

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE-BASED EDUCATION OF YOUTH WORKERS

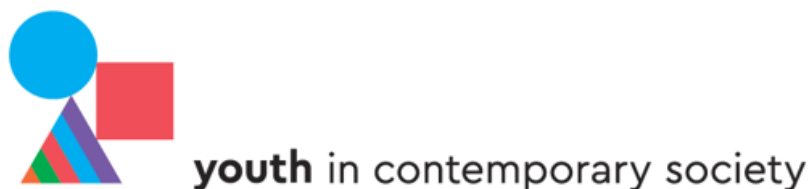
*Guide for community-
engagement mentors*



SUPPORTING EVIDENCE-BASED EDUCATION OF YOUTH WORKERS Guide for community-engagement mentors

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Community engagement



Dear mentors,

For the past two years, the Institute for social research in Zagreb, the University of Ljubljana, and the University of Rijeka have been involved in the SEEYW project dedicated to establishing a process of educating youth workers within the formal education system. Learning from the experience of organizations and experts who have a long history of quality youth work has been a key element of our vision for an educational program from the beginning. We are very pleased that you recognized the importance of the youth studies program at the tertiary level and that you're willing to accompany us on this new adventure called community engagement.

To ensure the quality of community engagement and the consistency of its implementation we developed a mentor training program and this guide. Also, during community engagement, we will provide you with support in form of consultation mentor meetings. The training program and this guide rely on all your mentorship skills and should ensure you receive a clearer picture of our mentorship process vision. We're, of course, prepared to develop and expand our vision with your professional observations, so the training and/or evaluation meetings will every year be aimed at further improving the community engagement based on your experiences, as well as the experiences of the students.

In this guide, you will find descriptions of all major elements of the mentorship process, suggestions for exercises that can be done solo or with your organisation colleagues and a short reminder of some theoretical segments crucial for that mentorship element (in green frames) and some examples that mentors identified during their training (in green text).

We're looking forward to our cooperation and hope that this guide will be useful to you.

The program team

SEEW: SUPPORTING EVIDENCE-BASED EDUCATION OF YOUTH WORKERS

SEEW is a K2 Erasmus project of the Institute for social research in Zagreb, the University of Ljubljana and the University of Rijeka. The three most important outcomes of the project are:

- Researching the youth work modalities in Croatia and the need for educating youth work professionals in Croatia and Slovenia;
- Proposing the occupational and qualification standards for youth workers;
- Developing the youth worker lifelong learning curriculum;
- Developing the youth worker tertiary education curriculum;
- Devising a mentor organisation guide and mentor training program
- Online courses for youth workers

This guide for mentors is a part of the SEEW project and it will contribute to the development of quality community engagement within youth studies program at the tertiary level.

Outputs of the project are available at:
www.youth-work.eu

1. Community engagement

Learning from experience and a strong connection to the local community are important determinants of youth work in general, and likewise, of our youth studies programme at the tertiary level. After the first semester during which they'll master basic concepts of youth work, in the second and third semester of the programme, the students will participate in community engagement enabling them to perceive and apply what they learned. This step is extremely important for deeper integration of learned knowledge, as well as the self-assessment of own competencies and identification of needs for future professional development.

A quality community engagement process seeks not only a strong and trustful partnership between higher education institutions and their external and non-academic actors/stakeholders but a clear understanding of the concept, roles and responsibilities, as well as a joint vision by all stakeholders engaged. This is why the process of creating such a joint vision, as well as of the concept of community-engaged teaching, learning and research within our youth studies programme at the tertiary level has been quite participatory. Community engagement mentors have played an important role in the whole process of co-creating the framework for students' community engagement, as we have been transforming their critical reflections and inputs into the programme itself. Their engagement has been provided through several phases during which we have jointly set up a clear division of roles and responsibilities, and a clear step by step description of the whole process and expected mentoring contributions. Besides, the main principles of our joint collaborative endeavours were discussed and agreed upon, as well as different possibilities of gratifying the contribution of community organisations invested in the programme. Nurturing such a collaborative and participatory process contributed significantly to setting up (our) partnerships of a high-quality profile.

The first chapter of this guidebook is, therefore, twofold - one part is dedicated to the basic elements within the theoretical perspective on the concept of community-engaged learning, and the other part focuses on sharing the outcomes of our collaborative and participatory process that resulted in a particular framework of community engagement that will be integrated into youth studies programme on a tertiary level.

1.1. Community-engaged learning

For the past forty years, universities across the globe that have been aspiring to institutionalise and integrate their teaching and research with the (local) community in which they are anchored, have also been engaged in the systematic development, promotion, research, analysis, praise, celebration and criticism of the experience-based learning model encouraging civic participation of students in their local communities. Originally, in English, this model is called (academic) service-learning, although recently phrases like community-based learning and community-engaged learning are being increasingly used.

Academics at higher education institutions are developing curricula, designing and implementing research and improving study programmes mostly following (only) the progress of their own scientific field. At the same time, local communities housing those institutions of higher education are going through their own development, faced with rising challenges and problems which the citizens should be able to (successfully) handle. However, the progress and development path of higher education institutions is

often divergent from the progress and development path of their local communities. The community-engaged learning model is an attempt to bring together those divergent progress and development paths.

Community-engaged learning is a multifaceted concept used in literature when indicating:

- (I) a special approach to teaching which links scientific theories and concepts with actual, real problems in the (local) community and society;
- (II) a teaching method encouraging student active learning;
- (III) an experiential learning model;
- (IV) a pedagogic approach integrating the study program and community service;
- (V) a process of practically and directly applying existing resources of the educational institutions in the community trying to respond to the identified community needs whereat the students learn from their own experience;
- (VI) a social change movement.

Bringle and Hatcher (1996) provided one of the most integral and most quoted definitions which states that service learning is a multidimensional educational experience in which students are active participants in quality prepared and organised community activity that meets identified community needs and then they reflect on their activity and examine the experience in a way that provides further understanding of the course content, appreciation of the (scientific) discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

The American Association of Higher Education and Accreditation states that service-learning is a multidimensional pedagogic approach and a form of empiric learning integrated into the course in the form of a thoroughly designed and purposeful project. Such a project connects students with those organisations/institutions/agencies in the community whose needs correlate with the course curriculum. The service-learning model stresses the university's institutional commitment to connecting with the community, its needs and problems and highlights the idea of the engaged university.

Jacoby (1996) also provides one of the widely accepted definitions of service-learning which efficiently synthesises the majority of the literature. The author states that community-engaged learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development.

Another often-quoted definition comes from Zlotkowski (1995), who states that service learning is an approach helping the students to develop a feeling of connection with the community, encourages their activity and civic engagement, influences the change of their attitudes, habits and behaviours while strengthening the students' compassion for the problems of community citizens. The author further points out that students are more engaged and involved in their own education, and better prepared for the role of active members of the community devoted to lifelong learning and positive (social) changes.

Despite their number and apparent diversity, all contemporary definitions and descriptions of the community-engaged learning model across different disciplines equally stress three components making up a sort of triumvirate of the model: student learning, community engagement and student and community (members) collaboration. The community engagement learning model emphasises learning through problem-solving and critical thinking, places curricular concepts in the context of real-life situations and community

problems, therefore strengthening students by demanding analysis, evaluation and synthesis of theoretical concepts through practical problem-solving. Through diverse community-engaged learning study programs, the students are engaged in meticulously designed and organised activities aimed at meeting identified needs and problems of the local community, while at the same time developing academic skills, a feeling of social responsibility and a dedication to improving the quality of life in the community and society in general.

1.2. Framing community engagement within youth study programme at the tertiary level

When contemplating and discussing this particulate youth studies programme at the tertiary level, the programme team had several core principles in mind:

- The programme should be international and financially accessible to youth workers.
- The programme should cherish a collaborative and participatory approach as means of fostering connections between university, youth work organisations and research institutes and contributing to strengthening connections between theory, youth work education, practice, research and policy.
- The programme should be anchored in a critical paradigm and participatory perspectives, pushing the community-engaged concept into the forefront (community-engaged teaching & learning, community-engaged research).
- All involved should see this Programme as a joint investment in youth work recognition and quality.
- Community engagement mentoring process should be co-created with youth work practitioners.
- The programme should acknowledge and take into account lessons learned from other youth studies programmes and be built upon the expertise of all involved.
- Taking into account that the Programme is in its developmental phase, all involved should embrace some risks but also be willing to practice tolerance for ambiguity in order to make the Programme as quality as possible.

As mentioned above, the development of quality partnerships with community engagement organisations is one of the priorities of the youth study programme at the tertiary level. In order to reach that kind of ideal partnership, during “Training for community engagement mentors” we started to co-create a mentorship process and we jointly defined the main principles for future cooperation, we discussed specific elements of future cooperations (roles and responsibilities, a support system for mentors, benefits for mentors and organisations, fees...) and specific elements of the mentoring process (matching

POSSIBLE BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS/MENTORS

Community engagement is a possibility for organisations to:

- accomplish own vision/goals (if they are connected with recognition, promotion or quality of youth work);
- gain direct support in the implementation of their activities through students’ participation;
- improve the competences of their staff that will work as community engagement mentors.

As a way of appreciating the organisation’s/ mentor’s contribution to the community engagement process, the Programme organisers and mentors discussed diverse possibilities for gratifying their contribution. The final list will depend on the current possibilities of the Programme and will be agreed upon before signing the contract:

- Provide financial compensation for community engagement organisations
- Jointly write/create youth work publications (articles, workbook...)
- Provide access to literature resources
- Participate in meetings with other (international) service-learning students
- Allow mentors to listen/participate in online lectures within the Programme
- Funds for student’s activities
- Getting affiliated as UNIRi expert training facility;
- Exchange of expertise (for example: giving lectures, inputs on conferences)
- Provide support in scientific research (be partners in projects; consulting on research implemented by organisations...)
- Partnership with higher education institutions in order to develop a quality label for organisations
- Support for organisations in responding to project calls.

process, report...). Community engagement mentors will continue to be important stakeholders that will shape the community engagement process and will be invited to co-create this process through several platforms - during regular meetings with programme representatives; within the evaluation of community engagement process; as feedback on the guide for mentors; and last, but certainly not the least, as part of the consultations and discussion related with the newly developed youth study programme.

During the process of co-creation, the mentors and programme representatives have clarified various features of the expected community engagement process within this particular youth study programme and have identified several important attributes:

1. The community engagement process is not connected exclusively to one or more courses (exp. individual youth work) but is seen as the core 'philosophy', as one of the basic principles for all courses to follow, and for the whole programme.
2. This community engagement is not and cannot be a mere fulfilling of lessons' hours. It is as much a process of learning for the students, as it is the process of supporting the work of local youth work organisations and their communities. Community engagement is a reciprocal relationship benefiting the students, but also the organisations and their beneficiaries as well as the local community itself.
3. The community engagement process should provide students with the opportunity to
 - recognise basic youth work theoretical concepts and implement them in practice;
 - assess the needs of the organisation's beneficiaries as well as those of the local community and propose a new activity that meets the identified needs;
 - concisely and professionally present and argument the results of the needs assessment analysis as well as the proposed activity to the representatives of the organisation (and, if possible, act upon it);
 - critically review and reflect on everything they observed in the context of youth work
4. The students are expected to show a high level of self-directed learning, i.e., they're expected to diagnose personal learning needs and formulate learning goals. They're expected, with the help of mentors, to identify possibilities for learning during community engagement, the resources they

MAIN PRINCIPLES FOR COOPERATION WITHIN TRAINING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The programme representatives and mentors agreed upon the main vision of the future community engagement process and principles that should be followed in order to reach that vision.

VISION:

The community engagement process is based upon cooperation, partnership and long-term union and fosters activism and positive local change. It enables the networking of students and organisations. Community engagement cherishes initiative, creativity, inclusion, safety and participation. It is embedded in reality and directed towards making a meaningful, useful, productive, helpful and visible impact. The process is inspirational and joyful.

PRINCIPLES:

- We are basing our relationship on TRUST.
- We are all putting additional efforts into establish meaningful CONNECTIONS.
- We are all CO-CREATING the community engagement process.
- We need CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS and FREEDOM to use the capacities and expertise that lays in this group. We are invited to take INITIATIVE.
- We are VERBALISING what we are doing and thinking so that others can join the process.
- We are recognising and supporting all individual and group ACHIEVEMENTS.
- We can take any group role that we feel COMFORTABLE with and we can change it at any time.
- We are doing our best to be PRESENT and to stay FOCUSED.
- We will dedicate time to REFLECT on what was done and what still needs to be improved.
- We cherish celebrations and JOYFUL times.

have available and that they jointly evaluate learning outcomes. Naturally, some students will find this framework harder or easier to follow. This is why it is important to approach planning with great flexibility, support and respect for diversity.

5. The community engagement has a general framework but is very contextual in its nature and therefore intended to be individually tailored to every specific student and for every specific organisation. It will take place within two semesters of the programme, but the weekly or monthly schedule of community engagement will be arranged individually between students and organisations. In that way community engagement will be compatible with the organisation's specific activities but also with the students' interests and capacities. Students and mentors will co-create the individual learning plan for community engagement based upon the following:

- students' general learning plan and interests
- needs of the organisation
- needs of the community/beneficiaries
- current activities (learning opportunities) within the organisation
- community engagement assignments.

6. Learning is expected to happen through delivering the assignments set by the programme, observing/participating in organisation activities, engaging in various activities of a reflexive nature, and through the mentoring relationships as such.

7. Levels of students' engagement (e.g. observe, analyse, participate, organise, create, lead, etc.) should be individually tailored in order to acknowledge specific contexts, including students' profiles, interests and capacities. There should be a healthy balance between activities that will allow students to witness (some) positive results of their own engagement during their stay in the organisation, and those kinds of activities that seek more long-term results and would therefore be hard(er) to witness during their stay within the host organisation.

All activities students participate in should be meaningful and thoughtfully designed. Diverse types of activities are welcomed:

- developing tools or educational content/input
- participating/leading/creating/promoting workshops
- participating in project management (developing ideas, project writing, financing...)
- outreach activities

- needs assessment
- participating in training that the organisation is implementing
- self-assessment/evaluation process
- mentoring local/international volunteers
- impact-related activities
- preparing reports/notes
- participating/leading leisure time related activities for youth
- promoting various organisational activities
- analysing youth services/policies
- communicating with different (relevant) stakeholders
- participating in team meetings
- participating/leading international projects

8. The community engagement mirrors youth work practice, and the mentors represent key (role) models implementing quality youth work programmes by applying the principles of youth work. Students will be observing different youth work activities while mentors will, throughout their approach towards students, also mirror youth work relationships (e.g. reflective practitioner; getting to know each other and establishing professional relationships, creating learning plans, being open for feedback on own practice, dealing with diversity, balancing risk competence and safety; ethical behaviour and self-care, etc.).

1.3. The community engagement process

Aiming to enable students to participate in community-engaged activities near their place of residence and in an organisation operating within their field of interest, the list of mentoring organisations available for community engagement will be expanded every year.

The community engagement process will be flexible in a way to (I) be adaptive to the specifics of each academic year, and (II) be up-skilled based on the evaluation findings. However, it will typically lean on the following sequence:

1. Preparation:

- Mentoring organisations are invited to be accredited as the UNIRi expert training facility (optional, not a requirement for becoming a mentoring organisation)
- Mentors prepare/refresh written descriptions of their organisations and themselves as mentors, alongside a description of activities available for students' participation. Specific limitations that the organisation has concerning engaging students (e.g. the number of students, lack of access for students that use wheelchairs, language restrictions, etc.) need to be shared with those who are in charge of organising the whole community engagement process.
- Students prepare written descriptions of themselves and their learning interests that will be given to mentors within the organisation(s) of their preference.

2. Initial selection

- Students are provided with the catalogued descriptions of organisations and mentors to consider and select four organisations with which they would like to conduct additional interviews before finally selecting the organisation in which they will perform their community engagement.
- Mentors get information on students who have put their organisation on a short list of organisations that they are interested in (description of student and their interests).

YOUTH WORK CHARACTERISTICS

Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio states that youth work usually has the following characteristics:

- Value-driven: youth work tries to serve the higher purposes of inclusion and social cohesion
- Youth-centric: youth work serves key needs and aspirations of youth, identified by young people themselves
- Voluntary: youth work is not obligatory, and relies on the voluntary participation of young people
- Developmental: youth work aims at the personal, social and ethical development of young people
- Self-reflective and critical: youth work tries to make sure it is doing its best to live up to its mission
- Relational: youth work seeks authentic communication with young people and to contribute to sustaining viable communities

Taken from:

[Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio](#)

For the purpose of researching youth work within the SEEYW project additional youth work characteristics were identified:

- Participative: youth work fosters a high level of participation of young people in all aspects of youth work
- Process focused: youth work recognises that learning can happen even if the planned result of that particular activity is not reached
- Open to all: youth work invites and cherishes diversity of all kinds and makes efforts that all young people can join the proposed activities
- Non-hierarchical surroundings: youth work establishes an environment without hierarchical relation between youth worker and a young person

3. Matching

- First matching meeting with students and mentors is organised. Basic features of the community engagement process are presented and students have the opportunity to directly speak with mentors from those (four) organisations selected in accordance with their professional interests; after the meeting, students need to make a final decision and choose only one organisation for their community engagement;
- Students rank choices of organisation for community engagement from one (their first choice) to four (their last choice).
- Mentors rank students they talked to during the first matching meeting and indicate those who would be the best match for their organisation, having in mind the learning interest of students and learning opportunities of the organisation.
- Person who is in charge of organising community engagement within the study programme makes final matching decisions in accordance with students' and mentors' choices, acknowledging also various internal and external factors that might influence the process.
- Responsible legal entities (the higher education institution in charge of the youth study programme and the mentoring organisation) sign a memorandum of collaboration detailing all the relevant aspects.

4. Implementation

- Mentors and students co-create and specify activities for students to engage in, the frequency of their participation and they jointly create and sign the learning plan for community engagement.
- Students start with community engagement activities and they work on their assignments.
- Students participate in supervision meetings every couple of weeks.
- Mentors participate in four consultative mentoring meetings.

5. Evaluation

- Students and mentors complete an evaluation survey designed by the Programme leaders.
- Students and mentors participate in the final community engagement meeting and discuss the evaluation results, presenting their own community engagement outcomes as well as suggestions on how to improve the process in the future.

1.4. Roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders

The community engagement of the youth studies program at the tertiary level has three key stakeholders:

- The higher education institution;
- The civil society organisation in which the community engagement is being implemented i.e., the mentor;
- The student.

The higher education institution

The institution of higher education is responsible for organising and coordinating the community engagement. Cooperation with organisations where the community engagement is being implemented is specified and operationalised by a signed agreement on mutual roles and responsibilities.

Substantive care about implementing the community engagement will be assumed by a person charged with organising community engagement, who will also be educated to provide supervision support to the students. The assignments of the person in charge of implementing community engagement are:

- contacting the organisations and mentors, before the academic year starts, to check if they're available for the community engagement within the given timeframe;
- creating the catalogue with organisations' and mentors' descriptions based on the information provided by the mentors themselves;
- organising and leading the first student - mentor matching meeting;
- providing supervision support to students;
- organising and leading the consultative mentor meeting;
- in specific circumstances, providing individual support to students and organisations;
- preparing and implementing the community engagement evaluation;
- organising and leading the final student-mentor meeting;
- upgrading the community engagement process based on the evaluation results.

The system of support for students and mentors is organised through supervision for students, group consultative meetings for mentors and, if necessary, individual meetings with students and mentors in specific circumstances/situations. The goal of the support system is to provide students with an opportunity to integrate theory and practice, to unburden (to openly state everything that happened, both good and bad), to reflect (on the community engagement process and youth work practice), to receive and give support (in dealing with challenging situations), to receive feedback on their work and to improve and/or gain new competences. Consultative meetings with mentors are more focused on the mutual exchange of experience so as to jointly upgrade the community engagement process. The supervision is based on principles of supervision in education whereat the supervisor has an administrative, educational and supporting role.

The civil society organisation as a host for students' community engagement

The organisation where the community engagement is being implemented signs an agreement on mutual roles and responsibilities with the institution of higher education. Every organisation involved suggests a mentor who must meet the required criteria, who undergoes mentor training and is approved by the educational program. The mentor can be someone who is a youth worker and fulfils the following criteria:

- multi-year experience in youth work;
- participation in relevant formal and informal youth work education;
- developed general competencies needed for mentoring students.

The mentor has numerous intertwined assignments including organising and coordinating the community engagement process in the organisation, helping the student reflect and identify what they learned, teaching and linking theory with practice, providing feedback and guidance to students, providing support and enabling the students to learn from their mistakes, taking care of the safety of both the students and the beneficiaries, motivating the students and celebrating their success. It is important to stress that the mentor also serves as a role model for quality youth work but that they're not expected to be perfect. Moreover, the mentors are expected to critically review own practice and to be able to learn from good practice and success as well as from possible mistakes and failures.

Every organisation must provide time, within the mentor's schedule, for the following activities:

- participating in training for mentors (6 days);
- preparing the text for the catalogue of organisations/mentors (1h);
- participating in the initial student-mentor meeting (5h);
- preparing the organisation for the arrival of the students and introducing them to the functioning of the organisation (5h);
- student mentorship (defining their specific learning plan, involving students in diverse activities, continued reflection on the experience, support in performing assignments) (25h);
- participating in four consultative mentoring meetings (12h);
- in specific circumstances, cooperation with the person charged with realising community engagement and the student (1h);
- filling out the report and evaluation survey (1h);
- participating in the closing mentor-student meeting (5h).

Students can also participate in activities that don't involve their mentor but are led by other organisation members or staff. However, in that case, the mentor is still responsible for all their other assignments.

YOUTH WORKER COMPETENCE

ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally defines competence as “a system of values, attitudes and beliefs, and skills and knowledge that can be applied in practice to manage various complex situations and tasks successfully.”

In the context of youth work, competence is the fusion of cognitive knowledge about youth work, practical skills necessary for working with youth and the attitudes and values which are the basis of youth work. In Europe, two youth worker competence frameworks can be used for self-assessment and further development of youth work competence:

- [ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally](#), SALTO
- [Youth Work Portfolio](#), COE

Within the SEEYW project, there are defined occupational and [qualification standards for youth workers](#) which will henceforth be used as a reference model in Croatia and Slovenia.

¹ Important note: hours given are estimates prone to further change due to various internal and external circumstances;

The mentor role cannot be assumed by another person in the organisation who didn't undergo mentor training and wasn't approved by the Programme leadership.

Students

Community engagement will take place within two semesters during which students will have to engage and fulfil several assignments. All students' assignments are listed in the table below together with the list of competences and estimated allocation of time for the students' workload.

Students of the youth studies programme at the tertiary level are individuals with completed higher education who have previous experience in youth work. However, some of the students might be very proficient in the youth work sector, while others might be just at their beginnings. Community engagement should therefore be adjusted to their competences and interests, acknowledging the possibilities of both the organisation itself and the mentor him/herself.

Students and mentors will jointly create individual learning plans that will, depending on students and organisations possibilities, define the timeline for all the assignments and the deadlines for their fulfilment.

Some of the assignments (e.g. participating in the initial student-mentor matching meeting; participating in supervision) will take place at the higher education institution while some of the assignments could partially or completely be realised remotely from the students home (e.g. preparing the presentation of the research results; exploring information about the organisation; preparation for participating in the organisation's activities), and some of the assignments will take place directly in the organisation (e.g. participating in activities; participating in meetings with mentors).

Table 1. List of competences and related assignments

COMPETENCE TO DEVELOP	ASSIGNMENTS	PROOF	ESTIMATED TIME LOAD
– Self-reflection and identifying own learning interests	– Preparing a description of themselves and their learning interests and participating in the initial student-mentor meeting;	– Written description of themselves and their learning interests	5h
– Critical thinking	– Exploring information about the organisation (main documents, team, participants...) & community (stakeholders, youth policy...)		5h
– Research of youth needs	– Identifying the needs of the organisation's beneficiaries and the local community along with designing a new activity that would meet the identified needs	– Written report presenting the research results and the suggested new activities	15h
– Advocating and presenting youth needs and own ideas	– Preparing a presentation of the research results, including the student's own suggested activities and presenting them to the organisation representatives	– Presentation (in any format)	5h
– General youth work competences	– Participating in organisation's activities		80h
– Reflecting on own competences and community engagement	– Participating in meetings with mentors and continuously reflecting with the mentor about youth work principles and youth work ethic noticed during the participation in organisation's activities.		25h
– Implementing youth work principles and ethical determinants in youth work			
– Verbalising own thoughts, emotions and impressions			
– Reflection on youth work practice	– Participating in supervision		25h
– Integration of theory, practice and own values			
– Care for own mental health			
– Asking for, receiving and giving support within group setting			

COMPETENCE TO DEVELOP	ASSIGNMENTS	PROOF	ESTIMATED TIME LOAD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expressing own thoughts, emotions and impressions in written form – Creating and revising the learning plan – Problematizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Writing a final essay answering the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What have I learned about myself; – What have I learned about youth work; – Which (ethical) dilemmas, problems or questions I encountered during the community engagement; – How did I realise my learning plan during the community engagement and in which direction do I want to continue my professional development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Written essay submitted to the person in charge of community engagement; on the institution of higher education 	10h
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Writing a project application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing a project application based on an activity identified during needs research and submitting it. (elective assignment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Written and submitted project documentation 	10h
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Formulating, expressing and receiving feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Filling out the evaluation survey and participating in the closing mentor-student meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Written report presenting the research results and the suggested new activities 	5h
SUMM		6 ECTS	180h

If the student's idea based upon the community needs assessment is found acceptable by the organisational leadership, the student can submit the idea to the Youth studies programme to receive additional funding for realising it during their community engagement. Each year, three best students' ideas will receive additional funding for the realisation of their activities/projects. This step is not necessary, but it may present an additional challenge for students as well as an added value for the organisation as well. If an organisation likes the idea, they can continue working with students and submit it to another open call for proposals (e.g. The European Solidarity Corps).

Preparing the organisation



2. Preparing the organisation

This guide is primarily intended to prepare mentors for the process of mentoring students. However, without proper preparation of the whole organisation that will act as a host for students, the whole mentorship process can be significantly hindered. This is why quality preparation of the organisation is important and this is why the mentor's job begins actually long before the students' arrival to the organisation.

There are quite a few topics that one should have in mind before community engagement starts. Some of them are described below and accompanied by a proposed preparatory task for you as a mentor. The tasks are also a form of preparation for the residential training which will gather mentors from all the organisations participating in the Programme during the academic year.

The organisations involved will for sure be different in size and might have different views on diverse topics. Therefore, it will be the mentors' responsibility to adapt the preparatory task to their own organisation. You're advised to first read this chapter in its entirety and devise a plan for solving tasks. It may be easiest to organise a meeting of relevant people in your organisation so that you can inform them about the community engagement features outlined in the first chapter, and you can jointly solve the first two tasks. Further tasks can be partially solved individually and/or by consulting your colleagues, even just by e-mail. Whatever you decide, you are the ones who are best acquainted with your organisations and can therefore best assess the appropriateness of each task as well as the expected timeline of their fulfilment. The only important factor is that all the preparatory tasks are done having in mind the participation of all important stakeholders.

These tasks might help a lot with organising community engagement but also, they might help your organisation in other aspects of the quality management system (e.g. introducing volunteers or new employees to the organisation).

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

“The term “quality management system” usually refers to a formal system of management which the organisation can utilise to upgrade and strengthen its organising process. Such a system aims to raise the quality of work and ensure consistency of activity, along with a clear and specific definition of what is expected from a quality organisation. Quality management has a twofold purpose:

- concerning the organisation itself it initiates changes and activities focused on upgrading the organisation's operation.
- concerning the surrounding stakeholders, it offers confidence and ensures credibility, and the beneficiaries can expect quality service in accordance with agreed standards.”

Taken from:

SMART (2015) [OK 2015 - Quality management system for civil society organisations](#)

Youth work also features an initiative to develop joint quality indicators for youth work and a system for assessing/self-assessing quality. Individual countries and organisations have already developed their own systems of quality which you can use as a framework to self-assess your organisation and your youth work.

European Commission (2015) [Quality Youth Work - A common framework for the further development of youth work](#)

2.1. Expectations and worries

Different organisations may have different motives for participating in the education of youth workers. For some the primary motivation is financial, others are interested in cooperation with the university and references. Some like a challenge and some will see it as a learning opportunity. Certain organisations couldn't say no to the person who invited them to cooperate or they had very motivated mentors who persuaded the idea of becoming mentors.



For example: The motivation of organisations involved in the training for community engagement can be categorised in these three areas:

- **Contributing to quality youth work (exp.: to wholeheartedly support the professionalisation of youth workers and their formalised education; to invest in the potential and capacity to deal with youth policies; to improve practice in the aspect of planning and monitoring the individual learning; to highlight the good practice in the field of inclusion / LGBTQ+, etc.)**
- **Networking (to connect with other “mentoring” organisations and to make our organisation a bit more visible; to share our approach and topics in youth work, etc.)**
- **Raising capacities of the organisation (to welcome students that are actually interested in youth work and might become part of your team in the future; to strengthen the capacities of the whole organisation in creating and implementing mentoring programmes; to work further on the quality of our activities, etc.)**

All of these motivational reasons are legitimate but it is important to examine and honestly affirm your motivation so you can be aware of its influence on the community engagement process. For example, the motivation can influence the priority you give to the community engagement process, the amount of time you invest in its implementation, the readiness of other organisation employees to include students in their activities, your expectations from other community engagement stakeholders etc.

On the other hand, it is important to consider what the organisation wouldn't want to happen during the community engagement. In other words, it is important to know under what circumstances does the organisation want the students to participate. When you speak openly about your worries, you will be able to identify certain expectations, but also certain codes of conduct that will be expected from the students or the institution of higher education. Furthermore, discussing your worries can direct you to discuss what can be done to prevent the realisation of those worries.

MOTIVATION

“Victor Vroom's Expectancy theory states that an individual will be motivated to work if they believe that their effort will be noticed and will result in a reward (pay, recognition, promotion) and if the reward is important enough to them.”

Taken from: Miljković, D., & Rijavec, M., (2007): Organizacijska psihologija- odabrana poglavlja, IEP/D2

The issue of motivation is a common question in youth worker education. Youth workers often say that they prepared workshops and activities but that young people are not interested in participating. This becomes a slippery slope if we declare them unmotivated and passive. The phenomenon when experts know what is good for young people and what they need is called a “pedagogical one-way street”. In youth work, the most important thing is doing everything together, that is, the youth worker role is to assist, help, lead, encourage active participation in decision-making and contribute to achieving the desired result.

Adapted from:

Gailius, Ž, Malinauskas, A., Petkauskas, D. & Ragauskas, L. (2014) [Handbook for people working with youth groups](#)



For example: Worries of organisations involved in the training for community engagement can be categorised in these three areas:

- Students (unmotivated and uninterested students; imbalance of expectations and possibilities; dissatisfaction with some aspect of the community engagement process; mental health issues of students and my inability to facilitate them during a health crisis; different ideas of what the mentoring process is...)
- Mentoring process (difficulties in matching activities with the student's interests and capacities; adjusting expectations and adjusting to each other; creation of a safe and diverse learning space for a student; maintaining healthy boundaries; having enough time in a busy work schedule for quality mentorship and managing work ...)
- Organisation (remote working and online activities; task division of other employees; different dynamics of work during the year in the organisation; fluctuation of employed people in NGO; that the organisation doesn't agree with the feedback that students offer...)

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the realisation of the community engagement will certainly affect the general operation of the organisation as well as the time the mentor has for all other obligations. This means that these questions are not just for the mentor but that they should be presented to all the key people in the organisation so that everyone is informed of what they're consenting to, what are the benefits and the potential disadvantages. Such open discussions can enable the organisation to understand all the obligations the mentor and organisation will have and therefore lead towards informed decision-making about entering the community engagement process.

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- ▶ Convene a meeting of all the people in your organisation (or at least key people leading the organisation and people leading key activities) and start a discussion on proposed issues. Take extensive notes and keep them in mind when planning further steps.

- What is the organisation's primary motivation for joining the community engagement process?

- How will the community engagement process influence the working of the organisation (positive and negative)? What wouldn't you want to happen? How can the community engagement process threaten/complicate the working of the organisation? What would you like to achieve by participating in the community engagement? How will you know that this process was good for the organisation?

- What must be arranged in advance or pointed out to students and the institution of higher education in order to prevent unwanted effects of the community engagement? Under what conditions do we want the community engagement to be realised in the organisation?

- What could cause you to lose your motivation for participating in the community engagement process and how can it be prevented? What do you need to keep your motivation? Which form of reward would be especially important to the organisation/mentor?

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- Write a short inviting description of your organisation on one A4 page. Write in a “we are...” format and include this information:
 - General information (when was established; main goals/vision/mission; city/country; values; the size of organisation and team; is it national or local; themes it’s dedicated to; beneficiary groups; methods; all working languages, networks, logo...)
 - What is specific/different/unique in your organisation
 - Learning opportunities for students
 - Links to additional information about the organisation

This description of the organisation is actually the identity document of your organisation which you will present in training, on which you will receive feedback and which will be included in the organisation/mentor catalogue from which students will select where they want to do the community engagement. Be concise and clear, and focus the description on the information you would find significant, interesting and understandable if you were a student.

2.2. Organisational culture and quality standards

Every organisation has its own way of functioning which becomes so common and automated that we often don't even register it although we participate in it daily. If someone outside our organisation would ask about our routine, the answer would probably be "That's how it's always been"; "That's how it's done."; "We find it normal". Often, these "normal" and "common" behaviours and procedures are those we forgot to mention when describing the working of our organisation. It is important to keep in mind that the things we consider "usual" and not work of mentioning can frequently become the basis of a misunderstanding. This can be key for introducing a new employee to the organisation (or in this case, a student to community engagement).

In the context of community engagement and in order to reach optimal participation of students in the life of the organisation, it is important to open our eyes to certain elements of the organisational culture. Only then we will be able to present our organisational culture to the students and introduce them to (invisible) organisation's code of behaviour.

Certain elements of the organisational culture are especially important in the context of community engagement and they should be addressed in the process of preparing the organisation for this process. The nature of human relationships and communication can facilitate or aggravate communication with the student because the students will not know what is the preferred method of communication unless they're told. They can easily make the mistake of sending too few or too many emails or reports on their activities in too much or too little detail. They won't know if they start their community engagement in a position of trust or mistrust and how freely can they behave in the organisation. They won't know if the organisation prefers individual or team effort and which level of initiative is considered desirable. This can cause them to inadvertently give too few or too many suggestions, or sidestep a certain procedure or employee.

This may be the first time the students are in a working environment, or they may have previous experience in a completely different organisation and they'll behave in line with what they learned there. Basic instructions on behaviour, dress code, workplace jokes, being late and the consequences of not complying with the rules can prevent numerous misunderstandings and contribute to a greater understanding between mentors, students and the organisation.



For example: During the training, one of the mentors identified these codes of behaviour in their organisations that students should be aware of.

- to be flexible and open to provide solutions for problems that occurred

ORGANISATION CULTURE

"The organisation culture represents a complete picture of how we work, how we communicate, how we make decisions and which principles and values we honour. The factors of organisation culture:

- Organisation history
- Mission and goals
- Values and principles
- Organisation structure
- Division of power/management style
- Nature of human relationships
- Way of communication
- Adopted rules
- Achievement monitoring system
- Myths and legends."

Taken from:

Poljak, N., & Šehić-Relić, L. (2006) Sukob org-Upravljanje sukobom u organizaciji, Centar za mir, nenasilje i ljudska prava-Osijek

- be actively involved in the decision-making process when it occurs in relation to the
- community engagement process
- be aware and know the limits of your role and actions/competences (ask for support when needed)
- seek to offer something that will contribute to the organisation/people/community

Keep in mind that it is important to present the students with a full picture: not only what and how we're doing something today but also what happened before and why we're doing things the way we are. Learning from history and past experience (pleasant and unpleasant) is an important part of learning. Also, it can be the source of our quality standards, which are still being cultivated in our work.

Organisations also have a different regard for diversity. Sometimes they even advocate embracing diversity but when they encounter diversity, they're unable to cope. For example: How would you react if the student coming for community engagement had a different worldview than you or if they had visible tattoos; what would you do if the parents of your beneficiaries objected to the sexual orientation or nationality of the student? You must ask yourself to what degree would your organisation see such a situation as a problem or to what degree would they approach it from a position of embracing diversity and see it as an opportunity for learning, development and upgrading the community engagement process (e.g. the student will be able to meet the needs of some of your beneficiaries who were reluctant to speak of their sexuality or nationality...). Furthermore, would your organisation expect the student to fit in and hide their diversity? Would they be willing to change or put in extra effort so that the student could feel accepted?

The system of monitoring achievement and the way you evaluate and valorise experience is important for maintaining the motivation of students but also of all other organisation employees who may want feedback on their work and recognition for supporting the student.

Finally, keep in mind that different organisations also have different regard towards dedication and affiliation to the organisation. Thus, some organisations expect a total dedication to the extent of ignoring all other aspects of life, some foster an ever-present sense of urgency, while for some affiliation implies never criticizing the organisation (especially not someone who is only a student). The student can feel all of this but they will probably not know how to address this, should they address it, and how to formulate their opinion and suggestion in a way that will be heard.

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

“Diversity management can be understood as the active and intentional approaches organisations take to promote inclusion. But diversity management is not just about welcoming and hiring people with different backgrounds or changing people's opinions about diversity. It's about changing the organisational culture and practices for everyone to feel safe, valued and able to be themselves. More and more companies have been renaming their diversity management approaches to “Diversity and Belonging” to highlight the importance of people feeling part of the organisation and how much they can actually be themselves.

Diversity management also requires us to reduce inequities and ensure that everyone can be successful within our organisations.”

Taken from:

Aschwanden, R. (2021) [*Embracing Diversity - A guide to diversity management for organisations active in intercultural youth work*](#)

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

Watch the [video](#) and if necessary read the [guide](#) about diversity management in organisations:

- Convene a meeting of all the people in your organisation (or at least key people leading the organisation and people leading key activities). Write the following themes on flipcharts and ask the participants to quietly go around and add their answers. If you find organising a meeting difficult, you can divide this task into several interviews with people in different positions in the organisation. On the basis of collected information, formulate a short codex of behaviour expected from students in your organisation and discuss it with the organisation representatives.

- FIRST DAYS: Remember your first days, weeks, months in this organisation and write what you found unusual, different, unclear or hard?

- TOTALLY DIFFERENT: What makes your organisation different from other organisations?

- WORK PRINCIPLES: What do you think is very important in working with your beneficiaries? Specifically, what must be done and what should never be done?

- ACCEPTANCE: If an alien from Mars came to work in your organisation, what would you say they must do and must never do if they want to be accepted, recognized and respected in your organisation?

- NORMAL: What would you say is normal behaviour (of employees and students) and what would you characterise as “impolite”, “irresponsible” or “abnormal”?

- On the basis of collected information, formulate a short codex of behaviour expected from students involved in community engagement in your organisation and discuss it with the organisation representatives. Here are some suggested sentences but feel free to use your own.

- In this organisation, it is important to...

- This organisation appreciates...

- This organisation encourages...

- In our organisation, we love when...

2.3. Identifying potential student activities

Your organisation probably conducts different projects and activities. Some of them constitute the core of your work and have been taking place constantly for years, while others are projects taking place periodically or only one-time. Some activities are extremely complex, demanding, confidential and demand continuous and stable relationship with your beneficiaries. For this reason, not all your activities are suitable for all students of this educational programme.

Bearing in mind that at this point you do not know what particular student will come to your organisation, in this initial phase it is important that you identify all the potential activities that students can join. Have in mind that students of this Programme are students that already have a higher education degree as well as (some) working experience. They might be very experienced in the topic you work at or in youth work in general, but inexperienced in the topic or method you are using. Therefore, try to categorise the potential activities by their difficulty and include activities with different levels of students' participation. Some activities could be just related to reading about certain subjects and critical discussion, some could be related to observing certain phenomena in the community, some of the activities could be co-led, while some could be initiated or created completely by the students.



For example: Mentors describe these activities as potential student community engagement activities:

- Taking the initiative to talk/play with the kids/youth in daily activities of the youth centre (listening to their stories, troubles)
- Helping to moderate the group meetings of theatre groups and/or film school.
- Mentoring the European solidarity corps volunteers.
- Assisting in planning the events, promoting and setting up for the evenings within the Festival.
- Cooperating with institutions and organisations in the community and connecting the support network for youth.
- Outreach activities in places where young people gather (sports fields, parks and other places) in order to assess the needs and organise activities with youth and for young people. This includes street youth work and outreach through cultural-artistic, entertainment and educational activities.
- Participating in the work of mobile teams that visit families and provides support to children, youth and their families in their environment.
- Participating in humanitarian and volunteer actions that are designed and implemented together with young people for

WELL CHOSEN ASSIGNMENT

“For some people, being well paid is the only important work criteria. But most people want their work to have meaning, to contribute to something important and meaningful for the community, that they can be successful and proud of their work and that it is in accordance with ethical principles.”

Taken from:

*Miljković, D., & Rijavec, M., (2009):
Pozitivna psihologija na poslu, IEP/D2*

direct contributions to the existing problems of children and youth and their families.

- Participating in monitoring the work of the working group for the development of the National Youth Programme.
 - Designing and conducting non-formal education activities.
 - Promoting meaningful youth policy.
 - Supporting the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects of young people (e.g. dance events, new board games).
 - Guiding the conversation with a young person using different techniques.
-

At this point, this is just a list of potential activities that students will get in order to choose a community engagement organisation. When a student comes to your organisation you will first get to know each other (expertise, competencies, interests...), develop trust and then you will jointly develop a plan and specify the activities a student will join. Keep in mind that the activities you chose must offer an opportunity to learn about youth work and give students a feeling of contributing to your organisation, your beneficiaries and your community.

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- ▶ Ask all activity heads to consider and send you a short description of the activities/projects they lead and a list of specific activities for beginner and experienced students. On the basis of collected data, write a list of activities your organisation can offer students and consider in what months would your organisation like students to participate in activities. Include diverse levels of student engagement (exp. observe, analyse, participate, organise, create, lead...), try to balance activities that tackle organisation and community matters and balance activities with short- and long-term meaningful impact.
- ▶ Write a short description of your organisation (city, themes it's dedicated to, beneficiary groups, methods and other specifics students could learn about if they choose your organisation)
- ▶ Write a list of general activities students can join in the first month to acquaint themselves with the working of the entire organisation and to familiarise themselves with the employees.
- ▶ Write a list of projects/activities students can join depending on their interests and previous competences.
 - Project description 1. (goals, themes it's dedicated to, beneficiary groups, methods, intensity and jobs the students would participate in) + comment if the activity is meant for experienced or beginner student

This description is actually the identity document of your organisation which you will present in training, on which you will receive feedback and which will be included in the organisation/mentor catalogue from which students will select where they want to do the community engagement. Be concise and clear, and focus the description on the information you would find significant, interesting and understandable if you were a student.

2.4. Organisation involvement

All the assignments so far were focused on preparing the organisation for the arrival of the students, but a few more preparatory details are necessary in order for everything to be ready for the beginning of community engagement.

If the previous meetings where you discussed the community engagement process didn't include all the employees of the organisation, it is important to inform them all in some way about what this process includes, who and when is coming, what will the students be doing and how many will be coming to your organisation. It is important to include everyone involved in your activities (employees, part-time associates and volunteers) regardless of their participation in the community engagement process. They must know who the students are and you should feel free to invite them to help the students in joining the regular activities. Think about whether your colleagues will react better to a written notification or a conversation. If needed, stress out that during the community engagement process you might be unavailable to them because of your mentor duties. It is important that everyone feels that the students are coming for community engagement to the organisation, not to you personally and that everyone can contribute to the students' learning. If the other employees don't feel this, you risk having the entire weight of the process fall on you, which would leave you feeling isolated and the student would miss out on many experiences.

Don't worry if during the first year not everyone shares the enthusiasm about community engagement in your organisation. Spread your enthusiasm to the colleagues supporting the idea, who you know are willing to participate (early adopters) and who will spread the news to others (early majority). At the end of the first year, make sure that you present to your colleagues the benefits of community engagement for your organisation, beneficiaries and the community (early majority) and if necessary, provide additional support to colleagues in identifying potential activities for students to join. This will further motivate people to support you next year and your effort and contribution to the development of the organisation will become more visible and recognisable.

Also, think about the way you will introduce the arrival of new people to your organisation to your beneficiaries (and their parents), especially to those participating in activities the student will be joining. You could choose to do it by a notice on the bulletin board or you could do it in person.

Depending on the specifics of the local community you're engaged in and the specifics of the student coming, consider who among your partners or associate organisations or the local community needs to be informed about the student. If you're cooperating with institutions such as schools or social care institutions, think about whether the principals need to be informed that someone other than your employees will be coming to activities and working with youth. Small communities mean every new person gets noticed so consider introducing the student to the local community during some of the

ON EMBRACING NOVELTIES

Whenever we introduce a novelty or innovation to the organisation (such as a new computer, a new way of keeping documentation, new protocols, volunteer club or community engagement) people will have different reactions. If we want as many people in the organisation to accept and support our innovation, it is important to approach different groups in different ways. Rogers (1962.) identified five groups of people by their reactions to novelties. 2.5% of people in an organisation are innovators and they enthusiastically embrace new ideas and unexplored areas. Unfortunately, they're not most liked in the collective and are unable to convey the importance of the novelty by themselves. This group basically counts on the early adopters which make up 13.5% of the collective. They're well-liked by the rest of the collective and become significant novelty ambassadors. 34% of the collective are the early majority which will accept the novelty when they see the results of implementation by the early adopters and innovators. They contribute significantly to the further spread of innovation. The late majority, making up 34% of the collective, are sceptical about innovation and will only accept it for economic reasons or peer and superior pressure with lots of convincing and support in implementation. The final 16% of the collective are the laggards who are extremely sceptic and slow to adopt new ideas because they believe them unnecessary because everything functioned well anyway.

Adapted from:

Roth, M., Pavlović, V., Morić, M. (2015.) Volonterska kuharica-priručnik za pokretanje volonterskih programa u školama, Forum za slobodu odgoja

open activities. Although you might find this unnecessary, meeting the local community will simplify the students' task of identifying community needs.

Concerning the intensity of the student's participation in the organisation, the type of work they will be doing and the possibilities of your organisation, try to provide the student with a place they can put their belongings and where they can sit down (such as a drawer, closet, table, computer). Such small gestures can greatly facilitate the students feeling welcome and as a part of the team.

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- Consider everyone you cooperate with and with whom could the student come into contact in your organisation and community. Consult your colleagues and ask for help in informing some of the stakeholders. The lists will help you not to skip anyone and to keep the task of informing your surroundings more transparent.

- Make a list of people and organisations that should be informed about the arriving students, noting what each of them should be told about how the student might come into contact with them.

- Make a list of documents the student should collect or sign in order to participate in all your activities (such as criminal records certificate, internal code of ethics).

2.5. Safety and risk management

The safety of all stakeholders always comes first. And when we talk about safety, we mean it in all aspects from physical to mental and encompassing all the stakeholders involved in the community engagement. It is important to stress that the students, regardless of their competences, are still in the process of education and they can't take responsibility for the safety of the youth you work with. Subsequently, ensuring everyone's safety is your responsibility and it includes identifying potential risks, creating a plan of risk prevention or damage reduction and informing the students about the security rules of your organisation.

Identify potential dangers to the students (you may have already mentioned them when discussing worries), youth and your employees during the community engagement process. Maybe you have beneficiaries with unpredictable reactions, maybe you hold activities in nature that could result in injury, and maybe the risk is excluding or insulting students/youth because of their faith, nationality or sexual orientation. It could also be about the safety standards of operating specific equipment or machinery you use, operating policy concerning health-hazardous substances (cleaning supplies, addiction management, cigarettes, providing youth with pain medicaments), rules about using public/private transportation during outings. You probably already have some protocols for risks such as fires or other emergencies, but some others you might need to elaborate on.

If your organisation works with beneficiaries who have specific health problems, maybe the students will need to be educated about providing first aid (in the case of epileptic seizures, diabetes or panic attacks...) or just informed about the specifics of the difficulties your beneficiaries have and how to adequately provide assistance (for example, how to assist a person with vision impairment). Although the students are instructed to honour confidentiality, privacy and the code of ethics, feel free to repeat the rules of your organisation concerning discretion and other information they will encounter during community engagement.

When you compile a detailed list of risks concerning the community engagement process (which you will probably expand in the years to come) it is important to create or update your protocols for emergency situations which list ways of preventing or reducing risky situations and how to handle them if they emerge. It is important you familiarise the students with the developed protocols but also with specific situations which have happened and which inspired the protocols to be developed. This way of teaching will enable the students to understand your decisions in greater depth and to learn how to react in new situations which you still haven't described.

Your employees and volunteers should also be familiar with all the security protocols, but also with the level of responsibility they can expect from the students. Supervision is organised as a form of care for students, but in the case of an emergency in the organisation, adequate help must be provided for all your activity leaders, including the students.

RISK MANAGEMENT ABILITY

“Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.”

Taking risk is important for learning from mistakes, developing resilience, self-confidence, self-respect, personal growth and development, and developing risk competence. In a desire to protect children and youth, numerous documents on protecting the health and safety of children and youth were drafted. Afraid of being called out or processed for not adequately protecting children and youth, professionals tend to avoid including children and youth in various leisure activities unless they have been made completely risk free, which also robs the children/youth of learning opportunities.

This doesn't mean we should stop worrying about risk but that it is important to distinguish between acceptable risk which constitutes a learning opportunity from unacceptable risk which leads to panic instead of learning. Subsequently, risk should be considered in the context of individual children/young person and their competences, while considering how we can transform unacceptable risk into an acceptable one.

Adapted from:

Eichsteller, G. & Holthoff, S. [Risk Competence - Towards a Pedagogic Conceptualisation of Risk](#)

Health and safety Executive (2012) [Children's play and leisure-promoting balanced approach](#)

As this topic will be important for students when they start working and take on a different role in their organisations, also inform the students about different measures existing in your organisation aimed at workplace protection of youth workers as well as your beneficiaries.



For example: Mentors during training identified some of these risks

- If a student is too experienced he/she might lose motivation for participating in the activities (What needs to be considered to prevent it: Think about questions that you will ask students on first meeting and explore students expectations; What needs to be considered when this risk happens: Think about changing activities they are involved or the level of their participation from observing to leading; think about mutual learning and how the student can contribute to your organisation with their expertise)
- A student can push the mentors professional boundaries by calling in inappropriate times or not completing agreed tasks in time (What needs to be considered to prevent it: Get to know each other in more detail and talk about the boundaries and things you both like and dislike in professional relationships; What needs to be considered when this risk happens: Could that be a great topic for the mentoring process and a discussion on what boundaries we established and how is that handled in youth work?)
- Students might have mental health issues that mentors are not aware of at first (What needs to be considered to prevent it: Consider the information that mentors should know in advance about the students and respectfully ask them; What needs to be considered when this risk happens: Who do we have to inform, depending on the seriousness of the situation and having discretion in mind; What kind of support can we offer?)
- Students might have unrealistic expectations from mentors and can ask for help in writing final papers... (What needs to be considered to prevent it: Talk about expectations within a mentoring meeting, reflect about the previous experiences and connect it with youth work in general; What needs to be considered when this risk happens: How can I use it as an opportunity to mirror discussion with a young person who has unrealistic expectations?)
- Students might have different values than you or your organisation on diverse topics (What needs to be considered to prevent it: Think about what kind of diversity is ok for you/organisation and include information on your values in the description of your organisation; What questions should I ask students in the initial interview before matching? What needs to be considered when this risk happens: Is that diversity relevant for youth work? How can I mirror

acceptance of diversity that is at the core of youth work;
Include information on your values in the description of your organisation

- Beneficiaries physically hurt or insult a student because of their sexuality, religion, nationality... (What needs to be considered to prevent it: Familiarise the students with specific hot topics in the community you work in; Talk about how to handle these situations if they happen; What needs to be considered when this risk happens: Who can the student contact immediately; Who will you contact next; What kind of psychological support is provided to your staff and students...)
- A student breaks organisation's laptop or projector (What needs to be considered to prevent it: What equipment is insured; What equipment can students handle by themselves; Who will cover the cost of repair; What needs to be considered when this risk happens: What information do we need in order to understand what happened; How does the student feel about it?)
- A student and a beneficiary fall in love (What needs to be considered to prevent it: Discuss the code of ethics with the student; Be observant of student- youth relations and react timely if needed; What needs to be considered when this risk happens: How will that influence the young person and their peers; How will that information resonate with parents; What damage control is needed within the community and stakeholders; Can the student continue with community engagement or not?)

Finally, it is important to mention that it is impossible and unnecessary to regulate everything. Try to find a good balance between acceptable and unacceptable risk to avoid falling into a trap of overprotecting the students. Remember that acceptable risks can provide students with significant learning opportunities and growth.

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- ▶ Ask all activity leaders to share different risky or challenging situations they encountered during your activities and consider which specific risky situations the students might encounter. Re-examine the fears you identified in the first assignment and prepare a list of relevant risky situations.
- ▶ Gather all the organisation protocols concerning risk and emergency management, checking if there is a proscribed protocol for all the gathered situations. If you have all the situations covered, collect the important elements and prepare them for the students so they can get acquainted with all the protocols. If there are situations that aren't covered by protocol, devise a new one with the help of the following questions:
 - Which are the potential risky situations and what could cause damage/harm?

- What makes them risky? Who can get hurt? What is the probability of the situation arising and how damaging can it be (1-5 scale)?

- Are the risks in question acceptable and a potential learning experience or is it unacceptable and how could the situation be contained within an acceptable framework?

- How would you prevent such a risky situation?

- How to react when the situation arises?

Mentorship *process*



3. Mentorship process

Up to now, you were preparing your organisation for creating a safe and encouraging learning environment. This chapter will focus on the mentorship process itself, which begins after pairing students with an organisation where they'll perform their community engagement, that is, connecting them with you, the mentors. From that moment onward, you are the person in charge of the students in the organisation. As was previously mentioned, it is also possible for the students to participate in activities lead by your colleagues but all the details of the organisation, coordination and learning process following is your responsibility.

In the following passages, we will describe the basic segments of the mentorship process. Each segment is placed in a specific context of the community engagement process, and the blue frame highlights the theoretical concept (and additional suggested reading) the segment refers to.

Each segment of the mentorship process is also an opportunity for the mentor to model a certain aspect of youth work. That way the mentorship process reflects the process of individual youth work.

This part of the guide also features, at the end of every described segment, suggested assignment for mentors which enables you to prepare for this segment of guiding the student. The listed exercises will be the framework of your work during residential training which will assemble the mentors from all the organisations.

MENTORSHIP

“Learning support includes:

- To support planning, reflecting and concluding the learning process;
- To support young people in getting to know themselves as learners;
- To provide feedback based on observation;
- To support building positive connotations about learning;
- To support building reflection skills.”

Taken from: Kėžaitė - Jakniūnienė, M. & Taylor, M.E. (2018.) [One 2 One - Supporting learning face to face](#)

“Educators become foremost facilitators of learning – sounds simple but it is not; because it means letting go of control. Facilitators of learning need therefore to develop specifically their competences to support the learning process of participants. Essential to these competencies are the necessary attitudes which, like an internal compass, can help to navigate and explore the field of learning to learn:

- Authentic willingness to support the learners on their way;
- Genuine trust that learners know best their own needs;
- Empathy in transparent relationships with learners;
- Awareness of the life-long learning context in which the learning activity takes place.’

Role of Facilitator of learning:

- creating a good learning environment;
- to offer resources;
- to put learning on the agenda;
- to ask supportive questions;
- to listen and observe;
- to bring people together;
- to motivate learners;
- to give feedback;
- to recognise needs and passions;
- to see the potential of learners;
- to be a learner;
- to give ideas and tips.”

Taken from: Kloosterman, P. & Taylor, M. E. (2012.) [Handbook for facilitators- Learning to learn in practice](#)

3.1. Student and mentor introductions

The first meeting of students and mentors is very important for several reasons. Firstly, it's the start of a developing relationship which is a key tool, both for youth work, and the mentorship process. Further, it's an opportunity for the mentor and student to get to know each other better and exchange information which will be important in creating the individual learning plan but also in future cooperation (e.g. how they will communicate, how they'll solve problems).

It is important that the introduction doesn't remain simply superficial but that you get to know each other better in the professional sense, but also that you share with the student that part of yourself you feel comfortable sharing (hobbies, interests and so on). For such an introduction you need to think about yourself in advance, but also to think about what questions you would want to ask the student.

If this is your first time being a mentor you might find it difficult to state who you are as a mentor, how you react, what you like, what is important to you, how would you like the cooperation to go and what do you want the student to know about you. In this case, rely on your previous experience from other relationships or from when you had a mentor. If you have previous mentor experience, try considering what kind of feedback you received and what you found hard or simple in that relationship. Of course, you can always choose to go in the direction of what you would like to be as a mentor.

How you speak about yourself will also in part determine how the students will speak about themselves. Think about what is important to find out about them and allow yourself to be curious and ask questions you didn't plan on asking. Keep in mind that the students will maybe need time to consider some of the questions and don't get scared by the pause in the conversation. Give yourself time to create a relaxed atmosphere. It would be good if the introduction took place somewhere you won't be disturbed and where both sides will feel comfortable to reveal some of the more personal details. Your task is primarily focused on the students' professional aspect, but their current or past life situations can have an impact on the community engagement process. Keep in mind that some of them could have the same life experiences as the beneficiaries of your organisation and that some information could open old wounds or cause them to project their experiences onto the beneficiaries. They could be single parents or take care of elderly family members, which means they always need their phone beside them or can't participate in community engagement on certain days. Challenges they face shouldn't be an obstacle for them to complete the full scope of community engagement and that's why we need to be flexible and enable them to participate as much as they can. Of course, this doesn't mean you need to make life difficult for yourself or your organisation. It is important to find a balance where both you and the student will be satisfied. And that is the main idea of this introduction. It is an opportunity for both sides to say "this is me" and see how accommodating can both sides be, but also for both sides to explain their limitations and set some boundaries if necessary. Of course, the boundaries will not be the same for everyone and will depend on

CURIOSITY POSITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD QUESTIONS

When we're talking with someone it is good to enter a position of childish curiosity which makes us ask questions to discover as much about that person and their view of a certain situation. In this position, we're guided by their answers as opposed to some goal we chose upfront. Some good questions are:

- With clear purpose and intent (whether we're asking to understand something and to encourage reaching a conclusion)
- Personal and reflective (supporting the inner process of examining thoughts and emotions)
- Positive and non-judgemental (judgemental questions like "don't you think you should ..." can jeopardize the relationship and cause feelings of pressure and revolt in the young person)
- Precise, caring and simple (the simplest questions are often the most inspiring and enable the person to focus on looking for an answer instead of looking for proper words to use)

Adapted from: Kėžaitė - Jakniūnienė, M. & Taylor, M. E. (2018.) [One 2 One - Supporting learning face to face](#)

numerous factors, but building that honest relationship where both sides are heard, though not always satisfied, is a good foundation for further cooperation. Keep in mind that this is also a process in which students will learn what it means for someone to be interested in them, how to talk to young people for the first time and how to set honest boundaries in a relationship.

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- ▶ Take the time to consider yourself and your competences (especially those necessary for the mentorship process or learning support). If you're the visual type, feel free to grab a pen and paper and sketch whatever comes to mind about who you are. Drawing might even help you when introducing yourself to student during the introduction meeting. The following questions might also help you:

- What topics are you an expert in and what can the student learn from you?

- Have you had a mentor? What was significant about that experience? What supported and what obstructed your learning process? From that experience, what would you include in this mentorship process?

- What are your characteristics, virtues, values, competences, interests, strong and weak points? What makes you different or specific?

- What in the mentorship makes you feel good, safe, respected and appreciated? What do you appreciate and what frustrates you in relationships or in youth work? Which is the best way to give you feedback? When do you accept it and when don't you?

- If you were a machine, what would your operation manual look like? How are you best approached? What would you like or dislike from the student during your cooperation or youth work? What does this say about your needs? What are your quality standards? What do you expect from the student and yourself?

- Any current events which could influence your mood? What do you do in life besides this?

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

When you have a clearer picture of who you are and what is important for the student to know, write a A4 page description of yourself as a mentor (write in “I am” form...). Be sure to include information on what the student can expect from you and what they can learn from you. This description is actually your identity card which you will present in training, on which you will receive feedback and which will be included in the organisation/mentor catalogue from which students will select where they want to do the community engagement. Be concise and clear, and focus the description on the information you would find significant, interesting and understandable if you were a student.

- After you finished describing yourself, consider what would you ask the students. What do you need to know in order to know how to approach them, how to support them, how to provide feedback and what activities to offer them? Write down key questions you find important and take them to the introduction with the student.

3.2. Introducing students to the organisation

There is no universal way of introducing the student to the organisation. You can invite them to the weekly team meeting, where they will meet everyone and will learn about all the activities that week, or you could first acquaint them with the basic documents of the organisation, or show them around the premises and introduce them to the beneficiaries. Chose whatever approach you think is the best and remember that you can always consult the student and ask them how would they like to start. Utilise all the materials you developed during preparation concerning safety, expectations, etc.

Regardless of what approach you chose, try to introduce the students in their first visits to all the different aspects of your organisation:

- Working area and separate operational units
- Employees, volunteers, external associates, beneficiaries
- Basic organisation characteristics (history, mission, vision, operational framework, philosophy, staff, culture, climate...)
- Work organisation (structure, employee and beneficiary policies, equipment use policy, daily routines)
- Basic programme/projects, activities
- Code of conduct
- Main stakeholders and partners
- City/village and basic local infrastructure (in case the students are not local)

Also, after you finish introducing the student to the organisation, consider entrusting further introduction to one of the volunteers or beneficiaries. They're probably going to provide the students with very different information which will give them significant insight into the beneficiaries' perspective of the organisation.

You can also assign the students homework – to read or study certain elements which you will later discuss together. Ensure them enough time to ask questions, but also so you can ask them what caught their attention and what did they find unusual. That can open the door to some topics you didn't think of or are not even aware of.

It may be a good idea for the students to spend their first days or even weeks in the organisation closely connected to you and your activities, and only later join the activities of your colleagues. By then you will get to know them better and the students will acclimatise to the organisation and will have the capacity and knowledge to develop a relationship with the other employees.

ORIENTATION AND ONBOARDING

Orientation and onboarding is organised for new employees or old employees starting a new position, but we'll view it in the context of introducing students to the organisation. Orientation program stages:

- Orientation (welcome, completing documentation (such as no criminal record certificate), introduction to the work environment);
- Introduction to the organisation (building a positive attitude towards the organisation, getting to know the beneficiaries, services quality, procedures, standards, benefits...);
- Introduction to specific activities (explaining assignments, responsibilities, expectations, establishing professional knowledge and skills, introduction to the learning plan);

Onboarding takes place in the mentor's workplace through observing, independent learning, performing assignments and participating in internal

Adapted from:

SELECTIO Akademija. Prezentacija: Orijentacija i uvođenje u posao

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- Create a plan for onboarding students in your organisation. In which order and in what way would you introduce them to what element of your organisation (i.e. meeting beneficiaries of your organisation, reading materials, observing, tour, talking ...)?

3.3. Introducing students to the local community

Even though the students are primarily coming to your organisation, in order for them to completely understand the context of your work and how it influences your activities, it is important they get to know the local community. Sometimes you'll need to explain the current situation in the community and sometimes you will need to elaborate on the important processes in recent history which impacted the composition of the population, local customs, important celebrations, relationship towards your organisation, etc. It might happen that you will forget to mention something relevant, but do not worry, just pay attention to situations in which students will say something like this: "This does not make any sense to me!". They might not see or understand the broader context and that will be an opportunity to explain what you forgot to mention at the beginning.

Given that the students' assignment is to identify the needs of the local community, it would be good if they were introduced to the key community stakeholders such as the mayor or the municipal chief, principals of the institutions you cooperate with, youth council members, media representatives, the organisations' supervisory/governing board members and such. It is not necessary to organise separate introductions with all of them, but if you have upcoming project meetings or current consultations about some policy document regarding the youth in the local community (for example, the city is applying for the "Youth-friendly city" certificate) it would be good to take the students to those meetings. They can just observe, but you can also invite them to have a more active role such as taking notes or supporting youth from your organisation who are participating in the consultations.

Understand that the functioning of the local community and how networking and active youth participation can result in policies and make changes in the community is an extremely valuable learning opportunity for the students. Furthermore, keep in mind that their assignment also includes identifying the community needs and that an insight into the broader context of your activities will be of great assistance in performing that assignment in a quality manner.

YOUTH FRIENDLY CITY

The Association of Cities in Croatia has launched an initiative to certify those Croatian cities which are compatible with the quality standards of local policies directed towards youth.

"Prerequisites for certificate application are:

- The city has a youth council or another institutional form of youth representation in the decision-making process;
- The city adopted the European charter on local youth work;
- The mayor has appointed a coordinator to apply the city for the certificate.

If your town is in the process of applying or already gained the certificate "Youth-friendly city" this can be a great learning opportunity for students to learn about the local youth policy. More particularly this can be an opportunity for them to learn about these 8 areas of local policies that are evaluated within the certification process:

- Participation
- Demographic incentives and measures
- Employment
- Mobility
- Health and sports
- Youth work and culture
- Education
- Informing."

Taken from:

Udruga gradova (2021) [Grad za mlade](#)

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- ▶ Consider the context in which your organisation operates and together with your colleagues identify the best ways of introducing the students to the broader context of your activity. Some of the following questions might help you identify relevant topics and people.

- Could someone among the organisation founders clarify the circumstances in which the organisation was founded and how it has changed under the influence of social changes?

- What in the community has the strongest influence on your activity? How is this noticeable and how could the students understand it? Which are the burning topics? What topics are off-limits? Which events happened and influenced the current behaviour of people in the community?

- Are there current consultations about creating a local youth programme and are you participating? Which decision-makers do you cooperate with most often and how could you introduce the students to your cooperation?

- Which prominent community members could talk to the students about the life of the community and important culturological segments?

3.4. Creating an individual learning plan

Before the arrival of the students to your organisation, you and your colleagues identified all the potential activities the students can join and on the basis of that the students selected your organisation. However, now that you know which particular students have come to your organisation, when they've had the opportunity to feel out the activities of your organisation and when you've had the chance to find out their interests and previous youth work experience, it is time to jointly create a detailed community engagement learning plan.

You should start with the list of competencies the students should develop during community engagement and listed assignments (described in chapter 1.4). Have in mind that students will list their learning interests before coming to your organisation too. Talk about it all and feel free to suggest additional goals and to specify, modify or remove some of them if they are unfeasible in the time allocated to community engagement or within the activities of your organisation.

Defining the learning plan is more the responsibility of the student while your primary task is to help them identify ways in which those goals and competences can be developed in your organisation, i.e. to come up with specific activities (learning opportunities) the student could join and which will lead them to the desired goal. Final specific learning plan (based upon programme assignments, learning interest of students and your organisation needs and opportunities) should define the following:

- what a student wants to learn,
- how they want to learn (list of learning opportunities; Programme assignments; activities of your organisation; specific tasks you will give them ...);
- what support they need in that process (from you or other colleagues)
- how will they recognise that they have learned it.

Defining how a student will recognise whether they developed the desired competence is essential. As in youth work, it is important to identify accomplishments and celebrate them and not allow students to downplay them. Keep in mind that through this process you're actually modelling how needs can be identified and translated into a learning plan, as well as how activities can be measured and revised to constantly stimulate growth and development.

The plan should enable the student to leave their comfort zone and enter the stretch zone without crossing into the panic zone. In the beginning, you might find it difficult to assess whether something is too much or too little of a challenge for the student. That is why it is important to define a schedule of revising the learning plan to keep up with the needs, possibilities and any new circumstances.

LEARNING ZONES

Studying the learning process, John L. Luckner and Reldan S. Nadler (1991) identified three key zones: the comfort zone, the stretch zone and the panic zone. In the comfort zone, no actual learning happens. Situations are familiar and can easily be handled with existing knowledge. Only when we face unknown challenges and enter unknown territory that the need arises for utilising our abilities in a new way, i.e. the need arises for us to stretch our minds and overcome the challenges. This is when learning happens. Such situations can cause discomfort, doubt in our competences and vulnerability. But learning happens even when it is hard because even in crisis situations people can test their own strength and ability, can apply new knowledge, experiment, and ultimately grow and develop. Only when a situation grows too intense and exceeds one's abilities, feelings of losing control and panic arise, which stops the capacity for learning. The task of a youth worker and mentor is to figure out assignments keeping students in the stretch zone and away from comfort and panic zones.

Adapted from:

Gailius, Ž., Malinauskas, A., Petkauskas, D. & Ragauskas, L. (2014) [*Handbook for people working with youth groups*](#)

The process of revising the learning plan can also open up opportunities to give feedback to a student or to receive feedback from them. Accepting feedback can be a very sensitive but also a significant process. Be careful and think how and when to suggest eventual changes to the learning plan or students' behaviour as well as what support mechanisms you're prepared to offer to the students to help them reach it. Keep in mind that the students will sometimes need encouragement or motivation to choose more or less challenging or complex assignments.

Do not forget that the mentorship process is also an opportunity for your growth and development and that some situations will bring you into the stretch zone. If you want, you can also create your own plan of improving mentorship skills and in the end, verify with the student how they see the competencies you developed. Regardless of creating your own plan, keep in mind that the mentorship process can be challenging and that you will at times doubt your competence and wonder what to do. Sometimes you can share your doubts with the student because that will provide an opportunity to learn together and to find a mutually agreeable solution. You can also ask for help from your colleagues and from the person in charge of realising the community engagement process. And do not forget that you can always request individual consultations or share your dilemma on the joint mentor consultations.

LEARNING PLAN

Learning, as well as planning learning, is a very individual process and most people have different preferences on learning and planning. Some prefer structure and tables, some drawing and other visualisations, and some prefer to write miles of text. The only important thing is that the plan is purposeful, that it is clear to the person who is learning and those who are helping them and that it contains these elements:

- what the person wants to learn (which competence they want to develop),
- how they want to learn (reading books, online courses, joining supervision or psychotherapy, shadowing, asking for feedback, reflecting, independently leading workshops, observing others...)
- when they will be learning,
- who and how can help them (mentor, other employees, colleagues...),
- how they'll keep track of their learning
- how they'll know that they mastered the lesson (self-evaluation lists, evaluation, learning diary, reflecting with a co-leader or mentor, personal feeling of security...).

For more information consult:

Kloosterman, P. & Taylor, M. E. (2012.)
[Handbook for facilitators- Learning to learn in practice](#)

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- ▶ Watch the [video](#)
- ▶ Consider the following questions: What do you think will be most challenging? What could make those challenges/hard times/hard processes easier? How can you help yourself and who can you ask for help?

- ▶ Write or record (audio/video) two messages to yourself. The first message should be addressed to the future you stuck in that challenging situation, and the second to the future you at the end of the mentorship process. The messages can be encouraging, motivating, advisory, they can remind you of some procedure or that you can ask for assistance. They can be whatever you think you'll need to hear/read at that time. Save the messages and read/listen to them when the challenging situation arises and when the mentorship ends, respectively. If you prefer to write, you can write a letter to yourself in this [web page](#) and define when do you want to receive the letter via e-mail.

3.5. Creating learning opportunities

After you helped the student identify what they want to learn and which activities in your organisation they will join, it is up to you, your colleagues and the students to conceive in what way will the students participate in those activities. Their participation levels are different and can range from observing to leading activities.

- **OBSERVING** how you lead the process, interactions of youth in the centre, meetings of volunteers/professional employees...
- **ASSISTING AND CO-LEADING** education workshops, trips, initiatives, photographing events, preparing materials...
- **LEADING WITH YOUR SUPPORT** of presentations, workshops, evening activities, results exhibition...
- **INDEPENDENTLY LEADING** interactions with the youth in the centre such as board games nights, posting information on the bulletin board...
- **READING** the protocols, project documents, organisation code of ethics...
- **CREATING** an educational workshop, educational article/leaflet, quiz...

Choice of a specific learning opportunity will depend on your needs, the learning plan and also the students' specific skills. Use what you learned about the students during your introduction. If you learned that someone is good at drawing, you could ask them to draw flip-charts for the evening workshop or if someone likes football, they could be encouraged to lead the football tournament in order to get to know the beneficiaries. It is good to start with learning tasks that carry less responsibility and with time make the learning tasks more difficult. Try combining different types of learning opportunities and adapt them to different learning styles. Hopefully, in time the students themselves will have some ideas on how they can help, that is, how they can create learning opportunities.

Sometimes, the student can just read some materials or take pictures or observe, but it is important that they later reflect with you on what they saw and experienced. If they participated in an activity lead by another employee, immediately afterwards they should discuss the activity with that employee, but they can later reflect with you on what they experienced from the perspective of what they learned.

LEARNING THEORIES

Different theories stress different aspects of the learning process and they're all important to keep in mind during the community engagement and mentorship processes. Constructivism encourages dialogue with the students in order to understand how they perceive and understand the world (youth work) but also to create learning opportunities that will enable them to discover their own understanding of youth work (instead of memorising correct answers or passively accepting someone else's opinion/work style). Behaviourism stresses the influence of reinforcements (award and punishment) on the learning process so it is important to identify success and provide constructive feedback. Brain-based learning points to the importance of creating an engaging and safe learning environment (without fear of making mistakes or being judged...) that at the same time is challenging and that provides enough time and encouraging questions to actively process and internalise what was learned. Also, both this theory and Control theory stress the importance of creating a learning plan that is based on the students' needs, interests and real problems they'll be facing in their professional careers. The learning styles theories suggest considering different methods and learning opportunities that will enable students to achieve their full potential, i.e. suggest implementing various methods/assignments combining experience, reflection, conceptualisation and experimenting, but also sound, visuals, movement, conversation... The multiple intelligence theory suggests using art, physical education, roleplaying, musical expression, cooperative learning, visualisation and storytelling during the learning process. The social learning theory stresses the role of the model whose behaviour is encouraged because the student will imitate the model (mentor) if the model has characteristics the students judge to be attractive or desirable. Finally, the social cognition learning model stresses the importance of encouraging interaction between students, and assignments and surroundings being carefully balanced with the degree of help the students' needs to complete the assignment.

Adapted from:

Life Foundation (2004) [*Methods and techniques used in Intercultural Youth projects*](#)

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- Consider what you could use help with and what would be interesting for the students to try out/experience in your organisation. Come up with three different types of learning opportunities that you could offer to the students. Try to create them so that different learning opportunities match different learning styles (maybe also different from your own preferred learning style).

3.6. Reflecting on experience and identifying knowledge

In the beginning, we stressed that this community engagement process is more than merely going through set assignments. One of the important steps in learning is reflecting on everything the students read, done or experienced during the community engagement process. Reflection can be initiated before specific activity, during the activity or after the activity. It should be continuous (within all process of community engagement), connected (with learning outcomes), challenging (asks for critical thinking and rethinking of own opinions, attitudes, perspectives...) and contextualised (connects content of the Programme with the practical experience, own life experience...) (Eyler, Giles, Schmiede, 1996.).

We suggest leading the learning process by implementing all the steps derived from the experiential learning theory because it enables learning on all levels. For example, the student joins an activity in your organisation and gains some experience. Afterwards, they will talk with you and describe everything they did and reflect on what they felt, thought and experienced. You will then link that experience with their previous experience, theory and concepts they learned about in the education program or to their knowledge of self and consider what they have learned and gained. At the end of the conversation, you jointly draw some conclusions for the future, that is what they can do differently next time or what they would like to experience or implement next time? When the students apply these conclusions, those new experiences become the subject of your next reflection, and so the reflection cycle keeps continuing and linking to itself.

Questions which can help you in this process:

- What happened, step by step. Who did what? How did they affect the situation? How did your words/actions affect the situation? How did the situation end/resolve?
- Which thoughts went through your mind? How did you feel? What helped/hindered the situation? What surprised you? What did you miss?
- What conclusions about yourself would you draw? How would you link all you experienced to theory?
- What could you change next time? What else would you like to try out? Do you need my help and support in that?

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential learning is a process where participants improve their competences through experience and can apply them to other situations in life. It happens in several stages.

- Specific experience (Being) - some situation happens e.g. the student participates in an educational youth workshop.
- Reflection (Feeling) - looking back at what happened e.g. talking with the mentor how the majority of the group was silent when the student was asking questions which made student feel insecure and retreat from leading.
- Conceptualisation (Thinking) - generalisation and consideration about how the observed links to theory or self-knowledge and drawing conclusions, e.g. linking insights with the group work phase and the influence of a new member on the dynamic, problematising what silence can mean and the student becomes aware that they dislike silence.
- Experimenting (Doing) - planning what could we change next time, e.g. in the next workshop the student could lead an exercise to develop the group dynamic, allow more time for the participants to consider the questions and signal the mentor to jump in if they felt fear. After application, the circle of experiential learning starts anew.

For more information:

Gailius, Ž., Malinauskas, A., Petkauskas, D. & Ragauskas, L. (2014) [*Handbook for people working with youth groups*](#)

Keep in mind that sometimes the process will go smoothly, but sometimes the students will need help and support in drawing conclusions and linking them to theory. Also, sometimes it's necessary to be removed from a situation in order to be able to reflect on it. Therefore, sometimes you'll manage to go through the first and part of the second step right after the experience, and the last several days later.

It is important to stress that learning happens both from failure and success and that nobody expects the students to experience perfect youth work. Reflection where the mentor openly speaks of their potential mistakes, although a very exposing experience for the mentor, can be invaluable for the students. Speaking honestly about all your experiences and being open to different feedback is an important competence for youth work which the students will undoubtedly need. Finally, don't forget you're the model from whom the students are learning how to be a reflective practitioner but also how to lead the reflective practice with youth.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflective practice is a method of working integrating thoughts, action and reflection, i.e. a practice used by professionals to critically analyse and reveal values and assumptions of their own practice in order to improve it. Reflection can be done during the activities (and it's more efficient at momentarily improving the practice) or after the activities (when full attention can be given to the analysis without the need for continuing activities). The reflective practice contributes to professional development (greater self-awareness, developing new competencies, better problem understanding) but at the same time, it's a time-consuming process that includes personal risk because it involves re-examining beliefs, values and emotions. The reflective practice process includes:

- Questioning what, how come and how a person is doing something; why and how are others doing it
- Looking for alternatives
- Open mind
- Comparing and contrasting
- Looking for frameworks, theoretical background and/or existing rationale
- Views from different perspectives
- Asking "What if..."
- Asking others about their ideas and views
- Using the perspective model when it's situation appropriate
- Considering the consequences
- Formulating hypotheses
- Synthesising and testing
- Searching for, identifying and solving problems

Adapted from: Life Foundation (2004) [Methods and techniques used in Intercultural Youth projects](#)

Look for additional inspiration for asking reflective questions in [Guided Reflection Questions for Service-Learning](#)

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- ▶ Remember an interesting, challenging or difficult situation you experienced in youth work and draw it. Imagine the student was with you in that situation and that now you're examining it together and reflect on it. Which questions would you ask the student keeping the circle of experiential learning in mind?

- ▶ Once you defined the questions, try answering them from your perspective.

- ▶ Finally, consider how it felt to talk about yourself and have you gained something from this reflection?

- ▶ Watch the [video](#): Brené Brown - The power of vulnerability

3.7. Coordinating, teaching, observing, feedback

After you have defined the learning plan and devised specific learning opportunities, it is time to implement the plan. More precisely, it is time to coordinate, learn through learning opportunities and observe the realisation of the learning plan. Through all these segments you will also have chances to listen, observe, give or receive feedback or confront the students.

Coordination in the community engagement process means that it's your task to arrange student participation in different activities of your organisation as well as solving potential problems. Also, it is your duty, together with your colleagues, to create a relaxed friendly, safe working and learning atmosphere for the students.

Learning by doing happens while performing regular activities. The mentor (or a different organisation employee) can invite a student to talk about what they are doing (from different perspectives: organisation, theory, needs, previous process, emotions ...), can demonstrate a certain activity or can consult a student while they are doing it.

Observing the realisation of the learning plan in the context of the community engagement process means organising and hosting regular meetings with the students where you will reflect on what they saw and learned. The intensity and structure of the meetings will depend on you and the students, along with the arranged frequency of the community engagement. You may not be a fan of structure but keep in mind that a set framework can help both you and the student to mentally prepare for the meeting while also providing additional stability and safety. A proposed structure framework of a mentoring meeting:

- **Introduction:** A conversation about your day, the general impression of the past week and what the student participated in since the last meeting.
- **Reflection:** If you didn't reflect with the student right after activities, you may decide to reflect on a specific activity, or you may reflect on all their activities.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening implies quietly listening to the other speaker followed by feedback about understanding what's being said and accepting of the other's feelings. What active listeners do?

- **They know when to listen and keep quiet:** active listeners are not afraid of silence because they know it's a space for ordering thoughts, emotions, forming sentences and gathering strength.
- **They give non-verbal cues that they're listening:** making eye contact, turning their body towards the speaker, non-threatening facial expressions with adequate closeness.
- **They ask good questions** which open, lead and stimulate the conversation, which are not intrusive and exaggerated and show their interest. These are not yes/no questions but require additional explaining. Such as: "Tell me more?", "How do you feel?", "Tell me what happened?"
- **They paraphrase** or repeat in their own words the core of what the other person said. This is a way of checking if we understood correctly but also enabling the other person to hear themselves. For example: "So, you mean ...", "If I have understood correctly..."
- **They transform** or recognise the need and motivation behind certain behaviour or story. The listener repeats what they heard but transforming it so that it is based on positive values, removing the negative or judging implication. For example: "What you actually want...", "You need more ...", "At the same time you need ...", "You would like if...", "Likewise, it is important to you..."
- **They confront** or point out that what the person is saying isn't in line with their behaviour or displayed emotions. The reaction to this can be turbulent but often we'll hear someone's real reasons, doubts, worries and needs only after confronting them. For example: "You say you want it, but you're not doing anything about it."
- **They remember well** and know how to apply that information in a later situation.
- **They listen with their heart** which means that they're fully present with someone without any resistance or judgement. They speak from their hearth and allow laughter, joy, wisdom, creativity or love to emerge.

Adapted from: Munivrana, A., Šimić, A., Pijaca Plavšić, E. (2016.) Od srca do srca- komunikacijski modeli kao alat u medijaciji, Forum za slobodu odgoja

Asking about what they found strange or unclear may open new topics and start a dialogue beneficial for the students' learning process, and maybe even your own.

- **Feedback:** you might provide the students with feedback through the process of reflective practice but maybe you'll choose to focus on certain assignments (such as a workshop they devised) separately.
- **Plans:** the final phase of the reflective process is identifying learning and the concept of applying knowledge. This might be a good starting point to talk about future activities. You also might go back to the learning plan and examine where you are at the moment and what is next in the plan. You should also discuss which form of support the students need and when will you meet again.

Keep in mind that feedback can also be given on the meeting with the mentor, but that it can be given any day if a specific opportunity presents itself. Both forms of feedback are important, just make sure you provide it in a manner and setting that will enable the students to receive it (e.g. when you're alone).

It is recommended that you approach the whole meeting from a standpoint of curiosity and apply active listening techniques during the meeting, summarising at the end what you discussed and what was arranged.

FEEDBACK

Feedback is a process of giving and receiving information. In a learning context, it can include information on how a student realised their learning goals or assignments, what is expected from them, how they can improve their work. It opens the discussion about the strengths of the student and how they can grow professionally. By giving feedback in a supportive manner, we're saying to a student that we see and greet their (additional) effort and what they have already achieved and we are encouraging them to keep trying. By including clear information about the specific behaviour student demonstrated we are also contributing to their self-knowledge. Do not forget that within the feedback we're also asking for feedback on our work and possible suggestions on ways we can improve our mentoring support.

Feedback is descriptive, specific, constructive, useful, timely, desired. Feedback is our subjective experience and it always implies inviting the other person to give their opinion of what we said.

Receiving feedback is an equally sensitive process that requires active listening to what the other person is saying, keeping our need to defend ourselves restrained, verifying that we understood, considering if we already heard that information about ourselves and does it match our own impression of ourselves. Feedback isn't the only truth about ourselves/event and when you consider what you heard, feel free to share your impressions, emotions and never forget you can always say: "I don't agree" or "I see it differently".

Adapted from:

Poljak, N., & Šehić-Relić, L. (2006) *Sukob@org-Upravljanje sukobom u organizaciji, Centar za mir, nenasilje i ljudska prava-Osijek*

Gailius, Ž, Malinauskas, A., Petkauskas, D. & Ragauskas, L. (2014) [*Handbook for people working with youth groups*](#)

Kežaitė - Jakniūnienė, M. & M. E. Taylor, M. E. (2018.) [*One 2 One - Supporting learning face to face*](#)

Life Foundation (2004) [*Methods and techniques used in Intercultural Youth projects*](#)

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- Receiving and giving feedback is one of the key mentor competences. Take the time and remember some situations in which you were giving and receiving feedback. Think about how you felt during that process and about your behaviour – which parts are you satisfied with and which parts you aren't.

- Identify the people you work with in different contexts and whose opinion you value and believe them to be honest. Ask them how they see you in the process of giving or receiving feedback.

- Finally, merge the two images – how they see you and how you see yourself – and if you desire to upgrade something, try to exercise it during the mentorship process.

- Read [article](#) Rethinking the feedback sandwich and think about your feedback style

3.8. Relationship, boundaries and responsibility

It is the mentor's responsibility to create a stimulating and safe working and learning atmosphere. Also, the mentor organises the learning process and provides challenging learning opportunities. Given that this community engagement is based on self-directed learning, the students are themselves responsible for learning outcomes, personal revelations and conclusions. It is crucial that mentors do not put too much responsibility on themselves because that prevents the students from learning how to self-manage the process. This act of ceding responsibility to the students is also important from the position of modelling the youth worker role. But it is important to stress that the students can't themselves take responsibility for youth work and achieving goals in youth work activities they are joining. They also cannot be solely responsible for the safety of the beneficiaries participating in those activities.

In a few of the previous chapters, we stressed the importance of students gradually assuming increasingly demanding learning opportunities and mentors enabling them to learn from their successes and mistakes. Of course, it is up to the mentor to assess the situation and watch that the beneficiaries are not denied anything because of the students' learning process.

It is important to note that the work of mentors and students will take place in a friendly atmosphere, just like youth work in general, but that doesn't mean they are friends. The mentors aren't expected to support the students in their private problems nor to spend time together privately. Moreover, if the students were to have unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the mentor, it's their job to define clear boundaries just like they would in youth work.

Within the responsibility aspect, the mentors are also responsible for taking care of their own mental health. By defining boundaries and priorities, making time for their private lives, regularly caring for their mental health, actively seeking professional help and support through consultation and supervision, modelling the attitude towards psychotherapy you will influence the students and their relationship towards their own health and life.

Remember that the community engagement process includes a system of support for mentors and take advantage of individual or group consultations. The community engagement process shouldn't make your work more difficult, push you into the panic zone or threaten your mental health.

RELATIONSHIP

The relationship of a youth worker with young people continuously hovers between freedom and responsibility. The youth are equal co-creators of the programme but they also need support and guidance, so the main challenge for the youth worker remains: How to create a situation where they don't usurp the process, don't impose, don't micromanage, but still ensures that the goals of youth work are achieved. Young (1999) points out 4 key elements of a quality relationship between youth workers and the youth:

- Acceptance and understanding of youth
- Trust
- Confidentiality
- Reciprocity
- Honesty

Along with acceptance, C. Rogers stresses the importance of empathy and consistency because only by having those qualities can the youth worker create an atmosphere of growth.

Adapted from:

Kovačić, M. & Čulum, B. (2015.) [Rad s mladima. Teorija i praksa rada s mladima](#), MMH

Gailius, Ž, Malinauskas, A., Petkauskas, D. & Ragauskas, L. (2014) [Handbook for people working with youth groups](#)

8 STEPS TO MENTOR BURNOUT

Experienced mentors M. E. Taylor and M. Kezaite – Jakniuniene identified in a discussion 8 traps to which mentors most often fell prey and which lead to burnouts. These are the 8 things to **ABSOLUTELY AVOID**:

- **Being a Hero:** thinking that everything depends on you and your support to the person you're mentoring and that without you they will be lost.
- **Not taking care of yourself:** avoiding any form of care for your physical health and abusing different addictive substances, eating too much unhealthy food and encouraging the person you're mentoring to do the same.
- **Having no boundaries in empathy:** constantly thinking about the situation of the person you're mentoring, engaging all your emotions into this story and carrying it home to analyse all night.
- **Being a perfectionist:** listening to every advice and blog about perfecting yourself, then transferring all those high standards and expectations to the person you're mentoring. Along with obligatory self-blame if the young person is advancing slower than you imagined.
- **Being available 24/7:** being available at every moment so you can repeatedly have the same conversations. Making sure you always keep the door to your office open, organising meetings that last late into the night and forgetting about "balancing private and professional lives". Definitely organising mentor meetings with no time limitations, giving additional assignments and bragging about your multitasking abilities.
- **Being simultaneously a friend, guide, teacher and parent to the person you're mentoring:** making sure you take on as many roles at once and completely confusing the person you're mentoring so they never know what role you're speaking from at any moment. Keep being a mentor even when it is no longer necessary.
- **Stop thinking about yourself and the purpose of your work:** viewing the mentorship process as selfless giving. They're the ones learning and it would be shameful to consider your own learning and development. Disregarding any emotion you might feel during the mentorship process and never looking for a way to understand or develop yourself.
- **Avoid making time for reflecting and self-reflecting:** meetings with the people you're mentoring will be over much faster if you are avoiding open questions, if you are not taking any notes and definitely if you are skipping reflecting on your work.

Adapted from:

Kezaite - Jakniuniene, M. & Taylor, M. E.: 8 guaranteed ways to burn yourself out as a mentor!

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

Read the story Lumberjack from Jorge Bucay's "Let me tell you a story" collection.

There was once a lumberjack who came to work in a woodworking factory. The pay was good, and the working conditions even better, so the lumberjack decided to try his best. The first day he came to the foreman who gave him an axe and specified his part of the forest. Full of enthusiasm, he went to the woods. In one day, he felled eighteen trees.

„Congratulations“ – said the foreman. „Keep up the good work.“

Encouraged by the foreman's words, the lumberjack decided to do even better tomorrow so he went to bed early. The next morning, he got up before everyone and went to the woods. But, despite his best effort, he managed to fell only fifteen trees. I must be tired, he thought and decided to go to bed at sunset. He was up at dawn, committed to best his record of eighteen trees. Still, that day he didn't manage even half that number. The next day he felled seven, then five, and the final day he spent the entire afternoon trying to fell his second tree. Upset about what the foreman will say, the lumberjack decided to go and tell him. He swore that he gave it his best effort. The foreman just asked: "When was the last time you sharpened your axe?"

"Sharpened? I didn't have time, I was too busy trying to cut down trees."

Consider how you “sharpen your axe” and if it feels like it’s not sharp enough, think about changing the way you sharpen it.

3.9. Difficult moments and ambiguity

Whenever we're doing something for the first time, it is almost impossible not to feel at least a little uneasy or insecure because of a certain level of ambiguity. No matter how much we study, talk or write about the mentorship process, it is impossible to prescribe everything or arrange it in advance. Some things just need to be experienced and only afterwards will the mentorship process be clearer to us in this context. Clearer but still not completely predictable because every new community engagement and every new student will bring their own dynamic. That dose of ambiguity is a fundamental characteristic of youth work and the mentorship process with which everyone deals in their own way. The students will also have to find their own way of coping with ambiguity and in that, you will serve as a significant model.

Like any other relationship, the mentor-student relationship can suffer from communication noise, misunderstandings and possibly even conflicts. It is important to deal with them as they arise, instead of ignoring them. In these situations, it is vital to start from the position of not knowing instead of taking the position of already knowing the answer (e.g. why someone did something) or the position of blame because this leads to losing contact with the other person. In these situations, I statements are our best ally because they enable us to express ourselves (e.g. I am angry because we misunderstood who's supposed to do what and now we don't have the materials for the workshop). It also provides an opportunity to follow the description of how we experienced the situation with our opinion of what we would like to change and invite the other person to share their view (e.g. "I would like next time ..." or "since we're not satisfied, what can we do?" or "how do you view this situation and what should we do to avoid repeating it?").

Besides the usual smaller problems, during the mentorship process, we can encounter larger problems or crises (such as a verbal clash between students and youth; the death of a beneficiary with whom the student was working individually; earthquake during activities). Often in such situations (after we made sure everyone was safe), there is nothing we can do. The mentor's role is to just be with the student, or to do something called "holding space"

HOLDING SPACE

Holding space means we're prepared to be with someone who's going through difficult times, without judgement or influencing their choices or outcomes. We sometimes do this as a part of a group or individual youth work, when young people share something that they're having trouble with, in their lives. It probably took a lot of strength for them to tell us and it is important not to stop them in those moments (such as "don't cry") or give them unreal encouragement (such as "it will get better"). In those moments, our assignment is "just" to be there, to provide them with the space to share everything they want to say, to show verbally and non-verbally that we're listening and that we're there for them, to empathise and ask what can we do to help (even if it's only to sit there and keep quiet).

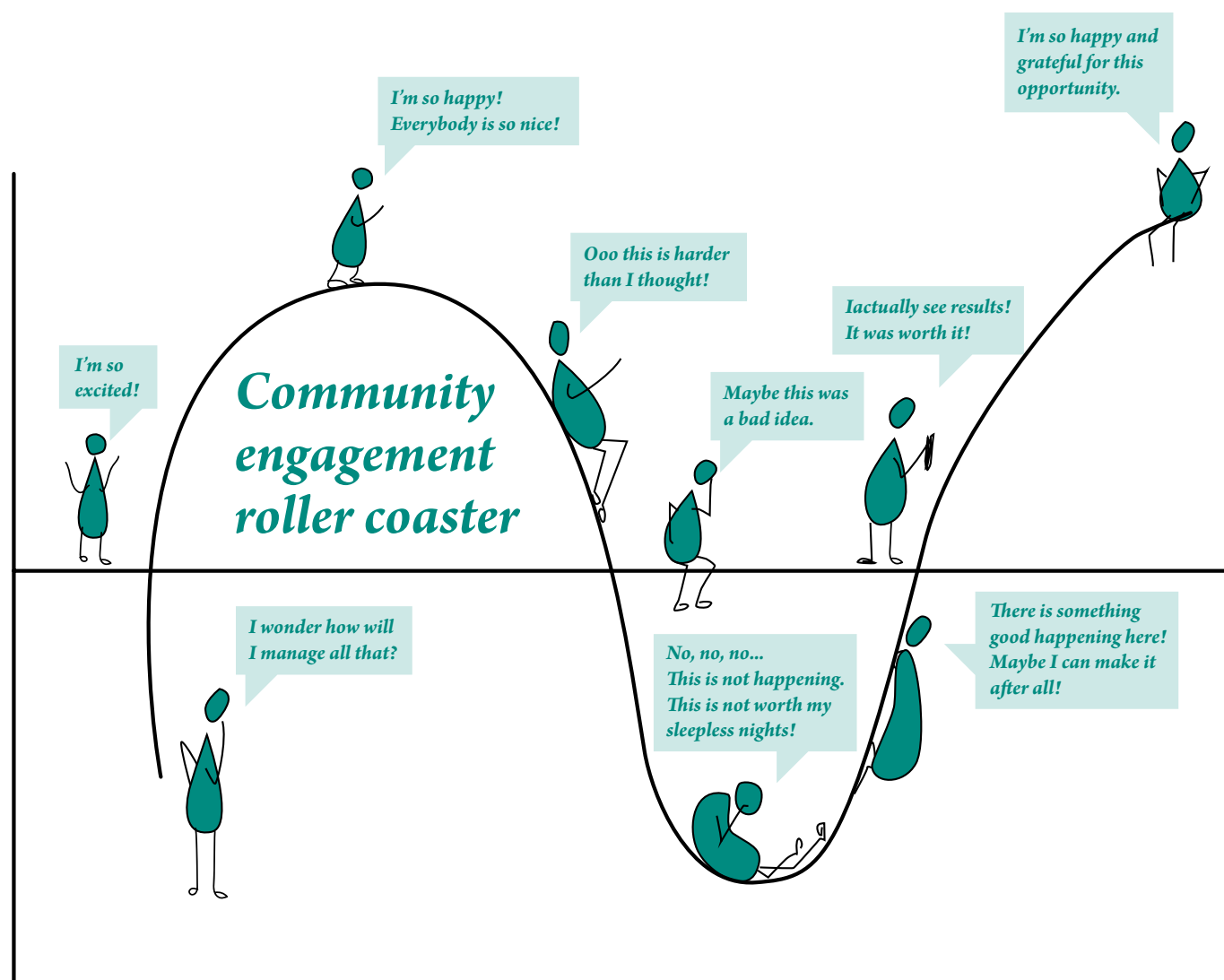
- Allow people to listen to their inner wisdom and intuition because they know best how they're feeling and what they need.
- Don't take power from people but instead empower them
- Keep your ego in check
- Make them feel safe to show how difficult it is for them
- Provide guidance and help with humility
- Be their container for complex emotions
- Enable them to make their own choices and to have an experience different from yours.

Adapted from:

Plett, H. (2015) [*What it Means to Hold Space for Someone*](#)

In the end, remember that working on any assignment carries its share of success and failures. Remember how you felt when you were writing your thesis, some larger project proposal or participated in some lengthy education. You probably had doubts from the start about how it's going to look, followed by enthusiasm and joy which were in turn followed by questioning the reasons why you decided to participate in the first place, is it worth your nerves and should you just quit. However, usually with a little perseverance and support, we manage to overcome those difficult moments and start seeing progress until we feel pleasure about everything we learned and achieved. This is a normal process that might be experienced by the students and which you also might experience. Keep this curve in mind and recognise the places when you should provide or seek assistance.

Figure 1.: Community engagement roller coaster (authors adaptation of project management curve from unknown author)



SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- Think about what difficult situations you might face during the mentorship process. Maybe you already listed some of them among worries or risky situations. Consider how you coped so far in situations when you faced emotionally difficult issues in your youth work. Watch these three videos and see how well your actions matched with the video suggestions. Make a note of your most significant insights.
 - [Brené Brown on Empathy](#)
 - [Brené Brown on Blame](#)
 - [The Importance of Empathy](#)
 - [What it Really Means to Hold Space for Someone](#)

If this topic interests you, take a look at the handbook: [Art of hosting workbook: How do we host, design and harvest meaningful conversations that matter?](#)

3.10. Ethics

You were selected as mentors because of the quality of your youth work and it feels redundant to mention that you're expected to act ethically in your role as mentors. However, it is important to note that one of the students' assignments is to observe the practice of your organisation in the context of ethics and to write about eventual ethical dilemmas, problems or questions.

So, when the opportunity presents itself, point out to the students the connection of some situations to ethical or professional principles and raise their visibility. Furthermore, if you get the chance, share with the students some of the dilemmas, problems and questions you faced during your work and discuss them together.

ETHICS

The code of ethics relates to professional and moral principles which youth workers should honour. Certain countries have developed ethical principles for youth work, but others, like Croatia, haven't so they refer to the codes of ethics used in other countries.

The Serbian national association of youth work practitioners - NAPOR - devised a code of ethics and distributed a publication listing ethical and professional principles and problematising certain key ethical dilemmas (which arise in situations when you must choose between two equally undesirable options), ethical problems (situations when we must make a decision but there is no dilemma) and ethical questions (conflicts between the rights and obligations of youth workers concerning the cooperation with government institutions on the one hand and the benefit of the young person on the other).

Ethical principles:

- We treat the youth with respect
- We respect and promote the right of youth to make their own choices and decisions
- We promote and ensure the wellbeing and safety of youth
- We contribute to the promotion of social justice for youth and society in general

Professional principles:

- Realising and understanding the boundary between private and professional lives
- Responsibility towards the youth, their parents, colleagues and society in general
- Improving personal competences
- Promoting and participating in the debates on the ethics of youth work
- Cooperation with institutions considering the implementation of ethical principles

Adapted from:

Stanković V. & Kalaba, V. (2017.) [*Etika od postera do prakse*](#), NAPOR

Kalaba, V. (2008) [*Kako razumeti omladinski rad*](#), Forum Syd Balkans Programme

SUGGESTED MENTOR ASSIGNMENT:

- Consider and write down ethical dilemmas, problems and questions which you and your colleagues faced in your professional practice along with how you managed to solve them. If the opportunity presents itself share them with the students.

3.11. Closing the process and evaluation

Every student-mentor meeting is an opportunity to evaluate the process, but a more thorough and focused evaluation is implemented halfway through and at the end of the community engagement process. The halfway evaluation will provide you with first insights into the relationship development and the learning plan realisation but also into potential ways of improving your relationship and learning process. These insights will enable you to improve the current mentorship process, while the evaluation at the end will serve to close up this relationship and to improve the new mentorship process next year.

Although the educational programme will include an evaluation questionnaire, you and the student should review the realisation of the learning plan together. Invite the student to identify key expected and unexpected learning opportunities, and do the same yourself because reciprocity is important in youth work. Keep in mind that the evaluation is a dialogue where each side presents their experience of the mentorship process, which isn't necessarily the same and that the insight into different perceptions is very important for the learning process.

Look back at your cooperation and draw key insights on how to improve the mentorship process. The reflection on your relationship can be a conversation but you can also use some creative methods (drawing, association cards) which might facilitate talking about what made your cooperation and the learning process easier or more difficult. If you created a plan of improving your mentor skills, now you can receive direct feedback on how the student viewed the specific competencies which you were working to improve. Conduct the evaluation in a formal setting but don't forget to celebrate your success and in a symbolic way mark the completion of the process. Don't forget to present the evaluation results to your organisation at one of your regular meetings. It would be good if you circle back to the expectations and worries you identified before engaging in this process and see what influence the community engagement has had on your organisation and what would you change in the future.

Achieved success is the strongest motivation because if we keep talking about our weaknesses, we will never develop self-confidence. The evaluation should focus on new knowledge and what the students were good at, considering how their strengths can be useful in situations that they didn't handle well. Also, it is important to remember that no one can be successful in everything and that we don't really need them to be. Sentences like "I developed that, but I can do better" somewhat lessen the significance of what was achieved and lead to the idea that we'll never be good enough. It is important to say we're happy and pleased without downplaying our progress. We all have our areas of expertise, our strengths and weaknesses, and it is important we accept them.

CLOSING THE MENTORSHIP PROCESS

SEeyN described the work of mentors and students by referencing the Joseph Campbell metaphor which says that we're all heroes embarking on numerous life adventures. Similarly, the mentor and the person they're mentoring are embarking on one such adventure, navigated by the student while the mentor serves as their chief assistant providing support until they reach the end of their journey together. The end is a time for celebrating success and giving tribute for all the learning, goals achieved, competencies developed and for reflecting on the journey they had together. After the final evaluation of acquired knowledge and reflecting on the mentorship process, it is important to mark the end of this relationship in a formal and symbolic manner.

Adapted from:

Hadžibegović. A. [Mentorship journey: Step by step](#), SEeyN

THANK YOU!

In the end, there are no more assignments. But there is gratitude for the time, effort and knowledge you invested in this process, as well as hope that you gained something from it. Thank you for planting dates with us and we're looking forward to the fruits of our joint labour.

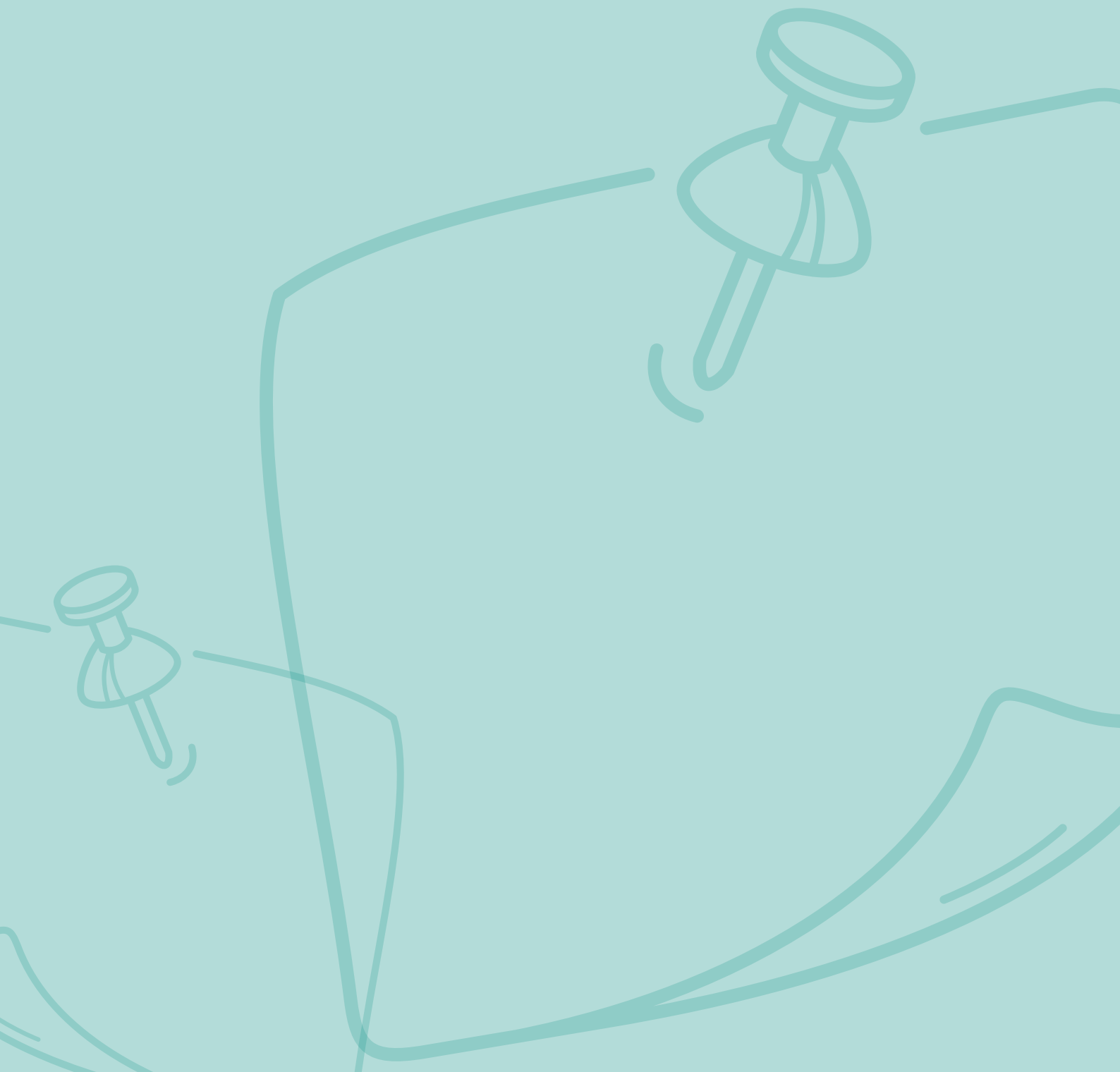
In a distant desert oasis, an old man named Elijahu was kneeling beside some date palms. His neighbour, a wealthy merchant Hakim, stopped at the oasis to water his camels when he noticed sweaty Elijahu digging in the sand.

- Hey old man, how are you? Peace be with you!*
- And with you – replied Elijahu without stopping his work.*
- What are you doing*
- I'm planting date palms.*
- Date palms? Dear friend, I think you're suffering from heatstroke. Come, let's have tea in my tent.*
- No, I have to finish planting. Later...*
- Tell me, friend, how old are you?*
- I don't know, sixty, seventy, eighty... What does it matter?*
- Listen, friend, date palms grow fifty years and only give fruit when they're fully grown. I mean you no evil, truly. I hope you live to be a hundred years old, but it's not likely you will see the fruits of those trees you're planting. Leave it, come with me.*
- Listen, Hakim, I've been eating dates which were planted by another who also couldn't have dreamed he would eat those dates. I'm planting these today so someone else may eat them tomorrow. And even if it's only to honour some stranger, my work is worth the effort.*
- You have taught me a great lesson, Elijahu. Allow me to pay you for it with this bag of gold coins.*

Jorge Bucay, Let me tell you a story

Mentor

notes



Used & recommended literature



5. Used and recommended literature

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“The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.”

- Steven Spielberg -

What is your mentor motto?

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