Study on Innovation in Youth Work – Focus Group and Survey Questions

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself and share your personal example of innovation.

2. What was crucial for innovation to happen and to be sustained in this example?

3. The factors proposed by the participants are added to a Padlet document. The participants rank all factors from 1 to 5 according to their importance. The facilitators provide a brief overview of the results. What other comments do you have about the composition and ranking of the factors?

4. Do you have any general comments about the concept of innovation developed as a part of this study? The participants are provided with a link to a Jamboard containing the proposed definition of innovation, where they can add comments/proposals for revision.

Survey Questions

Welcome slide

Welcome! You have been invited to complete this survey, and your readiness to take the time to support this project is very much appreciated!

This survey is part of a research project carried out in the framework of the European Academy on Youth Work (EAYW), a long term project aiming to support innovative approaches in response to current developments and trends related to youth work and youth work policy across Europe.

Over 160 professionals from the European youth work community of practice took part in the 1st edition of the EAYW in May 2019 in Slovenia. The 2nd edition of the EAYW is planned for November 2021. We are looking forward to using the findings from this research there, as a basis for joint reflection about what is needed to further support innovative approaches and quality in youth work.

The EAYW partnership includes the National Agencies for Erasmus+, youth field, and the European Solidarity Corps of Austria, Belgium (FL), Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden and The Netherlands and the SALTO-YOUTH Resources Centres network. More information: www.eayw.net.

Introduction

As innovation in youth work, within this study, we understand demonstrated methodologies, practices, tools, ways of approaching target groups, or organizational models that have novel elements, that are upgrades of existing practices, or are completely new to the youth field or to a particular context, and that enable youth work to better address the needs of young people, positively impact their lives, and/or contribute to a wider social change.

This definition of innovation in youth work is an outcome of a desk review and 7 focus groups with youth workers, which have already been completed. These research activities also provided indication of some of the factors that can play a role in supporting or hindering innovation in youth work. The purpose of this survey is to validate those findings and to explore their importance in more depth.

Within the survey, you will be asked to respond to 15 questions. When responding to the questions, please think from the perspective of a concrete experience you have had with innovation in youth work, as defined above.

Please note that all questions that include ranking have five options. On some screens you may need to scroll right to see all possible options.

1. **In which country is your organisation based?**

A Belgium	E Germany	I Slovenia
B Bosnia and Herzegovina	F Italy	J Sweden
C Estonia	G Lithuania	K The Netherlands
D Finland	H Portugal	L Other

2. How do you define your working community?

A Capital city
B Big city
C Medium city
D Small town
E Rural area

3. Which term best describes the profile of your organisation?

A Youth organisation
B Organisation working with young people
C Public institution
D Private foundation
E Other

4. Which sentence best describes the structure of your organisation?

A Mostly horizontal structure with shared leadership
B Combination of hierarchical and horizontal structure (e.g. hierarchical structure with shared leadership)
C Clear hierarchical structure with strong leadership

5. Which sentence best describes the financial sustainability of your organisation?

A Having guaranteed multi-annual funding mainly from public sources
B Having guaranteed multi-annual funding mainly from private sources
C Having guaranteed annual funding
D Depending on different projects
E Fundraising/ Self-sustainable activities
F I don't know/ I cannot answer

Introduction to the next part

In the next part, you will be asked to evaluate the importance of different factors in supporting innovation in youth work. Within this study, we are differentiating between two groups of factors: triggers and conditions.

Triggers are the factors that provide the initial push to innovation and motivate the youth worker or the organisation to launch the process of innovation. In youth work, they act as catalysts of the process of innovation.

The next three questions assess the importance of different triggers that we have identified so far. They are organised in three levels: individual, organisational and contextual.

6. **From your concrete experience with innovation, assess the importance of the following individual level factors for initiating the process of innovation. (1 - not important, 5 - very important)**

- Desire of the youth worker to create something new
- Having a new idea, or an idea to do something differently
- Going through a certain experience, such as participation in a training process

7. **From your concrete experience with innovation, assess the importance of the following organisational level factors for initiating the process of innovation. (1 - not important, 5 - very important)**

- An organisational need to change practices or come up with new approaches
- Conducting a structured process aimed at innovation
- Crisis in the organisation that requires innovation to be overcome
- Receiving a grant that demands innovation from the organisation

8. **From your concrete experience with innovation, assess the importance of the following organisational level factors for initiating the process of innovation. (1 - not important, 5 - very important)**

- Unmet individual or community needs, such as needs of young people
- Major social changes and developments
- Crisis situations and unexpected events, such as Covid-19 pandemic or economic crisis
- Push for innovation coming from policy makers
- Funding opportunities that support or demand innovation
- Developments in other sectors
- Ideas/proposals coming from community members outside of the youth field (teachers/parents)

Introduction to the next part

Conditions are the second group of factors that support innovation in youth work. Unlike the triggers, they may not directly push innovation to happen, but they are responsible for creating a climate favourable to innovation. These factors play a crucial role in making innovation possible and in sustaining a process that leads to an innovative outcome in youth work.

The next three questions assess the importance of the conditions that we have identified so far. They are organised in three levels: individual, organisational and contextual.

9. **From your concrete experience with innovation, assess the importance of the following individual level factors for enabling and sustaining the process of innovation. (1 - not important, 5 - very important)**

- Youth workers possessing certain competencies that are needed for the process of innovation.
- Youth workers having an innovative mindset – having an open mind and free spirit, being flexible, practicing divergent thinking.
- Youth workers having adequate experience in the area of work in which the innovation process is launched.
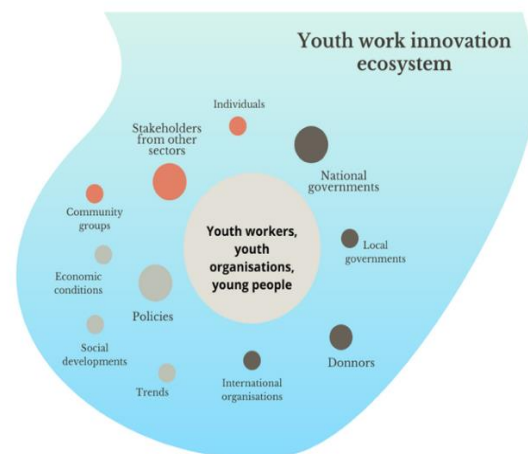
10. **From your concrete experience with innovation, assess the importance of the following organisational level factors for enabling and sustaining the process of innovation. (1 - not important, 5 - very important)**

- Organisation providing frame, space and adequate time for creativity and innovation
- Organisation that has a horizontal structure and management
- Organisation supporting experimentation and space to fail without consequences
- Capacity building activities for the staff
- Organisation nurturing a culture of sharing
- High level of participation of the young people in the organisational structure

11. **From your concrete experience with innovation, assess the importance of the following contextual level factors for enabling and sustaining the process of innovation. (1 - not important, 5 - very important)**

- Support for innovation from parents, schools and other social actors
- Cross-sectorial work and partnerships
- Recognition from the community and the relevant institutions
- Public bodies and policy makers that are supportive to innovation
- Stable funding that is not conditioned upon concrete outcomes
- International programs supportive to innovation
- Social trends that are supportive to the process of innovation
- Supportive youth work policy
- Cultural aspects that are supportive to innovation

12. **Within this study, we see innovation in youth work happening in an environment created by an interplay of various conditions, stakeholders and relations between them. Altogether, they form an ecosystem that can enable a climate favourable to the development of innovation in youth work. For illustration, see the image on the right. On a scale from 1 to 5, how favourable to innovation would you say is the youth work ecosystem that you are part of?**


13. **From your concrete experience with innovation, assess the importance of the different factors that hinder innovation (make innovation difficult to happen).**

- Lack of relevant competences of the youth workers
- Lack of understanding regarding the process of innovation
- Lack of time needed for innovation
- Lack of stable funding
- Being dependent on funds that require concrete outcomes and indicators

- Lack of support from public bodies
- Resistance to change
- Organisational culture not supportive to innovation

14. In the model shown on the right, innovation in youth work is seen as a function between the factors that you assessed before - triggers and conditions. According to this model, the more supporting conditions and the more triggers exist in the ecosystem, the higher is the probability that more and more impactful innovations will happen. To what extent is this true for your concrete experience with innovation in youth work? (1 - not at all, 5 - fully true)
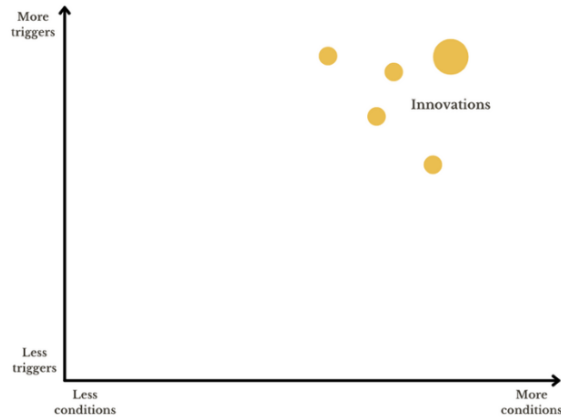
15. Please briefly describe the reasons for your rating in the previous question.