SUPPORT FOR A SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION OF CITIES AND TOWNS WITH LESS THAN 15,000 INHABITANTS WITH INVOLVEMENT OF THE LOCAL YOUTH

A Methodological Guide

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Pictures:

"I believe in the power of young people. Peace, economic dynamism, social justice, tolerance—all these and more, depend on tapping into the potential of youth, not in some distant future, but today."

— António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

1) Introduction

This methodological guide aims to pave the way for small cities and towns towards being greener and more sustainable. It was developed as an intellectual output of the ERASMUS+ project "Green Cities of YOUth", providing a comprehensive collection of measures and inspiring project ideas from other municipalities around the world.

These days, local authorities all over the world have to deal with severe challenges, however, these can be very different or even adverse.

The growth of cities on the one hand, brings up challenges such as increasing population, increasing risk of social exclusion of the most disadvantaged, lack of green space, increased air pollution and a growing amount of waste and increased mobility and energy consumption.

Smaller towns instead often face the risk of a population decline, which is often accompanied by negative effects such as a decrease in the local economy and subsequent loss of jobs and purchasing power, the closing of schools and care facilities and finally less use of public transport, which makes it more expensive (UN Habitat, 2022).

In any case, cities and towns need strong support to tackle these challenges and to become more sustainable, more resilient and thus, more attractive. This guide is intended to help and facilitate the sustainable urban development to reconcile social and economic interests, meeting the needs of generations of the present without putting those of future generations at risk. However, too often, the voices of those future generations are not heard or properly considered. We share the view that the youth of today should not only be the target group, but be actively included in the shaping of what will be THEIR future in the end. Thus, we are explicitly focusing on the empowerment of the local youth through involvement, inclusion, training and motivation.

In this guide, we will describe the different steps of the transformation process as well as the different fields of a green city that we have identified throughout our research. Each description is completed with relevant case examples of projects that can be implemented.

The measures suggested refer to towns or neighbourhoods of no more than 15,000 inhabitants. The addressees of this guide are local politicians and municipal staff as well as representatives of the local economy, civil society entities and individual citizens. The guide is freely accessible to all and it and contains the information in a written form that are available on our respective website: greencitiesofyouth.eu

Both media are published in the project languages: English, Spanish, German and Romanian.

2) About us

The project "Green Cities of YOUth" - „Increasing the role of young people in the development of sustainable cities" - is a joint project of the organisations Asociación Pokhara (Spain), Group of the European Youth for Change - GEYC (Romania) and aiforia - ecoculture e.V. (Germany). It is funded by the European Programme ERASMUS + from January 2022 to March 2024 (project ID 2021-1-ES02-KA220-YOU-000029156).

Pokhara, Spain (lead partner) is an association that provides services to young people. EMPU-G Program is their main program and it was born in September, 2013. Concretely, it is a Program of Selective and Indicated Prevention of the Social Exclusion Risk and Drugs Consumption, through non-formal education methods, focused on the educational work with youngsters between 12 and 30 years old and their families in situation of risk for social, familiar, relational, economic questions, etc. This Program is carried out in 8 localities in the province of Ciudad Real, Spain.

What we look for in the program is the integration of the youngsters in their community and the society. We work through creating a strong link between the participant and the educational team and the positive vision of adolescence.

For more information see the website: programaempug.com

Aiforia-ecoculture e.V. (aiforia.eu), Germany, is a non profit association with experienced project staff who has coordinated activities for mainstreaming best practices, facilitating knowledge exchange and the development of local, regional, national and international projects and processes for sustainability. The staff members are official tour guides of the Green City of Freiburg, commissioned by the Green City Municipal Office to present Freiburg's Green City strategies. The specific areas of expertise are: sustainable consumption (fair trade, organic, zero waste, regional, DIY, energy efficiency, etc.) and sustainable urban development with participatory planning.

GEYC is a Romanian NGO whose mission is to empower young people to change their community (geyc.ro). GEYC is coordinating the activity of the European PRISMA network (http://prisma-network.eu). The scope is to empower young people to create positive change in their community. The objectives are to support education at local, national and international levels; promotion of social networks and new media technologies for the personal and professional development of youth, advocating for human rights especially of youth, stimulate individual and organisational social responsibility and fostering entrepreneurship at the local, national and international levels. The target groups are young people (14-35 years old) from Romania and the Romanian diaspora; youth workers from EU and youth organisations from EU and neighbouring countries; teachers from Romania (focusing on secondary and high school teachers).

Within 24 months, this methodological guide will be developed to help communities with less than 15,000 inhabitants to implement low-threshold but effective projects to reduce their ecological footprint. In all three partner countries, participatory workshops with young people to raise awareness will be conducted to involve this generation, which is particularly affected by the future impacts of climate change. Selected projects will be implemented in the Spanish partner community of Miguelturra.

3) Traits of a Green City

There is no one single definition of a "Green City" or a "Sustainable City": Instead, scientists, politicians and activists offer a broad variety of descriptions and underlying concepts. Where the original definition of sustainability (derived from forestry) rather falls short for the complex systems of cities, the prevailing descriptions of sustainable urban structures follow the main idea of a city that balances the different economic, social and environmental issues of an urban complex.

The impetus for the development of this idea dates back to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 with the following Agenda 21 process, including guidelines for a sustainable development. Cities and towns adopted the guidelines on a local level, the Local Agenda 21 (Sustainable Cities Platform).

In 2004, during the 4th Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, the participating municipalities agreed on the Aalborg Commitments and the respective vision that their cities and towns should be inclusive, prosperous, creative and sustainable, should provide a good quality of life for all citizens and enable their participation in all aspects of urban life.

The Aalborg Commitments include the following ten fields of action:

1) Governance: Increase the participatory democracy
2) Local Management: Strengthen the local sustainability processes
3) Natural Common Goods: Protect and preserve water, energy, air and biodiversity
4) Responsible Consumption: Promote efficient use of resources and products
5) Planning and Design: Address environmental, social and economic issues in the urban planning process
6) Better Mobility, Less Traffic: Promote sustainable mobility choices
7) Local Action for Health: Promote the wellbeing of all citizens
8) Vibrant and Sustainable Local Economy: Ensure a local economy that gives access to employment without damaging the environment
9) Social Equity and Justice: Secure inclusive and supportive communities
10) Local to Global: Assume a global responsibility for peace, justice, equity, sustainable

(Sustainable Cities Platform)

In order to support the pathway to these goals, the Aalborg Commitments suggest a process referred to as Integrated Urban Management, including specific indicators and measures to follow through.

The Basque Declaration of 2016 can be considered as a reality check and revision, now referring to the relevant key processes towards urban sustainability as Socio-Cultural Transformation, Socio-Economic Transformation and Technological Transformation. In particular, the signatories focus on the need for transformation in order to:

1. decarbonise our energy systems and reduce total energy consumption,

2. create sustainable urban mobility patterns and accessibility for all,

3. protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services,

4. reduce the use of greenfield land and natural space,

5. protect water resources, water and air quality,

6. adapt to climate change and reduce the risk of disasters,

7. improve public space to create convivial, safe, and vibrant environments,

8. provide sufficient and adequate housing for all,

9. guarantee the social inclusion and integration of all parts of the society,

10. strengthen our local economies and local employment opportunities (Sustainable Cities Platform)

In 2016, the United Nations signed the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) as a future global development framework with 169 specific targets set for these goals:

Picture 1: Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations)

SDG 11 refers especially to the development on the urban level: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable ("THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development"). The targets include, among others, providing access to safe, affordable and sustainable transportation and access to green spaces by 2030 (Worldbank). However, there are strong interlinkages with other goals such as SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy or SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production.

ICLEI - The global network of Local Governments for Sustainability published in 2021 their vision for a sustainable urban world with the underlying five strategic pathways:

1) Low Emission Development: Reduce all environmentally harmful pollutants and emissions
2) Nature-based Development: Respect and protect all naturals resources such as soil, air, water and food
3) Circular Development: Decouple economic growth from resource consumption
4) Resilient Development: Strengthen the essential systems to prevent and recover from shocks and stresses
5) Equitable and people-centred development: Build more livable and inclusive communities

(ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, 2021)

The World Cities Report 2022 stresses the importance of action in urban contexts on the ongoing climate and biodiversity crisis to ensure the goal of limiting the average mean temperature rise to 1.5°C by 2100, thus the need for a transition towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions (UN Habitat, 2022).

4) Green City of Youth

As the involvement of the youth plays a crucial role in this project, the project consortium has initially developed a questionnaire which makes it possible to capture the youth's perspective and vision on green and sustainable development in their cities and towns.

The questionnaire was developed by the project consortium during the Study Visit in Freiburg, Germany in July 2022, together with the participating young adults from Spain and Romania. The questionnaire was tested on the site during the stay and later conducted in both countries during autumn and winter 2022.

Spain:

The survey has been answered by young people between the ages of 12 and 30 from Miguelturra, Spain. It was conducted among almost 50 respondents. The total of 10 survey questions included topics such as green spaces, public transport, bike lanes, accessibility of basic resources, water consumption, awareness-raising for sustainability, recycling and renewable energies.

Most of the young people indicated that in their locality there are few measures to reduce the use of polluting means of transport, such as bike lanes or pedestrian areas. Additionally, they stated that Miguelturra needs more green areas, more recycling points and better management of public money so that it can be invested in measures that favour sustainability.

Romania:

The survey was conducted among 64 young people between the ages 13 and 30 in Campina. The following main needs were identified:

1. Lack of quality education and easy access to reliable information sources for kids, youths and adults in regards to green and sustainable practices in their local community.

2. Poor sustainable and green infrastructure (including lack of new, regular and eco-friendly means of transport, no safe bike laces, unsafe transportation for vulnerable groups, no infrastructure for disabled people, no effective parkings).

3. Lack of response to polluted areas from the authorities and stakeholders (including no effective waste management, no fines or repercussions applied for polluting, no collaboration with CSR departments, unresponsive and irresponsible CSR departments).

Also, the young people expressed that the educational system does not work enough to raise awareness about ecological issues and sustainability.

The complete surveys can be found in Annex 2.

In addition to the results in Spain and Romania, the Greenpeace Sustainability Barometer 2021 concludes that young people in Germany do have a strong sustainability awareness. They are very concerned about the current situation of ecosystems and climate change. At the same time they feel abandoned by politics. However, they show a great trust in NGO's, research and citizens' initiatives such as Fridays for Future and are willing to get involved themselves as they feel that changes are visible in their direct environment (Kress 2021).

5) Fields of Action

The fields of action that we identified as relevant for this guide according to the SDG 11, the Aalborg Commitments and the ICLEI vision and its pathways include: Good Governance, Urban Planning and Design, Natural Resources, Energy and Climate, Responsible Consumption, Sustainable Mobility, Sustainable Economy and Social Equity and Justice. In the following subsections a broader description of each field of action is given with additional links to relevant best practices involving the youth or young adults. A comprehensive list of best practices can be found in Annex 4.

Governance

Governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Good governance follows several characteristics such as: participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency, consensus orientation and legality (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, n.d.).

It is necessary to know the legal basis for sustainability on behalf of the municipality who wishes to implement the guide. If no such basis exists, it should be created.

I.e.1 In the locality there is a big company or multinational, the responsibility of the local government is to ensure that a sustainable basis is being met (efficient use of the land, CO2 emissions, checking if they are using renewable energies, etc..)

I.e 2: allocate a part of public money to sustainability funds to substantially support sustainability projects on the local level.

Best practices:

Participatory Budget

Green Mapping

Urban Planning and Design

Currently, around 75 % of Europe's population live in urban areas with an increasing trend of urbanisation (*Urban Sustainability: How Can Cities Become Sustainable? — European Environment Agency*, 2022). According to the EEA urban environmental sustainability "encourages revitalisation and transition of urban areas to improve liveability, promote innovation and reduce environmental impacts while maximising economic and social co-benefits".

Best practice:

[Parking Day](#)

[Green Tourism](#)

Natural Resources

The natural resources are reflected in the SDG 14 "Life below water" and SDG 15 "Life on Land", both SDH's refer to the sustainable use of all resources that are created by nature and do have an economic value such as air, soil, water, wind, minerals, flora and fauna. It is distinguished between renewable (e.g.) plants, and non-renewable resources (e.g. gas). The use of natural resources has massively increased since industrialisation leading to over-exploitation and depletion, endangering thus the existing ecosystems.
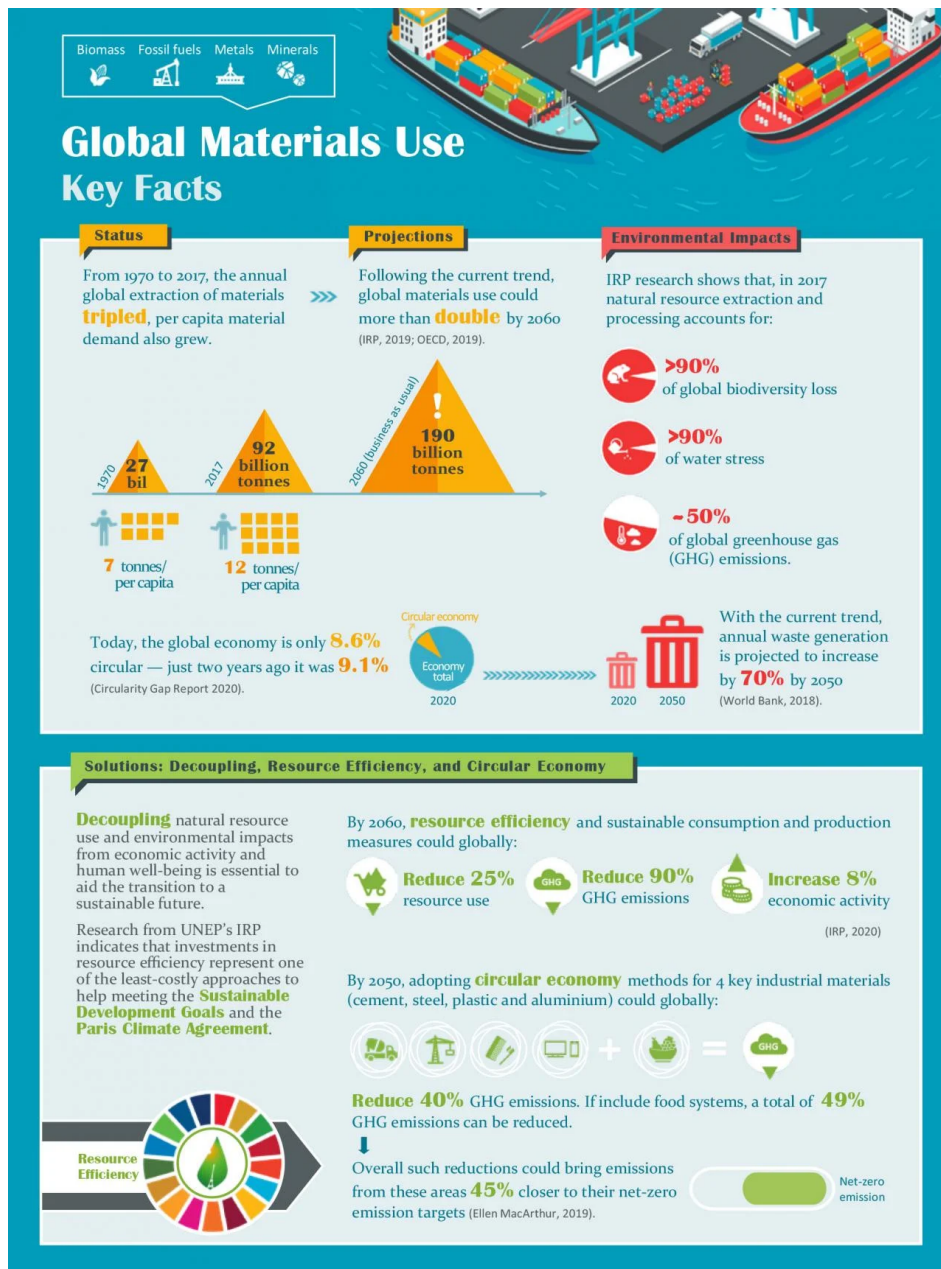
Picture 2: Global Materials Use (UNEP and IRP, 2020)

On the local level a multitude of actions can be taken to foster a sustainable use of natural resources.

Best practices:

Insect Hotels

Tree Patronage

Reforestation

Water Explorer

[Natural Science Week for School Children](#)

[Seed Swap](#)

Energy & Climate

According to the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1,5°C climate change is already affecting ecosystems and livelihoods across the world. But although climate change is a global issue, impacts are experienced locally, cities and municipalities are at the forefront of adaptation and mitigation of climate change by the mitigation of greenhouse gases through increasing energy efficiency, energy savings and the use of renewable energies (IPCC, 2018).

Best practices:

[Energy Saving Campaign in Schools](#)

[Climate Escape Game](#)

[Bicycle Cinema](#)

[Solar Cooking](#)

Responsible Consumption

All our daily products and services such as food, clothes, shelter and transportation depend on natural resources. Currently, the demand of natural resources is higher than the ecosystems' capacity to regenerate those resources (biocapacity) with the consequence of an ecological deficit, such as overfishing or emitting more greenhouse gases than the atmosphere can absorb. This deficit is called "overshoot". The earth overshoot day defines the date when the consumption of natural resources exceeds the biocapacity. In 2022 the Earth Overshoot Day landed on July 28. The development of the annual Earth Overshoot Days is illustrated in picture 3:
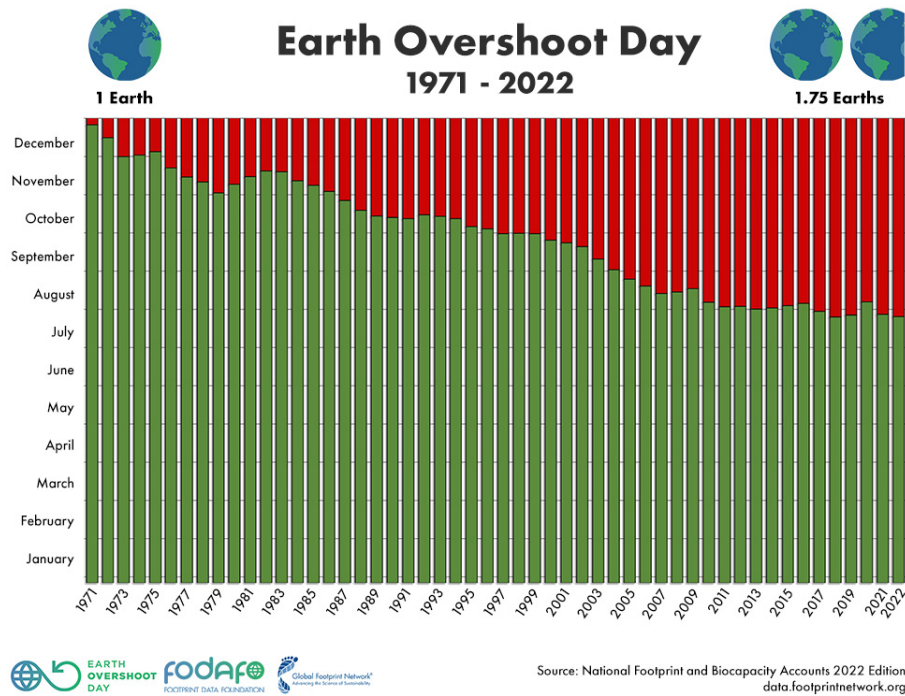
Picture 3: Earth Overshoot Day, 1971 - 2022 (Global Footprint Network, 2023)

Best practices:

[Local Food Challenge](#)

[Plastic Free Challenge](#)

[Clean Up Days](#)

[Disco Soup](#)

[Edible City](#)

[Local Food Council](#)

[Movie Festival about Sustainable Food](#)

Mobility

The traffic sector is responsible for a multitude of negative impacts in the urban environment, such as noise, pollution and the emission of greenhouse gases from motorised individual vehicles. Sustainable mobility thus includes an integrated approach based on cycling and public transport (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2013).

Best practices:

Free Cycling Lessons

Critical Mass

Economy

According to the World Bank, cities generate around 1.3 billion tonnes of solid waste per year. The current model of linear economy "produce, use, dispose" holds responsible for a massive use of resources with huge amounts of waste while the circular economy follows the principles "reduce, reuse, recycle" with waste being minimised or even eliminated from the system (World Economic Forum, 2018).

Best practices:

Repair Café

Clothing Swap

Social Equity and Justice

Human rights address several aspects such as diversity (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, religion, language, education, income, physical ability), inclusion, empowerment and solidarity. On a local level, authorities and the civil society can establish structures to promote and promote and reinforce human rights referring to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2021).

Best practices:

Intercultural or intergenerational Garden

Solidary and inclusive Restaurant

Carnival of Cultures

City map of barrier free locations

Free Store

6) Transformation Methodology

The transformation towards being a more green and sustainable community is a long-term process, which needs to be gone in small steps. It is not meaningful to work on all thematic areas at once, it is recommended that each community defines its own path according to its individual circumstances. It is further meaningful to adapt the transformation approach depending on the type of stakeholder. Whether you are a representative of the municipality (administrative staff of councillor), whether you are a member of a local NGO, business or other civil society or entity, or whether you are an individual person - there is always something you can do, and this guide is trying to support you while considering the varying conditions of different stakeholders groups. Needless to say, there is the highest potential for success if more (all!) stakeholder groups work hand in hand, so some of the recommendations below will reach out and overlap with other groups.

a) Municipal stakeholders

There are a number of methodologies used by cities and towns for paving the way in the transformation process: Integrated Management Scheme of the Aalborg/ Basque Declaration, Sustainability Management as suggested by European and International Standards (EMAS+, ISO 14001) etc. Here is one methodology laid out in the following overview:

Step 1: Stakeholder Analysis

As a first step of the process, the relevant public and private stakeholders, such as municipal administration and other public institutions, academia, media, businesses, associations, civil society and NGOs need to be identified.

Step 2: Awareness Raising

The involvement of the different stakeholders is crucial to understand the different types of information and needs in a specific municipality or community. It is therefore important to ensure the implementation of suitable participatory methods. Awareness raising includes informing, exchanging ideas and building initial partnerships (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2019).

A SOAR Analysis serves for a deeper understanding of the starting conditions. SOAR stands for:

Strengths: What are our greatest strengths? What do we do well?

Opportunities: What are our best opportunities? Who could we partner with? How can we activate latent assets?

Aspirations: What is our preferred future? What do we want to be known for?

Results: What are the measures that tell us if we've achieved our aspirations? Is anyone better off?
(Global Ecovillage Network)

Strengths

What are our greatest strengths? What do we do well?

Opportunities

What are our best opportunities? Who could we partner with? How can we activate latent assets?

Aspirations

What is our preferred future? What do we want to be known for?

Results

What are the measures that tell us if we've achieved our aspirations? Is anyone better off?

Picture 4: SOAR Matrix, Global Ecovillage Network

A SOAR analysis allows joint strategic thinking with the different stakeholders.

For more information about participatory methods see chapter "Involving Young People".

Step 3: City Profile and Needs Assessment

As a starting point for the process and its underlying framework is a baseline study of the prevailing circumstances. Input from all relevant stakeholders needs to be gathered. The baseline data could include:

   a) Compilation of social, economic and ecological facts (e.g. geographic and meteorologic conditions, population growth, gender and age distribution, household units, income distribution, amount of waste, water and energy demand and consumption, current and projected GHG emissions...)
   b) Analysis of national, regional and community-level related policies and regulations related to urban planning, climate change

Based on this information register a comprehensive city profile can be developed as the substantial first step (Lewis, 2015) & (Global Green Growth Institute, 2016).

A needs assessment - based on the city or profile - serves to identify possible gaps between the current state and the desired future state (Lewis, 2015), thus to set the objectives.

Several tools exist to conduct a needs assessment, a comprehensive list of tools can be find in ["A Guide to Assessing Needs"](#) (Watkins et al., 2012).

Step 4: Prioritisation and Options

The identification of gaps leads to the next step: the prioritisation. Given the broad range of topics, it is now important to consider which topics should be treated with preference.

This depends on several factors:

- The overall vision (this can be developed during step 2)
- The financial situation
- Assessment of the quality of the proposed projects (e.g. environmental impact, commitment of relevant stakeholders, supportive institutional structures)

A simple rating or scoring system (e.g. Balanced Scorecard) can support the decision-making process.

Step 5: Time and Budget Planning

A detailed budget plan is a must to understand the final costs of a specific project. The budget plan includes all expected investment costs and running expenditures that occur while implementing this project, as well as the different sources of funding and possible income. The budget plan further gives transparency for all stakeholders.

The UNESCO provides a simple budgeting tool, which can be downloaded here: [UNESCO Budget Planner](#) (UNESCO).

Possible sources of funding and income could be:

- Public household funds
- Public grants (local, regional, European)
- Business sponsoring
- Individual donations
- Fees for goods or services
- Crowdfunding

When it comes to time planning a gantt chart is an effective tool to schedule the different project activities such as tasks and events.

Step 6: Implementation and Evaluation

A smooth project implementation, thus putting the plan into action, requires constant monitoring of the project activities, budget and timing, regular communication with the project team, transparency towards stakeholders and the flexibility to make adjustments when necessary. A monitoring plan can be a helpful tool. Risks and possible solutions should ideally be identified beforehand. An evaluation tool can help to systematically assess if the project objectives have been achieved (UNESCO).

b) Civil Society Stakeholders

Even without having decision-making power in council resolutions or administrative measures, as a part of civil society organisations, member of an NGO, local business staff and similar entities, there is still a lot one can do. Initiatives and movements like Local Agenda21, Transition Town, Dragon Dreaming, Ecovillages etc. have developed valuable guides to help to design and follow through a suitable process of transformation towards a greener and more livable community. See Annex 4 for respective links.

The project management cycle from section a) can also be applied by NGO's or any other form of stakeholder.

c) Individual Persons

First of all, you are never alone! For sure, you will find some like-minded people if you look around, in the local newspaper, or on the internet- e.g. check the Transition Town Network for a group near you But even if you don't immediately find people you feel they match, you can start to make a change from within
The Inner Development Goals initiative has compiled respective tools to improve our inner capacity to deal with our increasingly complex environment and challenges related to the Sustainability Development Goals.

The method and tools cover 5 different dimensions:
1- Being - Relationship to Self

2. Thinking - Cognitive Skills

3. Relating - Caring for Others and the World

4. Collaborating - Social Skills

5. Acting - Driving Change

… more at https://www.innerdevelopmentgoals.org/

If you feel a strong impulse to start your own initiative or project, but feel a bit vague about how to best start it, you can make use of the "Changemaker Playbook". The hints and exercises help you clarify your underlying motivation, the topics your heart is most burning for, the resources (competences, time and money) you can tap into, and the best suitables ways for you to get engaged, be it volunteering, starting a social business, fundraising, campaigning or political activities.

(German   only:
https://zukunftswerft.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Dein_Changemaker-Playbook-1.pdf)

7) Involving young people

Analysis of participatory methods (Pokhara & GEYC)

- target group (average age, educational background)
- description of the method
- resources needed
- timeframe
- stakeholders
- aspect of sustainability
- objectives of methods (to be used as hashtags for search):
    - for awareness-raising (campaigns, games, flashmobs)
    - vision- finding (backcasting / transition towns, dragon dreaming)
    - for activation / empowerment
    - community / team -building (world cafes, open space conference, barcamp)

Other ideas:

- Podcast: group of 12 young people (16-26 years) meet once a month to develop a podcast on topics of the social-ecological transformation. In field trips, interviews, workshops and production in the studio, the youth discuss how a livable world can look like and how we can shape the necessary transformation. (https://www.katholische-akademie-freiburg.de/akademie/junge-akademie/)
- Graffiti
- "Theatre of the Oppressed" (by Augusto Boal), techniques for promoting social and political change: the audience becomes active, such that as "spect-actors" they explore, show, analyse and transform the reality in which they are living. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre_of_the_Oppressed)
- Creative/ art/ craft workshop (e.g. with ecological/ natural materials).
- Poetry Slam

1. POKHARA´S METHODOLOGY OF WORK

The methodology of work with teenagers in Empu-G is based on five key points, to achieve the participation and involvement of young people in any type of activity:

- Personal bond: There is previous work with the group of young people, which consists of establishing a very positive relationship of trust between the group and the reference person, who guides them in the activity, in our case, the educators. Why, when it comes to proposing them to do some kind of activity, they do it together with us without opposing it, sometimes simply for the reason of wanting to share time with us thanks to that link that we have previously worked on.

- Interest: We have to be aware that not all young people are the same, therefore, starting from this base, our work as leaders of the youth group and knowing the characteristics of our group we must propose activities that focus on the interests that share the same interest. cluster. Sometimes we must ask ourselves if the activity we offer is suitable for our young people or perhaps it would be more appropriate to carry it out with another group with different characteristics that are more suited to the activity we want to propose.

- Attractive activities: We must not forget when we work with young people that we are working with a demanding group, in which not everything is worth it. Therefore, choosing or proposing the most appropriate activities is in our hands. Sometimes it is as simple as asking ourselves what goal we want to achieve with our group of young people and looking for or designing the most attractive way (activity) for them to achieve those goals.

- Motivation: Sometimes, while we are carrying out an activity, problems arise with our group of young people, such as frustration, distraction, tiredness, etc. That is why it is important, and part of our job, to motivate

them during the activity, to maintain positive energy in the group and that the activity is completed successfully.

- Positive reinforcement: Once our group of young people has finished the activity that we have proposed, our work does not end there. It is important to value their effort and convey our pride in their work. In this way we are positively reinforcing the work they have carried out in the activity, and with a view to future activities, the group of young people will be more predisposed to do any other activity that we propose to them.

2.   GROUPS TO WHICH OUR INTERVENTION IS DIRECTED (EMPU-G)

Our focus of work is aimed at adolescents who are at risk of social exclusion

At Empu-G we work in small groups of eighteen teenagers maximum per educator.

In our program there are three different groups in each location where we work, divided by age range.

'Group of Little Ones', in this group adolescents from 12 to 14 years old attend the activities.

'Group of Mediums', is composed by adolescents from 14 to 16 years old.

Finally, **'Group of Seniors'**, made up of young people from 16 to 18 years old.

3.   TYPES OF ACTIVITIES (EMPU-G)

 The sessions are planned according to the needs and maturity level of the group. The same activities are not carried out with the 'Little Group', as with the 'Older Group'.

 In general, the activities we carry out in our program are the following:

Games: They are more focused on the 'Group of Little Ones' and 'Group of Mediums'. The objective of this type of activity is to foster group feeling and teamwork.

Workshops: These types of activities are carried out with adolescents of all ages. The goal is for teens to learn skills and manage frustration levels.

Sport: Sports activities are also carried out with adolescents of all ages. Since our program is focused on the prevention of substance use, sport is an essential element in healthy lifestyle habits, which we promote and instill in our program.

Group dynamics: The objective of these activities is to give rise to reflection and critical thinking in our adolescents. The dynamics that we carry out have different themes, feelings, emotional management, sexual education, consumption prevention... These types of activities are directed mostly to the 'Group of Mediums' and 'Group of Seniors', the little ones have not reached a sufficient level of maturity to reach the goals we want to reach with these group dynamics.

Regarding the use of ICT, from POKHARA, we get involved in the use of new technologies from the perspective of saving material resources that can be replaced by digital variants.

How, for example, the development of some of our activities through mobile applications, computer programs or websites, instead of directly printing documents or sheets to carry out the activity.

Likewise, we want to mention the adaptation that we had of our work methodology during the pandemic, towards a full use of ICT in our work, since it was the only option we had to continue with our program and be able to continue serving the adolescents who participate in it.

We create all our sessions with our teen groups online, through group video calls. We adapted the activities so that they could be carried out online. Both group dynamics and games. We even created some new games and activities that only needed digital resources, such as videos or web links so that our young people could enjoy and participate during the quarantine phase.

This new way of working to which we had to adapt, in addition to being a challenge for us as professionals, made us demonstrate the many alternatives and options that new technologies offer us with respect to saving resources, and therefore, in favor of sustainability, thus following

one of our main objectives as an association, to continue improving and to continue betting on sustainable development as an entity.

GEYC - Group of the European Youth for Change

Group of the European Youth for Change - GEYC is a Romanian youth organization founded in 2010 active at the European level. GEYC is the initiator and coordinating organization of PRISMA European Network, a European wide coalition aimed to raise the quality of youth projects.

Our mission is to empower young people to create a positive change in their community.

We are young people working with young people through both peer-to-peer education and mass communication supported by youth leaders

Target groups:

- young people (14-35 years old) from Romania and Romanian Diaspora;

- youth workers from EU & neighbouring countries;

- youth organisations from EU & neighbouring countries;

- teachers from Romania (focusing on secondary school and high schActivities:

- Educational projects (seminars, conferences, training, summer schools);

- Intercultural projects (youth exchanges, study visits, networking events);

- Research projects;

- Challenges;

- Raising awareness campaigns;

 Permanent activities:

- Our Facebook page (https://geyc.ro/fb), Instagram (@geyc.ro) and website aim to be an informative portal for young people providing valuable content in the following fields: news, education, entrepreneurship, responsibility, human rights, Romanian culture and civilization, Culture and intercultural dialogue and entertainment.

- GEYC Community gathers over 7000 Romanian speaking young people, youth workers, and teachers from all over the country and from abroad, providing to them: youth information, opportunities and engaging them in consultations concerning young people;

- in the context of the "No hate speech movement", GEYC launched and coordinates GEYC Resources Center (http://geyc.ro/resources), an online center of resources aimed to offer a wide variety of online free tools about multimedia and social media topics aimed to help both individuals and organizations in their work.

- We have created a network of over 130 schools and more than 100 teachers from all over the country, EDU@GEYC.RO, under the framework of the program Young Digital Leaders, a Europe-wide project that aims to empower young people through digital citizenship and critical thinking and media literacy skills, beyond the classroom, so that they can grow up safe, responsible digital leaders. This network was created in order to continue the collaboration and facilitate the communication between the teachers, but also to provide them with opportunities for them and their students.

GEYC Learning Center gathers all learning opportunities offered by us and our partners: training programmes, workshops, conferences, and symposiums. We focus on key competencies leading to employability such as digital skills, project management, soft skills, intercultural communication, organisational management, training, and social media marketing.

- SMARTER Academy: 20 hours intensive training course concluded with a final group project (to be presented) evaluated by their peers and by an expert committee and a theoretical assessment. More information: geyc.ro/smarter-academy. Modules: Project Management; PR & Communications; Digital Marketing; Human Resources Management; Soft skills. There have been 5 editions implemented in Bucharest and Chișinău, since 2014.
- HTML Basics: is a one-day practical workshop allowing the participants to discover the basics of HTML and to enable them to use it for basic web design tasks. The workshop is organized yearly in the frame of EU Code Week
- Get IT is a one-day practical workshop aimed to discover collaborative tools and to enhance online team-work and to introduce open source solutions for young professionals.
- European Mobility Café: these events bring European mobility opportunities closer to the young people by providing technical information and live experiences from their peers. More information: geyc.ro/mobilityEU-cafe
- European Fellowships: long-term programmes including mobilities, online learning, training courses, and practice in a specific field. European Fellowship programmes are an original format at GEYC through which our GEYC Community members develop their skills in a priority field by combining learning, exploring, and doing. During their fellowship they have the chance to get directly involved in GEYC's activities and to put their knowledge into practice. Although the Fellowships are not providing a financial stipend, our Fellows that are completing the programme with significant achievements are usually offered various follow-up collaboration

opportunities by GEYC and its partners. More information: geyc.ro/fellowship

- #învizită / #visitit: GEYC Community visits allow the participants to discover various institutions and interesting locations on a given topic. More information: geyc.ro/invizita
- GEYC Talks: are social gatherings offering an opportunity to GEYC Community members to meet offline, share ideas, and have fun.
- Consultations: offer a voice to our community members to have a say in fields that matter for them. Their results are taken into account in drafting our activities, strategy or in the structured dialogue with policy makers.
- Digital Citizenship Week: is an annual celebration started by GEYC in 2019 with the duration of a week around 15th of September - the International Day of Democracy bringing together activities and events connected to the role of the internet and of the current digital tools in the democracy.

Good practices used in youth activities:

1. Name: **Euro Casino**

Objective: It is a teamwork game, which makes it a great tool to foster dialogue and increase interpersonal competences, to develop leadership skills and assume responsibilities in a fun, yet serious way. It is also a strategy game, which allows participants to explore ways of setting and achieving a common goal within a team, take risks and learn from mistakes. Moreover, the large scale of possibilities to evaluate knowledge, skills and attitudes achieved during one specific programme (by challenging participants with specific related tasks) makes it a good option for any final non-formal evaluation activity.

SDGs: 4 Quality Education,

Duration: 90 minutes

Materials: stocks and quizzes

Description:

It consists of a simulation of a real casino, where each table brings new challenges for the participants. Depending on the nature of the programme we want to evaluate, the casino can have a very diverse range of tables (stocks, questions and gambling, psychomotrical challenges, memory or board games, etc.). Each team (4-6 people) has an equal amount of credits to start with and 2 minutes to set up a strategy. The tables with challenges get opened one by one, starting with the safest options. After 30 minutes, all tables are opened. To take a challenge they have to pay. Each facilitator at the table can choose its own strategy (they can change price, make special offers, accept to negotiate if asked etc.) and advertise the challenge like in a real casino. The team which has the biggest amount of credits in the end wins.

Observations/other/suggestions for facilitation:

- Make sure you have enough facilitators to share the roles. During the game you will need at least 1 person/table. You can also use one person to sell drinks or Internet connection, one to take the unattended credits and drop credits on the floor to see what others do. Also, if you want to record this on camera, do not count on table facilitators or participants, once they are in the game they will forget to press play (set up the camera on Auto or have someone there just for this).

- Make sure you have enough time to prepare the setting. Play casino music, use colour lights, balloons, dress formally, give tickets at the entrance. Be creative!

- Being a very intense experience, prepare the debriefing really well.

- Make the challenges relevant for your project. For example, if your project is an Erasmus+ Youth Exchange about Entrepreneurship, the Question table can have: questions regarding the topic of the project (info found out during the sessions), general questions about different cultural aspects of the countries represented in the project (experienced during intercultural night) or the European Union and Erasmus+ programme and also Monopoly-like challenges (lose/win credits, take another question, go to another table with challenges, etc.).

2. Name: **Face2Facebook**

Objective: Foster interaction between participants, stimulate individual reflection on expectations, fears & contributions to the project

SDGs: 4 Quality Education,

Duration: 50 minutes

Materials: here

Description:

Each participant received an A4/A3 paper with a template of a Facebook account. They have to fill in the name, update their status and info (hobbies, location, work & studies, etc.). In order to add friends, they will have to walk around the room and meet the other participants, sharing info of their profile. Also, they can draw each other's profile photos. Depending on the size of the group, this activity can take up from 20 to 40 minutes. The "profiles" will remain on a wall and they can use it during the project to send messages, give likes, add more friends, etc.

Face2Facebook can be, additionally, used for reflection. The template can also contain 3 empty posts, stating only "feeling hopeful", "feeling scared" and "feeling confident", where pax are supposed to write their expectations, fears and contributions, individually, which can be later discussed in the group. This part, including the discussion, can take up to 30 minutes. Due to the fact that the "profiles" remain visible during the whole project, trainers can invite pax to go back to these sections during daily/mid-term/final evaluation and update their status.

Observations/other/suggestions for facilitation:

- It best suits to a project linked to: communication, digital tools, social media, no hate speech online, cyber-bulling and other related issues.

- Personalise the template with the project's identity (logo, name of the project, etc.), but leave enough space to be filled in by pax.

- Be eco-friendly, you do not have to colour print it. Encourage participants to paint it and make it look nice.

- If you have a photo camera that prints on the spot, you can take pics of pax and hand them.

- Make sure you have a visible place to put them until the end of the project and encourage pax to use them regularly.

3. Name: **#învizită (#visitit)**

Objective: promote meaningful face-to-face interactions within the GEYC Community, fostering personal connections and allowing the participants to discover various institutions and interesting locations on a given topic.

SDGs: 4 Quality Education, Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Duration: 90 minutes

Materials: here

Description:

GEYC Community appeared and grew mostly online, but the best results are given by face-to-face interaction among people. This is how we came up with "#invizita" initiative. It started in Bucharest in 2016 (where we had more than 50% of our Community members at that time) to bridge the gap between online engagement and face-to-face interactions. Recognizing the value of personal connections, the initiative focuses on organizing visits to various institutions and

locations. Participants have the opportunity to engage in discussions with specialists or the responsible person at the location, to ask questions, and to actively participate in the activities offered at each location. These visits are designed around a specific theme, enabling participants to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the chosen topic. As for the topics related to Green Cities of Youth, #învizită events at Întrevecini Urban Garden, Buruiană Urban Garden Visit, Zero Waste Shop, Magazia Morăriței, Cuib (Sustainable food for a sustainable living visit), EFdeN Smart & sustainable house.

Observations/other/suggestions for facilitation:

- It is suitable on various topics.

- It encourages participants to actively engage in discussions and activities at each location.

- The facilitation of the event also includes a local expert, specialist, community member that has knowledge of the respective location and topic.

- Great to have discussions and debates.

4. Name: **European Fellowship on Youth Leadership (EFYL)**

Objective: EFYL aims to empower young individuals with comprehensive leadership skills, with a specific focus in the context of European projects. Through a dynamic and multifaceted program, participants engage in a transformative learning journey that combines theoretical knowledge, practical experience and collaboration.

SDGs: 4 Quality Education

Duration: One year

Description:

European Fellowship on Youth Leadership (EFYL) is a complex programme of youth leadership initiated by GEYC under the aegis of PRISMA European Network in the frame of EECT project. It is a complex program dedicated to youngsters between 18 and 30 years old that want to learn more about leadership, especially about leadership in European projects. The participants have a mix learning experience: training, job shadowing, practice, inspiration and peer-to-peer training. Participants embark on a transformative learning experience during an intensive Bootcamp which has focused on topics such as: leadership, teamwork, non-formal education methods, social inclusion strategies, project management fundamentals, intercultural communication, conflict resolution, and the specifics of Erasmus + youth exchanges.

After the Bootcamp, the participants have the opportunity to learn from experienced group leaders by Job Shadowing. After this step, they Practice, Get Involved and have the Final Evaluation.

Observations/other/suggestions for facilitation:

- The primary objective of EFYL is to provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of leadership principles, strategies, and practices so that they can be great leaders in mobilities.

- Prepare efficient and relevant games and activities from where will lead the discussions.

- It has 5 stages: Bootcamp, Job Shadowing, Practice, Get Involved, Final Evaluation.

- The Job Shadowing should be on a person with knowledge and experience in leadership, being a group leader before.

5. Name: **New Media Ambassadors (NMA)**

Objective: Empower participants with a comprehensive set of digital skills, PR and social media expertise, intercultural competences, creativity, and teamwork capabilities

SDGs: Goal 4: Quality Education, Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

Duration: 8-12 weeks, 10h/week, 100% online

Description:

New Media Ambassadors (NMA) is a complex online practical training of 8-12 weeks, based on gamification, aimed at developing participants' digital skills, PR and social media know-how, intercultural competences, creativity and teamwork. By facilitating the virtual exchange, NMA format supported and promoted the growth of the GEYC Resources Center and PRISMA European Network.

Observations/other/suggestions for facilitation:

- Great to develop a sense of initiative and leadership.

- You can use social media to gather all the participants in a private digital space.

- Weekly assignments and tasks will be given to the participants so they can focus on "learning by doing".

6. Name: **Eco Echo Clubs**

Objective: The Eco Echo workshops aimed to create a non-formal environment where young people could become more aware of the environmental crisis and be encouraged to take action, and where they could express their ideas about ecology in Romania. The aim of the initiative is also to make a positive change in the community and in today's generation of children and students for a sustainable future.

SDGs: Goal 4: Quality Education, Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy, Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, Goal 13: Climate Action

Duration: 45-90 min

Description:

The Eco Echo Initiative represents a series of five workshops that use non-formal methods to deliver information. The workshops were designed to respond to the need of young people to obtain valuable information regarding environmental protection, climate change, and sustainability. There are six types of workshops: starting with "Plastic", continuing with "Food Waste and Water Waste", "Paper", "Recycling/Upcycling", "Renewable energy" and concluding the dialogue with "Online Campaign". The Eco Echo workshops are an innovative approach to educating the students about the environmental issues and sustainability as they use a non-formal learning approach, rather than through the traditional formal education methods. In this way, the students are encouraged to have an active participation, while also stimulating creativity and critical thinking, which can be more engaging and effective in creating awareness and promoting action to become more sustainable. Moreover, the initiative has a holistic approach by not only addressing the theoretical aspects of sustainability, but also promoting behavioral change by encouraging participants to take action and make positive changes in their daily lives. Eco Echo Clubs are organized free of charge by GEYC with the support of the European Commission through the European Solidarity Corps programme as part of our Sustainability commitment.

Observations/other/suggestions for facilitation:

- Depending on the type of workshop, the duration might differ, as the activities are vast.

- Start by presenting yourself.

- Start with an energizer to introduce the topic.

- Some terms might be difficult to understand, so make sure you explain them well.

POKHARA

Pokhara is an association who provides services to youth. It was created last November 2013, whose objectives are preferably oriented to programming of activities aimed at young people.

Our purposes focused on the young population in general are:

- Promote sports and Leisure and Free Time activities in school age, in young people and in the general public.

- Bring, inform, sensitise and raise awareness of the existing problems in the different countries to Spanish citizens and especially to young people.

- Organise activities in a multitude of fields (environment, culture, sport,...) to promote different projects among the youth population.

- Promote educational leisure programs for young people and prevention of drug use, school absenteeism, family mediation, etc...

- Promote actions within the European Erasmus+ Program that involve the young population.

Our purposes focused on the youth population at risk of social exclusion are:

- Develop Socio-educational Programs and Projects for selective and indicated prevention to prevent drug use among young people

- Implement socio-educational actions that favour the personal and social development of the child and youth population at risk of social exclusion

- Promote the networking of the different agents that intervene with the youth population to establish effective inclusion measures with this population

- Involve the different socialising agents of the adolescent youth population, that is, family, peer group, community and educational centres, in the different socio-educational actions.

- Organise training activities, seminars, courses, congresses that favour the visibility and study of the youth population at risk of exclusion

- Carry out social research based on evaluations of the effectiveness of the different actions carried out with the youth population at risk

- Promote actions within the European Erasmus+ Program that involve the youth population at risk.

- Achieve measurable, positive and social impacts

- Provide services or goods that generate reinvestment in society

- Employ methods of production of goods or services that incorporate our social objective

- promoting the sport and leisure activities and free time in school, in young people and in the general public.

- Zoom in, inform, educate and raise awareness of the problems in the different countries to the Spanish citizens and especially to the young people of the locality.

- Organise activities of a multitude of areas (environment, culture, sports, media, etc) to promote different projects among the youth population to the fulfilment of these objectives, the association organises activities such as: excursions, lectures, workshops, publications, interviews, meetings, awareness

-raising campaigns, development of conferences, debates, contests, workshops, exhibitions and activities for leisure and free time, social animation, festivals and all those that are deemed necessary for the good achievement of the purposes of the association.

The association is a non-profit, so you may not issue shares or obligations, or distributed benefits among its partners.

Pokhara association works in conjunction with the Empu-G program, (in addition to carrying out other projects) that works directly on selective prevention with young people between 12 and 18 years and indicated prevention with young people between 18 and 30 years old. It is a comprehensive project, focused on all areas of young people: teachers and

educators of schools, families, social centres, social services and their social educators.

Since 2013, Pokhara has developed numerous projects within the framework of Erasmus + and other European Programmes. We want to continue providing this type of service to the members of our program, as it is a unique opportunity for them to live a similar experience.

In Pokhara Association we work with the program Empug, EMPU-G Program was born in September, 2013. Concretely, it is a Program of Selective and Indicated Prevention of the Drugs Consumption, centred on the educational work with youngsters and families in situations of risk for social, familiar, relational, economic questions, etc. This Program has been carried out in seven localities of the province of Ciudad Real, a rural area of Spain.

María Serrano: Project manager. Coordinator of European projects. Leading youngster groups. President of the association.

Jose Luis Romero: manager of economical issues in the association.

Lidia Prieto: social educator leading the Selective Prevention Project

Yolanda Pérez: social educator leading the Indicated Prevention Project

Currently, there are 25 professionals in the team, including social educators, social workers and psychologists, all of them with extensive experience working with children and youth, in cultural activities, games and youth, such as summer camps, workshops, integrated projects with young people, education, social work and psychology.

Everyone has training as monitors and directors of leisure and free time, and they move with the same concerns: working with young people in all their areas. In addition, our team has different official qualifications for working with the adolescent group (we have social workers, social educators and qualified psychologists).

 This implies a great participation by the members, which indicates the high level of motivation that moves.

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Annexes:

A1: Survey results Romania

A2: Survey results Spain

A3: List of best practices

A4: List of networks

Network of local authorities:

- Network of Sustainable Cities Europe (Aalborg Commitment): sustainablecities.eu/the-aalborg-commitments/
- Member cities of ICLEI: https://iclei.org/members/
- Covenant of Mayors: covenantofmayors.eu/about/covenant-community/signatories.html
- Fair Trade Towns: fairtrade-towns.de
- Energy cities: energy-cities.eu
- Eco Villages: ecovillage.org
- Slow Cities: cittaslow.de

Network of communities:

- Transition Town: transitionnetwork.org/
- Fridays for Future: fridaysforfuture.de
- Youth and Environment Europe: yeenet.eu
- Generation Earth: generationearth.at