European Academy on Youth Work

INNOVATION+ TOOLBOX

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Introduction

Welcome to the Innovation+ Toolbox! This resource has been created within the framework of the European Academy on Youth Work (EAYW) to support you in bringing more innovation to your Erasmus+ projects – and elsewhere in your work. So, if you are in the middle of planning or implementing your project, and you are curious to see how you can refresh it, then this Toolbox is for you!

The central part of the Toolbox is a selection of various tools that can be used to reinforce innovation throughout the project planning and implementation. It's like a menu that offers a few different options for each step of the innovative project development, and it does not need to be read from the beginning to the end. Start with the tools that make the most sense for your reality.

The Toolbox offers more – an introduction to innovation in youth work, tips to make your organisation more innovative, and red and green flags to look out for. Have a look at these as well, ideally with the other members of your team, since more than one person needs to be on board for innovation to happen.

As you explore the Toolbox and test the different methods, keep in mind that innovation is about experimentation. So, give yourself more than one trial and be patient – while also having fun in the process! If you are curious to discover even more about the innovation process in youth work, feel free to check the study on Innovation in Youth Work, which was created within the framework of the European Academy on Youth Work, and used as a background document in creating this Toolbox.

1

Innovation in Youth Work

At the EAYW, we're all about spicing up youth work with a dash of innovation! So, what's this "innovation in youth work" all about? Well, it's not just about inventing brand-new stuff; it's mostly about improving what we've got and tailoring solutions to unique contexts.

When we talk about innovation in youth work, we're considering how young people can be the architects of change alongside youth workers and other stakeholders. It's about how we get there, and the path is just as crucial as the destination.

Innovation can range from simple techniques and tools to bigger-scale approaches and organisational changes. But here's the trick: it's not about shiny new complicated solutions; it's about delivering real value and agency to young people and their communities. It's also about addressing needs and challenges and making positive changes in society. In youth work, the innovation journey involves a lively ecosystem with youth workers, young people, and youth organisations at the centre, but with other players too, from public institutions to policymakers and various other sectors. However, what we know is that it's the youth workers and young people who often take the lead. That's you!

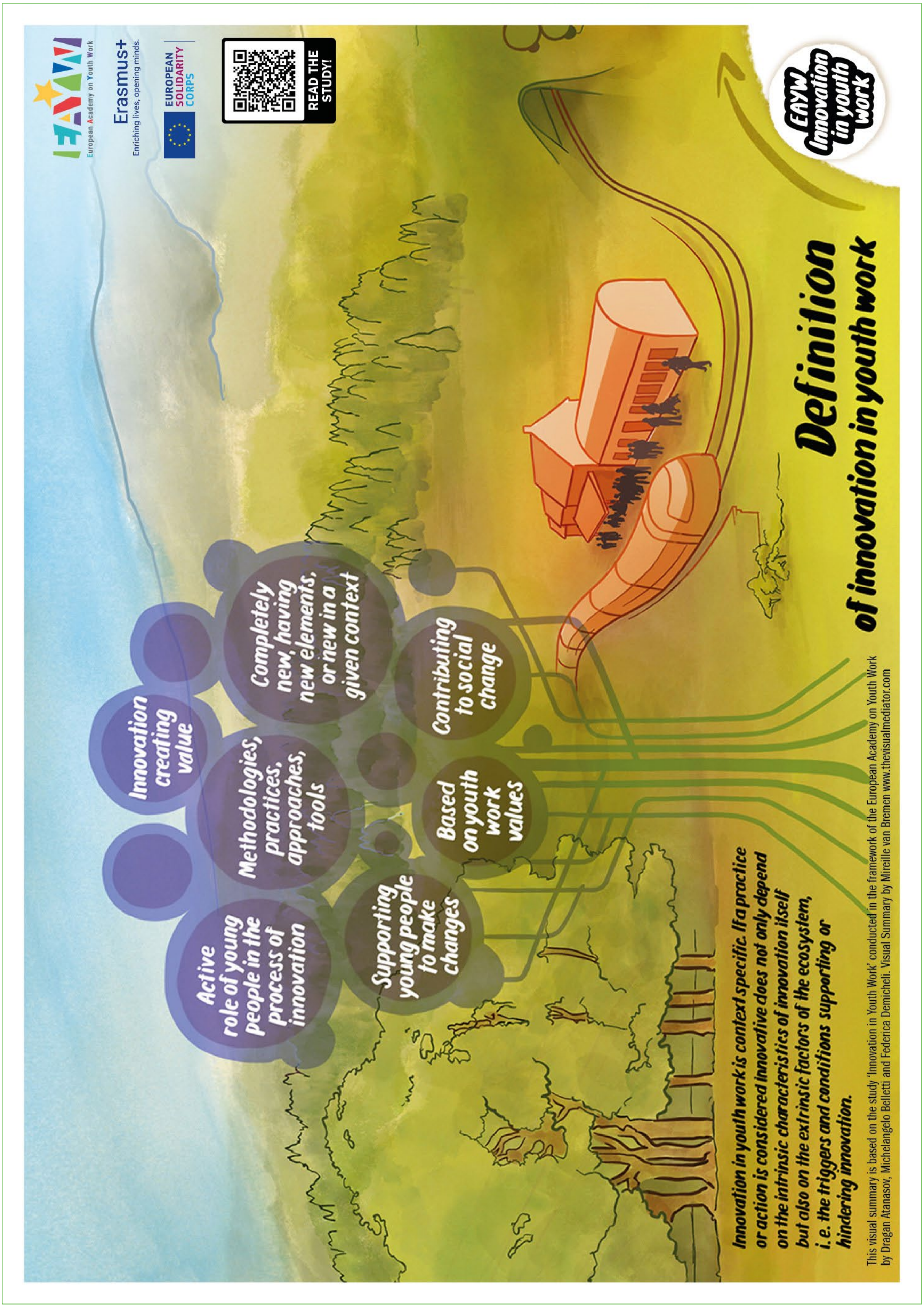
With this Toolbox, we want to help you innovate in your Erasmus+ projects. But please don't stop there! We hope we can inspire you to take innovation into your overall youth work practise as well.
Now, before we dive into the Toolbox, take a moment to think of a previous project that you consider innovative – it could be a project implemented by you or by someone else.

Reflection Questions:

- What was innovative? A method, an activity or a process?

- Is it something completely new, or an adaptation of something that existed in a different context?

- What was the value produced by the innovation?


European Academy on Youth Work
Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.
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READ THE STUDY!
EAYW Innovation in youth work
Active role of young people in the process of innovation
Innovation creating value
Methodologies, practices, approaches, tools
Completely new, having new elements, or new in a given context
Supporting young people to make changes
Based on youth work values
Contributing to social change
Definition of innovation in youth work
Innovation in youth work is context specific. If a practice or action is considered innovative does not only depend on the intrinsic characteristics of innovation itself but also on the extrinsic factors of the ecosystem, i.e. the triggers and conditions supporting or hindering innovation.
This visual summary is based on the study 'Innovation in Youth Work' conducted in the framework of the European Academy on Youth Work by Dragan Atanasov, Michelangelo Belletti and Federica Demicheli. Visual Summary by Mireille van Bremen www.thevisualmediator.com

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Creating a Fertile Ground for Innovation

The study on Innovation in Youth Work explored the importance of the conditions and triggers that support innovation, as well as factors that inhibit innovation in youth work. Both supporting or inhibiting factors can occur on an individual, organisational or contextual basis.

Youth workers from various countries reviewed these factors and assessed their importance for the innovation process. Below, you can see the most important factors from each group, as assessed by youth workers.

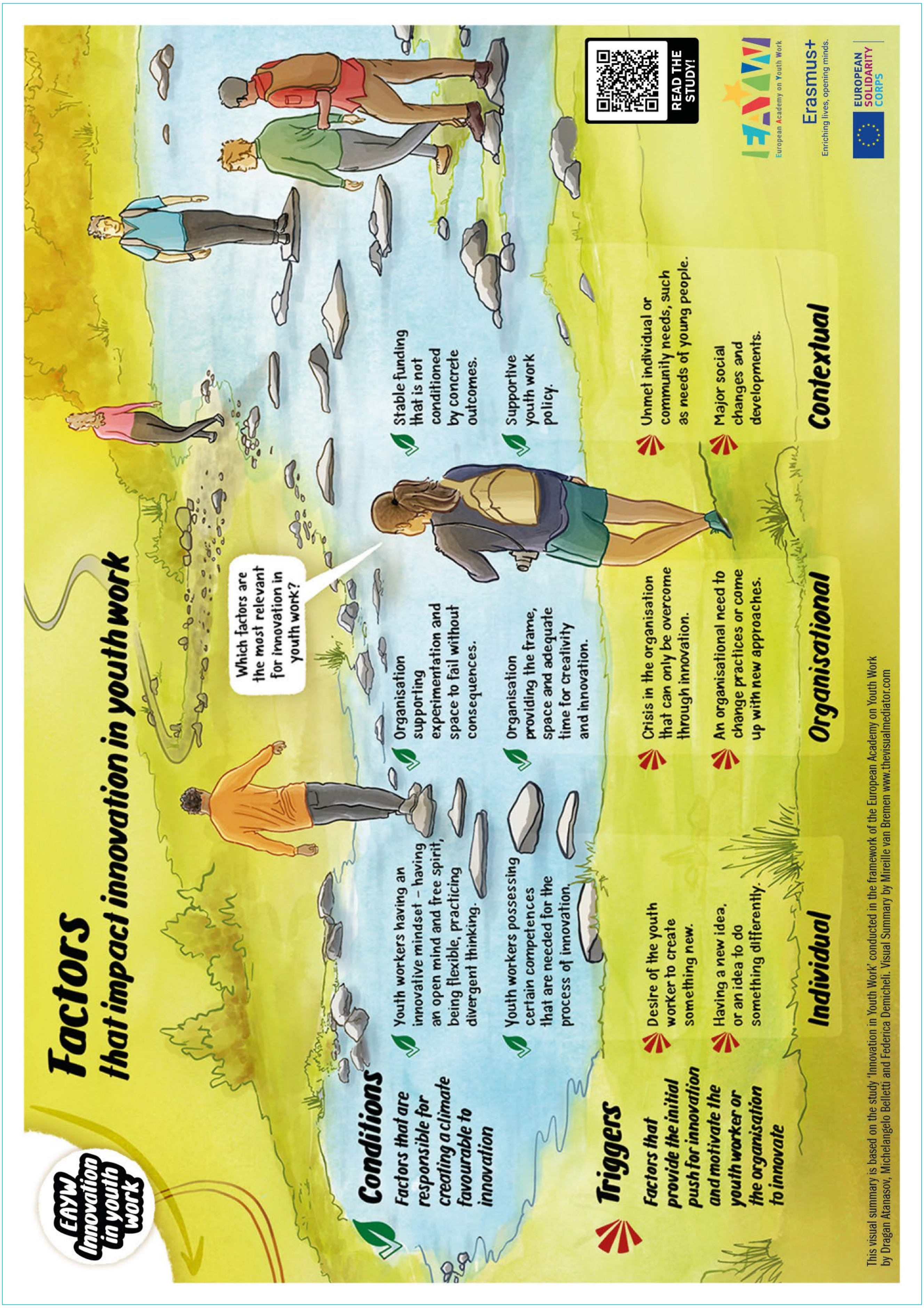
EAYW Innovation in youth work
Factors
that impact innovation in youth work
Conditions
Factors that are responsible for creating a climate favourable to innovation
Youth workers having an innovative mindset – having an open mind and free spirit, being flexible, practicing divergent thinking.
Youth workers possessing certain competences that are needed for the process of innovation.
Organisation supporting experimentation and space to fail without consequences.
Organisation providing the frame, space and adequate time for creativity and innovation.
Stable funding that is not conditioned by concrete outcomes.
Supportive youth work policy.
Which factors are the most relevant for innovation in youth work?
Triggers
Factors that provide the initial push for innovation and motivate the youth worker or the organisation to innovate
Desire of the youth worker to create something new.
Having a new idea, or an idea to do something differently.
Crisis in the organisation that can only be overcome through innovation.
An organisational need to change practices or come up with new approaches.
Unmet individual or community needs, such as needs of young people.
Major social changes and developments.
Individual
Organisational
Contextual
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Table: **Importance of factors that hinder innovation**

Trigger	Grade
Organisational culture not supportive to innovation	4.00
Resistance to change	3.80
Lack of support from public bodies	3.50
Being dependent on funds that require concrete outcomes and indicators	3.90
Lack of stable funding	4.00
Lack of time needed for innovation	3.80
Lack of understanding regarding the process of innovation	3.60
Lack of relevant competences of the youth workers	3.30

Study on Innovation in Youth Work, p. 43. D. Atanasov, M. Belletti, F. Demicheli. MOVIT, 2021. (https://www.eayw.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/EAYW-Study-final-report-2022-ISBN.pdf)

Think for a moment about how these factors resonate with you and your project.

Reflection Questions:

- Which of those factors works particularly well in your case, and how can you use that for your benefit?
- What might prevent you from innovating in your project?
- What can you do to overcome the factors preventing you from innovating?

Tips to Improve Innovation in Your Organisation

While acknowledging that each organisation works in a different context, we believe that some things are generally useful when supporting innovation processes. Here are some tips that you may want to take into consideration if you want to prepare yourself and your team for more innovative projects.

Foster a culture of innovation: Encourage staff members or partners in a project to share ideas, experiment, and challenge the status quo, fostering a supportive environment for innovation. The study showed that the most important condition supporting innovation was youth workers having an innovative mindset. Think of how you can support the others in your team to have an open mind and free spirit, be flexible and practise divergent thinking.

Look for unconventional partners: Involve new stakeholders who are not among the “usual suspects” for Erasmus+ projects, either as official partners or local network partners. Embrace their different perspectives and ideas. “Developments in other sectors” was among the factors that received the lowest scores in the study on Innovation in Youth Work. This probably means that not enough interaction is happening with stakeholders from other fields. Look for potential partners from other areas that might bring something new and valuable to your work. See the Stakeholder Mapping exercise for an example of how to do this.

Encourage bottom-up innovation: Establish a platform for stakeholders to contribute with innovative ideas. Actively listen to their suggestions, provide feedback, and recognise their contributions, empowering them to be part of the innovation process. Don’t forget to involve young people as well – very often, it is young people themselves who appear as the main driving force of the innovation process.

Identify innovation champions or a dedicated innovation team: Identify and nurture innovation champions or teams within the organisation or project. Look for someone eager to experiment, take risks, someone who can communicate well and engage others on a journey to create something new. Empower them to lead multi-stakeholder teams, provide guidance to others and promote collaboration, inspiring a culture of innovation. Create a safe space and provide a safety net for any failures; according to the study, one of the main factors for innovation was that the organisation supports experimentation and space to fail without consequences.

Encourage cross-functional collaboration: Foster collaboration across departments and partners in a project or team through workshops, brainstorming sessions, and effective communication channels, encouraging diverse perspectives in innovation initiatives.

Provide dedicated time and resources: Allocate time for innovation activities, encourage collaboration and resource sharing, and establish a separate innovation budget (for organisations). Our study showed that the second most important factor supporting innovation was that the organisation provides a frame, space and adequate time for creativity and innovation.

Use gradual funding: Allocate separate resources for experimentation, piloting, scaling and sustaining innovation. Gradually increase resource allocation as ideas prove themselves across the different steps. Some flexibility of the funds for innovation is essential: according to the study, one of the main obstacles to innovation was being dependent on funds that require concrete outcomes and indicators.

Evaluate and learn from experiences: Conduct regular evaluations, gather feedback, and create a learning culture. Engage external stakeholders to collaborate on joint innovation projects. Innovation in youth work, such as elsewhere, may require multiple trials and learning from the failures.

Provide continuous learning and development opportunities: Invest in staff professional development through workshops, conferences, and online courses focused on innovation.

Think of sustainability: For innovation to be successful, it should be replicated and sustained either by you or someone else in the field. Before trying to do something innovative, think of how it fits with the rest of your work and what you will need to do to ensure that the innovation can become part of what you do.

Celebrate and share success stories: Recognise successful innovation initiatives, share stories to inspire others, and establish platforms to highlight and celebrate innovation achievements.

Reflection Questions:

- Which of these principles are you already applying in your work?

- What can you do to prepare yourself, your organisation and the other partners for more innovation in your projects?

Green Flags and Red Flags to Look Out for

Innovation is an ongoing process that requires continuous learning and adaptation. Here are a few red flags that may indicate areas of concern. Addressing them proactively can help you be more effective in your innovation efforts. But there are also green flags! These are signs you are on the right path to produce meaningful results.

Red Flags:

People are resistant to change: Strong resistance from partners or team members who are unwilling to embrace new approaches and ideas can impede innovation.

There is mostly a top-down approach: Imposing innovation ideas without involving stakeholders or communities can lead to disengagement.

There is no clear vision yet: Lack of a well-defined innovation strategy or goals can result in aimless experimentation.

Colleagues are afraid of failure: A culture that punishes failure rather than embracing it as a learning opportunity will struggle to create new possibilities.

There are silos and hierarchies: A rigid organisational structure that inhibits cross-collaboration and idea-sharing can make holistic and effective solutions difficult to emerge.

Ignoring user feedback: Failing to listen to the needs and feedback of beneficiaries or community members can result in solutions that miss the mark.

It's getting too complicated: Overly complex processes and solutions can overwhelm and discourage team members and stakeholders.

Short-term focus: Prioritising immediate gains over long-term innovation sustainability can limit the impact of innovation efforts.

Green Flags:

The team is diverse: Involving individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences can stimulate creative thinking and generate fresh perspectives.

There is clear communication about innovation: A well-structured innovation strategy aligned with the organisation/project's mission and goals will allow for new solutions to be incorporated into your long-term action plan(s).

There is a culture of experimentation: A culture that encourages experimentation and celebrates both successes and failures as learning opportunities has much better chances of coming up with something new and useful.

Resources were allocated: Sufficient resources, including budget and time, dedicated to innovation throughout the process, will ensure that the team won't fall back to the old ways of doing things.

The approach is human centred: A focus on understanding the needs and preferences of beneficiaries or community members helps to create solutions that actually work.

There is flexibility: An adaptable organisational structure that allows for agility in responding to changing circumstances will be better prepared to face change.

There is a long-term vision: A commitment to sustainable innovation that considers long-term impact and relevance from all areas ensures lasting results.

3

Crafting your Innovative Project

This Toolbox offers a range of methods to consider for each step of the innovative project development. An innovative project timeline can improve the approach to Erasmus+ projects by introducing creativity and forward-thinking at every step. Ultimately, it fosters a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability. By embracing creative thinking, project teams can improve their effectiveness, relevance, and long-term impact, paving the way for more inclusive, forward-looking, and transformative learning experiences and solutions.

Innovative Project Timeline

3.1. IDENTIFY NEEDS FOR INNOVATION

Before developing the project idea, participating organisations should conduct a needs assessment to identify the specific interests, challenges, and gaps within their target groups and communities. This stage involves consulting with the intended beneficiaries and stakeholders and conducting surveys, focus groups, or other research methods to gather relevant data. The findings from this assessment will help shape the project's objectives, activities, and expected outcomes by ensuring they address the real needs and problems faced by the target group(s). The needs assessment also helps in building a solid rationale for the project, demonstrating its relevance and potential impact. Innovation can be infused by employing technology, media, data-driven methodologies and participatory approaches.

Name of the Method: **Innovative Stakeholder Mapping**

Objective

To identify, categorise, and understand the roles of various stakeholders in youth work and determine their potential contributions to innovative project development, ensuring diverse perspectives and optimal engagement.

Group size

5-10 participants (preferably a mix of project team members and external representatives familiar with the field of youth work).

Duration

90 minutes

Materials

- A large whiteboard or flipchart
- Dry-wipe markers or pens in various colours
- Sticky notes in multiple colours
- Pre-prepared cards with categories like "Directly Involved", "Beneficiaries", "Influencers", and "Observers"
- Printed templates of stakeholder matrices or grids

Resources

Template of the matrix and the method on MIRO: https://miro.com/miroverse/stakeholder-mapping-mendelows-matrix/

Author

Stakeholder mapping has roots in business and project management techniques. This specific adaptation for "Innovative Stakeholder Mapping" in the context of youth work is an inventive application and not attributed to a specific individual.

Step by step

1. Arrange the room to ensure all participants can easily access and view the whiteboard or flipchart. Distribute sticky notes, pens, and category cards among the participants.
2. Brief the group on the Innovative Stakeholder Mapping objective. Highlight the importance of stakeholders in the innovative project's success, especially in the field of youth work.
3. Ask participants to think about all potential stakeholders related to the project. These can range from youth participants, youth work professionals, parents, community leaders, funders, to local businesses. Write each stakeholder on a sticky note.
4. Using the pre-prepared category cards, guide the group to categorise each stakeholder. For instance:
   - Directly Involved: Those directly participating in the project.
   - Beneficiaries: Those who benefit from the project's outcomes.
   - Influencers: Those who can sway opinions about the project.
   - Observers: Those aware of the project but not actively involved.
5. Plotting on the matrix: On the whiteboard or flipchart, draw a matrix with 'Interest in Project' on the y-axis and 'Influence on Project' on the x-axis. Position each stakeholder (from the sticky notes) on the matrix based on their perceived interest and influence.
6. Engage the group in a discussion about the placement of each stakeholder. Ask questions like:
   - How can we increase the interest of high-influence, low-interest stakeholders?
   - How can we involve stakeholders who are highly interested but have low influence?
7. For stakeholders deemed crucial to the project's success, brainstorm specific strategies to involve them. Consider tailored communication methods, collaborative events, or special sessions.
8. Summarise the mapping outcomes, and highlight the key stakeholders and engagement strategies identified.
9. Conclude the session by discussing the next steps, like setting up meetings with key stakeholders or planning stakeholder engagement events.

Name of the Method: **Asset and Deficit Mapping of Innovation**

Objective

To map the needs and gaps that can be addressed by the innovative project, as well as the strengths and assets that can make the innovation happen. The tool also enables connecting both aspects and seeing how the available resources can be used best to make a change.

Group size

Up to 15 participants. The group should include members of the project team as well as young people who are (potential) beneficiaries of the project.

Duration

1 to 2 hours.

Materials

- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Pens
- Stickers in different colours
- String

Resources

/

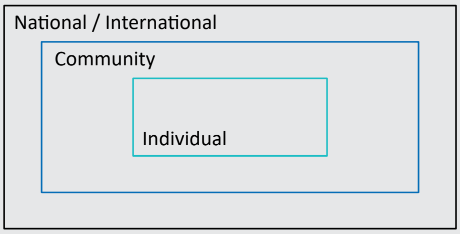
Author

Different variations of the tool have been used in various contexts. This version was developed for the purposes of this Toolkit.

Step by step

1. Explain to the participants that with this tool, they will be mapping both assets and gaps that are related to the innovative dimension of the project. Distribute the materials and explain that the mapping will be done on flipchart paper. If the group is bigger than 4-5 members, you can split it into a few smaller groups that can work in parallel and then compare the results. If young people are present, make sure that they are supported and that there are conditions for their equal participation.

2. Tell the participants that you will start by mapping the needs – challenges, deficits and gaps that exist, which can be addressed by the innovative aspects of the project. Ask the group to draw three concentric rectangles on the flipchart. Write “individual” on the smallest rectangle, “community” on the middle one and “national/international” on the largest one. Ask the group to follow that order when discussing the deficits – focusing first on the needs of the individual beneficiaries of the project (such as young people or youth workers), then on the needs of the wider community (including your organisation and other actors from the youth field), and finally on any existing needs on a national and/or international level- depending on the scope of your project. The group should have about 30 minutes to list all identified needs in the three rectangles .



3. When the task is completed, ask the group to present the outcomes. Ideally, different persons could talk about different levels, and it would be great if young people were also involved. As the group presents, ask them to share the main needs identified on all three levels. Ask the group for a quick reaction about the needs that are most likely to be met by you and the other stakeholders involved in the project. If more groups have worked in parallel, compare the differences and similarities between them.

4. Now tell the participants that you are moving to the second step – mapping the assets that can be used to support innovation in the project. Ask the group to draw the same pattern as before – three concentric rectangles marked as “individual”, “community”, and “national/international”. Following the same order as before, the group should first discuss and list all individual assets – skills, strengths, resources, etc. of various individuals that are, or can be involved in the project, including the team members, other professionals and young people. Moving to the community level, they should think of all assets of the organisations and the wider community, including other groups, organisations and institutions. Finally, the same should be done for the national and/or international level.

5. When the task is completed, ask the group to present the outcomes in the same way as before. As they present, ask them about the assets that are the most important, either because of their availability or because of their relevance to the project. Mark them on the flipchart.

6. At the end, place the two maps in a visible place and start a discussion on how the identified assets can be best used to meet the identified needs. Don’t forget that you are not discussing the project in general, but its innovative dimension. Ask the group to consider the added value that innovation can bring to the beneficiaries and the target group, and the ways in which young people can be actively involved in it.

How Might We...

This method can help bridge the needs analysis phase and the next phase, where your team is searching for possible solutions. Make sure that your team has a clear statement of what the specific target group needs. The team working on the needs analysis should have clear statements ready by identifying the target group, the need and the reasons for the specific need.

Example of a good statement from needs analysis

Young unemployed people in rural areas...	need safe spaces to grow and get the required support...
(target group)	*(needs)*
because...	they seek safety, stability and a sense of perspective.
(insights from the needs analysis)	

When clear statements are there, then the 'How might we..." method will help to move in the right direction of ideating solutions:
"How" suggests that we do not yet have the answer.
"Might" emphasises that there are many different paths that we can go down, not just one solution.
"We" immediately brings in the element of collaboration and teamwork.

Name of the Method: **How Might We...**

Objective

1. To transform needs into project ideas;
2. Formulate constructive and open-ended questions that facilitate targeted brainstorming and ideation for innovative project ideas.

Group size

4-12 participants (Optimal size for a brainstorming session)

Duration

15- 30 minutes

It can be quick, if the needs analysis was done well and it provides a clear summary of needs and challenges of the target group.

Materials

» Whiteboard or flipchart, markers, post-it notes, timer

Resources

If the activity is taking place online, a simple online Miro board with a basic structure to write down the questions in the HMW style.

Step by step

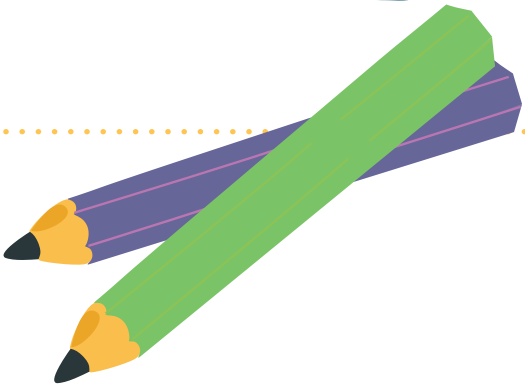
1. Start with a clear challenge or problem you want to address.
2. Break down the main challenge into smaller challenges or facets.
3. For each facet, begin by writing "How might we..." followed by the challenge in question form, e.g. "How might we promote inclusivity in our youth project?"
4. Each question should adhere to the logic of "How might we..." followed by a verb (e.g. develop), a noun (e.g. a set of tools), and the type of 'user' (e.g. young people in rural areas).
5. Each participant writes their "How might we..." questions on post-it notes.
6. Read the "How might we..." question aloud and ask if the team is inspired by the question to find many solutions. If not, the question might be too narrow, or the HMW question is too broad.
   To deal with this dilemma, there are two question techniques: "WHY (should it be done)" in order to expand the focus and "HOW" in order to narrow down the focus of consideration.
7. Cluster similar questions together on the whiteboard.
8. Prioritise the questions based on their importance or feasibility.
9. Begin brainstorming solutions for the top prioritised questions.

Author

Business consultant Min Basadur. Consulted for Procter & Gamble in the 70s, and later on, the method was adopted by design thinking agencies like IDEO.

Check if a similar solution already exists

Innovation entails either devising something entirely new or enhancing an existing entity in need of improvement. Sometimes, we might believe we have a ground-breaking idea, but is it truly novel, or have others already introduced it? If you’re considering applying for an Erasmus+ grant, your concept will be compared with existing projects of a similar nature. Search the internet or, specifically, the Erasmus+ project results platform by entering a relevant topic or field of action to check for similar projects.



3.2. PROJECT IDEA AND PREPARATION

This is the initial stage where organisations or institutions interested in participating in the Erasmus+ programme develop their project ideas. They identify the objectives, target groups, activities, expected outcomes, and potential partners for the project. The following methods ignite a creative approach to finding the right solution. Try to build teams from diverse partners and stakeholders of youth work. More diverse teams may come up with more unexpected and fresh perspectives for the needs and challenges identified.

Ideation methods

Name of the Method: **6-3-5 Brainwriting**

Objective

To rapidly generate a diverse array of ideas in a structured and collaborative manner, minimising groupthink and allowing for equal participation from all members.

Group size

Groups of 6 are ideal. With adaptations to the template and to the sequence, a different group size also works. In the case of large groups, split them into smaller ones.

Duration

20-30 minutes. Depending on the complexity of the question and the experience of the participants, 3 to 5 minutes for each round should be allocated for 6 rounds of ideation. There should be time dedicated to the selection of ideas.

Resources

Check the online method template on MIRO for inspiration or online use of this method.

Materials

- A template or sheet for brainwriting, with space for six ideas (one for each participant)
- Pens or pencils
- Timer or stopwatch
- A quiet room with a table for participants to sit around
- Glue dots for the evaluation if the selection is to be done by dot voting

Step by step

1. Form groups of 6 people each and explain the problem.
2. Give each participant a sheet of paper with a grid consisting of three columns and six rows (18 boxes in total), or have the participants draw the grid themselves. ***Variant:*** Create a sheet with 6 columns so that 6 ideas can be developed, along with 6 rows (36 boxes in total); this arrangement allows for the development of completely new ideas.
3. The participants write three ideas in the first row of the sheet within a defined period of time (3-5 minutes). The whole thing is done without speaking. ***Variant:*** Ideas can also be written on post-its instead of on the sheet.
4. When the set time is over, the sheet is passed clockwise to the next group member.
5. Give participants some time to look at the ideas already written down. Then, ask the participants to complete the next row on the sheet with more ideas, again within the defined time period. Ideally, the existing ideas are developed further. The ideas may (but need not) build on or supplement the ideas of other participants.
6. The process of passing on and completing the sheet is repeated until all rows, or boxes, have been filled.
7. Cluster and evaluate the ideas with the team and agree on the next steps.

Author

The 6-3-5 Brainwriting method was developed by Bernd Rohrbach and was first published in his 1968 article "Kreativ nach Regeln – Methode 635, eine neue Technik zum Lösen von Problemen" (Creativity by rules – 635 Method, a new technique for solving problems).

Name of the Method: **Associative Brainstorming**

Objective

To foster creative and innovative thinking by forming unexpected connections between a central theme and random stimuli, broadening the ideation horizon and prompting diverse solutions.

Group size

4-8 participants

Duration

60 minutes

Materials

- » A large whiteboard or flipchart
- » Dry-wipe markers or pens
- » Sticky notes
- » A timer
- » A list of random words or objects (prepared beforehand or generated using a random word generator)

Resources

Random word generator websites or apps can be handy if you haven't prepared a list beforehand.

Step by step

1. Outline the objective of the Associative Brainstorming session, emphasising the goal of combining a central theme with random stimuli to produce diverse and innovative ideas.
2. Collaboratively decide on the main idea or problem to explore or resolve. Write this at the top of the whiteboard or flipchart.
3. Random word generation: Introduce the list of random words or objects. If not prepared beforehand, use a random word generator or invite participants to call out words spontaneously. Aim for 10-15 random words or objects and jot them down on the left side of the whiteboard.
4. Set the timer for 20-30 minutes. Participants should strive to associate each random word or object with the central idea, creating novel connections or solutions. They can note down their ideas on sticky notes and position them under the corresponding word on the board.
5. After the brainstorming session, collaboratively discuss each idea. Delve into the feasibility of each notion, weighing its advantages and drawbacks, and consider any potential modifications.
6. Group related ideas and highlight those the team believes hold the most promise. These ideas can be further explored or prototyped.
7. Summarise the session, express gratitude to the participants, and deliberate on the next steps, such as prototyping or developing the most promising ideas further.

Resources

Associative brainstorming, as a concept, has roots in classic brainstorming techniques used by various thinkers and educators.

2x2 Matrix

The 2x2 Matrix method is a visual way of categorising ideas. The matrix is highly modifiable because any type of meaningful axis attribute may be used. The project team can choose what are the most important criteria for choosing the idea and sort the initial results from the ideas based on the matrix. Please check the possible list of criteria that can be added to the matrix to sort out the ideas.

Name of the Method: **2 x 2 Matrix**

Objective

To categorise and prioritise ideas, and identify strategic opportunities for International Cooperation Partnership projects, assisting youth workers and project managers in decision-making and strategy formulation.

Group size

The smaller the group, the shorter the discussion. This allows for quick evaluation of the matrix and prioritising of ideas.

For groups of more than 8 people, dot voting procedures can also be helpful.

Duration

15 – 45 minutes

Materials

- Large whiteboard or flipchart
- Markers
- Post-it notes
- Predefined criteria labels for the X and Y axes (e.g., “Impact” for the Y-axis and “Feasibility” for the X-axis)
- Post-its already written during the ideation session (e.g. from “6-3-5 Brainwriting”)

Step by step

1. Clearly define the criteria for both X and Y axes. Common criteria include “Impact” and “Feasibility” or “Urgency” and “Importance”.

2. When creating axis labels, think of “high” and “low” attributes of each axis:

High	Low
Feasible	Impossible
Urgent	Not urgent at all
Costs	Savings
Innovative	Already exists
Important	Unimportant/ Negligible
Beneficial	Not needed

3. Ask participants to think about ideas, strategies, or actions for their project. Alternatively, use ideas from a previous brainstorming session.

4. Discuss each idea and decide where it should be placed on the 2x2 Matrix based on the predefined criteria. For example, an idea that is highly impactful but less feasible might be placed high on the Y-axis but more to the left on the X-axis.

5. Review the placement of ideas. Those in the top right quadrant (high in both criteria) are generally the most desirable. When evaluating ideas, focus more on the benefits for your key target group and the feasibility and use measurable and tangible criteria for the opportunity analysis.

6. Based on the matrix’s visual representation, decide which ideas or actions to pursue, which ones to further research, and which ones might be set aside for the time being.

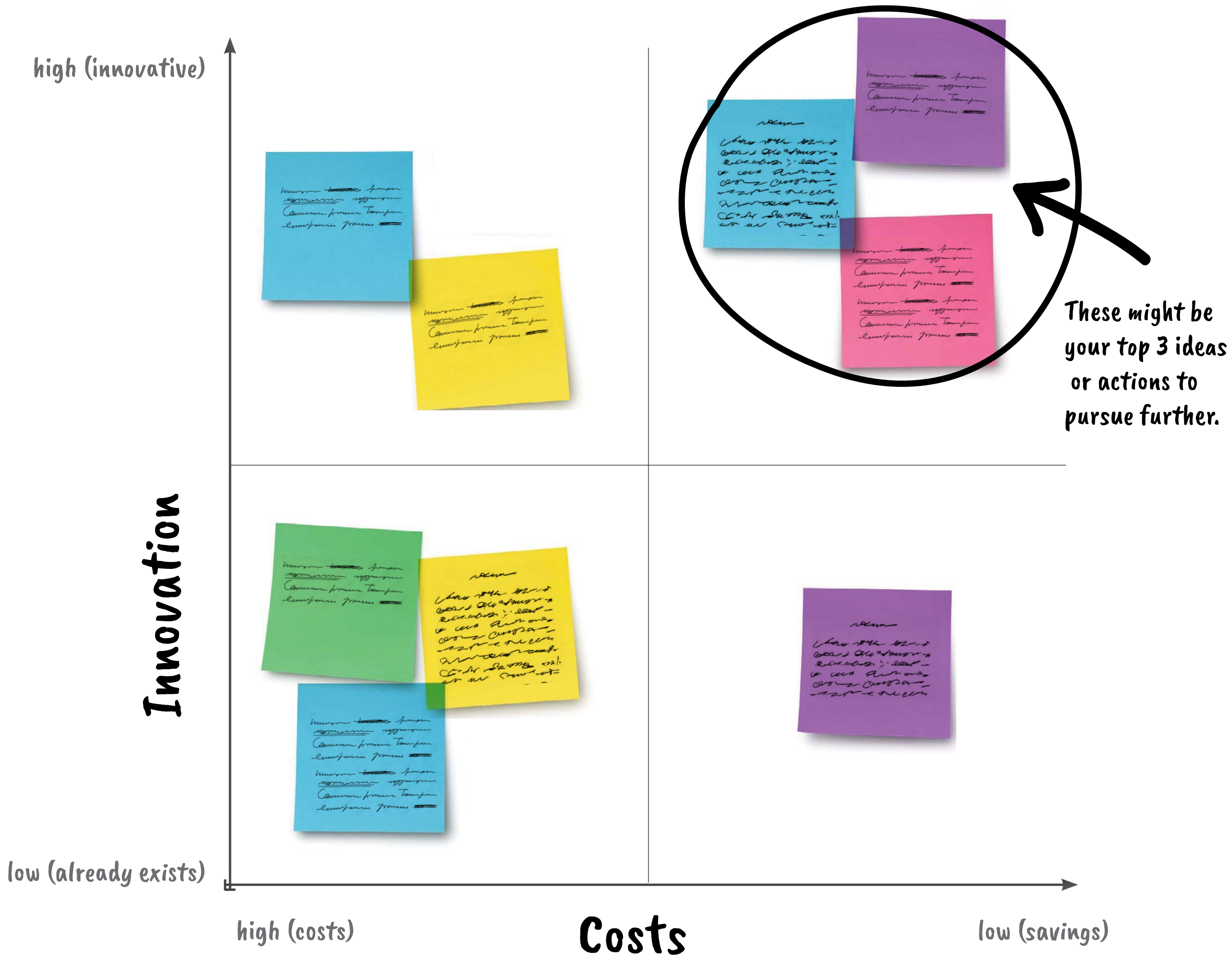
Resources

Guides on using the 2x2 Matrix and potential criteria lists to adapt and use.

Author

The 2x2 Matrix is a widely adopted tool across various fields and disciplines. Its origins are not attributed to a single author but have been popularised in business and design-thinking processes.

2x2 Matrix example:
The group has collected lots of exciting ideas and actions for the project. The matrix will help to decide, which ones to pursue further, according to the criteria "innovation vs. costs".



3.3. APPLICATION PROCESS

The next stage involves completing the Erasmus+ application form and submitting it before the specified deadline. The application form requires detailed information about the project, its objectives, planned activities, budget, and partner profiles. Writing the project doesn't have to be a lonely, one-person job. Involving others in this process is a way to generate more engagement and ownership. Here are some things to keep in mind when you build an application in cooperation with partners, young people or other stakeholders.

An Application Form Is Not a Place to Do the Project Design

An application form should describe your project in detail, but it's not an inspiring place to dream of a beautiful project. Use virtual boards, mind maps, sticky notes or artistic tools to design your project before you start describing your ideas in the application form. Designing the project while writing the application is the fastest way to kill creative and innovative ideas.

Use Collaboration Tools

Once you have a general idea of your project, use the main dimensions of the project (or the main questions of the application) and share it with your team (partners, young people and or other stakeholders involved). Use a shared document where everyone can contribute, or make your own canvas in a virtual whiteboard. Allow everyone to share their ideas of how the project should be described and what the crucial details are that can't be missed. Make sure some crazy, experimental ideas get their way in too ;)

Why, What, How

Before answering each question with full sentences, gather everyone to write only three bullet points for each question. The bullet points should be Why, What and How. Agree with your partners what is the Why, What and How that should be described under each question. This way, when creating the complete answers, you are sure that 1) everyone contributed to the different questions and 2) the answers will explain your project's intentions, actions and processes well.

Be Clear

On the application form, clearly answer the question in the project description section, "What makes your proposal innovative?" Explain if you are talking about implementing innovative outputs, processes, working methods or partner organisations. Explain if it is something new in general or is it new in your (local) context.

RIP (Rest.In.Peace.) Application

Together with your partners, young people and or other stakeholders involved, make a list of things that could kill any chances of getting the application approved. This can be "forgetting our values", "new ideas not explained well", "boring language", etc. People might have a hard time deciding what to write in an application, but generally, they can be quite fast at identifying what they don't want there. This is a creative way to involve everyone to contribute to the process and get a good list of reminders of what not to do.

3.4. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

This is the main phase of the project, where partners collaborate on planning and conducting activities according to the project's timeline and objectives. It may involve various results such as publications, training courses, webinars, games, seminars, etc., but you can get creative and think of new, unconventional and even surprising formats. Here are two exercises that will help you do just that.

Name of the Method: **Format Fusion**

Objective

To inspire the project team to conceive original formats for activities/events by merging diverse event types and exploring unconventional ideas. This method can also be used to ideate a specific part of an activity or output.

Group size

4-10 participants

Duration

60 minutes

Materials

» Two bowls, cards with names of traditional event formats (e.g., seminar, workshop, panel discussion, etc.), cards with names of non-traditional or unrelated activities (e.g., shopping, picnic, scavenger hunt, talk show, board game night, beach day, New Year's Eve, etc.).

Resources

» A quiet room with breakout areas.
» Whiteboards or flipcharts for sketching and presenting.

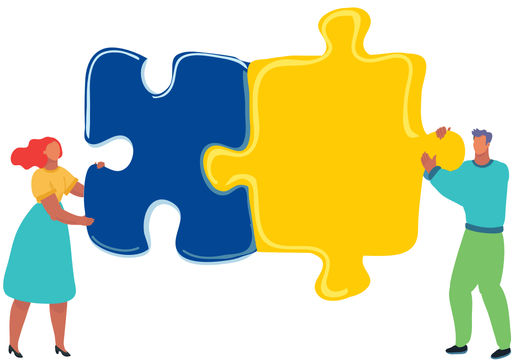
Note: If done online, you can have the two sets of words covered with a colourful card and a number on a Miro or Zoom whiteboard or even PowerPoint, and participants choose one number from each set of cards. The facilitator then uncovers those words for the group. Another option is that the facilitator physically holds two hats with the words inside on small pieces of paper and draws the words for each group.

Step by step

1. Place cards with traditional event formats in one bowl and non-traditional activities in another.
2. 2. Divide participants into pairs or small groups.
3. Each pair/group draws one card from each bowl.
4. Challenge pairs/groups to design an activity/event that fuses the two drawn formats, ensuring it aligns with your Erasmus+ project's goals.
5. Allow 30 minutes for brainstorming, 10 minutes for selecting one crazy but doable idea and 10 minutes for sketching the basic layout of the fused event.
6. Each pair/group presents their innovative format to the larger team.
7. Collectively, discuss the feasibility and potential impact of each idea. The goal isn't to finalise, but to spark new ways of thinking about event formats.

Author

Based on common combinatory exercises used for creative thinking and ideation.



During the implementation phase, there are a lot of meetings. Lots! Loads! And they can easily become a dull routine that kills all creativity and the joy of living many times. Here are two more exercises that can make partner meetings more interactive and productive, transforming them from boring check-ins to engaging, creative sessions.

Name of the Method: **Rose, Bud, Thorn**

Objective

To reflect on positives (Rose), potentials (Bud), and challenges (Thorn) in the way the team is collaborating

Group size

Any

Duration

30 minutes

Materials

» Post-it notes, markers, and three labelled sections on a board or wall: "Rose," "Bud," and "Thorn."

Step by step

1. Partners reflect on the project's aspects fitting each category.
2. Each partner places their thoughts on post-its in the respective sections.
3. The group discusses insights and collectively brainstorms solutions to avoid the thorns and intensify the smell of the roses.

Resources

» A working room with a working wall, board or table.

Author

"Rose, Bud, Thorn" is a well-known feedback and reflection activity that has been used in various contexts, such as design thinking and retrospectives in agile methodologies and education.

Name of the Method: **Come with me**

Objective

To share glimpses of daily life, interests, and experiences of team members, fostering personal connections and understanding between remote partners.

Group size

Any

Duration

Ongoing

Materials

» A shared online photo board or album (e.g., Pinterest board, Google Photos shared album or a channel on Slack or Teams)
» Smartphone or camera

Resources

» Online photo-sharing tools or platforms.
» Communication platforms like Slack or Teams for interaction.

Step by step

1. Create a shared online photo board or album and invite all team members. Name it "Come with me."
2. Encourage team members to occasionally snap a photo during their day that represents a moment, a hobby, an interest, or something unique to their environment. It could be their morning coffee, a book they're reading, a scenic view from a walk, or even a pet doing something funny. Ask team members to add a brief caption or story behind the photo. The idea is to give a small window into their world. You can also add a weekly or monthly reminder for this task to everyone's calendar.
3. Team members can comment, react, or ask questions about the photos shared. This opens up opportunities for conversations beyond work and helps team members discover common interests or learn more about each other's cultures and environments.
4. At the end of the week, or at the beginning of each team meeting, you can have a quick roundup – either send a digest of the week's photos or spotlight a particularly engaging or unique post shared.
5. Introduce occasional themes or challenges like "Throwback Thursday" (share an old photo and its story) or "Mystery Monday" (share a close-up of something and let others guess what it is).

Author

Inspired by general team-building practices adapted for remote teams.

3.5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Throughout the project, partners monitor the progress and assess the outcomes to ensure that the project is on track and objectives are being met. Evaluation helps identify areas of improvement and successful elements of the project. Throughout the project's lifecycle, the "Monitoring and Evaluation" stage can embrace innovation by integrating real-time feedback mechanisms, artistic techniques and even artificial intelligence.

Name of the Method: **Stories of change**

Objective

To identify and collect examples of impact and change caused by the project and to allow the project beneficiaries and other community members to share their perspectives of how the project is affecting them.

Through integrating various media (photography, audio, video) and with appropriate support, the tool can enable young people with fewer opportunities to share their perspectives in different ways.

Group size

The tool is to be used with individuals. There is no limit on the total number of participants that contribute with stories.

Duration

Happening throughout the project. Individual participants may need up to 1 hour to tell their stories. Data analysis requires more time.

Materials

» Depending on how the stories are collected: computer, audio/video recorder, camera, paper and pens.

Resources

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Author

The tool is an adaptation of a tool developed by the Peace Corps in the PACA Field Guide for Volunteers.

Step by step

1. Discuss with the project team about the possibility of applying storytelling as a tool for measuring the success and impact of the project. Make sure that the discussion involves the staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation and that storytelling is added to the overall monitoring plan for the project.

2. Together with the other team members, define key times or aspects of the project that are suitable for the use of storytelling as an evaluation tool. Jointly define the profile of the individuals to submit stories, including project beneficiaries, such as young people and youth workers, and other community members who may be affected by the project.

3. The next thing to do is prepare guiding instructions for the respondents. Include a few questions that should be answered by the story and provide some details about the length, format, etc. Consider integrating different media, such as photography, video, or audio recording, as these will make it easier for some participants to submit a story. In some cases, such as with young people with fewer opportunities, you may consider fully replacing the narrative part with photo, video or audio.

4. When the instructions are ready and the identified moment comes, ask the participants for their stories on how the project impacted them, other young people, local youth organisations and/or other stakeholders in the wider community. Depending on the profile of the participants, you may decide to interview them or provide other types of support to ensure that they can successfully submit a story. In addition to the guidelines, you should also provide them with a consent form explaining how the story will be used and if and how their personal data will be used. Make sure you have a signed consent form along with each story.

5. Once the stories are collected, review them with your project team and discuss the various topics that have emerged from them. Ask the others, if the stories represent the kind of change that you wanted to see from the project, if there is anything unexpected, if there are negative examples or lessons learned, etc. Based on that, discuss if you should make any modifications to the project to ensure greater impact and/or more significant changes within the target group and the wider community.

6. Repeat the process as planned at other moments during the project, including at the project end. If you ask the same participants for stories, you can compare any progress or change that has happened in the meantime.

7. Work with your monitoring and evaluation team to decide how the information gathered in the stories can be translated into the final report and into other reporting tools you may be using. You may want to consider coding, which is a method of assigning descriptive labels to qualitative information, which allows you to identify related content across the gathered data. For example, define a few major types of change that you can see and count how many times they appear in the stories.

Name of the Method: **Monitoring spreadsheet**

Objective

To monitor the project implementation against set indicators and criteria, and to provide a basis for discussion on how the project impact can be strengthened.

Group size

Ideally, one person would use the tool, while other staff members can contribute by providing information.

Duration

Throughout the project

Materials

» Computer with data processing software (such as Excel)

Resources

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Author

The tool was developed for the purposes of this Toolkit.

Step by step

1. Discuss with the project team, especially with the monitoring and evaluation staff, about the possibility of designing a spreadsheet in Excel that will help with following the project implementation. The spreadsheet should be created once the project has a ready monitoring and evaluation plan and set indicators.

2. Break down each indicator into criteria that can be observed and measured. Agree with the rest of your team about the minimum threshold that needs to be reached so that the indicator is considered achieved. For example, you might decide that 3 out of 4 different criteria need to be met as a minimum threshold for a single indicator. The idea is to come up with things that are easy to observe or report on, and that directly contribute to the indicator. These may already be part of your monitoring and evaluation plan, and then you don't need to develop them from scratch.

3. Create a spreadsheet document that includes all indicators and all criteria linked to them. Add a field for each criterion where you can indicate if it was met or not. Using a bit more advanced functions in the data processing software, you can add a function that marks the indicator as achieved once the minimum threshold is met. You can also add colours and other visual elements to make the tool more appealing – for example, all indicators can be in red from the beginning and turn into green once they are met.

4. Use the tool continuously throughout the project, on agreed time intervals. For example, you might update the spreadsheet once a month, or after big project phases are completed.

5. After each update, or at agreed points of time, meet with the project team to discuss how the project is progressing based on the spreadsheet and other monitoring tools you may be using. Provide an update about the number of criteria and indicators that are met/unmet, reflect if you are on track with the project implementation, and discuss any changes you may need to make to ensure that greater impact is achieved.

6. Do the final update at the project end to assess how the project has been implemented overall. The outcomes collected in the spreadsheet can serve as a basis for preparing the final report of the project, but also as a reflection tool to discuss potential follow-up or further cooperation within the partnership.

Name of the Method: **Ways to Grow Framework**

Objective

To reflect on the implemented and/or planned activities and outcomes of the project and to consider to what extent they are revolutionary or not in relation to bringing innovation and reaching new beneficiaries. It is to be used during project implementation, so that the original plan can be compared to reality.

Group size

Up to 10 participants

Duration

Up to one hour

Materials

- Copies of the Ways to Grow Framework
- Pens
- Stickers in colours

Resources

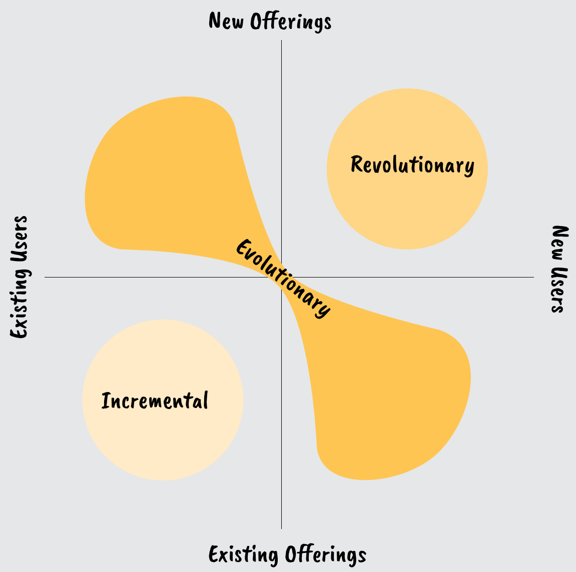
Possibly printed copies of Ways to Grow Framework

Author

The tool is an adaptation of a tool developed by the Peace Corps in the PACA Field Guide for Volunteers.

Step by step

1. Gather the project team and any other stakeholders involved in the project implementation. Print copies of the Ways to Grow Framework, or alternatively, draw it on flipchart paper. Explain to the participants that the vertical axis represents the novelty (innovation) that the project is offering, and the horizontal axis represents the users – direct beneficiaries and other community members.



2. Explain to the participants that the idea is to reflect on the activities and interventions that have been implemented (or planned) and to discuss to what extent they actually bring innovation and/or involve new target groups. By doing this reflection during the project implementation, the project team can compare how their vision aligns with reality and decide if anything else can be done to bring more novelty or reach new beneficiaries.

3. Ask the participants to list everything that has been implemented so far (or that should be done soon) and position it in the framework. Everything that they think brings innovation should be above the horizontal axis, and everything they think has stayed within the existing offerings should be under the axis. Similarly, the activities or interventions that brought new beneficiaries should be on the right of the vertical axis, and those that engaged the existing beneficiaries should be placed on the left side.

4. When all activities, interventions, outcomes and aspects of the project are mapped on the framework, look together at the distribution from incremental, evolutionary or revolutionary. Ask the participants to reflect if this is how they feel in relation to the project implementation. Did they expect that more (or less) innovation will be achieved? Did they expect more (or less) new beneficiaries? When looking at the framework, are there gaps or less full areas? Discuss within your project team if you need to change or add something to achieve more revolutionary changes with your project.

3.6. DISSEMINATION AND IMPACT

Project partners share the project's results and outcomes with the wider public to maximise its impact. This can be done through various means such as publications, websites, social media, and local/national dissemination events.

It's not easy to be seen and noticed in the information overload. Promoting innovative products requires creative ways to present and promote your project results. We invite you to go beyond the obvious or ordinary communication channels, even though sometimes a simple face-to-face meeting with your stakeholders might be the best method to achieve your promotion goals. Utilise the fact of being in an international partnership and get all partners contributing with ideas on how you can promote your project results and how other people from the youth work sector can benefit from your project results. Sometimes, it's not easy to come up with great new ideas for the dissemination phase. Why not try a different type of brainstorming?

Negative Brainstorming for Your Next Dissemination Strategy

Negative brainstorming combines the traditional brainstorming approach with the so-called reversal method. Instead of finding a solution, participants of the negative brainstorming session focus on anything that might make the problem worse.
For example: Instead of finding new ways of using your innovative solutions for youth work, the group concentrates on finding ideas on how to keep your project outcomes unknown and hidden from others.

The results from this brainstorming exercise are subsequently evaluated and reviewed as to whether new starting points arise from it or whether certain aspects, which usually exacerbate a problem, can be eliminated.

Get Inspiration from Your Favourite AI Assistant

With AI language models and chat assistants improving every day, it can be an interesting source of inspiration. Try one or a few AI tools to prompt for some new promotion ideas. When prompting, make sure to give detailed context about your organisations and your project idea and ask to generate x numbers of ideas. Work further on amending, combining or remixing initial ideas. You can apply typical brainstorming techniques by starting to expand ideas and later narrowing them down by providing more specific aspects like resources, sectors, specifics of your audience and so on. Who knows, maybe your next project promotion idea will be a virtual conference in a metaverse or a blended reality treasure hunt in your local park.

For some people, prompting AI tools might still be a new experience. The way you communicate with AI can influence the quality and precision of the results. Here are some recommendations to potentially enhance future prompts for better results:

- **Be specific.** The more context you provide, the more tailored the answer can be. If you have a specific aspect of youth work in mind or if there are particular challenges or unique features about the project, mentioning them would help. For example: “Promote a digital literacy campaign for youth in rural Europe” would yield more targeted ideas than a general “youth work” prompt.
- **Define your audience.** If there’s a specific demographic within “youth” you’re targeting (e.g., teenagers, college students, young artists), mentioning it can refine the solutions.
- **Highlight priorities.** If there are certain promotion methods you’re more interested in (e.g., digital vs. traditional, low-budget vs. high-budget), clarifying that can guide the AI’s suggestions.
- **Ask for reasoning.** If you want to understand the ‘why’ behind each idea, you can specifically request the AI to provide a rationale or benefits for each suggestion.
- **Segment your request.** If you’re looking for diverse ideas, you can ask the AI to provide suggestions across categories. For instance: “Provide 2 digital marketing ideas, 2 event-based ideas, and 2 community engagement ideas...”
- **Iterative interaction.** Sometimes, a back-and-forth interaction can refine results. You can start with a broad question, review the AI’s suggestions, and then delve deeper into areas of interest in follow-up queries.
- **Feedback loop.** After you receive a response, you can clarify or ask for additional depth on certain points. For instance, “Can you expand on the Virtual Reality Tours idea?”
- **Examples.** If you have examples of similar campaigns or initiatives that you liked or disliked, sharing them can provide a reference point for the AI.

The language models and AI tools are developing rapidly right now. Here are a few AI-based idea-generation tools to consider:

- Open AI’s Chat GTP
- Google’s BARD
- JASPER.AI with a focus on content writing for the communication processes (no free version, requires payment for the lowest product tier)

Specific AI prompt example:

Context: We have just completed an innovative international youth work project that spanned multiple European countries. This project was dedicated to improving the quality of youth work, with a special focus on digital literacy, mentorship, and community engagement. Our primary audience is youth workers, educators, policymakers, and young individuals aged 16-25, especially those in urban settings.

Objective: We’re seeking innovative promotional ideas to effectively communicate the results and impact of our project, emphasising its unique features and the benefits it brings to the European youth work landscape.

Request:

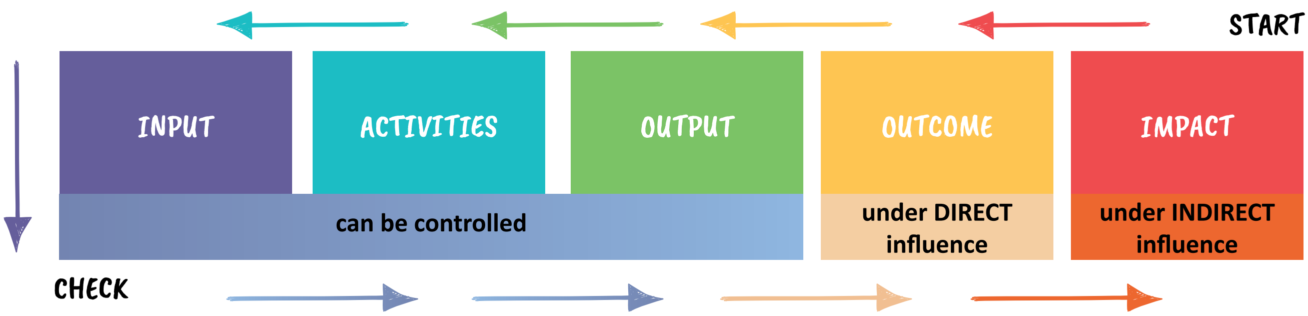
- Please provide 3 digital marketing strategies tailored to our target audience.
- Suggest 2 event-based promotional activities that can engage both youth workers and the youth themselves.
- Offer 2 community engagement ideas that would help in grassroots promotion, especially in urban environments.

For each suggestion, kindly provide a brief rationale explaining its relevance and potential impact.

ImpactTool

ImpactTool is a web-based tool as well as a collection of materials developed by the Dutch National Agency. It aims at helping organisations to define their impact and project structure based on the Theory of Change. The tool helps to define your input, activities, outputs, outcomes and the long-term impact of your project. We recommend trying out the tool in your organisation team and, ideally, in the team with your project partners. Use it at the very beginning of your project development. It will help you design the right path and structure for your project design.

This website is in English and Dutch and provides a clear structure on how to define the impact you wish to achieve and how to build that into your project design. The tool provides worksheets, resources and tips on planning your project impact. You can switch between Mobility projects (Key Action 1 of the Erasmus+ programme) or Cooperation Partnerships (Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ programme).



https://www.erasmusplus.nl/en/impacttool-strategicpartnerships

Impact+ Exercise

The Impact+ Exercise has been developed by the UK National Agency to help Erasmus+ applicants and projects think about what their impact could be and how to measure it. The exercise involves a workshop and just needs you, your partners and the Impact+ Exercise materials. The Impact+ Exercise materials provide you with an Impact+ Exercise table, a workshop guide and both a blank and text version of the Impact+ Tool.

- Impact+ Exercise English materials (1.22 MB)
- The video guide explains how it works and is available with subtitles in English and several other languages.

CLICK CLICK

https://erasmusplus.org.uk/impact-and-evaluation.html

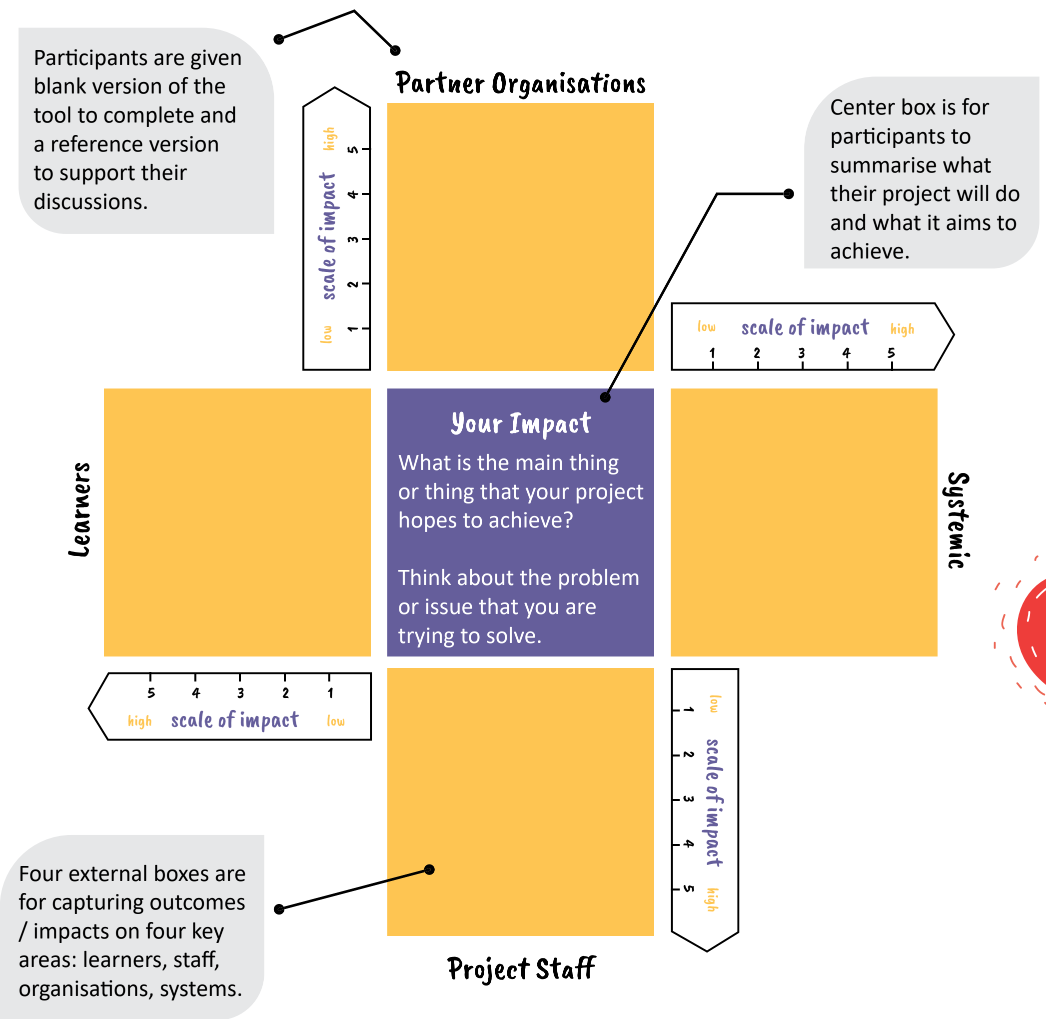


Image source: Impact+ Exercise, Workshop Guide, p.7. British Council, Ecorys, 2018.

Impact+ is also a collection of resources to help you evaluate the impact of your project without having to start from scratch. There are guides, research methods and articles, among other materials, that can act as practical tools for you to understand more about your project's impact.

3.7. REPORTING

Making this stage participatory and enjoyable can boost the team spirit and ensure a comprehensive report. Here are some approaches to help make the final reporting of a project more fun and creative:

Talk about Innovation

At the end of the project, partners are required to submit final reports to their National Agency, providing a detailed account of the activities, outcomes, and expenditures during the project. When writing this report, include the implementation of innovative elements and possible feedback from different stakeholders. Also, note if any unplanned innovations happened by chance or by necessity during the project.

Visual Reporting

If you want to create engagement for your follow-up or next project, remember that perhaps the National Agency is not the only stakeholder you should report to. Create infographics, newsletters, thank-you letters, and other creative formats to report to your different stakeholders. Create visuals to present your project results and future plans. Platforms like Canva or Piktochart can be helpful.

Use Storytelling

Instead of just listing out achievements and challenges, encourage team members to share stories from the project. This narrative approach can make the reporting process more engaging for the report writers and for readers as well.

Name of the Method: **Our Sailboat Project**

Objective

To reflect on the project, identify what propelled the team forward and what held it back in order to improve processes and performance for future projects and feed main insights to the report.

Group size

Suitable for small to medium-sized teams (5-12 participants).

Duration

60- 90 minutes. Depends on the size of the group and the depth of conversations.

Materials

» A drawing of a sailboat, rocks, clouds, and an island on the whiteboard or paper (drawn before the meeting begins).
» Markers.
» Sticky notes in multiple colours.

Resources

For running this session online with your partners, import and adapt the template from Miro

Step by step

1. Explain the purpose of the retrospective and the sailboat metaphor (sailboat = team, island = goals, wind = helping factors, anchors = hindering factors, inhibitors, rocks = risks). 5 min.

2. Ask project team members to write on sticky notes what they believe helped the project move forward (wind), what held it back (anchors), and any risks encountered or foreseen (rocks). They should also note what they wish to achieve by the next iteration (island). 10-15 min.

3. Team members place their sticky notes on the corresponding parts of the sailboat drawing and briefly explain their points. 10-15 min.

4. Group similar items together and discuss each category, prioritising key items that need action or attention. 15-30 min.

5. For the most critical points (especially anchors and rocks), discuss as a team how these can be addressed. Assign action items and agree on measurable next steps. 10-15 min.

6. Recap the discussion, ensuring everyone is clear on the actions decided upon. Decide how you can include the results of the evaluation in the project report.

Author

The original method, “Sailboat Retrospective”, is a variation of agile retrospectives, which have been popularised by agile coaches and facilitators. The original creator of this specific technique is not well-documented.

3.8. FOLLOW-UP AND SUSTAINABILITY

After the project's completion, partners may continue collaborating and building upon the project's results. Ensuring follow-up and sustainability is crucial to the long-term impact of any project. Here are two approaches and one specific exercise you can use to boost innovation for the follow-up and sustainability stage:

- **Sustainability Workshops**

Before the end of the project, organise brainstorming sessions to discuss how to keep the project alive and its outcomes sustainable. This engages team members and stakeholders in forward-thinking, and increases the chance that your project lives on and creates a deeper and wider impact.

- **Impact Stories**

Encourage stakeholders and beneficiaries to share stories of how the project has impacted them. Share this in-person or through online events, leaflets or social media posts. This not only serves as testimonials (that you can use in the reporting phase) but also motivates the team to continue their efforts.

Name of the Method: **Vision Board**

Objective

To envision the long-term impact and sustainability of the project and define actionable steps to achieve it.

Group size

5-15 (Can be adapted for larger groups with breakout sessions)

Duration

2 hours

Materials

- Large board or virtual whiteboard tool (e.g., Miro, Mural)
- Magazines, newspapers, or online image banks
- Scissors or virtual cutting tools
- Glue or virtual sticking tools
- Markers or virtual drawing tools

Resources

Magazines, newspapers, digital image banks and virtual collaboration tools.

Step by step

1. Set up a large board in the centre of the room (or use a virtual whiteboard for remote teams). Provide magazines, scissors, glue, and markers.
2. Ask participants to reflect on what they envision for the project's future – its long-term impact, how its results can be sustained, potential challenges, etc.
3. Participants should cut out images, words, or phrases from the magazines (or use online image banks) that represent their vision. They can also draw or write their thoughts.
4. Each participant sticks their images/words on the board and briefly shares their vision with the group.
5. As a group, discuss common themes, challenges, and strategies to ensure sustainability. Identify actionable steps.
6. Capture the vision board's content and the discussion insights. This will serve as a roadmap for follow-up actions and ensure the project's sustainability.

Author

Inspired by the concept of vision boards used in various settings, from personal development to strategic planning, to visually represent goals, dreams, and aspirations.

Name of the Method: **Sustainable Innovation Reflection**

Objective

To reflect on various aspects of sustainability of the innovations introduced by the project, and to discuss ways in which those aspects can be further supported during the project.

Group size

Up to 15 participants

Duration

2-3 hours

Materials

- Flipchart paper
- Paper
- Pens
- Markers

Resources

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Author

The tool is an adaptation of a tool developed by the Peace Corps in the PACA Field Guide for Volunteers.

Step by step

1. Gather the project team towards the end of the project implementation to discuss the sustainability of the innovations introduced by your project. Explain to them that the purpose is to reflect on different aspects of sustainability and on the steps that can still be taken by the project to ensure greater sustainability after the project ends.

2. Prepare **five pieces of flipchart paper** on five different tables in the room. Each of the flipcharts should focus on a different aspect of sustainability. Explain to the participants that you will use the world café method, where the participants are split into small groups and rotate visiting each table for a given period of time. The groups are supposed to discuss the questions and note down any important reflections. Depending on the available time, you can allocate 10-15 minutes per table. **The pieces of flipchart paper should have the following questions:**

   Is the innovation brought by our project…

   1. Culturally sustainable? Does the approach, concept or product fit within and build on the local context in each of the local communities where the project is implemented?

   2. Politically sustainable? When there is no project to support the innovation, will the approach, concept or product be taken over by other stakeholders and sustained within the socio-political context?

   3. Economically sustainable? Once project funding is over, will there be enough local resources or capacities to provide new resources to sustain the innovation?

   4. Managerially sustainable? Within the management of the project, will there be local management capacity to take over the innovations?

   5. Environmentally sustainable? If and as the innovations grow, will the environment be able to sustain the use of resources?

3. After all participants go through all five tables, have a joint overview of what was written on each flipchart, and then initiate a group discussion about each of the aspects of sustainability. Talk about any challenges to sustainability that you have identified, and discuss what can still be done as part of the project (or beyond) to mitigate them and strengthen the sustainability potential of the innovations.

Name of the Method: **SCAMPER Innovation**

Objective

To reflect on various questions that can trigger improvements in the innovation dimension of the project, both during the project implementation and beyond.

Group size

Up to 15 participants

Duration

1-2 hours

Materials

- Adapted SCAMPER worksheet
- Pens

Resources

Printed copies of the SCAMPER worksheet (or worksheet made available to the participants online).

Step by step

1. Gather the project team and any other stakeholders involved in the project implementation and explain to them that you will have a group reflection using an adapted SCAMPER methodology to discuss things that can be done within and beyond the project to strengthen its innovation dimension.
2. Divide the group into smaller groups and distribute the SCAMPER worksheet (see below). Assign each small group with two or three questions from the worksheet. Explain to the participants that the questions serve as “improvement triggers” that can help the team to reflect on new perspectives and generate different ideas on how to modify the project implementation so that its innovation dimension is strengthened.
3. When the groups respond to the questions they were given, take some time to go through each of the “improvement triggers” questions together. Ask each group to present to the whole group the top three ideas that came from responding to the questions. Then, let other groups add comments and reflections on the questions that they haven’t worked on.
4. At the end, ask the participants to reflect on the exercise and discuss the major thoughts that this activity provokes in them connected to the innovation aspect of your project. What potential improvements can be agreed upon for the next steps of the project?

Author

The tool is an adaptation of the SCAMPER tool developed by Bob Eberle in the 1990s.

Adapted **SCAMPER** worksheet

Substitute	What can you substitute within the project to support the innovations? What materials or resources can be changed or introduced? What rules can be modified?
Combine	What would happen if you combined different aspects of your work to create something new? What resources, materials, activities, products, etc. can be combined to strengthen the innovations?
Adapt	How could you adapt or readjust your work to strengthen the innovations? What needs to happen so that those adaptations are possible? What other contexts, products or ideas could you add to your work to provide more novelty?
Put to another use	Can your innovations be used somewhere else? Who else can benefit from them? How can those innovations be applied in other contexts?
Eliminate	How could you simplify your work? What do you need to get rid of to focus on the important elements of the innovations? What elements, rules, activities and products can you eliminate without jeopardising the project and the innovation process? What could you have in their place?
Reverse	What would happen if you reversed your process or sequenced the activities differently? What if you did the exact opposite of what you are doing now? How can you reorganise your work?

The A4 version of the SCAMPER worksheet, which can be printed as a handout, can be found on page 46.

4

Project Design Choices

Every project has its own specific goals and needs. While there's no one-size-fits-all design, a solid plan should consider the project's goals, the partners' past experiences, the expected timeline, and the resources on hand. Depending on the project, partners might opt for a specific methodology or approach or one that aligns with the end product they aim to produce.

Applying the Design Thinking Approach

Many innovation-oriented projects in the youth field aim to create some specific new solution - methodology, publication, platform, process, a set of tools or a digital application. The Design Thinking approach has become quite popular among product or service designers in recent years, and it serves well in designing something in the field of youth, too. Design thinking is a human-centred approach to innovation and problem-solving that integrates the needs of people, the possibilities of rapid prototyping and a series of feedback loops. At its core, design thinking is about adopting a holistic approach to solving complex problems.

The Main Benefits of the Design Thinking Approach[1]

Empathy. Design thinking places a significant emphasis on empathising with the main target groups of the project. This deep understanding helps innovators create solutions tailored to the real needs of their target groups.

Iterative process. Design thinking promotes prototyping and testing solutions, encouraging teams to adjust and change (or, in other words, iterate!) their ideas based on feedback, ensuring that the final solution is refined and effective.

Hands-on practical approach. Design thinking is pushing innovators to create simple prototypes of possible solutions and start collecting feedback as soon as possible before the high-quality product is created.

Collaborative approach. It encourages multidisciplinary teams to collaborate, harnessing the diverse skills and viewpoints of team members to foster innovative solutions.

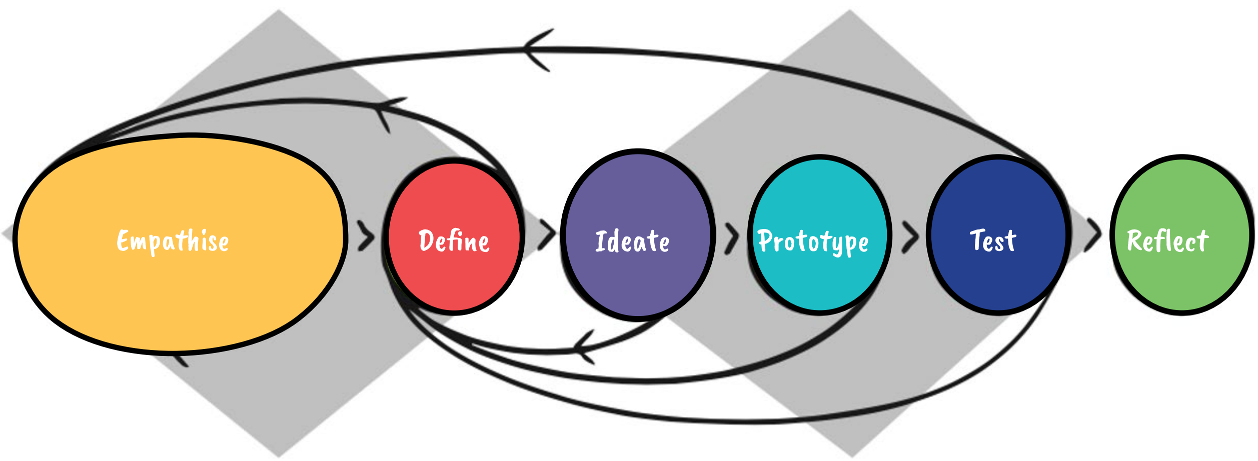
1 Based on the publication "d.school bootcamp bootleg" by Hasso Platner, Institute of Design at Stanford University

Risk reduction. By rapidly prototyping and testing ideas, teams can quickly identify what works and what doesn't, reducing the risks associated with launching new products or services when it's unclear how it will be perceived by the target group.

Unearthing hidden opportunities. Design thinking can help organisations identify previously unseen opportunities by focusing on user needs and pain points.

Key Features of Design Thinking

It is a process based on a few key steps. There are some variations on how these steps are named, and in some cases, there are intermediate steps. The most important feature is that it's a circular process, and teams may jump back to the beginning if testing proves that something isn't right. The image below is a good visualisation of the approach.



Empathise - understanding the needs, desires, and objectives of those who will use the product or service. It involves immersing oneself in the environment of a person who will use your product to get a deep sense of their challenges and aspirations. We use the word 'user' to refer to someone who will use the innovative product that a project team aims to develop.

Define - using the information gathered during the empathy stage to clear needs and challenges. This phase helps teams clearly articulate the problem they're aiming to solve.

Ideate - brainstorming and coming up with creative solutions. This phase is about generating a wide variety of potential solutions without the constraints of feasibility.

Prototype - turning ideas into tangible products or services. Prototypes are a low-fidelity representation of the final solution, helping teams quickly visualise and test their ideas.

Test - testing prototypes with end-users/learners to gather feedback. This phase ensures that the solution is refined based on real-world feedback before larger-scale implementation.

Reflect - it involves reflection on teamwork, procedures, involvement of stakeholders and the process of producing something innovative. It's an essential step to keep on learning from the experience of innovation.

Given its human-centred approach, design thinking can be quite beneficial when planning a Cooperation Partnership project within the Erasmus+ programme. The iterative nature of design thinking ensures that initial project ideas are continually refined based on feedback, ensuring their effectiveness and relevance in the long term. Furthermore, the collaborative approach of design thinking aligns well with the principle of equal partnership and the participatory nature of youth work and the Erasmus+ programme.

With the design thinking approach, it becomes easier to decide on the project structure. What should be the main stages and so-called ‘work packages?’ When should partner meetings be held, progress reviewed, and get geared up for the next steps? The plan will also make clear when face-to-face meetings are essential and when an online chat will suffice.

A design-thinking approach gives a clear structure for innovative product development within the Cooperation Partnership. If you plan on developing several products, these main phases can be repeated with the specific work package.

Example of a Cooperation Partnership Project Design

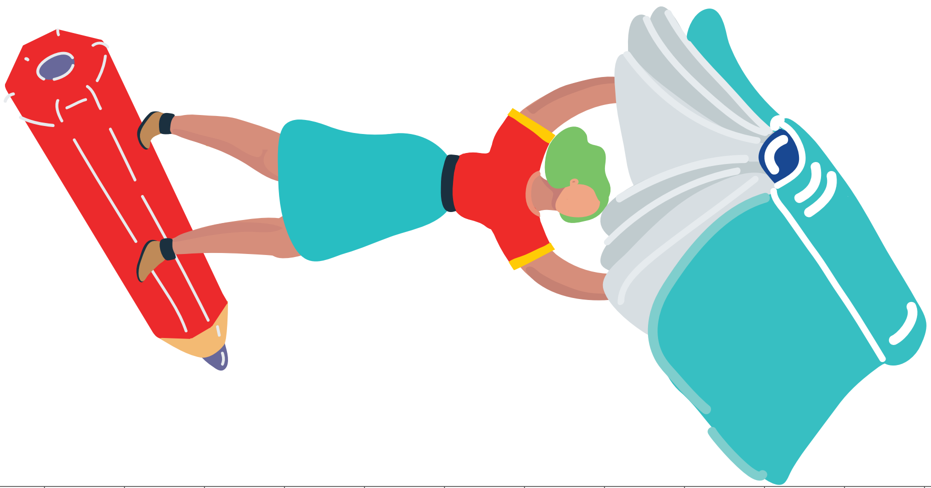
The KA2 project “Trainers Appraisal” aimed at creating a 360º competence review online tool based on the ETS competence model for trainers. The partners decided to apply a design-thinking approach throughout the entire project life cycle. The project team defined four main outputs to produce:

1. A web environment to run a 360° appraisal service
2. Web tools and guidelines to support trainers’ self-assessment
3. Web tools and guidelines for external review of trainers’ performance
4. Web tools and guidelines for trainers’ professional development

Each output had all major design thinking steps. For example, the first output, the “360º competence review concept”, was split into these phases:

- **Empathise** - needs analysis based on trainers’ survey and literature review
- **Ideate** - synthesising findings from the previous phase, reviewing similar examples, and coming up with self-assessment and feedback collection ideas.
- **Prototype** - creating a survey based on the agreed scales for the competence assessment
- **Test** - sending the survey to trainers who took part in the initial “Empathise” phase and collecting feedback on the assessment scales and the content
- **Reflect** - analysing received feedback, improving the initial prototype and finalising the description for the Online 360º tool creation.

The online tool creation went through all these phases with a bigger focus on prototyping and continuous testing. A clear vision of the project design helped to identify specific tasks and foresee the timeframe, as well as identify needs for online and in-person meetings.



The "innovative" project timeline/ project design:
Example of a KA2 project based on the design thinking approach.

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20
O - DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT PRODUCTS																				
WP2: Web-environment development	WP2	WP2	WP2	WP2	WP2	WP2	WP2	WP2	WP2											
WP2-A1: Research	WP2-A1																			
WP2-A2: Ideation		WP2-A2																		
WP2-A3: Prototyping			WP2-A3																	
WP2-A4: Production				WP2-A4	WP2-A4	WP2-A4	WP2-A4	WP2-A4	WP2-A4											
WP3: Web-tools and guidelines devel-opment on self-assessement							WP3	WP3	WP3	WP3	WP3	WP3	WP3							
WP3-A1: Research							WP3-A1	WP3-A1	WP3-A1	WP3-A1										
WP3-A2: Ideation										WP3-A1	WP3-A1									
WP3-A3: Prototyping											WP3-A3	WP3-A3								
WP3-A4: Production												WP3-A4	WP3-A4	WP3-A4	WP3-A4					
WP4: Web-tools and guidelines for external review of trainers performance											WP4	WP4	WP4	WP4	WP4	WP4				
WP4-A1: Research											WP4-A1									
WP4-A2: Ideation												WP4-A2								
WP4-A3: Prototyping													WP4-A3							
WP4-A4: Production														WP4-A4	WP4-A4	WP4-A4				
WP5: Web-tools and guidelines for trainers professional development														WP5	WP5	WP5	WP5	WP5	WP5	WP5

5

The End Is Just the Beginning

As we end this journey through innovation in youth work projects, let's not forget that the spirit of the Erasmus Programme is not only about the innovative results we create, but also the innovative paths we choose to get there. Each tool and strategy presented in this publication is a door to new ways of working, new forms of inclusion and new perspectives on today's challenges that can help you find solutions that create a better future with young people.

So, dear reader, as you close this publication, please accept our kind invitation to pull up your sleeves and start trying new things. Dare to be playful and curious about new possibilities. Listen to young people and let them participate every step of the way with you, and may your projects be as bright and boundless as your collective imagination.

Anita Silva

Anita Silva is a Portuguese creative trainer, consultant and... clown. She has extensive experience in non-formal education approaches in international youth work, higher education, community work and the private sector. She studied Creativity and Innovation and loves to take people and organisations on a journey outside their own boxes. She is the founder of Clowncare, an NGO that makes clown visits to eldercare settings, and the director of Team MAIS, a consulting company that helps organisations to take Learning, Creativity and Innovation a step further.

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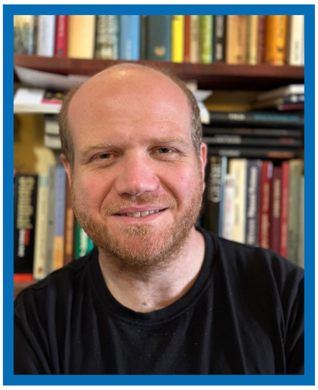

Dragan Atanasov

Dragan Atanasov is a trainer, researcher, evaluator and author, specialised in youth work recognition, youth policy, cultural diversity and community development. He has over ten years of experience in conducting research and assessments in the field of youth work, designing and delivering non-formal education activities, developing policy documents, and monitoring and evaluating programmes. He is a member of the Secretariat of the Union for Youth Work in Skopje, North Macedonia, and the President of AYWA – the Alliance of Youth Workers Associations.

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Laimonas Ragauskas

Laimonas Ragauskas works as a facilitator, supervisor and coach mainly in the areas of non-formal learning and training for various youth work organisations as well as local and European institutions. Since 2002, he has been working as a trainer in the field of youth work. Since 2012, Laimonas has worked extensively with innovative digital solutions and training concepts for better recognition and quality of youth work. He continues his work with Awero and the international Cities of Learning network to pursue building a comprehensive ecosystem for recognition.

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Adapted **SCAMPER** worksheet

Substitute	What can you substitute within the project to support the innovations? What materials or resources can be changed or introduced? What rules can be modified?
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MOVIT has been the Slovenian National Agency for EU programmes in the field of youth, currently Erasmus+, youth field, and the European Solidarity Corps, since May 1999. In this role, MOVIT manages indirectly centralised EU budget funds and supports different forms of learning mobility activities in youth work. It also runs activities to promote the development of (European) youth work, solidarity, and non-formal education. MOVIT also serves as an office of Eurodesk (www.eurodesk.si) and the SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre (SALTO SEE). SALTO SEE belongs to the network of SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres (www.salto-youth.net).

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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA FOR YOUTH

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Enriching lives, opening minds.

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About this publication

This resource has been created within the framework of the European Academy on Youth Work (EAYW) to support youth work practitioners in bringing more innovation to their Erasmus+ projects – and elsewhere in their work.

So, if you are in the middle of planning or implementing your project, and you are curious to see how you can refresh it, then this Toolbox is for you! The Innovation+ Toolbox offers a selection of various tools that can be used to reinforce innovation throughout the different stages of project planning and implementation.

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