

**# INSPIRING # QUALITY
YOUTH WORK**

**USING INDICATORS TO STRENGTHEN
THE QUALITY OF YOUTH WORK**



PREFACE

Inspiring Quality Youth Work (IQ Youth Work) is the result of an Erasmus+ Strategic partnership between eight member organisations of *InterCity Youth - The European Network of Local Departments for Youth Work*. The project addressed the lack of a common understanding of what constitutes quality in youth work. By creating a bank of quality indicators, it built a common platform for practical quality development through follow up, peer learning and exchange of methods and best practices.

The starting point and basis for the work was the ideas and principles stated in the handbook *Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development*¹, European Commission 2017.

IQ Youth Work can be downloaded from www.intercityyouth.eu. Here you will also find a web based bank of indicators and some practical examples.

Our hope and ambition is that the result of this project will be used not only by the members of ICY but all over Europe. This would mean a significant contribution to the important creation of a common ground for youth work and to its further development.

We would like to thank everybody that has contributed to the project; the project's work group that did most of the work, the board of ICY that also functioned as management group of the project, the advisory committee that provided valuable input on the project and last but not least all the youth workers that tested the material and gave feedback and ideas for further development².

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¹ Improving Youth Work - your guide to quality development (2017) can be downloaded from www.intercityyouth.eu or ordered from the bookstore of the European Commission.

² For more information about ICY, the partners in the project, and the advisory board please see appendix.



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INTERCITYYOUTH

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent years' economic crisis and high unemployment rates have led to an increasing political interest in youth work³. Questions have been raised regarding youth work's actual contributions to young people and to society at large. It is therefore high time that the youth work sector starts answering these questions in its own words. If not, somebody else will⁴.

Inspiring Quality Youth Work provides you with the support you need in order to give your own answers to these questions – answers that are relevant, clearly structured and comprehensible while at the same time paying full respect to the rich diversity of local youth work.

IQ Youth Work does this through presenting a broad and clearly structured bank of indicators from which you can select indicators that fit your local context. Starting from where YOU⁵ are, **IQ Youth Work** will, in a very concrete way, guide you through the whole process of selecting indicators and using them for follow up and further development.

This way **IQ Youth Work** will help you to:

- Clarify what constitutes quality youth work in your context.
- Work in a structured way with quality development.
- Set clear and concrete objectives for your future operations.
- Show the outcomes of your work to others.
- Advocate for youth work in a knowledge-based way.

In order to support your process, **IQ Youth Work** also contains examples of what this might look like in practice. It starts, however, with the fundamental question: What are indicators?

3 Youth work is defined as: "Actions directed towards young people regarding activities where they take part voluntarily, designed for supporting their personal and social development through non-formal and informal learning". Quality Youth Work - a common framework for the further development of youth work (2015) Published by the European Commission.

4 Authorities with little knowledge and/or respect for youth work often, especially in times of austerity, want to assign youth work to tasks that do not fall into the realm of what is generally considered youth work. Clear quality indicators help youth work defend itself against these kinds of assignments.

5 YOU might be a youth worker, a manager, a policy maker, a politician or a young person. Whoever you are, do not forget that the process described in this booklet must be well grounded in your organisation and that all stakeholders concerned therefore should be invited to participate.

2. WHAT ARE INDICATORS?

What characteristics are important if one should be able to assess the quality of youth work? What would indicate (show, be a sign of, prove) the quality of youth work? Indicators are your answers to this question. They are points of reference in relation to which reality can be compared, analysed and assessed.

Indicators could be set up for:

- **Preconditions**; e.g. ethical guidelines and youth worker competence.
- **Work processes**; e.g. the process used for recognising young people's learning.
- **Outcomes**;
 - › Quantitative outputs; e.g. number of participants or activity hours.
 - › Qualitative effects; e.g. perceived experiences or skills developed.

However, in order to decide which preconditions and work processes you need you must first decide what outcomes you want to achieve. This is the reason why **IQ Youth Work** focuses on indicators on outcomes⁶.

A bank of indicators could, however, consist of many different types of indicators related to many different aspects of youth work – so what is the reason behind the ones you will find in IQ Youth Work?



PLEASE NOTE.

There is an important difference between indicators and aims!

Aims are descriptions of how or to what degree reality should correspond with the indicators. Two examples might be:

Indicator – Young people take part in evaluation.

Aim – 50 % of young people taking part in youth work should be taking part in evaluation.

Indicator – Young people feel listened to during the evaluation process.

Aim – 80 % of the young people taking part in evaluation should agree to the statement “I have been listened to during the evaluation process”.

⁶ When you have put together your own set of indicators on outcomes based on the bank of indicators in this booklet, you might also want to develop indicators on preconditions and work processes. If so, we recommend you use the handbook *Improving Youth Work* – your guide to quality development as a basis for this process.



3. WHY THESE INDICATORS?

IQ Youth Work focuses on outcomes, because before you decide what preconditions you need and what work processes you want to use you must decide what they are to be used for, what you want to achieve – i.e. the desired outcomes.

So, what are the most significant and important outcomes of youth work? Or, in other words, which are the outcomes that, taken together, characterise good youth work?

Despite the fact that youth work is, and should be, very diverse, there is a common understanding regarding which basic principles that should guide it if it is to contribute to the personal and social development of young people⁷. The report *Quality Youth Work*⁸ states nine core principles of youth work. When working with indicators on outcomes the four most important ones are that youth work should:

- Be actively inclusive; reach out to and welcome all groups of young people.
- Be based on young people's voluntary and active participation, engagement and responsibility.
- Be designed, delivered and evaluated together with young people.
- Be based on non-formal and informal learning.

In order to see what this means in practice and, in a second step, to be able to see to what degree youth work has outcomes that meet these principles, we need indicators on:

- Gender balance and inclusion of marginalized youth.
- Participation.
- Learning (informal and non-formal).

This is why **IQ Youth Work**'s bank of indicators looks the way it does. By using indicators related to these core principles you will be able to show how youth work contributes to the personal and social development of young people. At the same time, they also make clear that young people's active participation and learning is, in itself, the core outcome of youth work. An outcome that we know through both research and experience will lead to many other positive effects such as health and active citizenship⁹. It will also lead to better contact with the labour market and increased possibilities for taking part in further education.

So, let's get started!

⁷ "Youth work focuses on the personal and social development of young people." Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people (2013).

⁸ *Quality Youth Work - a common framework for the further development of youth work*. Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States (2015). Published by the European Commission.

⁹ See, for example, the Council of Europe recommendation on youth work (2017): <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/-/new-recommendation-to-the-council-of-europe-member-states-on-youth-work>



4. THE PROCESS STEP BY STEP

The function of indicators is, as said in chapter 2, to be points of reference in relation to which reality can be compared, analysed and assessed. In order to fulfil this function, they must be possible to follow up. Indicators that you cannot determine whether you have reached or not are therefore completely useless. The same goes for indicators for which it is impossible to assess what led to their fulfilment¹⁰.

The fact that indicators should be matched against reality means that they must be set in relation to a specific context, for example a youth centre or a municipality. The reason for this is that things you want to reach on municipal level (a broader context), e.g. gender balance, might not be possible or even desirable in every single unit (a more limited context) since they might be set up to complement each other.

Moreover, the living conditions and needs of young people vary between different realities. Young migrants living in a suburban area might, for example, have a need to develop other skills than young natives living in a rural area.

Furthermore, this explains why the basic reason for using indicators should be quality development, not the comparison of results between different contexts. It also explains why the analysis of the results, i.e. what led to them and how they should be addressed, must always be contextualized¹¹.

In order to build a set of relevant indicators you therefore need to follow a process in three steps:

1. **Define your context.**
2. **Specify your target group.**
3. **Choose indicators from the bank of indicators.**

How to work with these three steps constitutes the core content of **IQ Youth Work**. When you have taken these steps, there are two more steps that you need to take in order to use the indicators for further quality development:

4. **Decide how you want to gather information on how reality meets the indicators and do the gathering.**
5. **Analyse the result and decide what you need to change in order to improve quality.**

These steps are also included in this booklet, but much more briefly. When working on them we therefore recommend you to also use the handbook *Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development*.

¹⁰ An example of such an indicator is the degree of drug abuse among young people, since this is affected by many different factors and it is impossible to distinguish the specific impact of youth work. (The degree of drug abuse is of course important on a societal level, but not as an indicator for youth work.)

¹¹ It is also important to keep in mind that indicators can be subjective or objective: "Attractive equipment" is a subjective indicator that could only be compared in terms of degree of user satisfaction, not in terms of the objective quality of the equipment. The percentage of girls taking part in an activity (gender balance) is an objective indicator.

STEP 1: DEFINE THE CONTEXT

When you start defining the context you must ask yourself on what level or levels you want information; Is it important for you to know the quality regarding:

- A specific group activity (e.g. a girls group)?
- All group activities in your organisation or youth centre/unit?
- All youth work carried out in your municipality?

The reason for this is that which indicators you choose will most likely vary between different contexts. This means that you, when you choose indicators, must ask yourself for what context or level they are relevant. For example, if you choose the indicator that young people should experience that they develop new interests, you may find this relevant on a municipal level, but not in relation to a specific group activity where young people are gathered around an already existing interest.

This means that some indicators might be relevant on (e.g.) a youth centre level but not on a municipal level and the other way around. If you are active in an organisation that consists of many different units you must therefore keep this in mind and discuss if you need to use different indicators for the common/general level and for the single units.



Examples of contexts that your indicators could be related to:

- A specific group activity in a youth centre or an NGO.
- All group activities in a youth centre or an NGO.
- A specific open (spontaneous drop-in) activity in all or a specific youth centre or NGO (e.g. drop-in football tournaments on weekends).
- All open (spontaneous drop-in) activities in all or a specific youth centre or NGO.
- All activities in a specific youth centre or NGO.
- All youth work carried out within a municipality.
- All youth centres in a municipality (excluding e.g. activities taking place in sport arenas).

Before you continue, you should have an at least preliminary answer to which context(s) you are interested in. However, when you have taken the next steps and specified your target group and chosen indicators, we recommend you to go back and see if context, target group and indicators are consistent with each other, or if you need to make some adjustments.

STEP 2: SPECIFY YOUR TARGET GROUP

The target group of youth work is often said to be all young people – but what does this mean in practice? If youth work should live up to the core principle that it should be “actively inclusive; reach out to and welcome all groups of young people”, we must specify what groups we are talking about.

The second step is therefore to decide on what you need to know about your target group, its characteristics and composition, in order to;

- Know that you reach the young people you want to reach, for example school drop-outs or an equal degree of girls and boys.
- Know how they experience youth work and if there are differences that are related to, for example, age or gender, e.g. if activities meet their interests to the same degree.
- Know to what degree you reach your aims regarding for example learning, and if this varies between different groups.

When you specify your target group it is also important to keep in mind that, for example, gender balance could be considered important on a municipal/total level, whilst at the same time different activities might be targeted exclusively at girls, boys or LGBT youth. Some youth centres will say that an equal gender balance is relevant for the sum of their activities (but not for each single activity), some will say it is not. Hence, you need to relate the target group to the context.

More or less all of the above characteristics might of course, depending on the context, also be a sign of marginalisation. Young LGBT people are for example often marginalised in relation to both youth work activities and society as a whole.

So, the basic question is: In relation to what groups, i.e. categories of young people, do you want to do your follow up?

Some possible specifications that you might want to make are on¹²:

- Age
- Gender
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Background (e.g. native, immigrant, or minority)
- Interests (e.g. culture or societal issues)
- Extremist views (e.g. engaged in far-right movements)
- School/learning situation (e.g. school dropouts)
- Personal situation (e.g. disabilities or drug abuse)
- Family situation (e.g. living without parents)
- Economic resources (e.g. can't afford membership fee)
- Employment status (e.g. employed or unemployed)
- Living area (e.g. living in urban problem zone or rural area)

¹² The examples given are meant as inspiration and are by no means exhaustive. They could of course be both multiplied and deepened depending on the aims of an activity.

STEP 3: CHOOSE INDICATORS

On the following pages, you will find the bank of indicators from which you can choose the ones that are relevant for your context and target group. It is divided into three sections:

1. Indicators on how young people **perceive youth work before taking part**¹³
2. Indicators on target group
3. Indicators on how young people **experience youth work when taking part**

Be sure to make your choices on the basis of a thorough and open-minded discussion. The more different stakeholders (young people, youth workers, policy makers) that are involved in these discussions, the better the result will be. This will at the same time also make the indicators more well-grounded in your organisation and thus contribute to a mutual understanding of what constitutes quality in youth work.

When you have taken this step, you will have a context, a target group and a set of indicators. In order to do follow up you will of course, as shown in the examples in the appendix, have to gather information related to the target group specifications you have made in step 2. Otherwise you will not be able to see differences between different groups of young people, e.g. which groups you actually reach and possible differences in the way they perceive or experience youth work.

However, before taking the next step, do not forget to go back and consider whether the context, the target group and the set of indicators are all consistent with each other. In case they are not, consider what adjustments are needed.

Watch out!

As you will see, indicators can be more or less general and consequently, when followed up, give more or less precise information. Be careful when deciding what level to choose; A more general level might seem easier and will require fewer questions. On the other hand, this might mean that you have to spend much more time analysing what the answers actually tell you.



¹³ It might seem logical to start with choosing indicators regarding what you think are important preconceptions of youth work among young people. However, in order to do follow up on these indicators you will have to ask not only those that take part in youth work but a much broader group. This requires a lot of work, and if you have not worked with indicators and structured follow up before we strongly advise you to wait with this, at least until you have chosen your indicators on how young people experience youth work and done your first follow up on those.

1. Indicators on how young people perceive youth work before taking part

Before taking part in youth work, young people¹⁴ should perceive that:

- They get information about youth work activities
 - › The information is relevant
 - › The information is attractive
 - › The information is targeted at them¹⁵
- They have access to activities that meet their needs
- They have access to activities that meet their interests
- They have access in terms of physical factors
 - › Where the activities take place, in relation to
 - › Distance
 - › Physical accessibility
 - › When the activities take place
- They have access in terms of social psychological factors
 - › They do not risk being harassed by other young people while taking part
 - › They do not risk being harassed by youth workers while taking part
 - › They will get support and protection if harassed
 - › They will be met with a positive attitude
 - › They will be met/treated as individuals¹⁶

¹⁴ Within the target group chosen.

¹⁵ This means that they should be able to identify themselves in the information given and feel that they are welcomed to take part.

¹⁶ This means that they should feel secure about not being met/treated on the basis of preconceptions, not having to act in accordance with stereotypes.



- They will have possibilities to influence¹⁷
- They will have possibilities to actively participate¹⁸
- They will have possibilities to develop their competences¹⁹
- They will have possibilities to receive recognition for their learning

¹⁷ This means that they think that they will be able to take part in decision-making processes within the given context.

¹⁸ This means that they think that they will be able to take part in the creation, carrying out and evaluation of activities.

¹⁹ Competences could be knowledge, skills or attitudes.

2. Indicators on target group

Young people²⁰ should take part:

- In youth work
 - › In open, spontaneous drop-in, activities²¹
 - › In group activities²²
- As active participants (producers²³)
 - › When formulating the idea for the activity
 - › When planning the activity
 - › When organising the activity
 - › When preparing the activity
 - › When deciding on the budget
 - › When applying for money
 - › When delivering/carrying out the activity
 - › When evaluating the activity
 - › The process
 - › The outcome/result
 - › The support given
- As receivers of recognition for their learning

²⁰ Within the target group chosen. This means that regardless of what method you use for follow up (see chapter 5, step 4), you will at the same time have to gather information (statistics) regarding the young people taking part.

An aim related to this might be that you should strive for having a gender balance of at least 40/60 in, for example, open (spontaneous drop-in) activities. (This of course presupposes that there is an equal gender balance in the surrounding society. If not, this must be taken into consideration.) Another example would be setting aims that state what percentage of the total target group you want to reach, e.g. 10 % of all young people in the municipality.

²¹ This refers to activities that are open to all young people within the target group and where they can take part spontaneously and without any previous qualifications.

²² E.g. a group of young people making a youth exchange or running a youth centre.

²³ “Producers” are defined as young people that are engaged in and take responsibility for planning, delivering and evaluating youth work activities for themselves and/or others.

3. Indicators on how young people experience youth work when taking part

When young people²⁴ take part in youth work they should experience that:

- Activities meet their needs
- Activities are based on their own learning objectives
- Activities meet their interests
- They develop new interests
- They can be themselves
 - › They are not being harassed by other young people
 - › They are not being harassed by youth workers
 - › They will get support and protection if harassed
 - › They are met/treated as individuals²⁵
- Their ideas, thoughts and feelings are taken seriously
 - › By youth workers
 - › By other young people
- They are being part of the community/group/fellowship
- The community/group/fellowship is democratic
 - › They are free to share their opinions
 - › Everyone’s opinion is equally important
- They are met with positive expectations
 - › Their presence is perceived as an added value
 - › By youth workers
 - › By other young people
 - › They are listened to
 - › By youth workers

²⁴ Within the target group chosen.

²⁵ This means that they should feel secure about not being met/treated on the basis of preconceptions, not having to act in accordance with stereotypes.

- By other young people
- They are met/treated as resources
 - They get stimulated to participate
 - They get support to participate
 - They are allowed to make mistakes
- They get the help/support they need
 - By youth workers
 - By other young people
- They contribute
 - With ideas
 - With opinions
 - Through concrete actions
 - Helping/assisting others
 - ✓ Youth workers
 - ✓ Young people
- They are active participants
 - The activity is based on their ideas
 - They take part in planning
 - They take part in organising
 - They take part in preparations
 - They take part in deciding on the budget
 - They take part in applying for money
 - They take part in delivering/carrying out the activity
 - The process/activity relies on their active participation
 - They take part in evaluation
 - Of the process
 - Of the outcome/result
 - Of the support given
- They have influence.
 - They take part in general decision-making²⁶
 - They get stimulated to take part in decision-making
 - They get support to take part in decision-making
 - It is their ideas that govern how the process/activity turns out



- They develop competences;
 - Knowledge²⁷
 - Skills (e.g. ability to cooperate or take responsibility)
 - Attitudes (e.g. towards other groups of young people or drugs)
- They develop their learning
 - They discover new ways of learning
 - They take responsibility for their own learning
- They receive recognition for their learning²⁸
- They will be able to use the competences they gain in youth work in:
 - Their studies
 - Their future work life
 - European Mobility
 - Active citizenship
- Facilities are attractive
- Equipment is attractive

²⁶ This refers to decision-making in the given context, e.g. a youth centre.

²⁷ Knowledge can be about anything, from how the EU is organised to where you can find information on the rights of children. In order to do follow up you need to specify which specific knowledges you want young people to develop. The same goes for skills and attitudes. The ones mentioned are just examples.

²⁸ Here you can add sub-indicators that make clear if the recognition has been done through a specific method, e.g. Youthpass (youthpass.eu) or ELD (eldkompetens.se/english).

5. FURTHER ACTIONS

The discussions you have had regarding **context**, **target group** and **indicators** are of course important and interesting as such, but in order to put them into practice you will have to take two more steps.

STEP 4: DECIDE WHICH TOOLS TO USE TO GATHER INFORMATION

Now it's time to think about how you are going to gather information on how reality meets the indicators. In order to do so you will have to transform the indicators into questions. This might, depending on the indicator, be more or less complicated and require more or fewer questions. It also depends on what method(s) you want to use.

The first question you must ask yourself is therefore what method(s) you want to use in order to gather information on how reality corresponds with the indicators.

- Through tools for documenting number of participants, activity hours, etc.?
- Through questionnaires to young people?
- Through interviews or focus groups with young people?
- Through observations and assessment made by staff?
- Through observations and assessment made by young people?
- Through external observations and assessment?
- In some other way?

These different methods could also be combined in various ways. You could for example use the results from a questionnaire as basis for an analysis of your operations together with young people. Or the other way around; you could use a focus group with some young people as basis for making a questionnaire.

Watch out!

- Think about how much time you have to gather information so that you are sure that you will manage this step. Gathering information that will never be used is counterproductive. However, keep in mind that this gathering might be carried out in a way that enhances young people's influence and sense of being actively listened to.
- Are there any limitations in your target group that would make a specific method unsuitable (e.g. illiteracy, geographical obstacles, age, etc.)? For example, young immigrants might have difficulties reading the official language and it might therefore be better to interview them than to use a questionnaire.
- Some questions, for example regarding sexual orientation, might be very sensitive or difficult to ask. In this case you should not, due to integrity reasons, ask directly, but must instead use some kind of questionnaire where the respondents feel secure that their answers will be entirely anonymous.

In *Improving Youth Work – your guide to quality development* you will find some examples of tools used by different organisations for gathering information.

STEP 5: ANALYSE THE RESULTS AND DECIDE WHAT YOU NEED TO CHANGE IN ORDER TO IMPROVE QUALITY

When you have gathered the information, it is time to analyse it in relation to the context from which it is gathered. It is on the basis of this analysis that you can decide what measures are most likely to give a better outcome. A good analysis is what turns information into knowledge.

Analysis is basically the art of asking relevant questions, and to keep on asking until the picture is completely clear.

- How, to what degree, does reality correspond with the indicators?
- Why did we get this outcome?
- What factors have been decisive for the outcome?
- What would have led to a better result?

The answer to these questions will lead to the next step in the process, formulating what measures should be taken in order to improve quality.

A good and thorough analysis requires a self-critical attitude in combination with a creative and open-minded approach. You must be able to step outside of your own reality and look at it from different perspectives²⁹. You can, however, never put yourself entirely in the position of others. Different stakeholders (young people, youth workers, policy makers) have different experiences and perspectives and are likely to give, at least partially, different inputs to your analysis. This is the reason why you should always engage young people in the follow up of youth work. Without them you will never be

able to understand why your activities turned out the way they did.

Young people's ideas and perspectives are also essential in the next step of your process – formulating what you need to change in order to improve quality. This step is often taken parallel to the analysis, answering the question of what would have led to a better result, and young people's answer to what would have made them experience youth work in a different way is of course crucial.

If you have set aims in relation to your indicators, e.g. that youth work should meet the interests of girls and boys to an equal degree, it is now also time to set concrete objectives for the coming period. Keep in mind that these objectives should be realistic within the time frame given.

Also keep in mind that aims and objectives need to be accompanied by a plan for action which states what measures are to be taken and who is responsible. Without this, nothing much is likely to happen.

Doing a first follow up on your outcomes in relation to indicators is of course exciting. However, it becomes even more exciting the second time around when you will be able to see the results of the measures taken to improve quality. On the other hand, the implementation of the measures you have agreed upon will take some time, and even if you are eager to see results, do not do your second follow up too soon.

²⁹ You will find an example of what this could mean in practice in the appendix.



6. SOME FINAL WORDS

Working with indicators and follow up is not an easy task – it takes both structure and concentration as well as creativity and open-mindedness. With the small resources often set aside for youth work, the task might seem overwhelming. However, if we want to enhance the recognition of youth work and strengthen its position in the broader youth sector this task is imperative. A structured follow up in relation to clearly formulated indicators and aims will, at least in the long run, give youth work the credibility it needs in order to get adequate funding. Working with indicators and follow up must therefore be seen as a long-term investment, not as a short-term cost. However hard it might be, youth work can no longer afford to spend its resources as if we were living in the last days, we must start investing. If we don't, the last days might actually soon be here.

However, as hopefully made clear in the previous pages, formulating indicators and doing follow up and evaluation is in fact, and should be handled like, youth work! If we want youth work to be about participation and non-formal learning, giving young people the possibility to define its quality is a project as good as any.

Inspiring Quality Youth Work, its indicators and tips for follow up, will be used as means for quality development within InterCity Youth. By using the same indicators and standing on the same ground we will enhance our ability to learn from each other and to develop youth work together. If you, in some way, want to join in or just want to know more about our work, you will find us at www.intercityyouth.eu.

APPENDIX

EXAMPLES OF SETS OF INDICATORS & WAYS TO DO FOLLOW UP



– EXAMPLE 1

Context: Group activity in a youth centre

Activity aim: To arrange a schools-out event

Learning aim: To strengthen the participants' capacity to express themselves, cooperate and take responsibility in a democratic context.

Target group: Young people 14-17 visiting a youth centre.

Follow up will be done through:
Questionnaire

INDICATORS CHOSEN:

On target group:

- Age
- Gender
- Background
 - › Native or immigrant
- School/learning situation
 - › School results
 - › School dropouts

INDICATORS ON HOW YOUTH WORK SHOULD BE EXPERIENCED:

- They feel being part of the community/group/fellowship
- They perceive the community/group/fellowship as democratic
 - › They feel free to say their opinions
 - › They feel that everyone's opinion is equally important
- They are met with positive expectations
- They are active participants
 - › They take part in planning
 - › They take part in organising
 - › They take part in preparations
 - › They take part in delivery
 - › They take part in evaluation
- They develop (personally)
 - › They develop new skills.
 - To express themselves
 - To cooperate
 - To take responsibility

EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS IN QUESTIONNAIRE (RELATED TO THE ABOVE INDICATORS):

1. **I was born:**
 - 2000 2002
 - 2001 2003
2. **Gender:**
 - Female Male Other
3. **One or both of my parents are born in another country:**
 - Yes No
 - I don't know
4. **My current school degrees will allow me to study further:**
 - Yes No
 - I have dropped out of school
5. **While taking part in this group I have felt:**
(Alternatives: I do not agree at all, I agree a little, I agree a lot, I totally agree)
 - That I am part of a community/group/fellowship
 - That I have been free to say my opinion
 - That everybody's opinion has been equally important
 - That the other participants have met me with positive expectations
6. **I have taken part in:**
(Alternatives: Yes or No)
 - Planning
 - Organising
 - Preparations
 - Carrying out the activity
 - Evaluation
7. **By taking part in the group I have become better at:**
(Alternatives: Not at all, a little, some, a lot)
 - Expressing myself
 - Cooperating
 - Taking responsibility

— EXAMPLE 2

Context: All youth centre activities for young people aged 13-17 years in the city

Activity aim: To strengthen young peoples' role as active participants in youth centre activities

Learning aim: Young people learn to actively participate in activities at the youth centre, thus developing their ability to cooperate and take responsibility

Target group: 13-17 years old in activities at the youth centre

Follow up will be done through:
Questionnaire

INDICATORS CHOSEN:

On target group:

- Age
- Gender
- Background
 - › Native or immigrant

INDICATORS ON HOW YOUTH WORK SHOULD BE EXPERIENCED:

- They are active participants
 - › The activity is based on their ideas
 - › They take part in planning
 - › They take part in organizing
 - › They take part in preparations
 - › They take part in delivering/carrying out the activity
 - › They take part in evaluation
- They develop competences
 - › Ability to cooperate
 - › Ability to take responsibility

EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS IN QUESTIONNAIRE (RELATED TO THE ABOVE INDICATORS):

1. I was born:

- 2003 2004 2005

2. Gender:

- Female Male Other

3. The language spoken at home is the same as the country of residence:

(Alternatives: Yes or No)

4. I have taken part in:

(Alternatives: Yes or No)

- Planning
- Organising
- Preparation
- Carrying out the activity
- Evaluation

5. I have developed my ability to cooperate:

(Alternatives: I do not agree at all, I agree a little, I agree a lot, I totally agree)

6. I have developed my ability to take responsibility:

(Alternatives: I do not agree at all, I agree a little, I agree a lot, I totally agree)

– EXAMPLE 3

Context: Work with a group of LGBT youth in a youth center

Activity aim: Leisure activity planning and producing different events

Learning aim: Increase self-confidence and life skills. Learn how to plan, produce and evaluate different events

Target group: LGBT youth aged 15-20 years in the city

Follow up will be done through: If the group is small you can discuss and ask the questions but if the group is large make a questionnaire

INDICATORS CHOSEN:

On target group:

- Age
- Gender
- Gender identity

INDICATORS ON HOW YOUTH WORK SHOULD BE EXPERIENCED:

- They can be themselves
- They are met with positive expectations
- They are met/treated as resources
- They get the help/support they need
- They contribute
- They are active participants
- They have influence
- They develop competences

EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS IN QUESTIONNAIRE (RELATED TO THE ABOVE INDICATORS):

1. I was born:

- 1998 2000 2002
 1999 2001 2003

2. Gender:

- Female Male Other

3. I identify myself as:

- Female Male Other

4. I feel that I:

(Alternatives: I do not agree at all, I agree a little, I agree a lot, I totally agree)

- Am able to be myself
 Am met with positive expectations
 Am met as a resource
 Get the support I need
 Contribute with ideas

5. I have taken part in:

(Alternatives: Yes or No)

- Planning
 Organising
 Preparations
 Carrying out the activity
 Evaluation

6. I have developed my ability to:

(Alternatives: I do not agree at all, I agree a little, I agree a lot, I totally agree)

- Plan activities
 Cooperate
 Express myself
 Take responsibility
 Evaluate activities

7. I have taken part in general decision-making in the youth centre:

(Alternatives: Yes or No)

— EXAMPLE 4

Context: Work with a group of migrant young people

Activity aim: An open activity to meet and exchange experiences

Learning aim: To support the individuals in learning the culture and traditions of the country, improve intercultural skills

Target group: Young migrants aged 16-20 years old

Follow up will be done through:
Interview, questionnaire

INDICATORS CHOSEN:

On target group:

- Age
- Gender
- Background
 - › Native or immigrant
 - › Minority group

INDICATORS ON HOW YOUTH WORK SHOULD BE EXPERIENCED:

- Activities meet their needs
- They are being part of the community/group/fellowship
- They can be themselves
- They are met with positive expectations
- They contribute
- They are active participants
- They develop competences

ON TARGET GROUP:

Percentage of young people within target group reached

EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS IN QUESTIONNAIRE (RELATED TO THE ABOVE INDICATORS):

1. **I was born:**

- 1998 2000 2002
 1999 2001

2. **Gender:**

- Female Male Other

3. **I was born in another country:**

- Yes No
 I don't know

4. **One or both of my parents are born in another country:**

- Yes No
 I don't know

5. **The language spoken at home is the same as the country of residence:**

- Yes No

6. **I feel that:**

(Alternatives: I do not agree at all, I agree a little, I agree a lot, I totally agree)

- Activities meet my needs
 I am part of a community/group/fellowship
 I can be myself in the activities
 I am met with positive expectations
 I contribute with my ideas

7. **I have taken part in:**

(Alternatives: Yes or No)

- Planning
 Organising
 Preparation
 Carrying out the activity
 Evaluation

8. **I have developed:**

(Alternatives: I do not agree at all, I agree a little, I agree a lot, I totally agree)

- My understanding of the local culture
 My tolerance for different ways of thinking

– EXAMPLE 5

Context: Work with youth exchanges

Activity aim: Getting to know other countries/cultures

Learning aim: Improving employability through increased ability to express themselves and take responsibility

Target group: young people between 18-25 years

Follow up will be done through: Questionnaire

INDICATORS CHOSEN:

- Age
- School/learning situation

INDICATORS ON HOW YOUTH WORK SHOULD BE EXPERIENCED:

- Activities are based on their own learning objectives
- The community/group/fellowship is democratic
 - › They are free to say their opinion
 - › Everyone's opinion is equally important
- They are met with positive expectations
 - › They are allowed to make mistakes
- They get the help/support they need
- They contribute
- They are active participants
- They develop competences
- They develop attitudes
- They develop their learning
 - › They discover new ways of learning
 - › They take responsibility for their own learning
- They receive recognition for their learning
- They will be able to use the competences they gain in youth work in:
 - › Their future work life

EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS IN QUESTIONNAIRE (RELATED TO THE ABOVE INDICATORS):

1. I was born:

- 1993 1994 1995

- 1996 1998 2000
 1997 1999

2. Gender:

- Female Male Other

3. My current school degrees will allow me to study further:

- Yes No
 I have dropped out of school

4. I feel that:

(Alternatives: I do not agree at all, I agree a little, I agree a lot, I totally agree)

- Activities help me to learn things that interest me
- The community/group/fellowship is democratic
- I am able to say my opinion in the group
- Everyone's opinion is equally important in the group
- I am met with positive expectations
- I am allowed to make mistakes
- I get the support I need
- I contribute with ideas

5. I have taken part in:

(Alternatives: Yes or No)

- Planning
- Organising
- Preparation
- Carrying out the activity
- Evaluation

6. I have:

(Alternatives: I do not agree at all, I agree a little, I agree a lot, I totally agree)

- Developed my ability to express myself
- Developed my ability to take responsibility
- Discovered new ways of learning
- Taken responsibility for my learning
- Received recognition for my learning
- Gained competences in youth work that I can use in my future work life

EXAMPLE OF ANALYSIS

You work in a youth centre and have an objective that states that at least 40% of your visitors should be girls, but when you look at your results the actual figure is only 20%. The different steps and questions in your analysis might then be:



You look at your statistics in order to see if the percentage of girls varies between different weekdays.

- You might then see that you have 40% girls coming on Tuesdays and Fridays, but almost none on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

You then ask yourself the question what is the difference between these days in terms of:

- activities (form, content, etc.);
- youth workers (sex, competences, absent, present, etc.);
- visitors (absent, present, etc.);
- the world outside (what is taking place).

You realise that you have to talk to young people in order to answer these questions, and then find out that:

- the activities are attractive only to boys;
- the girls have a training session with their football team on Mondays;
- there are no female youth workers present on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

On the basis of this information you ask yourselves, for example:

- Why do girls not come when there are no female youth workers?

And conclude that this might be because:

- there is a need to have female role models;
- the male youth workers do not have the right approach to female visitors;
- your activities and the roles youth workers take in them are so gender-stereotypical that girls come only on certain days.

Based on how you answer these questions you will come up with different suggestions as to which measures to take to achieve your objective.

BACKGROUND TO THIS BOOKLET

It is often stated that youth work is hard to define due to its great diversity and variety of forms and settings. In the report “Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union” (European commission, 2014) the conclusion is “a blurred picture” and that there is further need for clarifications and for a common ground in order to strengthen youth work.³⁰

An attempt in this direction was made during the 2nd Youth Work Convention, held in Brussels, April 2015, and the declaration from the convention also gives a long and rather general description of the core features of youth work.

However, a common ground can not only be built on descriptions of diverse practices in a diverse reality. A common ground must be built upon common definitions and principles. These kinds of definitions and principles can instead be found in the report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems, *Quality Youth Work - a common framework for the further development of youth work* (2015).



Based on common definitions and core principles of youth work the report outlines a structured process for the development of youth work through the development of common indicators, quality tools and systems. It offers a common starting point in the core principles of youth work, common principles for building, and a framework to build within. In this way, a common ground can be built that is not only abstract words in fancy documents but also connects these words to concrete indicators relevant for everyday youth work, showing outcomes possible to analyse, assess, learn from and develop.

Since indicators define the crucial elements of quality, the necessary starting point for improving quality is the development of common indicators. Hence this booklet!

³⁰ Please see; http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf

PROJECT PARTNERS

The InterCity Youth³¹ partners that took part in this project and their representatives in the working group were:

- KEKS, network of local departments for youth work, Sweden (*coordinator*), represented by Sara Lesch and Johanna Sundvall
- Kanuuna, network of municipalities, Finland, represented by Petra Sorvastio and Annina Kurki
- VVJ, support-organisation for youth work, Belgium, represented by Ellen de Grauwe (*Filip Stallaert*)
- Municipality of Munich, Germany, represented by Tarja Marks
- Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo, Italy, represented by Massimo Capano
- Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands, represented by Ger Straten
- Municipality of Stara Zagora, Bulgaria, represented by Emilia Koleva (*Mariana Perchemlieva*)
- Municipality of Thessaloniki, Kedith, Greece, represented by Anna Alevra

The project has also had an advisory committee, representing different organisations and institutions. We especially want to thank Dr. Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll representing Deutsches Jugendinstitut DJI (*German Youth Institute*) for her support and valuable input.



³¹ For more information about InterCity Youth please consult: www.intercityyouth.eu

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#INSPIRING#QUALITY #YOUTHWORK

Inspiring Quality Youth Work (IQ Youth Work) is the result of an Erasmus+ Strategic partnership between eight member organisations of *InterCity Youth - The European Network of Local Departments for Youth Work*. The project addressed the lack of a common understanding of what constitutes quality in youth work. By creating a bank of quality indicators, it built a common platform for practical quality development through follow up, peer learning and exchange of methods and best practices.