Study on Innovation in Youth Work – Reports of Focus Groups

1st Focus group, 27.10.2020

Participants: K, Ka, M, S, A

M: Youth worker for a long time and lately working as a freelancer. Actively exploring the connections between the digital environment and non-formal education. **Example**: activity in a training course – using virtual reality as a way to better get to know the place of the training (surroundings, city). The participants were asked to go out, take pictures and create a 360-degree picture and they could then recreate the place by using a headset made of cardboard (and using a smartphone).

K: Youth worker, working in an institute for youth development, one of the largest civil society organisations in Bosnia. The institute runs a youth centre where they run a lot of educational activities. Involved in civil society since 2002, working mostly with youth workers and not with young people. **Example**: 15 years old programme, called "Learn, Think and Act". It is adjustable for different groups. The innovative element is working with young people cross-ethnically and cross-country for one year. The best part of the innovation is the long-term approach of the programme. If you meet randomly someone who participated ten years ago, it is very easy to recognize them because of their values. Many participants have said that this was a life-changing experience for them. The programme has been adapted for different groups.

Ka: Working in an organisation. **Example**: physical tools that are used in an innovative way.

A: Running a youth organisation with a group of friends. Working with young people since 2014. He is also a trainer of young people and a mountain guide. **Example:** working with young people aged 13-14. They go to the school for almost a year, meeting the young people every or every second week. In the meantime, they apply for a youth exchange, then they take them to the exchange and afterwards they keep working with them, but in the organisation, not anymore in the classroom. In this way, they are pushing them to organise activities in the community – movie nights, game nights etc. It is innovative, because they manage to make young people active. Another aspect is that it is content-free, so they offer a frame and they ask the young people what do they want. Innovation is also that they don't wait for young people, but they go to the young people.

S: Working in a youth centre. **Example**: They launched an open youth center on discord when the lockdown started. They had 200 young people joining immediately and later, other youth centres got interested, so they started supporting them. It is difficult to moderate the work because the Internet provides anonymity and young people don't always adhere to the values that are respected in live. It is difficult to motivate young people to be active, only 30 to 50 of them got actively engaged. The project brought the older generation of youth workers closer to young people by using different digital tools than Facebook.

What was crucial for innovation to happen and to be sustained in their examples?

K: The need of young people. They couldn't meet with each other across different parts of the country. The need was recognised by the young people.

M: Innovator-driven. The trainers wanted to show to the participants something new that they didn't know. It's also part of the wider culture of youth work of sharing. What was also crucial was the provision of technology – headsets from the side of the National Agency.

A: The intervention of the teacher, who said we should do something more. The teacher contacted the youth centre. The parents, principle and other teachers supported the process, once there was an initiative coming from one person. The teacher is the main innovator.

Ka: Innovation brought by a young person who brought the blocks to the playground. She was thinking that there were probably families who didn't have access to the playground. Another factor was the lack of resources and possibilities.

S: In our case, without Covid-19 and the lockdown, it wouldn't have happened. But we immediately saw the necessity to make youth workers and communication still available for the youngsters. It was more important than ever to not lose the connection, because in those uncertain times with many sudden changes, there was a real threat of having some youngsters fade away. And to do that, it was crucial that the youth workers adapted and took a step towards youngsters and went into their space of "usual habitat". Of course, there were many youngsters for whom the platform was as new as it was to the youth workers, but the "regulars" were more than helpful to get them settled in. It was a little bit unexpected, since we didn't expect to get nationwide attention, but it was interesting to see strangers become friends, thus to this day they actively communicate on the server.

Participants rank all factors from 1 to 5 according to their importance. Facilitators provide a brief overview of the results. What other comments do you have about the composition and ranking of the factors?

A: Organisations that are the most innovative are led by a man or woman who is extraordinary.

Ka: It should still be a person who is ready to listen to young people.

K: Today it's also about influencing young people. Today, there are too many important people for young people. Being an influencer in the youth field.

Ka: That person must be ready to fight bureaucracy.

K: The director has nothing to do with innovation. He has people who know what is done around, but usually directors don't know what is happening in the youth centre.

A: There are probably two different examples. In small organisations, the director needs to be always around and to be the youth worker.

M: In the beginning, there should be a stronger leadership. If the organisation survives, then you need to establish a culture of innovation in the organisation. Getting innovative is difficult inside an established body. As the organisation grows, the founders might be against changes, and the initiative might come from young people. If the organisation is not ready for innovation, even a super innovator might be unsuccessful.

K: Sometimes, it comes from youth workers, sometimes it's expected from the management. Youth workers would probably say, the best ideas of innovation come from young people. Another question is, who is responsible to bring innovation in youth work? Do we need to have innovation if

everything goes well and the old-fashioned way is fine? So many times, young people have great ideas and we can't support them. Additionally, organisations are pushed to bring innovation with their calls for funding.

M: Building innovation culture, being open to new ideas. There are young people's needs, but there are also youth workers' needs. I don't want to do the same thing over and over again for five years. I need to go out of my comfort zone and prove to myself.

Do you have any general comments about the concept of innovation developed as part of this study? Link to jamboard to add comments/proposals for revision.

K: Maybe we should use the word "alternatives" instead of "new" in youth work. Maybe consider using this in the study.

M: Intervening in the lives of young people is a bit too much – are we really doing this? At times yes, but sometimes no. I am questioning the aim in the definition. Also, maybe not organisational models but more simply approaches.

A: The core purpose of innovation is to better address the needs of young people. Also, what is this "valuable" in the definition? I am maybe missing why innovation. Interconnectedness of different factors is crucial for innovation. If something doesn't happen, then something else won't happen etc.

Participants: L, E, J, T, A

What was crucial for innovation to happen and to be sustained in their examples?

T: Working for a youth service in Flanders for 3 years now, concentrated on youth culture – musicians, skateboarders, creating spaces. Handing empty spaces (buildings) over to young people. **Example**: They built a house with different spaces representing different aspects of youth culture. In his opinion, it is not so innovative, but it is experimental. The biggest part of the job was convincing people that it is okay to start without knowing where you are going.

L: Freelancer in Germany in a youth education center. Focused on historical work, the colonial history of Germany. **Example**: We write the narrative. Colonial history in different European countries and tackling it in European youth work. Strategic partnership project.

J: Working for a network with an aim to be an access point for young people in their region of Germany, about Europe and mobility. They are also a Europe Direct information point and a European youth education center. **Example**: Working since 2014 on digital badges as a new way of recognizing learning processes. Always trying to bring it forward and include new target groups. They developed a platform and an app, now they are developing a new platform – Cities of Learning in Europe. They were not happy with Youthpass, so they introduced the badges.

E: Working for the municipality of a small town in Finland. 30% of the work is international youth work, it started after taking part in a youth exchange. **Example**: 13 years ago, they started an international club, meeting every week. The goal is to go for an international youth project, and the project being their own idea from the beginning. This is in fact the way it should happen, but E. Does not see that it is always like that, because youth are usually presented with ready-made projects.

A: Partnership with a municipality, coordinating a youth centre.

What was crucial for innovation to happen and to be sustained in their examples?

T: Societal innovation is a crucial part in the work they are doing. They start innovating in a project trying to imagine new practices to help change society. The work starts from the interests of young people and forms their ownership of the project. Using the negative context and trying to turn it around – empty spaces in the city given back to the young people. Imagination in a cultural sense – new ways of doing things.

L: Transnational friendship and cooperation. Persistence of individuals. Lots of research done. But none of that was crucial for innovation. It was crucial for projects to be realised. So probably these are not the key things for innovation. In their project, it was crucial that activists and activist groups from outside the Erasmus+ structure came and interacted with professionals from inside Erasmus+. Another factor was that a lot of people thought that the work on this topic was needed and was missing, because there was no project that went to the bottom of racist issues. There was a big need for searching for our roots. The need came from youth workers.

T: Agreeing, a lot of successes in their project comes from people outside of the field.

J: Innovation was inspired by accumulated knowledge from observing the need over time, the need was shown by young people. The approaches were then developed by youth workers. Factors also

included the available funding schemes. Sustainability came not only from identifying the needs, but also cross-checking with others. Innovation was also learning from people who brought resistance towards the badges.

T: Recognition comes from seeing how others replicate the practices in other contexts.

E: There was another youth worker who started the process and it would not have been possible without him. "There is a lot of me, a lot has to do with the personal input from me as a youth worker, I am always trying to think out of the box." The boss is very supportive, and this is another factor, there is an atmosphere that supports innovation. The NA is also very supportive, they are not bureaucratic.

T: Keeping the politicians out of the process, leaving it to young people. Young people need some kind of free space, and in the best case, youth workers as well, because if you want to do it right, you will do it together and at their tempo.

L: There was a lot of support in the application process from the NA before they applied. Now the NA is more rigid. They had a lot of ideas but the NA was very rigid and strict, they wished to have more space for creativity and flexibility. The idea or the need was created in this moment by a small group of youth workers, but then outside people came with different backgrounds – people of color, who now represent about 75% of the team members. Innovation is in the profile of the people implementing the work.

T: What we are missing is giving a seat on the table to people who are usually not reached. To succeed, we need a large and diverse community. We should widen it.

Participants rank all factors from 1 to 5 according to their importance. Facilitators provide a brief overview of the results. What other comments do you have about the composition and ranking of the factors?

J: Innovation in youth work has a lot to do with the risk of failing. "Having the ideas and identifying needs is not enough, I would also add a kind of safety net." There are a lot of ideas but to turn them into innovation, there needs to be a safe frame of how innovation can work – having funding, supportive colleagues, participants giving you the frame to try new things.

T: Giving some freedom, margins to try. Innovation is harder if you need to promise results. In our case we had to convince the politicians that we don't know what we are doing, but it will be great. We need to have more possibilities, have freedom and supportive framework. You should expect some form of result, but there is a range of what the result should be. There should be a balance between freedom and specific numbers. You need some form of proof. Results – starting from the needs of young people and then providing a report at the end.

Do you have any general comments about the concept of innovation developed as part of this study? Link to jamboard to add comments/proposals for revision.

T: The link with society and social change is missing a bit.

J: Is "intervening" the right word? Isn't it also about intervening for the benefit of young people? What is missing is the benefit, the interest of young people.

Participants: G, B, W, S, M, M, I

B: Living in Denmark, working in Sweden. Creative initiatives focused on design, arts, etc. They are an NGO funded by the municipality. **Example**: On organisational level. They always worked on grassroots level. Since last year, they have tried to stress the idea of participatory culture, letting other people take and run initiatives in a format that they like. They have about 30 - 35 initiatives, mostly run by young people, some successful, some are catastrophes.

G: Founder of an NGO. **Example**: They have developed social innovation t-guides. Young people are hired to train seniors on ICT. They have worked with 25 in Sweden and they have trained about 300 young immigrants and taught about 10000 seniors.

W: From Belgium, small youth organisation, using art as a tool to express themselves. **Example**: Music on wheels, mobile recording studio. Focused on vulnerable youth for whom it is difficult to go to their organisation. They visit them where they live and record music together. Also doing an international project. It is based on a known mobile school idea, just adapted to music.

M: Coming from Bosnia, working for a local NGO, working on prevention of addiction, trying to take a more creative approach instead of just presentations. **Example**: Intercity theatre project, collecting young people from different towns to a seven-day camp in Sarajevo. It is a project where they can learn about acting and do theatre plays together, but in the meantime, they get information about addiction prevention. The plays can be connected to additions, but also to other relevant youth issues. It is innovative because they involve young people from different towns to do one play, and then it is replicated in each town.

I: From the Netherlands, working for an organisation in a small city. **Example**: They have many volunteers and they organise activities themselves. They all start on the same level and the organisation supports them on the way. There is also a youth centre where they can organise activities and are being coached.

M: Working as a training manager for a regional network seated in Bosnia. **Example**: Making synergies of approaches from different sectors and mixing them with youth work. One example is design thinking from the entrepreneurship field that is used in project design and training development. Another example is the Hero's journey from literature and film, which they combine with mentorship in youth work. Another example is digital youth work, adapting digital tools and different apps that are not primarily used in youth work, but are turned into methods for their own needs. The last example is using social innovation of young people for reconciliation in the Balkans.

S: Coming from Sweden, based on a camp, coming from a small "dysfunctional" organisation. Very ambitious with Erasmus+ and ESC. Not sure why they were chosen, not really a youth worker, not sure what is new and innovative. **Example**: They live on a farm, secluded from civilization. They share everything and build connections with each other. It often fails, but it is a method that can fail sometimes. Youth need chaos and in chaos they can be heroes, they can go in and create order. Working in nature, building everything themselves. They were probably chosen by the NA because they use live action role playing games. They have a fantasy land and several times a year they go into these "Lord of the Rings" or "Game of Thrones" lands. It might seem like playing games, but there is a lot there.

What was crucial for innovation to happen and to be sustained in their examples?

I: That all volunteers participate actively.

G: The needs are identified.

S: Sometimes youth are not aware of their needs. It is a challenge every time to encourage volunteers to be actively involved.

M: Youth might not know their needs, but it is more that they are not able to vocalise and frame them.

G: It is the youth workers' knowledge that you have to hang out with the youngsters to gain understanding of their needs, to figure out creative ways of identifying the needs.

M: In their case, they focused a lot on culture-driven innovation. They are very open and they encourage innovation. In their pool of experts, they have trainers, researchers and innovators, which is not very common. It helps a lot to have this kind of approach and management to support their members in the network.

G: They have trained the trainers from the group. After one year they could be the leaders. All participants are coming from the organisation, from among themselves.

S: He had no clue of the culture of Erasmus+ 6-7 years ago. It was a great learning opportunity and personal development for him as a trainer. Now, this is benefiting the participants. In their case, it is innovator-driven. They are motivated by actually having fun and wanting to achieve something. Often they are even working for free. What helps him to keep motivation is positive feedback from participants.

M: Innovation often comes from necessity. In her case, it is individual driven and also culture driven. If you need to present something boring to young people, you need to find a creative way of doing it. Culture is important, to provide you the space to make mistakes and not be fired. When you feel positive feedback from young people, that makes you keep going.

W: Opportunity from the organisation to do innovative projects with young people, so it is the cultural argument. They are also process oriented, instead of focused on the product, and this is very important for innovation to take place. It is important that the entire group believes that innovation can happen. That is how innovation can be sustained, also when it gets more difficult.

B: They were looking at Internet culture when doing innovation, especially the open source culture. They were trying to find new ways of organising youth activities, beyond the old, democratic ways. People's movements are historically very important, but this is old-fashioned and they had to find new ways of attracting new people. They have a lot in common with the community, which is self-organised, and they have the concept of co-living. They were looking at other groups when thinking of different new participatory approaches.

G: Sustainable partnership is also important, so that you are not alone in making social change – since doing social change is a lot of work.

S: It is a constant search for reliable partners.

M: Innovation should be organic, so that you can keep building it and bringing in new people. It also comes with the open source thing, since it should be a living organism.

G: You also need to have "muscles" to keep up and improve what you are doing. You cannot do the same thing and you have to innovate new ways. There is a need to do more to keep up the quality.

S: The NA is really demanding to be progressive and seek new ways and new methods, looking for new ideas, hopefully coming bottom-up.

W: The eagerness to grow, which drives organisations to be better. They work a lot with disadvantaged young people and for them it is very difficult to participate. Safety in one's life is important to take on challenges. Self-esteem is needed to innovate, because when you innovate you take risks. People might stop in the middle of the innovation process because of the risk of failure. A climate is needed.

B: Creating safe rooms, but also challenging rooms, finding the balance to make it safe enough for people to dare but still be challenged.

S: As a youth worker, I have a problem with this balance. How much can I demand from participants? I approach young people with great expectation and sometimes young people get scared from too much expectation.

I: To feel responsible for the project and to have ownership.

W: The structure of the society, the tendencies. For example, if the government decided not to fund youth projects any more. So, it is the climate.

S: It is fascinating to have projects in countries that have more conservative governments, and in different social contexts.

Do you have any general comments about the concept of innovation developed as part of this study? Link to jamboard to add comments/proposals for revision.

S: What we are looking for is impact. The definition just says "intervening in the lives of young people", but should the definition also express that we are looking for impact?

G: You can work in an innovative way or innovative organisation, but that doesn't mean you are creating innovation. Innovation should be something unique.

B: Rather good way to frame it. Just a gut feeling. We talk a lot about innovation, but innovation could also be about sustainability.

G: Innovation should be about social problems in some way.

S: Why do we need to be innovative? Maybe the methods are all out there? There is probably innovation to go back and find old ways of doing things. What's the point of always re-inventing things?

G: You have to twist them then, to adapt them.

M: Whenever we work with this kind of innovation, people say yeah, it's a nice idea, but probably it already exists somewhere. They don't realise that for us, for our context it doesn't exist, and for us it will change something, it will make an impact.

M: She likes the definition, but would add that it really depends on the context, taking into consideration the context where the methodology is taking place. About the impact – young people are exposed to many other factors, and it is difficult to say what makes the change in young people's life, the project or something else. That's why it is difficult to measure the impact. So, it depends on the context – the context, target groups should be taken into account.

S: Whatever ambition we have as leaders, the participants will always come with a sub-agenda – to have fun, to find a place in the group to be expected, and romance.

I: Why should innovation have the potential to be used in other fields?

G: Should it be also about learning something new? Also, evaluation, that it needs to be evaluated.

M: Iteration – trying new things, failing or succeeding, learning from that, going back etc.

S: Accept feedback, and be aware of the feedback you are receiving, and from there re-evaluating your approach.

Participants: S, K, M, A, J

S: Coming from Estonia, a sports psychologist, also working for an NGO. **Example**: Sport intervention programme for youth at risk. Kids and young adults play football and through sports, they teach life skills – self-management skills, communication, resolving conflicts etc.

J: Director of an organisation based in Germany. YEPP Europe Network of marginalised communities and youth organisations from 19 countries, focuses on youth and youth empowerment. Runs capacity building programmes. **Example**: "Welcomeship" programme, creating a welcome culture and entrepreneurship designed for migrants and refugees. Erasmus+ partnership involving seven countries, learning model for community-based entrepreneurship to foster inclusion in the communities and to reposition young migrants and refugees from passive victims to active members.

M: Working in a foundation in Finland. Responsible councilor in a culture house. Working in the mental health field, the foundation has 5 culture houses all over Finland. **Example**: Guided functional peer support. Mental health rehabilitators are running the activities, and they work as support. They use different creative methods, arts and culture. The goal is to reduce stigmatisation related to mental health.

A: Comes from Italy, working in the field of youth work since 1998. Started an NGO and has led an international network since 2008. Representing both local and international organisations. The aim is to promote the development of young people. **Example**: Youth work needs to get engaged with other sectors, particularly with the entrepreneurial sector. They created a new model of youth worker, taking competencies of an entrepreneur. They think that youth workers sometimes fail because they don't get competences from other fields. Another example is "Get addicted with sport values", aimed at supporting youth workers to work with youngsters to prevent any kind of addictions. Starting with kids, involving teachers, parents and coaches.

K: From Sweden, founder and director of an NGO, doing different things to empower young people – entrepreneurship, escape rooms etc. **Example**: A way for including young people that are usually not involved in entrepreneurship activities, to reach the people who are usually at the back of the class. They collect dreams from the class pupils and someone else is fulfilling the dream of another person. When the dream is fulfilled, they are asked if they want to do the same for someone else. The method is now developed in a Strategic Partnership.

What was crucial for innovation to happen and to be sustained in their examples?

K: It was first crucial to see a need. They saw in other programmes that they did not manage to involve the people they wanted to involve. It is hard to come up with innovation if you don't have experience in the field.

S: They managed to start off with the programme because they got a request from the government, and the request came from a need of young people – there were not many interventions and there was space for intervention that was not available, so it was a context-driven factor.

A: For sure, the project was first context driven, because it came from a need that is observed concerning society that is changing, where young people are more exposed to opportunities but they do not know how to catch them. On the other hand, it could also be on the side of the

organisational culture, because youth work is changing mentality. Many youth workers have their own structure. Or it could be all of these factors interconnected with each other.

J: It was clearly context-driven in the first place, a response to a situation of social exclusion, stigmatisation etc. What we wanted to achieve is that young people go through this programme and develop entrepreneurial ideas. The group did not only include migrants and refugees, but also other local young people. It was about community-based entrepreneurship, it started with a situational analysis of the community, and to base the entrepreneurial ideas of young people on the needs that exist in the community. The activities were done with stakeholders from different other fields, and this element was important.

M: They have needs in their environment, and they wanted to reduce stigmatisation. They started empowering the cultural network in their community to fight against the problems. They wanted to change, to fight against the problem.

Do you have any general comments about the concept of innovation developed as part of this study? Link to jamboard to add comments/proposals for revision.

J: The notion of scalability is very important, and maybe it could be emphasized a bit more - the potential to be used by others in the field. This is a strategic element of innovation; it should be designed in a way that many people can use it afterwards. Often, results in Erasmus+ projects, for example, are made available for others to use, but nobody really knows about them. It is important because often, innovation ends up on a shelf. From the very beginning, it needs to be part of the strategy, how we can bring it closer to as many organisations and people as possible.

A: It has to be visible and recognized. We have a lot of tools, but sometimes we create new tools when there are some that are already there. Probably it is not up to us but there should be a way to make them visible and to be really recognized. The existing platforms for projects are not enough and sometimes we lose a lot of time for things that are already created and running. There are a lot of similar things, so one could start with something that is already available and then add innovation to it.

K: It's quite comprehensive, not much to add, just to reinforce the aspect of scalability.

J: Sometimes, I also feel it should not be an end of itself. Sometimes, organisations are doing fantastic jobs and they should keep doing what they are doing, instead of trying to think of designing something that is innovative. It is quite well explained in the definition that is not just about that, about doing new things.

K: In Sweden, we have this big fund, and a criterium for applying for support is that it has to be something totally new. But we are already doing great things and there is no support to keep up what we are doing.

Note by **Federica**: It is also important how donors define innovation, when they ask for innovation. Also, innovation takes a long time to develop, and youth projects are often not funded for so long.

Participants: J, K, K

J: From Portugal, president of an NGO for social economy. Based in a small village, which has the usual obstacles and challenges of a small place. Their role is to support developments in many areas, working with the municipality, trying to focus the work on the main issues that the community struggles with. Youth work is the most important part of their work. **Example**: A big project built on innovation in youth work. The objective is to build a growing community, going a bit deeper, moving from the concept to the practical level – a local educational ecosystem. They created a network of all organisations in the village – business, public institutions, youth, craftworkers etc. The network is a "Spark" community that can be used for education: Every time teachers need to teach a class, they can do it in an institution that works in that field. Because young people don't have knowledge of the place where they are living. So, the community supports the education of young people, so that they can be part of the community.

K: Living in Belgium, working for a youth NGO that is active in big cities in Flanders. Active in more difficult parts of the cities. They are not only focused on youth work and free time activities, but also mix with other domains that are important for young people – education, culture, welfare etc. Used to work for the NA in Flanders. They are a city lab, a lab where many difficult things can be started. **Example**: Working cross-sectoral, and this is where a lot of innovative projects begin. Active in competence-based youth work, convinced that people are learning in youth work, and they try to prove the impact. Another example is a multimedia tool that youth can use to take pictures of public spaces and then express their feelings on how they feel in their neighborhood. Also a project with education – young people that have a hard time to go to school, who study part-time. They also give them volunteering possibilities.

K: From Ljubljana, leading an organisation that has four youth centers, a mobile youth center, street workers and other programmes. **Example**: Making a mobile youth centre from an old bus. There is a strategy about youth work and they have the possibility to discuss with policy makers in the city. They heard in a meeting that 17 buses will be trashed and they asked if they can get one bus to create a mobile youth centere with young people, because there are not enough spaces for young people in Ljubljana. They delivered only mentorship to the young people. They had an open call, selected 14 young people and researched what they are missing in the city. Then they discussed how they can make a place to hang out from the old bus.

What was crucial for innovation to happen and to be sustained in their examples?

K: All factors were important. The idea itself was really important, there was a lot of passion around it. The second important element was the participatory element of leadership. The process of working together is more important than the result itself. They had the trust that results will come. Really important was also that they created partnerships with very different stakeholders. On the one hand, they are a small youth NGO, on the other hand, there was a big public transportation company, and also partners from the creative industry. The knowledge that they brought from the youth field was very important, because they focused on the process and on the values. Resources were also important for this innovation: financial support from the municipality. And that the municipality also understood the need that the project addressed, the lack of spaces and programmes of young people in some parts of the city.

K: The importance of the participative process. It is important that people are involved so that they can keep using it afterwards. There are many examples of innovation that we see people are not

using anymore. Partnerships are also an important aspect for their organisation, especially with organisations coming from different sectors. Finally, there is need for financial support. If you want to develop things and be innovative, you need to have time and pay people, and also to develop the tools. Usually we have money to create the tool, but then the funding stops and you do not have money to keep implementing it. You have to be able to experiment, to have time to reflect and think of which is the next step you need to take. It is also important for us that we are in a city where we see a lot of challenges – when we are challenged, we are motivated to become innovative.

J: Concept-driven innovation, if we imagine the things that happen in creative or design thinking processes, sometimes it comes from just one word. In the case of our project it came from one word. Then through participatory approaches, we started from the end, from the brand to go back to how it could be useful. Everything started from the spark. Other factors are the ability and capacity to observe reality and have a picture of what is going on. This continuous diagnosis helps us understand things that do not fit with the tools that are available. The fact that we are independent and outsiders, we can see how we can connect dots. The vision from the outside, as external observers, sometimes brings very good value to find solutions for the problems. So, the context-driven factors were the most important. Inside the organisation, the work structure is not conventional. From experience we discovered that in a big organisation, as the structure is growing, the amount of energy and money spent on management takes up 35 – 40 percent of the resources. Sometimes it is too much and there is imbalance between resources and impact. We tried to rebuild an organisation that could avoid that amount of effort and money on administration. Everyone starts as a volunteer, and they can work on the ideas that they have. This is culture-driven, since inside the organisation we create an atmosphere, an environment for everyone to be creative. The last factor is about the target group, youth. We always build our projects around three pillars: the things they want, the things they need, and the most pressing troubles of the society.

K: For us it is very important that we are innovative. What is preventing innovation is the expectation that the stakeholders that are providing money are asking for results. It is difficult to balance between being innovative and assuring results. In the past, we had more freedom to innovate. Innovation also is something that originates from doing. We innovate to give answers to the challenges young people are facing.

Do you have any general comments about the concept of innovation developed as part of this study? Link to jamboard to add comments/proposals for revision.

J: Sometimes, a new methodology or new tools do not make the same thing faster, better, cheaper etc. Sometimes, if a thing is novel, it doesn't mean it is better. I know it is innovation, but it doesn't make sense if it is worse. There should be objectives that show improvement.

K: The definition is perfect because it is used within this study, not as an absolute. Agreeing that it should be some kind of improvement. If something is new, it doesn't mean that it is better, so that should be somehow included in the definition.

J: To add "positively" intervening in the lives of young people. To improve the condition of young people, how we can support them to be happy.

K: Innovation also has some impact on the rest of the society, not just on young people, so also the community. The quality of life of the local community is improving.

J: Sometimes, that wider impact is inevitable – the families and other groups will benefit from it.

Participants: N, Z, C, L

C: From Portugal, has been working with the city of Braga for 9 years, managing the youth department. At the moment managing a social innovation centre, focused on generation Y and young people in transition to active life. Working within the network of European Youth Capitals. In 2015, they started a KA2 project, a quality label for youth friendly cities. New concept "impact youth work". **Example**: Youth power hubs, impact on young people.

Z: Lives in Lithuania, background in youth work, but not calling himself a youth worker. Still doing activities with youth in the neighborhood, programme management, encouraging cooperation with schools on volunteering. **Example**: Board game about community development. In cooperation with young people they created a game on intercultural learning. It's a mixed community.

N: From the Netherlands, leading a social enterprise. Extending school out of the school. **Example**: Energy transition, with 200 people they helped to make the transition that the government could not make.

L: National coordinator of the Portuguese Red Cross youth department. **Example**: A board game as an educational tool developed in a KA2 project together with young volunteers and youth workers, to raise awareness of social issues.

What was crucial for innovation to happen and to be sustained in their examples?

Z: The context was very important. Working in a very small NGO, there is a lot of flexibility to react to the needs, discover the needs of the community and develop something in a short time. The management is very horizontal and they feel very equal and it's easy to propose new ideas. Another thing is previous knowledge, he had great motivation to develop such a board game because in his neighborhood there are people who cannot communicate with each other.

N: The organisational model, as a social enterprise they are fast in their youth work. The structure is horizontal. When the hierarchy is great, it takes youth workers a lot of work and time to implement their ideas. They are also a small organisation. In big organisations, there is not much innovation, they just keep doing the same.

C: They do not consider innovation the same as development. The understand innovation as a process that combines three factors: feasibility, visibility, sustainability. Young people do not understand innovation as a process. It should be data and research-based. They also try to prepare the market for the youth field to be prepared. Also working with the young people who would use the innovation. Then social innovation is about knowledge, society and impact. Innovation based on solving problems is very close to social innovation. Promote the access of young people to new technologies to solve problems. Innovation is a result of the alignment of the sectors. You could be problem oriented, development oriented. Social innovation is always driven by solving problems. Organisations that have innovation mindsets are fundamental for innovation to happen. We need organisations that foster this kind of mindset. You need to have feasibility institutes, understand the youth work sector and young people.

L: Innovator-driven factors, highlighting the team – youth workers, young people and partner organisations. The team was made of young people, with innovative mindsets, motivated to do things differently. The project was youth-led. Also, the organisational culture of the Red Cross is very

supportive of youth work, open to ideas and new projects, freedom to propose. It was a funded project, which made resources and findings possible. But it was possible, because the Red Cross supported it from the start. The context-based factor is that it came at a time when board games were already fashionable, and that they involved young people from the beginning.

N: Their organisation had people in the team who had different backgrounds, not only from the youth work field.

Z: The funding scheme, because the creation of the board game was funded by a private donor. They show trust in the organisation and they do not demand clear results. It is easy then to burn money because they can experiment and try out new ideas.

Do you have any general comments about the concept of innovation developed as part of this study? Link to jamboard to add comments/proposals for revision.

C: They developed two games, but the question is whether they are available for the young people in Europe or not. For it to be innovation, the market and young people should ask for it. If something is done only with a small specific group, if it does not become a trend, then it is not innovation. Innovation is when something that is developed in a small group is adopted on a national level. The market needs to be behind the innovation, and young people should also request it. "Recognized" is not enough. Otherwise it is just development, not innovation. There is a relation between social innovation and youth work. Everyone talks about innovation, and then you take innovation and you stick it to other things. Innovation is when something is developed that is really needed by young people, and then it is adopted as a policy. For example, when there is a movement for young people to vote when they turn 16, and then the governments accept it.

Participants: S, A, I, E, M

E: Living in Germany, working as a deputy director of an association, responsible for the field of inclusion and diversity. Working in international youth work for 15 years. The organisation is working on inclusion, sustainability, contemporary history and human rights. **Example**: Existing for 15 years, model of international criminal court. Simulation on the level of the university, a worldwide activity. Young people meet and for the last part they meet to discuss. The innovation is that they wrote a KA2 project, they developed movies, educational materials and trainings. It is very successful, the page of the project is visited by thousands of people. Now they applied for a follow-up project.

S: From Slovenia, working for an NGO, involved in youth work for 12 years, for the last 3 years as a professional youth worker. They work on civic education, youth initiatives, finding a personal mission, also multimedia and gamification. **Example**: This year, they launched an educational escape room, with youth for youth. They worked on human rights through an escape room.

A: Coming from Italy. Involved in the youth field for the last 20 years, so quite sensible to changes and new environments and how young people interact not only among each other but also on an intergenerational level. **Example**: Community urban gardening, started through Grundtvig, and in this way emerging new leaders got involved, not to grow vegetables but to "cultivate" people. They invented a name for this called "gardenizer". So, they are also establishing it as a vocational profile. Most are young people, deciding to invest their studies in this, even most of them as volunteers. They are following this process with the support of European programmes.

M: From Berlin, working in an association implementing many things, mainly focused on open youth work – youth centres, mobile youth work. Always trying to find new ideas and innovations. **Example**: They were put in a situation at the beginning of the year to try something new – a virtual youth centre. It was challenging but they managed. Also a youth exchange series on music and art.

What was crucial for innovation to happen and to be sustained in their examples?

E: All three groups of factors. The cultural factor is important. They are six people working in the organisation and they keep innovating. This is also supported by their organisation. There is a free spirit in their organisation and whatever they come up with, it will be supported. A very big potential is also the exchange with people coming from different contexts and countries. It is also connected to the innovator-driven factor – the free minded attitude, the free spirit. The context as well – whatever happens in the society connected to their topics of work is something they are working on – providing social change. If I see that my inclusion projects are changing my young people's lives, it keeps me going.

A: Innovation comes from the people and from the context, but we have to intervene to make it visible. Because they themselves were not aware that it is innovation. The impact of the context was the continuation of innovation thanks to the impact. The intercultural exchange that is happening – different experiences, ages, subcultures. They did not recognize the potential of what they were doing. You can experiment with something that you cannot try out in society. Everything they are doing counts a lot for the little part of society. At the same time, in the limited space they are trying and testing new social rules. In this case the innovation was started by "community makers".

M: We do not create projects to be innovative. We see the youngsters, their needs, and based on that think about how to make it possible to achieve some goals. The music project was to learn

about human rights, not to make music. It was happening together with young people, not made only by the youth workers. So, the young people were not only participants, but also partners in the project. Also, in the youth centre, it is very informal, there is no obligation to come, and for this reason all activities are always developed for the youngsters there. At school, you have to follow some curricula, but for us it is more important that young people make activities for the virtual youth centre. As a leader of the association, I had the financial need to do something. We get funds per working hours with young people. But this is only one part of the story. In our case, the youngsters really want to work together. It is a very poor neighborhood, so for us it was important to keep in contact with them. For this reason, we started to even extend the working time. We tried to do virtual and interactive things. Based on that experience, we created an international virtual youth centre. So there was a need and the relation with the young people got even closer.

E: In youth work, we are not thinking about innovation, we think about our job. We are not thinking, oh, what can we innovate?

S: In our case, the important thing was that I got an opportunity to play and try, even if I fail. I tried, it was a success and I continued working on it. It also comes from my passion; I am passionate about escape rooms. When I talk about escape rooms, people want to create things together with me. I saw an example of an educational escape room and I saw a conflict between the game and the educational impact, so I decided to work on something like that. I involved young people in the process, choosing the topic with them, creating the room with them. An escape room is also an attractive thing and you get a very wide audience. We chose the topic based on a survey. To sustain it, the importance was to have it recognised it as a good thing, by the local community and the National Agency.

M: It is also the support from the donors. If you have the kind of donation that offers you a budget, some free money that you can use, that you can make mistakes, not to get punished. For example, our youth centtr is quite a big one. In 2015, when the migration started, there was a refugee camp in the neighborhood. So we changed the name of the youth centre into "international youth centre" to show a positive approach to working with the refugees as well. This was easy to do without additional funding, but it was important that the municipality was open minded about the idea.

Do you have any general comments about the concept of innovation developed as part of this study? Link to jamboard to add comments/proposals for revision.

E: I do not like the word intervening, since it has a negative connotation. Something like "having an impact" is more positive.

A: It is not only about intervening in the life of young people, but in terms of empowering them to do something for the community now, not in the future. Politically we keep considering young people as doing something in the future, and we need to speak about them finding their place in the community now.

E: Engagement should be part of it – to be engaged, to be active.

Additional input from I in the chat:

The Centre for Career development has existed for 10 years and the biggest lesson that we learned is that innovation is the only way to succed. Our innovation is based on business and a marketing approach to our projects. This means our project is our product. One of the examples is our "Career diary". This is a multifunctional diary, with a set of tools for better understanding and learning

different areas that we work through. Until now we have developed a Career diary for different projects (in area of IT, media, entrepeneurship). We distribute it to our participants as one of the outputs of the project. Second, we noticed that youth likes modern names of the projects. Of course, the most important thing is to have good quality of activities. But the presentation of the activities is ticket to participants, for better networiking and connections. For example, the name of our workshops is CV Clinic (instead of name it: How to write your CV), Hot chair (10 questions in your first job interview).