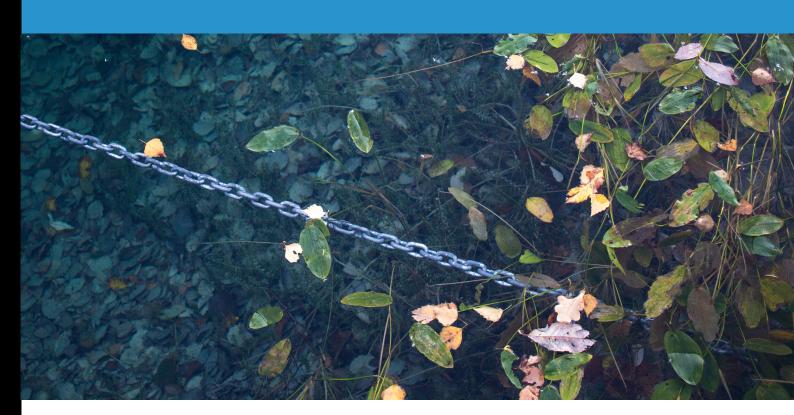# Upgrade My NGO

OPEN SPACE OUTLINES

About the training

"Upgrade My NGO" was an Erasmus+ Training Course implemented in Borgo San Basilio (Italy) from 13th to 20th of November 2019 by Shokkin Group Italia and Shokkin Group International.

The activity, which involved **25 board members** and coordinators from **11 organizations from Italy, Estonia, Spain, Norway, The Netherlands, Romania, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and Latvia**, had the aim to increase the professional competencies of coordinators and capacity of organizations in creating supportive procedures for youth's involvement and developing a sustainable membership cycle.

This document contains the **description and outcomes of eight sessions held during an Open Space** which was part of the training course's programme, facilitated by different members of the participating organizations on various topics identified and requested by the participants of the course itself:

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Youth trends

Youth organizations working all across the European Union are challenged to find communication ways as well as appropriate activity formats to reach out to their target groups. Young people across Europe have been growing up with access to the Internet and connected to social media as means of communicating with each other, finding relevant news, learning about events to attend and sharing own passions and achievements.

We have studied a variety of youth trend reports among a series of websites and exchanged own observations as youth workers and educators dealing with young people from across Europe in our work lives and here are the trends to adjust if you wish to stay interesting for the Generation Z and have their support and engagement in your activities.

Healthy Body – Healthy Mind
We have seen an increase in the level of consciousness young people have among various European countries. Levels of casual alcohol consumption and smoking are decreasing and awareness of what you eat and how you live are increasing. It is more evident that young people are getting more concerned about the amount of information, stress and influence surrounding them is higher than ever before. As youth organizations we should support the ideas of living a healthier lifestyle in the way we organize our activities, in the way we work ourselves and what example we provide. Being a youth worker with visible signs of burnout will not increase interest in joining your activities.

Generation Digital
Growing up in the digital era with access to vast amount of information increases the level of suspiciousness within young people is also growing. They have learnt to detect sponsored ads, banners and clickbaits online. They very often ask each other: "how do you know that what you post is true?" And they know about cyberbullying, data security, keeping low profile online and other things that many parents don't have a clue about. As youth organizations we need to be aware of our way of communication with the young generation, if we don't seem credible, if we don't show respect online to our followers and if we don't create engaging quality content they will see us as another "sponsored" post in their feed. Be engaging and be honest in your online communication.

Deeper Connections
Growing up in the digital world also leads to understanding of the need for human connections. There are more young people realizing the need for social bonding, for good quality interaction and discussing many topics once close to finishing high school. They are more ready to overcome taboo topics and speak about mental hygiene, modern masculinity, anxiety and challenge the status quo of things. Youth organizations should be ready to support such discussions and be there to challenge the status quo with them. Then young people will feel your true interest in what is important for them. Dare to discuss together with them.

Green awareness
2019 brought us the uprising of young people and the topic of climate change. Waves of protests, voices of the youth have been heard in a long time around the world. We can only hope that this wave will last and young people will be ready to support social justice in many other topics also. It is evident that the youth is becoming more conscious and aware of the environmental question. So should organizations get more aware and make change internally looking at the resources you use, optimizing your events to be waste free and switching your daily office work to plastic free. It is a matter of changing your habits, communicating the change to your members and incrusting it into your activities.

City Swapping
Young people are less connected to one place and they are light on their feet to swap cities or even countries for studies, work or seeking adventures. With this there comes both a challenge and an opportunity. Of course it means it is harder for young people to make long-term commitments, they often don't know where they will end up in half a year so being dedicated to a long-term project or activity is many times not an option. More sensible ones will just not sign up and others will but then leave you hanging half way because they are moving somewhere.

Thus, designing flexible programs that don't demand long term dedication may increase the interest of young people. On the other hand, living flexibility brings a new target group of young people moving to your city and as a youth organization you can be there to help them adapt, find friends and get engaged with interesting activities and projects. Don't forget that you can really influence the feeling of belonging for a newcomer to your city and as a reward you will get a dedicated member being there for you.

Of course this is not an exhaustive list of trends and you can add many more from your practice. We have found these to be most relevant for independent youth organizations that work both locally and internationally providing young people with opportunities to grow through the power of non-formal learning and volunteering.

Evaluating quality in youth work

SPAM (Self- and Peer-Assessment model) is a tool developed by Finnish youth workers and which is currently used to evaluate and improve the quality of the youth work happening in several municipalities in Finland.

It is a type of formative evaluation (looking at the process as opposed to the outcomes) used to critically assess youth work in different contexts: open evenings or one-off events and small group activities where youth workers engage with a small group for a longer period of time. It
consists of a number of criteria which can be adapted for different realities and updated when needed, so in this sense it is quite flexible.

During the session we had a discussion about why evaluation is needed in youth work and how participants who attended evaluate the quality of their work. We discussed the difference between the feedback we get from youngsters taking part in our activities and a form of evaluation where we evaluate ourselves or our peer youth workers.

Then I shared the tool itself on the group and participants were welcomed to ask questions. The main outcome of the session was information about an existing tool of assessment that could be adapted and use to evaluate the quality of youth work.

For more information

www.intercityyouth.eu

Environmental sustainability of organizations

In Shokkin Group International we realize the rapid negative effects that climate change brings, and in a series of previous meetings we discussed the need for the network to develop a standard on environmental sustainability for our member organizations. As a first step we held this session, which started with a brief intro and a discussion about different key concepts.

Consider the differences between CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT and reflect on the nature of our ACTIONS:
- Make sure to have a holistic approach.
- Knowledge: Being aware and critical. Base your actions on knowledge and facts.
- Values and attitudes towards sustainability, climate and environment: as youth workers, it is important to consider what kind of values and attitudes we transfer to the young people.
- The values and attitudes shape our behavior.
- Consider if it's something to work actively on as a topic, or something the organization has in mind in every day life**.**

Then, participants were presented to two main questions and invited to gather and brainstorm possible alternatives/solutions/answers to them, as follows:

What can we do to make our *NGO's office work* more environmental friendly and sustainable?
- Think before you buy: Follow the 5 R's: Reflect, refuse, reuse, reduce, recycle.
- Use eco-friendly, local and vegetarian food as much as possible.
- Use eco-friendly merchandise and stationary as much as possible. Support local green companies in buying merch.
- Remake products: workshops on how to remake garbage into something useful.
- Recycle and use recycling bins when there is a recycling system in your area.
- Reuse material: try to reuse materials you know you will be using many times.
- Be aware of your paper consumption: try to reuse and limit the amount.
- Sharing the things and resources in the office or with members to decrease consumption: computers, drill, projectors, etc.
- Use mugs instead of one-use plastic cups.
- Don't forget to turn off light and electronic devices.
- Put this guideline in the office (reminders) in the office to make members aware.
- Educate your team and members about how to be more eco-friendly.
- Cooperate with local green NGO's.

What can we do to make *our projects* more environmental friendly and sustainable?

- Use public transport as much as possible during projects instead of renting bus or driving private cars.
  - Encourage to take public transport.
  - Encourage to take trains instead of flights in the information package of activities/events.
  - Use the "carrot" system, if you take the train you receive a gift, a hug, give tasks on the way, entertainment on the train, etc.
  - Consider this when deciding the reimbursement process. Everyone who takes train will have a full reimbursement even though they are over the limit? Less reimbursement, when participants take flight and train/public transport is an option.
  - Consider where projects are held – is it easy accessible by train?
- Consider the venue and accommodation of participants.
  - Hotels usually consume more energy than venues where you manage food/cleaning yourself.
  - Choose eco-friendly venues, eco-villages or similar. Be willing to pay extra for this. Sleeping in cabins, tents etc.
  - Give participants the opportunity to stay close to the nature – appreciation of nature and changes in values and attitudes to the importance of nature.
- Consider the amount and type of materials you use.
  - How are the materials produced?
  - Are the materials necessary or worth it?
  - Use less (one-time) plastic, such as plastic cups. Participants can bring their own cups or glasses to avoid the one-time use bottles/cups and cleaning for each time.
  - Use glass instead of plastic.
- Buy local products as much as possible, encourage participants to do the same.
- Buy ethical produced products as much as possible.

Promotion of youth organizations

Promotion is always one of the central topics when talking about challenges for youth organizations. As board members and coordinators, we feel the need to constantly improve our external communication strategies in order to reach a bigger number of young people who will, potentially, join our activities, become members of our organization and join forces with us in order to accomplish our vision of a better world..

ONLINE PROMOTION

Specially nowadays, promotion strategies must be in constant change in order to accommodate the needs and requirements of our young audiences: visual content, short texts, impactful content and most of all, mobile phone-oriented. Sometimes, promotion and visibility of our activities becomes more time and resource consuming that the activities themselves. So, is there any way to make it better, faster, easier?

In this session we aimed to put in common the strategies for online/offline promotion of several organizations, hoping to find some powerful outcomes. For that, we started by assessing the target groups we want to reach.

- **Channel**

Do you know "where to find" your audience? Without knowing it, you might be investing a lot of energy in producing media content in a channel that, at the end of the day, no one checks. For instance, while Twitter is still very popular among people of various ages in the United States, its use among youth in Europe has decreased notably; also, while many Millennials still see Facebook as their main social media, the new Generation Z already see the big blue like something mostly their parents use, and they focus much more on Youtube and Instagram instead. But it is not only a matter of age, in some countries such as Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania, Facebook looses even more weight in comparison with other Russian-made applications such as V-Kontakte (VK) among the Russian speaking youth.

- **Tone**

As a youth organization, our aim is to reach out to young people and make them see the value of joining our activities. In order to do so, we need to be conscious of the tone of our publications. Simple, brief, yet powerful content that will trigger their curiosity to research more. Easy going and familiar language they can relate to. Many times, when publishing a call for participation we tend to go towards a formal registry in order to make it look more serious and official, while in reality this might cause a negative effect in the receivers of that message and, rather to encourage them to apply, just scare them off.

- **Content**

Another fair point to consider is the content of our publications. We tend to prove the value of our organization by putting the focus on all the projects and awards that the organization gets, on how professional and experience the organization is. But... how are the people behind it? Do we show the organization's "human side", or just as an abstract entity?

Young people will be much more willing to approach one of the organization's events or activities if they see that it provides a familiar environment. When keeping regular updates on the organization's social media (so, so important to keep the flow of information regular!), don't forget to show everyday events. The team enjoying a coffee in the sunshine, someone who accidentally made a funny mistake, the new decoration in the office... keep it human!

- **Format**

Another essential matter, even if a more obvious one. A few years ago, long text posts gave way to more visual publications reducing the text and adding an image; more recently, it became necessary to just include the text in the post with a simple catchy sentence integrated in the image itself. Some years ago, promotional videos with cool soundtracks were the best resource. In the Instagram and Stories era, videos should never really go over 3 minutes, and they should have subtitles, as it is more and more common that people watch them with the sound off. The requirements change rapidly, and it becomes a must to keep up to them if we want to be at the top of the pyramid.

OFFLINE PROMOTION

When talking about promotion, we should also keep in mind the "local bubble" in which our target group is and which could help us expose our work better:

- **Word of mouth**

In the same way that the learning delivered by a teacher might reach deeply only a few of the students in the classroom, the value of the opportunities we spread will also only reach a part of our audience. Whether it is a personal development course or a youth exchange abroad, whether it has a small fee it is completely for free, people will often have doubts of something they don't know and will be skeptical to give it a try.

However, it is much easier for us to take the step if someone we know has already done it and says it is a super cool experience. If we focus on delivering quality content for even a few participants in the beginning, they will for sure talk about it and pass it on to their close circles. The reach numbers will not be as high as with an Instagram post, but its effectiveness will be definitely higher.

- **Local stakeholders**

As youth organizations, we shouldn't be trying to reach our goals in a solo mode. Building synergies or "ecosystems" with similar organizations and institutions in our local context will make the work more successful. While organizing a specific event, don't hesitate to think about possible organizations/companies which could also benefit from it and who could support its implementation. After receiving support, always remember to appreciate it, both online and offline. Usually, other organizations and/or companies will be delighted to see themselves tagged in an online publication (which they will for sure share with their audiences) or find their logo in a gratitude letter to all partners involved.

- **Influence figures**

Just like the big brands, bringing into the picture a recognizable figure, someone familiar to your target group to participate in or promote one of your long-term programmes or events will make it straight away more appealing. Of course, we are not talking into bringing world-known football players or singers. Look closer, in your local community, for young artists, activists, Youtubers and other relevant figures (better if they are of a similar age) who advocate similar values and can be an example to follow.

In general, something important to remember is that youth is a continuum of changes, and that it will be hard to keep youngsters forever. However, one of the simplest rules of marketing will also do for the promotion of your organization: show young people WHY it is valuable for them to be active and participate, and they will come all by themselves.

Educational Escape Rooms

During 2019, Awesome People was also involved in the transnational Youth Initiative: **Critical Escape** together with Estonian partner Shokkin Group.

The aim of this one-year long project was to empower young people from various backgrounds to develop critical thinking and raise the level of their involvement in the community life through participating in educational escape rooms created and implemented by young people.

In Sweden we have developed one room about diabetes, one about mental health and one about tobacco consumption. During this open space session we let the participants try the tobacco room, we told them the rules, the scenario and then they had to solve the different puzzles.

Due to lack of time we did not have the opportunity to tell more about how we created the room, but the participants got to finish the room and have the educational reflection afterwards. They really liked the concept of educational escape room and liked the way we had done the tobacco room.

For more information

et.shokkin.org/criticalescape

PIFbase method

PiFbase International is a strategic partnership currently being implemented between 3 youth NGOs in Sweden (Awesome People), Romania (Un Strop de Fericire) and Finland (Innola) to develop and quality assure an innovative method of promoting social entrepreneurship among youngsters using coaching.

PiFbase stands for Pay it Forward – Be a Social Entrepreneur and is a method aiming to reach out underrepresented youth groups. The session held during the Open space was about informing those who attended about the stages of the method:

Foundation – Action Plan – Reflection

Also about how we are currently implementing it and the challenges we faced during the process.

We explained with some details the steps involved and what organisations need to do in order to support the PiFbase processes. Also, participants who attended were informed about an international dissemination event that we will have in May 2020 to present all the results of the partnership alongside handbooks and materials needed to implement the PiFbase method in their organisations.

The session finished with questions from participants who wanted to know more about specific steps and challenges of the process and how we managed to overcome them. A few of them expressed their interested to get more information about the method once we finalize all the manuals related to its implementation.

For more information

https://www.pifbaseinternational.com

Social orientation

Awesome People have, in a regional project, developed a **method material in social orientation for newly arrived immigrants with a gender equality perspective and non-formal learning.** We have tested the material with different groups: only male groups, mixed gender groups, different languages (Dari, Arabic, Somali) and different age groups (high school students and adults).

The method material follows the Swedish social orientation compulsory content divided in eight chapters. For each chapter we have different exercises with the aim to understand the content of that chapter.

The session held during the Open space was about informing those who attended about the method material but also about letting them try some of the exercises in the material. We did the first exercise in chapter four, which is an introduction exercise with the aim to explain the different perspectives people have due to prior experiences, culture, upbringing etc.

The other exercise was to illustrate one of the Swedish gender equality goals: End violence against women. The aim of the exercise is to bring a broader understanding of the situation of domestic violence and discuss about it. After the exercises we had an open discussion about the method material and many of the participants thought it was a good way to work with social orientation and wondered if we had the material in English, which we unfortunately don't have at the moment.

Video making

Participants in this workshop got to take the a step into the world of basic's of movie recording by learning different tips on how to make a good movie to use in their organizations for marketing, dissemination and documentation.

Step 1
Participants tested different moves with the camera for making the movie more alive and not dull and boring. They tested zoom, sideways, up and down, moving the camera, moving the body as a tripod and standing still. During the filming, all participants where using their phone as tools and film moving object and still objects. This is a perfect tool to use and its no need to buy any expensive products.

Step 2
Participants learnt how to make a focus on what they are filming and to make a boring object more fun an interesting to watch. The object was a pinecone and the task was to test step 1 on it.

Step 3
Participants understood and tested how to find a good focus, moving and getting the knowledge of when to record and when not to. We watch different movies as examples for inspiration and better understanding of step 3

Step 4
Participants looked at how a storyboard is made and looks like to learn how to prepare themselves before recording the material for the movie. They got to see examples of the difference between a planned recording with a storyboard for helping and a good plan of when and what to record and a non-planned recording that just comes from whatever has been filmed.

Step 5
Participant were introduced to a set of various movie editing programs such as Movie maker, Animoto, Filmora, Windows movie maker, etc. for them to try and use when editing the final movie. They got information about how to use short 3-4 sec recordings and to use different angles and distances to make the movie fun to watch. They also got introduced on how to use sound and music in the final movie to create a feeling for the viewers

Step 6
We summarized the session by answering questions about the workshop.

For more information

https://animoto.com/
https://filmora.wondershare.com/

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