, and cultural professionals), or even celebrities. If we invite representatives of the press, it is important to plan in advance how we will present the event.

The guest list should always be tailored to the needs and comfort of the young participants. They might be happy to see their teachers or parents, but they might not. It is worth reflecting together on the advantages and disadvantages of a smaller or larger audience and making decisions based on that.

In addition to presenting the creations, it might be worth offering young people the opportunity to share their personal experiences and thoughts. The professionalism of the event could be enhanced if professionals working with young people report on their methods or if external experts—such as artists, writers, or curators—reflect on the works.

Including interactions might also be important. At certain events, the audience can participate in creative activities, such as communal creation. For example, in one town, during an outdoor exhibition, visitors could join in a community mural painting.

During event preparation, aim to ensure that young people can actively participate in as many tasks as possible, based on their interests and abilities. In addition to showcasing the creations, activities like organizing a music program, managing technical equipment, organizing catering, or even moderating the event might appeal to them. However, another option is to have others take on the event planning tasks so that the young participants can fully enjoy the event.

It is essential to finalize the event details at least one month in advance—including the venue, the program, and the guest list. This provides enough time to work out the details, promote the event, and recruit participants.

Closing Remarks

Our methods and results across various locations and contexts have proven that young people from diverse backgrounds can become open-minded, socially aware, creative, and self-reflective citizens. To achieve this, it is essential to create an environment where trust and openness are fundamental, where they have the opportunity to share thoughts and ideas, and engage in collaborative creation within areas of interest that appeal to them. If we truly listen to them, value them, and communicate this clearly, they too will begin to see themselves and each other as valuable, and will be encouraged to approach others with openness.

By offering activities that provide joy, a sense of achievement, and lasting experiences, young people become motivated and capable of creating values they can proudly share with their communities.

We encourage all colleagues working with young people to bring together youth from diverse backgrounds in controlled, positive circumstances. Create opportunities for shared conversations, creative collaboration, and active participation in social roles. Provide platforms for young people to showcase the incredible results they can achieve together.

We wish you continued success, joy, and inspiration in your work!

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