DIGIVOGUI ODYSSEY: A theoretical manual for Youth Workers

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developed by:

Disclamer

Authors note

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth the future."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

This manual is a key resource within the DIGIVOGUI project, an initiative that embodies the values of inclusion, equity, and collaboration. DIGIVOGUI brings together the expertise and dedication of Psientífica (Portugal), Centre Progress and Development (CPD Albania), Bravo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Artistic Pedagogic Youth Organization "Schedia stin poli" (Greece). Our collective mission is to empower young people to achieve social and professional inclusion by enhancing their personal and social competencies through innovative methodologies such as virtual exchanges and non-formal education.

Youth are both our present and our future and their potential as drivers of positive change inspires our work every day. This manual is designed to support young learners, youth workers, and organizations in exploring the opportunities of the digital world. It offers practical tools, creative methodologies, and adaptable strategies to build the skills and confidence needed to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

At the heart of DIGIVOGUI lies the belief that self-confidence and resilience are essential in a young person's journey toward defining their life project. We aim to take them through the path of self discovery exploring the opportunities that help them find their future.

This manual is a celebration of what we can accomplish when we join forces with a shared vision and passion. By uniting educators, youth workers, professionals and institutions, we are committed to creating brighter futures for all.

As you engage with this manual, we invite you to explore, learn, and grow— transforming aspirations into meaningful action. Together, we can equip ourselves and our youth with the tools to thrive and make a lasting impact on society.

Sincerely,

The DIGIVOGUI Consortium
(Psientífica, CPD, Bravo, Schedia stin poli)

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I.Introduction

I. Theoretical conceptualization (problem, needs)

DIGIVOGUI is a solution, an ambitious response that takes into consideration the fundamental role that young people play in society. Although nowadays their potential is more considered in national, European, and global strategies there is still a long path to improve the response to their empowerment, equal opportunities, and information, being our mission as workers in the youth field to provide the tools and the guidance so they can make informed choices adjusted to their needs and expectations.

"If there is no solution to the problem, then don't waste time worrying about it. If there is a solution to the problem, then don't waste time worrying about it,"- XIV Dalai Lama.

When faced with a challenge, focus your energy on what can be done. If the issue has a solution, take action rather than dwelling on worry. If it does not, worrying serves no purpose and diverts valuable energy. In the context of vocational guidance rooted in non-formal education, this perspective underscores the importance of equipping individuals with problem-solving skills, resilience, and a growth mindset. As youth workers with different perspectives, knowledge and backgrounds, we guide learners to recognize what is within their control and channel their efforts constructively.

By fostering self-awareness and encouraging practical action, we help individuals navigate challenges effectively, empowering them to embrace uncertainty with confidence and focus on achievable goals.

In this way,

DIGIVOGUI PROJECT IS A VIRTUAL EXCHANGE THAT AIMS TO DEVELOP THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL COMPETENCES OF YOUNGSTERS, ENSURING THAT THEY ARE GIVEN THE NECESSARY TOOLS TO PREPARE THEM FOR ACTIVE AND PARTICIPA- TORY CITIZENSHIP AND FOR EDUCATED, RESPONSIBLE AND INFORMED ACTION.

Our main goal is:

→To empower youngsters to promote their social and/or professional inclusion.

Our specific goals are:

→Promote transnational cooperation;

Promote the professional development of youth workers;

Promote the development of personal and social competences in youngsters.

To make this possible, our project is based on three main strands:

1 Theoretical, conceptual, and methodological development that allows us to develop the intervention with youngsters - Theoretical Manual and Practical Manual.

2 Planning, preparation and structuring of trainings for youth workers- MOOC and Training for Youth Workers

3 Planning, preparation, and structuring of an Interactive Open Online Course for youngsters, allowing them to develop their personal and social competencies.

The Theoretical and practical manuals are tools to use in addition and complementary to the MOOCs and each other.

The Theoretical Manual, serves as the foundation for the creation of the MOOC and Training for Youth workers, giving extra knowledge and information to the workers in the youth field to improve their technical competencies in the support of the youngsters following this program.

This proposal follows a structured action and systematic evaluation of needs. Throughout this manual, it's possible to find a benchmarking and literature analysis of the situation of each partner country, however, our proposal is also based on many years of contact and analysis with young people facing these problems. Saying so, the needs DIGIVOGUI intends to answer, being the theoretical manual a complementary way to do it are:

● Cooperate transnationally to develop global responses, adjustable to different contexts and realities dealing with the same social problem.

● Train youth workers so that they are able to provide inclusive, participative, and adjusted responses to youngsters, which act on the causes of the problem and eradicate its effects.

● Promote the development of personal and social competence in youngsters through non-formal education methodologies and digital media, ensuring that the intervention responds effectively to the needs, expectations, and potentials of youngsters.

This manual will provide directly or indirectly an answer to the three needs enounced once is created considering a transnational reality, being adaptable and possible for replication in different contexts and realities, once it´s based on experiential learning and social science literature exploration (a).

Also, it´s the main support for the training and MOOCs for youth workers, giving them the main theoretical basis to guide and deepen their learning path.

Once the youth workers will be prepared to apply the program created in their realities and reaching a large number of youngsters, it´s a basis to understand what needs to be developed and the fundaments behind establishing a huge quality level to our proposal.

II. The why, what, who and what for, of this manual

WHY?

Because it´s a basic need, it implies the preparation of youth workers and all the ones interested in working in the youth field to apply and support their participants, individually or in groups to be able to make an informed and clear decision. It gives the proper basic knowledge to understand the principles highlighted in the DIGIVOGUI practical manual, allowing any professional to accompany the vocational guidance based on the proposed non-formal education. It´s a fundamental tool for applying all the tools created in this project, allowing an effective and impactful intervention.

WHAT?

Here we are going to approach:
- The basic knowledge and fundaments to acquire for the implementation of the DIGIVOGUI program next to young people. This manual is the reinforcement material and pedagogical context of the MOOCs for youth workers.

Here you can find:
- The introduction to what is DIGIVOGUI.
- Basic principles of Vocational Guidance, a European review on the subject as well as specific cases of each one of the partner countries and benchmarking
- What are competencies, highlighting personal and social competencies and the ones to pay attention during the DIGIVOGUI training.
- Tips and tricks for session planning to approach the competencies and case studies to put in practice your knowledge.

For then being able to:
- As the chapters of the MOOCs flow, acquire more theoretical information on the subjects, preparing you to guide the target group on their learning process towards the MOOCs for youngsters and practical manual.

WHO?

This manual is directed to all the youth workers and youth field professionals, and even curious youngsters that want to know more about the DIGIVOGUI program while taking the virtual MOOCs.

WHAT FOR?

It´s the theoretical and technical tool to support the MOOCs for youth workers. It can be consulted as an individual process. However, we advise that the program should not be applied without consulting the practical manual and participating in the MOOC for youth workers.

III. Main Concepts

youth work	According to Council of Europe, youth work is a broad term, including activities from social, cultural, educational, environment and political nature, directed to and with young people. It can be delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Although there is still a long way to go on the recognition of the youth work practices in most of Europe, it is a common agreement that it is essential to work with young people and the societies in which they live, promoting inclusion and active participation, guiding youth throughout the process of decision making.
facilitator/ trainer	Person responsible for the preparation and implementation of the sessions /activities based on Non Formal Education. There are discrepancies on the definition of the term's facilitator and trainer, however this manual will often use this terminology with the conscience that the concepts mean different things and our purpose is to be as broad and inclusive as possible.
erasmus+	European program that supports education, training, youth, and sports. It is the result of the junction of 7 previous programs. The 2021-2027 program puts a strong focus on social inclusion, green and digital transitions and promoting young people's participation in democratic life. This project is financed by the Erasmus + program.
youngster	We follow the Erasmus + and European Solidarity corps age frame when referring to youth. People between the ages of 13-30 years old.

Youthpass	Youthpass is a European recognition instrument for identifying and documenting learning outcomes that are acquired in projects under the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes. It aims to: ● promote reflection and awareness about learning and help make learning outcomes visible for the learners themselves as well as for others. ● reinforce reflective practices in youth work and solidarity activities, thereby enhancing their quality and recognition. ● support the continued pathways of young people and youth workers, ● raise visibility of the value of European engagement.
youthpass	
in vogui	Moments of reflection, tips, and tricks based on the author's experience. To inspire the reader on approaching the competence and what to be aware of and pay attention to.
memento in vogui	It´s the sum up of all the contents presented in this manual , as well the connections between different chapters. They will appear after each chapter and in the end with the connection between all the information.
digivogui cases	Cases of the daily practice of the consortium when working with young people used to stimulate the reflection and learning process of the reader.

Table 1. Basic Concepts

vocational guidance

02

I. Let´s establish a ground base

José Ancardio Buéndia always with an eye on the compass, saying, "The essential is not to lose guidance." (Garcia Márquez, 1967).

However, to get a standard definition of what we mean by vocational guidance, this chapter will be dedicated to reflecting upon the concept and its interpretation by different authors and recent studies, as well as taking into consideration the point of the situation of vocational guidance in each of the partner countries as well as a benchmarking on good practices on the field.

In this context, we chose to adopt the term "vocational guidance" to the detriment of other commonly used synonymous terms, as we believe it does not end with helping to make a professional choice. It is broader and goes beyond.

> We understand "vocational guidance" as the intervention to help the individuals choose a profession and build a life project. In other words, it means guiding in the sense of "teaching to choose" by providing resources to facilitate the elaboration of a project for the future.

According to Agbo et al. (2024) Vocational guidance involves supporting individuals in addressing issues related to career planning and decision-making. This process considers a person's unique traits—such as personality, interests, abilities, and values —while aligning them with relevant job opportunities. Vocational guidance also teaches the competencies required for various vocations, ensuring tailored and personalized advice for each individual. This guidance significantly impacts individuals' lifestyles, influencing choices such as living arrangements, social circles, and even personal preferences. It focuses on providing tools for self-assessment, exposure to career information, and experiential learning opportunities to empower individuals in making informed decisions about their career paths.

Career choice, defined as selecting a specific occupation, is shaped by factors such as vocational guidance, parental influence, admiration for role models, part-time job experiences, training opportunities, personal interests, and aptitude assessments. Professionals offering vocational guidance also play a crucial role in helping individuals resolve conflicts, select appropriate courses, and make well-informed decisions about their futures (Agbo et al.,2024).

Vocational guidance fosters the development of effective decision-making skills, enabling students to make informed career choices. Through counseling, career assessments, and discussions, students learn to gather and analyze information, evaluate options, and weigh pros and cons. These skills are not only vital for career decisions but are also transferable to other areas of life (Uwaifo, 2019).

By aligning skills, strengths, and interests with career opportunities, vocational guidance enhances employability and increases satisfaction and success in chosen career paths.

In this context of crisis resolution and identity formation, youngsters need to implement a series of choices regarding their school and professional future. The concept of crisis acquires a broad meaning here, much like its Chinese translation (危机, wéijī) combines the meanings of "danger" (危, wēi) and "opportunity" (机, jī) or even, according to Bohoslavsky, "(...) the idea of passage, of readjustment, of a new form of adaptation" (1998, p 36).

Santos, Ferreira, Blustein et al. (2001) justify that productivity at work began to be predicted from workers' ideas, skills, and knowledge. Thus, the advantages of investing in the continuous training of employees arise.

As youngsters get more qualified in formal education for broader and more sophisticated professional options, the need to plan their careers is even more significant. So, following the same line, the concept of work has assumed a new image. It has been recently taken as something that has to be exciting and rewarding for people (Richardson).

Saying so, we should have a crescent preoccupation on preparing the youngsters for the labor market, the preparation for the decision-making and the performance of development tasks related to the transition school – job market.

Society is increasingly diversified, and the world of work is more complex, "implying new responses from education and training systems and vocational counseling" (Santos et al., 2001, p. 165). It is important to encourage individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge that are essential requirements in the labor market today. The vocational intervention process should not be limited to the choice process. Still, it should also "contemplate improving decision-making skills, knowing how to deal with change, promoting self-esteem, intentionality, career planning throughout life" (Leitão, 2004, p. 251). For this intervention to be effective, it is necessary to help the individual to clarify their desires and aspirations. Career today is not defined only by a specific choice but by a series of interactive decisions taken throughout life (Watts, 2000).

When trying to understand vocational guidance throughout history, there is a conclusion that the labor market and individuals evolve, so the rate of the research and new explicative models for vocational guidance must surface at a same rate (Hecket & Lent, 1992; Osipw, 1990).

According to Conger and Petersen (1984), occupational identity forms an integral part of the sense of identity, constituting one of the main developmental tasks of adolescence, as it is correlated with the sense of personal identity and all the identifications made by the individual through life (Lisboa, 1997).

Thus, occupational identity is formed through the self-perception that the individual has of the professional roles with which he has been in contact throughout his existence, especially regarding significant figures, such as parents, family members and teachers (Lisboa, 1997)

The idea is that more than the conventional practices of vocational guidance, mainly on the transition and eminent decision phases, are urgently needed, and the primary concern of the professionals should be preventing problems and difficulties or promoting the vocational development of the individuals (Spokane, 1991).

The research, that the job or academic degree chosen provides a sense of involvement and fulfills the person's desires for a job or academic degree. In a sense that they can reflect that their occupation is more than an effort that is paid; the work is something that the individual is doing because they decided to do it, at least in part, in a way that goes with the human and societal need to do it. Besides, they must have the confidence enough to do the tasks that the job or academic degree requires and are proud of doing it, searching for constant solutions to be better. In this line of thought,
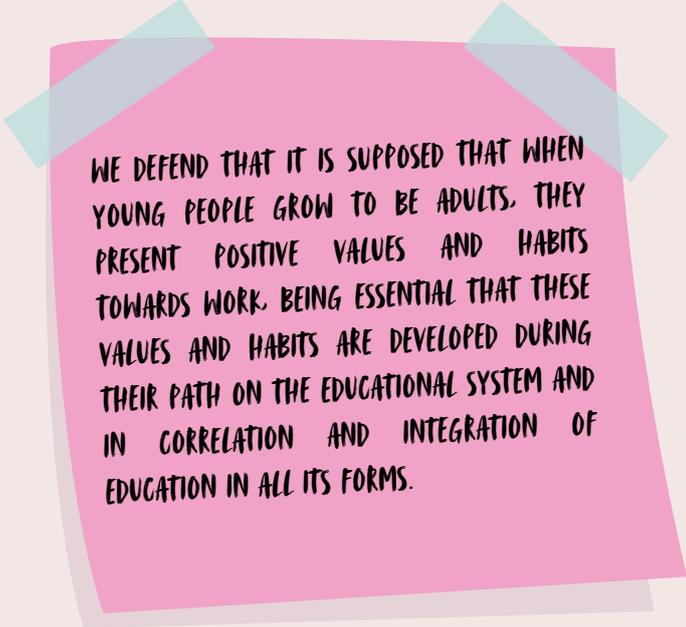
WE DEFEND THAT IT IS SUPPOSED THAT WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE GROW TO BE ADULTS, THEY PRESENT POSITIVE VALUES AND HABITS TOWARDS WORK, BEING ESSENTIAL THAT THESE VALUES AND HABITS ARE DEVELOPED DURING THEIR PATH ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND IN CORRELATION AND INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION IN ALL ITS FORMS.

The temporal dimension of the choice becomes important, as the moment of choice is the present moment, and, as stated by Soares (2002), it is in this present that the adolescent will define a future, based on their past references. Faced with many implications of professional choice, this phase presupposes the emergence of conflicts, anxiety, and the elaboration of mourning, because "choosing implies giving up certain things" (Filomeno, 2005, p. 33).

Adolescence is a confrontation between fantasies, childhood identifications, and actual demands, whether from a profession or the adult world. Thus, the adolescent who makes a choice is in a phase of transition, change, adaptation, and adjustment, leaving the childhood world behind to enter adult life. So, what mainly leads youngsters to give up on or feel unfulfilled by their choices regarding a secondary or higher degree?

1. Lack of information about the course: Often, the choice is influenced by the image that society, parents, or teachers have of the course or the status that choice will bring, which may be inaccurate.

2. Decision under pressure: for students with good grades, there is a bigger pressure to follow a given career path not only from the parents as also from the teachers, family, and colleagues. We can give the example of Engineering and Medicine students.

3. Not adapting to the local: this applies to students away from home who end up not getting used to the city or the academic environment where they are accepted for university

4. Not liking the course: students who, at a given time, realize that the course does not correspond to their expectations and realize that it does not motivate them anymore.

Of course, we consider everyone as a unique case; however, to find a common ground for the methodology and response created, in this chapter we described how we approach vocational guidance and how the DIGIVOGUI program was built to be a complementary and essential tool for supporting the transition of teenagers and young adults to the academic and labor market as they go through the process of identity formation and consolidation.

We conducted an analysis of the state of vocational guidance practices in each country, providing both the reader and ourselves with a starting point for developing the flexibility and adaptability needed to adjust these practices to each specific European context and to each participant in the program.

II. European conceptualization
The Portuguese Case

In recent years, several factors have influenced the changing landscape regarding the transition to higher education or the labor market. It is known that the increase in mandatory schooling in Portugal until the 12th grade, the encouragement of continued education, and the creation of educational opportunities aligned with the labor market have been changing the paradigms and the way schools, parents, and young people approach decisions during transition periods (Almeida & Freire, 2008).

While a part of the young Portuguese population manages to reach higher education, another significant portion fails to acquire the diplomas and skills needed to navigate changes in the information society and adapt to new social and technological contexts, leaving them on the margins of the opportunities available to young people from other European countries (Guerreiro and Pegado, 2006).

Psychology and Guidance Services (SPO) in schools in Portugal were established in the early 90's. The Ministry of Education plays an important role here, being one of those with the most responsibilities, providing Psychology and Guidance services in public schools.

The SPO was created to reinforce the need to support children and young people throughout their educational pathway – in terms of academic success, in defining and pursuing life goals, in choosing training paths, or in the transition to working life, in assessing the demands and consequences of decisions and in its eventual reformulation, finally in the configuration and implementation of their role as students (2004, p. 185).

With the increase of the obligatory school years, there are two important decisive moments for the students. At the end of the basic education, 9th grade is their first decisive moment where they must decide with implications on their future path the next step and the field of education and training: being it sciences and technologies, human sciences, arts, or a vocational course.

This moment of transaction, when reaching the end of 9th grade, often generates stress and pressure on the youngster, who faces this transaction as a crucial moment (Silva, Paixão, & Albuquerque, 2007).

The other moment occurs at the end of secondary education. In this case, the young person goes through a new moment of transition: toward higher education, professional education, or the job market. Regardless of the project he establishes, this is a period of change, that might cause the rise of conflicts and anxiety.

These phases are crucial for developing realistic and conscious choices. However, most of the time, instead of continuous follow-up throughout the school career, guidance services' interventions have been concentrated in a single academic year or, due to a lack of human resources to meet the number of students, have not happened at all.

Vocational guidance in the school context should take a preventive approach and be much more than simply applying tests, interviews, or questionnaires to clarify or "discover" interests, values, or aptitudes, revealing a predetermined path. It must serve as an intervention to activate and strengthen human development, aiming to optimize the individual's potential and mobilize their resources to build an authentic, responsible, and conscious life project. This process should start in the early stages of the student's development rather than only intervening during moments of crisis.

In a study on the perceived efficacy of the Portuguese SPOs (Silva, 2016) next to upper-level secondary students, 95% acknowledged their importance; however, 39,5% said that the service didn´t clarify their doubts. It is still pointed out that, when the students are questioned if the orientation was useful for awareness of the relation between education, professions and employment, 56.1% of the Portuguese students did not consider it helpful.

95%
acknowledge the importance of SPOs.

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56,1%
think that the orientation didn´t highlight the relation between training, professions, and employment

It's even necessary to consider that for the item "Was the guidance clarified about the nature of the labor market and the importance of taking into account the labor market when making school decisions?" 58.8% of the students consider that they were not clarified in the SPO on this issue. In the item "Were you given a written report of the results obtained?", 64.9% of the students did not get a written report on the results of the assessment that was carried out on their school and career choice.

58,8%
of students are not aware of the labor market when making academic decisions

A significant percentage of students (61.4%) did not choose their schooling based on their assessment results. In fact, Carvalho (2012) notes that addressing students' needs implies looking beyond the general picture, which includes most students who intend to enter higher education after completing secondary education. The author highlights the need for a wider variety and greater flexibility of secondary routes for vocational guidance to better match students' needs.

These data suggest that problems related to a lack of competence in making professional choices tend to arise when teenagers lack adequate information and guidance about courses and professional opportunities (Azevedo, 1999). One-third of students who enter higher education regret their choices within four months of starting their course. Thus, "it would be good to study this issue in depth, trying to address the problems before they frustrate many young people and present themselves as unsolvable" (Azevedo, 1999, p.132).
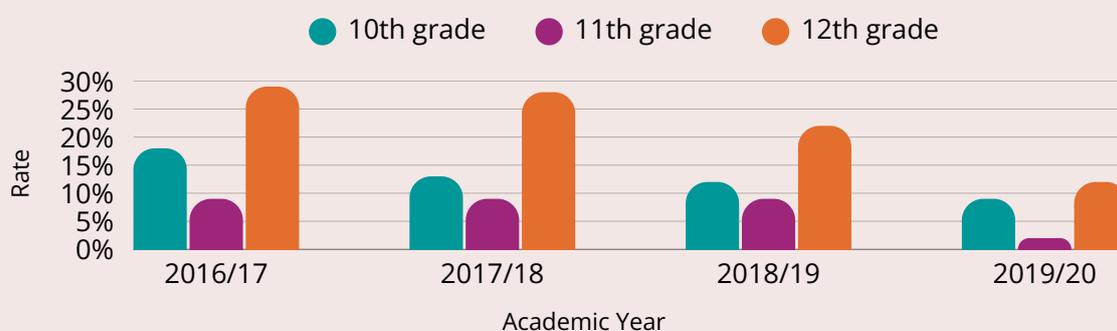
Figure 1. Rate of drop out or retention of secondary students in Portugal. Data from DGES official website.

Where are the students one year after the beginning of their superior education degree?
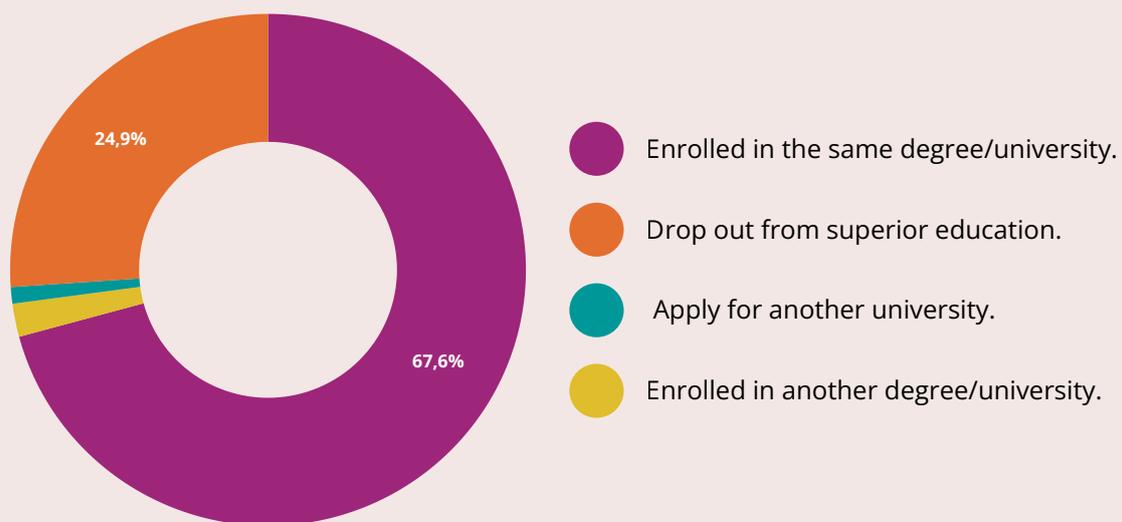

Figure 2. Where are the students 1 year after starting their superior education degree? Data from DGES official website

One important and common aspect pointed out by the authors is the need for a general policy for the sector, as school and career guidance are carried out differently in each school. Thus, a general policy for the sector and greater transparency from SPOs about their practices would help ensure more effective guidance, avoiding mistakes or less effective models. This issue was also highlighted in a previous study by Leão (2007), who noted that in each legislative term, creativity, new materials, or the absence of them have been imposed without any assessment of the effectiveness of those previously introduced. Moreover, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor have often acted with complete lack of coordination.

This situation persists today. A 2021 report shows that, according to data from the DGEEC, apart from integrated master's degrees, all other courses have seen an increase in the number of students abandoning their studies in the first year of university. Undergraduate dropout rates increased by almost two percentage points, from 9.1% to 10.8%.

In the 2020/2021 academic year, nearly one in four students (24.4%) who enrolled in a technical higher vocational course (CTeSP) were no longer in the national higher education system one year after starting the course. The percentage for the previous year was 18.7%, 5.7 percentage points lower. Among undergraduate degrees, the percentage of students who left the system during the first year was 10.8%, compared to 9.1% the previous year.

It is essential to create a support structure to promote a network with local, national, and international institutions, as well as to develop projects focusing on "who I am" and "what is the real context of work" (Königstedt, 2011).

Guidance - Município da Lousada

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Municipality of Lousada created a project aimed at supporting youngsters in their school years to address the increased difficulties of exclusion resulting from online education, offering career guidance and coaching.
From this context and the broader need to enhance knowledge of digital methods and practices in career and vocational guidance, the #Guidance project emerged.
The #Guidance project started on 1 April 2021 and will be implemented over 24 months. Its main objective is to improve the capacity of partner countries and organizations to implement efficient and inclusive digital career and vocational guidance for youth and young adults.

In the long term, the project is expected to contribute to:
- Promoting social inclusion and equality in career guidance across the education system.
- Increasing the number of young people and students who complete their education and improving their chances of finding employment.
- Encouraging more young people and students to make well-considered career choices.
- Equipping school staff with the necessary skills and tools to offer students greater choices in an inclusive manner.
- Enhancing the perception of health and hope for the future among young people and students.

GUIDANCE
Digital tools and Method development

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Inspiring Future

Established online in 2013/14, acting nationally in all the Continental Portugal districts and over 200 secondary schools.

It acts in 2 fronts:

➤ **"Descobre-te e orienta-te" – Vocational guidance and counseling**

It aims to help young people begin their process of personal and interpersonal discovery, enabling them to align their dreams and interests with their intellectual abilities. The goal is to promote a thoughtful and conscientious decision-making process throughout the various stages of a young person's development.

In general, counseling empowers individuals, families, and different groups to achieve their mental health, well-being, education, and career goals.

➤ **"Explora e escolhe um caminho"- Academic and personal development**

The "Explore and Choose a path - Personal and Academic Development" service is based on Coaching methodologies and provides young people with tools that enable them to face their academic and/or professional challenges creatively, autonomously, and responsibly. Students are challenged to work on their self-knowledge and potential based on their current and future goals.

➤ **"Make your decision"- Academic counseling.**

The service "Make your decision - Academic Counselling" helps and enlightens students regarding the application process to Higher Education, and the educational offers, among other information of academic nature.
The services provided are paid.

INSPIRING FUTURE

➤ **Jovem Cascais - Município de Cascais**

This service is provided by the Cascais Youth Store from the Cascais Municipality; it´s a space with personalized counseling with a vocational guidance, educational and professional counselor to youngsters from 14 to 30 years old that live or study in the city of Cascais. What to expect from GO?

Support in:
- Researching courses, careers, and professions.
- Exploration of personal and vocational profile.
- Contextualized construction of career projects.
- Vocational decision-making.

Information on:
- Basic, secondary, and post-secondary educational and/or training pathways.
- Education and training courses
- Public training offer in Cascais
- Post-secondary educational paths
- Technological Specialization Courses
- Professional Superior Technical Courses
- Other Formative Offers
- Application to Higher Education

Resources used:
- Individual interview.
- Vocational tests.

Booking the appointment does not mean that it will be in the same academic year. It has a waiting list.

JOVEM CASCAIS

VOGUI - Vocational Guidance Based on Non-Formal Education

VOGUI started as a KA2 Erasmus+ Project in partnership with a Bulgarian organization, aiming to pilot a guided and personalized vocational guidance program based on Non-Formal Education (NFE) with 12th graders from a secondary school in Águeda.Following its success, it became a project funded through a partnership with Águeda Municipality and Portugal Social Innovation, implemented locally by the Águeda Youth Center. It ran from 2019 to 2021, supporting young people aged 13 to 18 and those in NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) situations.
Main Activities:

- Sessions for the training of personal and social competencies based on NFE for decision-making and vocational guidance, next to 5 schools of the municipality with students from the 9th to the 12th grade– both online and presential.

- Sessions for training in personal and social competencies based on NFE for decision-making and vocational next to NEET population – both online and presential.

- Personalized counseling for improvement of competencies and application to superior education or labor market.

- Passfuturo: online career fair with access to workshops and informative sessions with universities, schools, and professionals.

- Testimonies: clarification sessions with professionals from different fields in a round table format

- Company visits: visits to regional enterprises and companies for networking and acquaintance with the labor environment.

- Job shadowing: after analyzing the youngster's professional and academic interests, contact different professionals from the fields pointed out and book job shadowing days for the youngsters to get to know the profession.

The Greek Case 🇬🇷

The term vocational guidance was used in Greece to describe services that assisted citizens in choosing a profession until the 1970s. Today, other terms with similar content are used simultaneously with the term Professional Orientation: Vocational Counseling, Counseling andVocational Guidance, Career Counseling, Career Education, etc. Since 1977 and onwards in secondary education, the term School Vocational Guidance (S.E.P.) has been used.

The article "Student Views on Vocational Guidance: Findings on Chronic Deficits - Suggestions to Meet Student's Needs" mentions the absence of Vocational Guidance (VG) courses in the Greek educational system, as well as the reasons why these do not exist. At the same time, the need and usefulness of this subject is assessed regarding both the educational system and the entire Greek society. Their findings show that when there are no VG in Greek schools, graduates find it challenging to choose a profession that suits both their physical and mental abilities, as well as their life aspirations. The issue is not only quantitative but also qualitative; namely, it is important to determine the most suitable manner and method for the presentation of existing professions in the classroom, which will encourage students to explore them further.

Regarding the views of young people about education, the role of the educational capital (and even the socio-economic one), and its connection to the labor market, the findings of the field research showed that most young people seem to have formed an opposing view and stance concerning the contribution of the Greek educational system to the proper preparation of young people for the transition to the labor market, in relation to the provision of appropriate knowledge and skills.

The National Centre for Vocational Guidance (N.C.E.P.) www.ekep.gr is a Legal Entity under Private Law (N.P.I.I.D.), established by Laws 2224/1994 and 2525/1997 and operating since 2000 under the supervision of the Ministries of Labour and Social Security and Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, based on P. By Presidential Decree No. 232/29-07-1998 (Government Gazette 179A), as amended by Presidential Decree No. 44/9-2-2004 (Government Gazette 37). By Presidential Decree No. 24 of 14 April 2010 (Government Gazette A 56/15.4.2010), the CCEP is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs. The ECCEP aims to strengthen the cooperation of institutions and organizations in the public and private sector involved in Counseling and Vocational Guidance activities and initiatives. It places particular emphasis on the dissemination of information on issues relating to education, training and employment in Greece and Europe.

Through its participation in the European Network of National Information Centers for Vocational Guidance - Euro guidance, it contributes to the convergence of the systems of Counseling and Vocational Guidance with the countries of the European Union.

The first attempts to organize Vocational Guidance services were made during the fifties. Since 1953 there have been many efforts that have always aimed to meet the needs for Vocational Guidance not only in the field of Education but also in the field of Employment. In Education, in 1953, School Vocational Guidance was established as a course in the Teachers' Training School, while in 1954 the Ministry of Labour established a training school for Vocational Guidance Counselors. The effort continued and finally, in 1997 the institution of the guidance counselor became particularly important as its contribution to the upgrading of the role of Education and its harmonization with modern socio-economic problems was recognized. Among the innovations introduced in the operation of the institution are the establishment of School Career Guidance Offices (GRAs) and the implementation of 'Career Education' programs and the organization of a 'Career Day' in schools.

The institution of School Career Guidance (SEP) and its objectives:

- Implementation of the SEP institution

The SEP currently aims to:

- Facilitate students in their personal development and self-awareness.
- To familiarize students with information as a communicative process, with an emphasis on the importance of developing skills of active search, critical processing, and utilization of information.
- To help students to solve problems and make decisions through activities that give them the opportunity to experience similar situations, with a view to developing personal maturity.
- To facilitate the objective of young people's transition to the world of work by broadening pupils' experiences through varied and complex activities both inside and outside school.

School Vocational Guidance Offices (GRASEP)

The School Vocational Guidance Offices (GRASEP) were established by the Ministry of Education and their task is to support the implementation of the institution of Vocational Guidance at school as well as to provide information and counselling support to the entire school community (teachers, students, parents, and guardians) of the school unit in which the Office operates and of the nearest school units. Trained FEC Counsellors staff them and have a library with books and information material on FEC.

It is worth mentioning the role of the youth workers. Unfortunately, there is no specific role for the youth workers in the Vocational Guidance. The NGOs and the projects or programs that run, involve youngsters and they empower them for their future through activities, workshops, youth exchanges and training courses. In this view the youth workers have a really important role, and they can support the youngsters to find their own way to their life by finding themselves first!

🇬🇷 Bench Marketing - Get Inspired

Vocational Guidance in Greece

There are specific programs that are run by the government or others that are run by NGOs, such as the Project HELIOS (Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection), which does integration-related educational courses (e.g., lessons in Greek language, courses in professional skills' development, etc.) and professional counseling sessions to support the job search.

The individual sessions of professional counseling include:

- Identification of needs and interests of participants.
- Profiling of participants' skills based on the EU Skills Profile Tool.
- Compensation for the monetary costs associated with acquiring various certifications (e.g., Greek language certificate, drivers' license, English language certificate, ECDL (computers) and others.
- Organization of professional events, such as "career days."
- Networking with the private sector (employers).
- Guidance for setting professional goals and professional orientation counseling. Information is also provided with regards to the services offered by D.YP.A., the national organization for unemployment/employment in Greece.
- Information pertaining to the rights and obligations of employees and employers in Greece.

Also, the "Summer Vocational Orientation" program for high school students focuses on the idea that the experience gained will serve as a useful tool for their academic and professional careers. High school students followed the process of statistics production for one full week and had the opportunity to discuss their professional careers with ELSTAT employees and exchange views.

Source: ELSTAT Annual Statistical Programme Evaluation Report 2018

Furthermore, Odyssea is a non-profit organization that supports vulnerable young people in accessing employment opportunities. They provide tailored vocational and life-skills training, combined with employability services, to connect young people with the world of work and empower them to realize their full potential.

The Albanian Case 🇦🇱

Albania is currently implementing various educational reforms. They aim to improve the competitiveness of enterprises and the economy through a skilled workforce.

There is a comprehensive legislative framework established that defines the guiding principles and structure of the VET system in Albania, the roles and responsibilities of the key actors and overall standards for VET provision, assessment and certification that includes the following: the amended Labour code (2015), the Law on Craftsmanship (2016), a new VET Law (2017), amended Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Law (2018), amended Law on Pre-university Education (2018) and the Employment Promotion Law (2019). However, there is a challenge to make this legal framework operational. Still there is a significant skills shortage and skills gap in the Albanian labour market, mainly due to insufficient collaboration between the world of education and the world of work.

In Albania, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ) is responsible for developing the vocational qualifications system based on labor market needs, in line with the Albanian Qualifications Framework. Among other tasks, it is responsible for developing the National List of Occupations based on ISCO 2008, assessing market needs for qualifications, creating occupation and qualification standards, developing national curricula (for both long-term and short-term training courses), preparing teaching materials and assessment tools, establishing mechanisms for including lifelong qualifications in AQF levels, and accrediting VET providers.

The VET system faces challenges, including underfunded teacher salaries, insufficient resources for skill development, infrastructural deficits, and a lack of funds for extracurricular activities, scholarships, and dormitories. Innovative solutions are needed to explore additional funding sources.

Bench Marketing - Get Inspired

VET provision and youth workers

Though there is no legal framework entrusting provision of vocational education and training to youth workers and related affiliates, they play a crucial role in the design and implementation of VET programs and activities. There is an extensive engagement of youth workers and civil society organizations in the offering of VET activities which are greatly focused on:

- Educational activities, offering training courses, career guidance, counseling services, and organizing events like seminars, conferences, peer exchanges, and mobility programs.

- Research activities, focused on labor force and skills assessments, and implementing intervention projects. They also promote the design and testing of innovative tools to improve VET quality.

- Consultancy services for drafting, reviewing, and developing VET strategies, and providing support for managing VET projects in schools.

These activities cover all development sectors, including personal and social competencies, ICT, coding, digital literacy and learning, as well as skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes that support sustainable social, economic, and environmental development. Ultimately, they contribute to the quality provision of lifelong learning opportunities. Offering non-formal opportunities for young people to acquire employability, entrepreneurship, and digital skills to help them enter the workforce remains at the core of all interventions.

VET in schools

VET providers (VET schools, and Vocational Training Centres, VTCs) are key actors in VET offering/ implementation. They are the primary implementers of the legislative framework into day-to-day operations, though Albania's public VET providers are small in size.

A new VET law entrusts the providers with a broad range of responsibilities, which are outside of the mandate of an educational institution. VET schools are supposed to set up business development units that establish and maintain long-term cooperation patterns with the local and regional business community to ensure quality work-based learning opportunities for their students. Work-based learning (WBL) needs a uniform national approach. VET public providers need guidelines and standard procedures for organizing, implementing, and assessing the work-based learning component, which has generated a patchwork of individual actions of varying scope and quality.

Albania has introduced a competency-based curriculum which has contributed to improving education indicators. The curriculum framework defines the goals, general principles, educational levels, crosscutting key competencies, and subject areas of the education system. It sets forth the key competencies for lifelong learning that all students are expected to achieve by the end of upper secondary education. With approval from their local education institutions, schools in Albania can draft their curriculum based on the curriculum framework and standards approved by the ministry.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Case 🇧🇦

What is the point of the situation related to vocational guidance and training of personal and social competencies next to youngsters in the same age range?

The situation related to vocational guidance and training of personal and social competencies among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important issue that needs to be addressed.

There are several reasons why this is important:

> High Youth Unemployment: Bosnia and Herzegovina has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in Europe, with around 60% of young people unemployed. Providing vocational guidance and training in areas where there are job opportunities can help young people and work.

→ Lack of Guidance and Support: Many young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina lack guidance and support in choosing a career path and developing the necessary skills to succeed in the workplace. Vocational guidance and training can help fill this gap.

→ Social and Personal Competencies: Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina also need support in developing their personal and social competencies, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. These skills are crucial for success in the workplace and in life in general.

→ Economic Development: Investing in vocational guidance and training for young people can also have broader economic benefits, such as promoting economic development and reducing poverty.

Therefore, improving the vocational guidance and training of personal and social competencies next to youngsters in Bosnia and Herzegovina is crucial for addressing youth unemployment and promoting economic development, as well as helping young people develop the skills and competencies they need to succeed in the workplace and in life.

What is the role of the youth worker in the process? What is the role of the schools so far?

The role of a youth worker in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to engage and support young people in various areas of their lives, including education, employment, social integration, personal development, and community participation. Youth workers are responsible for creating and implementing programs and activities that enable young people to develop their skills, knowledge, and abilities, and provide opportunities for them to take an active role in their communities.

In terms of the role of schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they are responsible for providing education and training to young people, to prepare them for the future. Schools have a crucial role in providing a safe and supportive environment for students where they can learn, grow, and develop their skills and knowledge. Schools also play an important role in promoting social integration and creating opportunities for young people to engage with their communities.

However, the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina has faced many challenges in recent years, including a lack of resources, outdated curricula, and inadequate teacher training. This has had a negative impact on the quality of education and has limited opportunities for young people to reach their full potential. To address these issues, there is a need for greater investment in education, including the recruitment and training of qualified teachers, the development of modern curricula that reflect the needs of the 21st century, and the provision of adequate resources and facilities to support teaching and learning.

Based on our research, there is limited literature specifically focused on personalized vocational guidance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, there are some studies that have explored related topics such as career counseling and guidance, employment, and education.

One study conducted in 2019 examined the challenges faced by career guidance practitioners in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study identified a lack of funding, resources, and training opportunities as major barriers to providing effective career guidance services. The study also highlighted the importance of personalized approaches to career counseling, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalized populations.

Another study conducted in 2020 focused on youth employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study found that a lack of vocational training opportunities and a mismatch between skills and job requirements were major obstacles to youth employment. The study recommended the development of personalized career guidance and vocational training programs to address these challenges.

Overall, while there is limited literature specifically focused on personalized vocational guidance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a growing recognition of the importance of personalized approaches to career counseling and guidance in the country.

Benchmarking, as the process of comparing and evaluating performance against best practices in a particular field, allows us to identify the most effective approaches in our society for creating MOOCs.

Since there is limited literature on personalized vocational guidance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we aim to enhance its visibility by applying international and peer benchmarking in MOOCs.

International benchmarking, one of the most effective forms of benchmarking, involves comparing the performance of vocational guidance services with international best practices. This can be achieved by attending vocational guidance conferences and workshops, collaborating with international organizations, and conducting international studies. For instance, the International Labor Organization (ILO) provides guidance on best practices, and the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) offers information on vocational education and training across Europe. Benchmarking with international best practices can help improve the quality and relevance of vocational guidance services in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

And peer benchmarking can be done by exchanging information, sharing best practices, and collaborating on joint projects. For example, vocational guidance centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina can collaborate with other centers in the region to share best practices and learn from each other. This can help them improve the quality of their services and meet the needs of their clients in a better way.

Now, how we connect this with the creation of MOOCs is that MOOCs can provide vocational guidance professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina with access to international best practices in vocational guidance. They can enroll in MOOCs offered by international organizations or universities to learn about new methods and approaches in it. This can help them improve the quality of their services and stay up to date with the latest trends in vocational guidance. On the other hand, peer benchmarking in MOOCs could facilitate connections between vocational guidance professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other centers in the same region or country. This would provide them with the opportunity to share best practices, collaborate on joint projects, and learn from each other. MOOCs could also be used to create online communities of practice for vocational guidance professionals, where they could share information, ask questions, and provide feedback to each other about this topic during the project's duration.

Career Fairs: Career fairs are organized in Bosnia and Herzegovina to bring together employers and job seekers. These fairs provide an opportunity for youth to meet with potential employers, learn about different industries, and explore career options. Career fairs also offer workshops and seminars on job search strategies, resume writing, and interview skills.

Online Resources: There are several online resources in Bosnia and Herzegovina that offer vocational guidance services. For example, the European Training Foundation (ETF) provides information on vocational education and training in the country. The Ministry of Education and Science also offers online resources to help students and youth explore different career options.

Job Shadowing: Job shadowing programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina allow youth to observe and learn from experienced professionals in their field of interest. This provides valuable insights into different career paths and helps job seekers make informed decisions about their future careers.

Since we mentioned that there is limited literature focused on personalized vocational guidance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we would like to try using international and peer benchmarking in MOOCs so we can make vocational guidance more visible.

When it comes to international benchmarking as one of the best practices in benchmarking where we compare the performance of vocational guidance services with international best practices, we see using it by attending conferences and workshops on vocational guidance, collaborating with international organizations, and conducting international studies. For example, the International Labor Organization (ILO) provides guidance on best practices in vocational guidance, and the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) provides information on vocational education and training across Europe. By benchmarking with international best practices, vocational guidance services in Bosnia and Herzegovina can improve their quality and relevance.

Peer benchmarking can be done by exchanging information, sharing best practices, and collaborating on joint projects. For example, vocational guidance centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina can collaborate with other centers in the region to share best practices and learn from each other. This can help them to improve the quality of their services and to better meet the needs of their clients.

Now how we connect them with creation of MOOCs is that MOOCs can provide vocational guidance professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina with access to international best practices in vocational guidance. They can enroll in MOOCs offered by international organizations or universities to learn about new methods and approaches in vocational guidance. This can help them to improve the quality of their services and to stay up to date with the latest trends in vocational guidance.

On the other hand, with peer benchmarking in MOOCs it would be possible to facilitate vocational guidance professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and enroll with other vocational guidance centers in the same region or country. This can provide them with the opportunity to share best practices, collaborate on joint projects, and learn from each other. MOOCs can also be used to create online communities of practice for vocational guidance professionals, where we could share information, ask questions, and provide feedback to each other about vocational guidance during the duration of project.

MEMENTO VOGUI
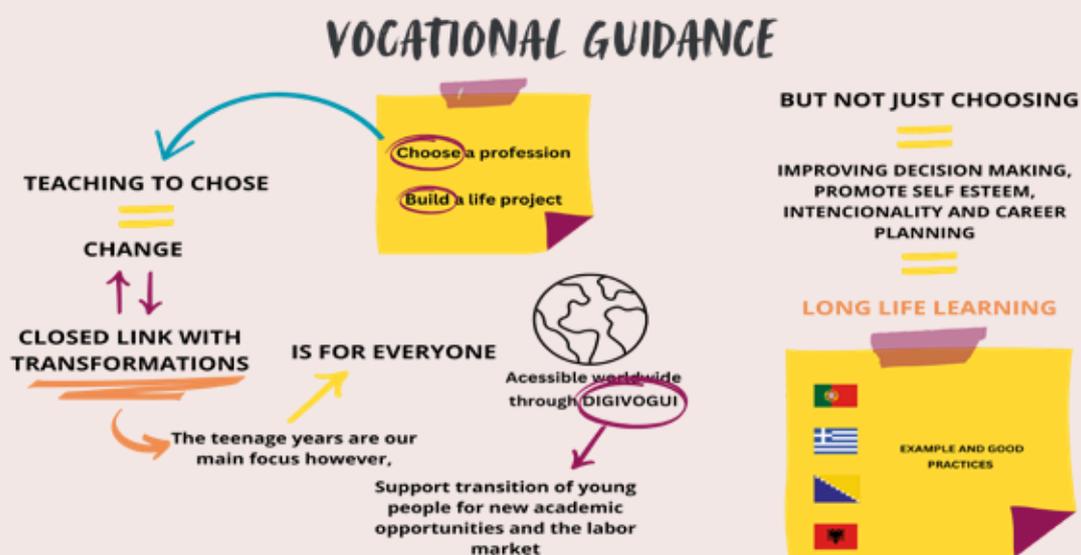
non-formal education

03
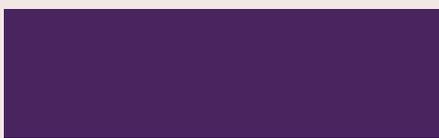
I.What is and what for?

The definition provided here is based on our experience and exchange of knowledge with people who are very experienced in the field and review of publications on the matter. In the resources of this manual, you can find some additional material to explore to get more familiar with education and the role that non-formal education plays in it, mostly directed to the work with young people. However, we defend that

"IT CAN HAPPEN EVERYWHERE WITH EVERYONE"

The educational system according to the European Commission and the Council of Europe, can be seen as the junction of three complementary forms: formal and non-formal education and informal learning.

Formal education refers to a structured education system that encompasses all schools from primary to university, including specialized vocational and professional training programs.

Non-formal education (NFE) refers to all planned personal and social education programs that are designed to develop a range of skills and competences outside the formal education curriculum. Non-formal education is structured intentional and voluntary.

Informal learning refers to a lifelong process in which each person acquires certain attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge from a variety of educational sources in their environment and from everyday experience (home, neighbourhood, library, media, work, play, etc.) (Brander et al, 2006)

During our practice we learned to be careful with such radical differentiation in what respects each type of educational methodology definition and differentiation. Their differences are not so black and white and, nowadays, with schools' reformation and more awareness of the need for personal and social competences for the jobs of the future, in settings dedicated typically for Formal education we can find many methods that typically we can reserve for Non Formal education. Saying so, what we all agree upon is that NFE
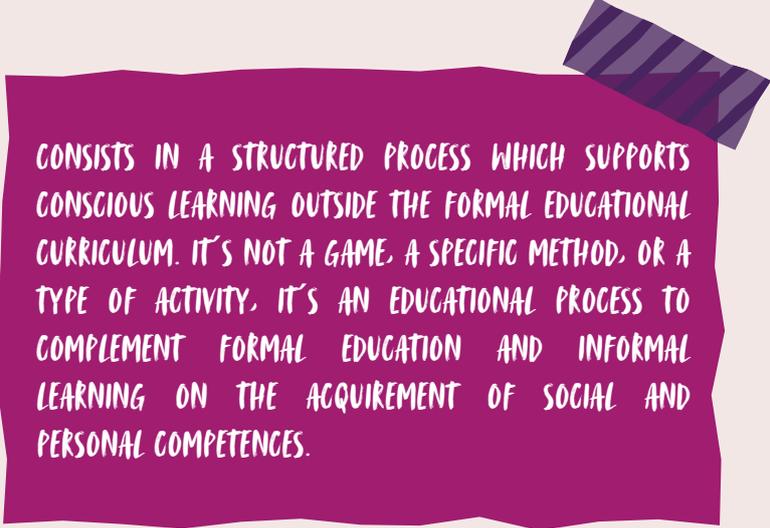
> CONSISTS IN A STRUCTURED PROCESS WHICH SUPPORTS CONSCIOUS LEARNING OUTSIDE THE FORMAL EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM. IT'S NOT A GAME, A SPECIFIC METHOD, OR A TYPE OF ACTIVITY, IT'S AN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS TO COMPLEMENT FORMAL EDUCATION AND INFORMAL LEARNING ON THE ACQUIREMENT OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL COMPETENCES.

There are many purposes for the use of NFE. Each educational activity, based on its learning objectives and desired results, chooses its own purpose. It usually has many layers and is adapted according to the needs it serves and the target groups involved. Depending on the context, the purpose may vary from being very explicit and measurable to broader and more abstract. The purpose is also linked to the intentions, ambitions, motivation and dedication of the people involved - learners, educators, community, etc. Through this, results can be expected or unexpected - what we planned and desired to achieve and what we could get in addition. (Quoting IN A NUTSHELL – NFE practical manual, in prelo).

II. Main principles

NFE has certain characteristics that we want the reader to be aware of when applying an intervention based on this methodological approach (these principles and exploration of NFE can be found in a manual build on a KA2 Strategic Partnership that can be consulted for more information IN A NUTSHELL – NFE practical manual):

⟶ **Establishment of common rules** and co-establishment with the group of a safe space and free of judgment to facilitate learning.

⟶ **Goal oriented and structured:** definition of clear goals and setting of a coherent plan to achieve those learning goals.

⟶ **Voluntariado:** os alunos/participantes têm livre arbítrio para escolher fazer parte do processo ou atividade.

⟶ **Participativo:** baseia-se na participação ativa do aluno, nas suas necessidades e é o responsável pelo seu próprio percurso de aprendizagem.

- **Learner-centered:** The learner(s) are actors of the learning process; as such, they contribute to it. The learning process is developed with and for learners.
- **Self-assessed learning:** to enable and support learners to define what they take from the NFE process of learning, being aware of their learning outcomes, it should be provided time, space, and tools for participants to reflect on their own learning experience.
- **Value-based:** it has its own set of values and it´s aimed to promote impact and social change.

III. Non-Formal Education and Vocational Guidance

Non-formal education can support vocational guidance by providing practical "hands on" learning, career exploration opportunities, and hands-on learning experiences that support individuals make informed decisions about their career paths.

In addition to formal and informal methods of vocational guidance, it is essential to recognize that the jobs of the future will rely not only on technical skills but also on the development and proficient use of personal and social competencies.

According to the Council of Europe's recommendations and the 2020 European Skills Agenda, vocational education and training should emphasize key competence training based on NFE from an early age. This would lay the foundation for resilience, lifelong learning, employability, social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development, and support for the green and digital transition.

Education is dynamic and complex, and NFE techniques serve as a complementary and essential tool for developing decision-making skills and providing an "expansive" rather than "restrictive" form of career preparation for young people. Fuller & Unwin (2004) argue that this expansive approach leads to better and more adaptable career decisions and enriches the future workers' "learning territory." This expansion benefits individuals by helping them acquire both social skills and formal qualifications, making them more competitive in today's global economy.

Societies aim to achieve full employment and sustained economic growth, which in recent years has become even more challenging for younger generations. Therefore, investing in the education and support of young people — not only in formal education but also in human resource development — is crucial.

By providing basic education, key work skills, and lifelong learning opportunities to everyone, countries can help at-risk youth and those with fewer opportunities improve their employability. This leads to a more skilled, productive, and fulfilled workforce in the future, while also reducing social exclusion among young people.

MEMENTO VOGUI

NON FORMAL EDUCATION

OUR BASIS

Structured process

Development of competences outside of the Formal Education curriculum

With many purposes

CHARACTERISTICS

→ Establishment of common rules and co-establishement with the group of a safe space

→ Goal oriented and structured

→ Voluntary

→ Participatory

→ Self Assessed learning

→ Value based

LONG LIFE LEARNING

→ Pratical "hands on" training of personal and social competences

→ Support indivuals career /life choices

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

train social and personal competences

04

I. How to and what for?

There is no unanimity among researchers on the definition of competencies. However, there is agreement that it is related to the mobilization of acquired knowledge, action-oriented subjective construction, habits, and evaluation. Considering the contributions of different authors to each of these components, Jardim (2007) states that competencies are a multidimensional concept, consisting of the ability to apply a combination of knowledge, attitudes, and skills in a concrete situation, with the ultimate goal of being successful. In basic terms, it is the personal ability to perform a function or task according to predefined criteria, associated with the individual or the professional role. It implies an agreement or social pact, in the sense that it exists based on the perception of the self claiming to have it or a third party that recognizes it.

Indicators of competence:

1. Capability: understood as the possibility of being successful on a given dominium.
2. Operationalization: a way of acting on an organized way as a mean to lead to an action.
3. Knowledges: such as schemes or mental representations about a topic.
4. Abilities: the know-doing a given task in each situation.
5. Situation: cluster of stimuli surfacing in a given environment or context.
6. Efficiency: to reach the desired result throughout the appropriated means, minimizing wastes and maximizing resources

Due to the nature of this manual and the project it is based on, we want to explore the definition of competence as presented in **Youthpass**, specifically the competencies for Lifelong Learning. In 2006, the European Union defined a set of key competencies that all types of education should consider. In 2018, this model was revised and is still used in daily practice by educators today. In the framework, competence is defined as the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The framework outlines the main competence areas that individuals need for personal and professional fulfillment, social inclusion, active citizenship, and leading a sustainable and healthy lifestyle. These are grouped into 8 interconnected areas that build upon each other (for more information, consult the Youthpass leaflet by SaltoYouth).

Developing a competence is then a structured path of continuously working on knowledges, attitudes, and skills.

Knowledges

The things you know, like facts, concepts, or domain models. Knowledge is usually the type of thing you find described in most textbooks. Knowledge is something that you have conscious access to and can tell someone about.

Attitudes

What you tend to do, feelings and attitudes about someone or something. It is interconnected with your values.

Skills

Things you do, like sing a song, calculate a formula, throw a ball. Almost always, you will use knowledge when you perform a skill. Skills are not something you have conscious access to, you just "do it" although you may have knowledge about the skill that allows you to describe what you can do.

Defining them is a complex process that requires time and intensive training, especially when the goal is to develop personal and social competencies essential for higher education and the labor market.

So, what are personal and social competences?

When we talk about **personal competence, we refer to a dynamic, ever-evolving accumulation of related capabilities that facilitate learning on a personal level.** Four personal competencies are particularly salient: cognitive competency, metacognitive competency, motivational competency, and social/emotional competency.

These personal competencies can be enhanced through instruction and by example, as part of the academic curriculum, in extracurricular programs, and through engagement of families. They include their own specific clusters of knowledge and skills as well as values, attitudes, and learning habits (patterns of behavior) (Redding, 2014).

A "social competence" is the capability of articulating thoughts, feelings, and action in the function of the personal goals and demands of a situation or culture, generating positive consequences for the individual and their relationship with others (Del Prette & Del Prette , 2005, 33).

So, when we refer to the training of personal and social competences, we mean all the details that besides the technical competences will structure the individual's way of action and way of giving significancy to their experiences on a given environment or set, as well as the way they are going to deal with the transitions and movements that society requires from them daily. Preparing the youngsters for this journey of personal and social development will give them not only tools for their professional lives, but also strengthen their relation within the professional and the personal worlds and by affecting their notion of fulfillment, personal and professional realization, and wellbeing.

II. Tips and practical advice

Throughout the definition of the competencies to be trained we left in the next subchapter some practical examples for you to reflect and be able to relate your daily practice with the theory.

Also, in the next chapter you can find a moment of "doing it yourself" throughout case studies.

However, based on our experience, here you can consult some tips and practical advice to improve your future intervention towards young people, based on three fundamentals:

- You are not the main character on this play, but the participants are, whoever they are.
- Working on the youth field and mostly with non-formal education is impactful, but all magic comes with a price. This work has the power to change lives, be conscious about its power and act according to the perspective of making your surroundings a place of equity and opportunities and not for self-proposed.
- All the tips and advice given here are based on the perspective and experience of the authors, it accumulates a lot of years of practice, however, we want to stimulate the reader´s critical thinking, not to preach an absolute truth.

a)Tips for training and facilitation in the youth field

What we mean by youth field is when your action is directed to target groups between 13-30 years old, whether you are a youth worker, a teacher, a trainer or facilitator, a superior technician on the field of education or youth in a municipality. All groups are different, with different needs and challenges, but this age, as we explain on the chapter 2, is passing through an identity discover process and as they are very challenging, it´s also very rewarding to be a part of this process. However, it is our responsibility as youth workers and possible models of influence on young people's life, to be aware of the impact that our action can have on the participants but also of the various influences that can act throughout activities.

Things will probably never go as planned but be very clear about your intentions and goals, minding also:

The establishment of the learning environment

The research on learning environments is still evolving, especially when discussing non-formal education, as "it can happen anywhere with anyone." In this context, we are not focusing on initiating a discussion on what should be done to create the perfect and inclusive learning experience. Instead, our focus is on providing information and tips to help the reader be aware of key considerations when implementing sessions with young people.

Looking at the definition of learning environments, they refer to the places where learning occurs. Their design depends on:
- The learning goals established by both the educator and the learners should be very clear to both parties.
- We aim to develop competencies, so the learning environment should be designed with the activity in mind, ensuring that learners feel comfortable, encouraged, and inspired by their surroundings.
- Learners should feel free to ask curiosity-based questions, and the educator should be positioned, both psychologically and physically, in a way that allows the learner to approach them comfortably.

The most important part here is to be aware that adapting your surroundings to the group and individual styles of learning in front of you will improve the learning experience for everyone involved. Flexibility towards the planning and the process is half the way for a great facilitation and training journey.

Involve the participants in all process

Ao abordar temas tão difíceis numa fase tão marcante, especialmente ao utilizar a educação não formal, seguimos as recomendações do projeto Educação para a Cidadania Democrática (EDC) do Conselho da Europa, destacando a aprendizagem através da prática e de uma abordagem centrada no aluno. Todos os materiais desenvolvidos no DIGIVOGUI têm por base a prática diária e realidades concretas apresentadas pelos jovens com quem trabalhamos a nível nacional e internacional. Conversando com parceiros e outros profissionais da área, o testemunho é o mesmo: os jovens dedicarão energia e empenho às questões se puderem assumir a responsabilidade conjunta pelo que fazem e pelo modo como aprendem, e se as questões forem apresentadas de formas relevantes e interessantes. Como educadores, precisamos de aproveitar essa energia. É evidente que os jovens irão adotar estas ideias e colocá-las em prática, como demonstram os inúmeros programas existentes e em constante crescimento para os jovens.

Two heads think better than one

It's important to consider co-facilitation, which means running the program with two facilitators or trainers. This will depend on the group's size and needs, but co-facilitation usually makes any educational activity more dynamic and effective.
The benefits of co-facilitation include sharing the work of supporting small groups or helping individuals. It also makes it easier to keep participants interested since two facilitators can adjust the pace and rhythm of the session more easily. Another key benefit is that co-facilitation allows for quick adjustments when things don't go as planned and helps present different points of view and experiences to participants.

Both facilitators should be involved in every step of preparing the activity, with a clear understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. It's also helpful to involve the young people in the process (Brander et al., 2012).
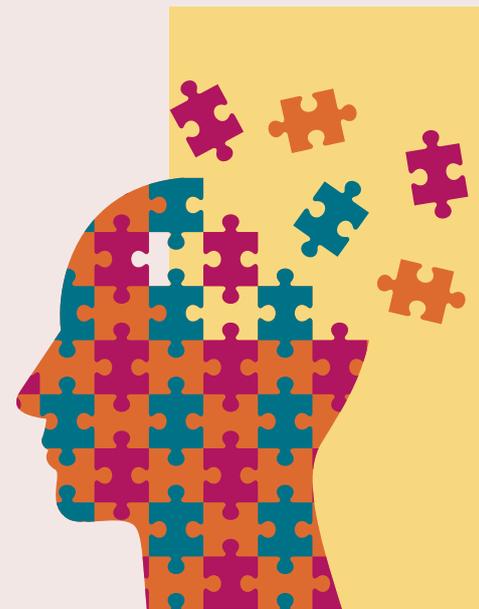
It´s all about planning

In our perspective, the job of a trainer/ facilitator is, at most times, 80% planning, 20% facilitation. In the case of the DIGIVOGUI program, you will have access to the activities beforehand and with all the specifications regarding materials and time. However, that only happens sometimes, and our work becomes 100% easier with some good session planning.

In this case, make sure that you read through all the information at least twice, consider and repeat the MOOCs as many times as you need! Run through it in your head, and visualize how it will go, considering the needs and expectations of the participants. Imagine how the group will react. Ensure you have read through all the information about the activity, preferably twice! Run through it in your head; try to visualize how it will go. Make sure also that you do not run out of material; it´s always better to have more than not being able to include all the participants because you run out of the materials needed.

Social contact

It is important that everyone in the group understands the ground rules for participatory, experiential activities. Clearly communicate the rules of the space where the activity is taking place, if any, and make sure that the participants fully understand them. For example, if the session is held online, having all the mics on can cause interference, so one of the rules can be turning your mic off while the others are speaking, and when you wish to speak, use emoticons on the chat.

Other rules that are always pre-established in the DIGIVOGUI activities are: hate or bullying speech is not allowed at all, everyone takes their share of responsibility for the work developed during the session, and everyone deserves a chance to be listened to and to participate, free of judgment by the others. This is a voluntary and participatory process, so no one should feel pressured to say anything or do anything they are not ready or comfortable with.

We defend that there should always be present in the schedule of any activity time to define these ground rules; we call it a social contract, that is discussed and agreed by all the group, and it´s flexible to adapt to the process and their needs change.

Debriefing, Debriefing , Debriefing

Never, in any circumstance, an activity in DIGIVOGUI or using NFE methodology is completed without debriefing. We can´t stress this enough, even if we propose 3 activities for a session but in the first one the participants needed a longer debriefing, don't rush it. It will have more impact and more long-term advantages for all processes if they do one activity with a good debriefing than three activities with a weak or no debriefing (no debriefing is not a non-formal education). It is the debriefing that allows the participants to integrate their learning and helps them to put what they have learned into a wider context.

Like the rabbit in Alice in the wonderland be careful with the time!

Depending on the place and group you are working with, time management can be your best friend or worst enemy. Carefully planning the time needed for the activity, including adequate time for debriefing — the most important part of an educational activity based on non-formal education — is crucial.

Give participants enough time to integrate their learning during the activity, but be aware that excessively long debriefings can cause participants to lose interest. This will depend on the type of activity and how participants respond to it, so make sure to test and visualize the activity yourself or with colleagues before presenting it to your target group.

Be clear!

When giving the instructions for an activity try to pass the maximum information to the participants as allowed by the characteristics of the activity. Make sure that everyone understands what they must do and if needed ask multiple times if it´s clear for everyone. Most of the times, working with international groups, language can be a barrier, giving time for the ones that are more fluent in the common language to translate for the participants with more difficulties.

Walking Side by Side: Embracing Horizontal Relationships in Vocational

One of the main principles of DIGIVOGUI, and of ENF in general, is that facilitators guide participants through experience and knowledge sharing. You do not control the activity or the participants' learning process, nor are they indebted to you for what they learn. It's their process, and the most important part is that they can go through it at their own pace and on their own terms, with you there to guide them through the steps and facilitate the process.

To change the world, make your own bed first

Here, we are referring to the need for evaluation—not only of the activity but also self-assessment by both the participants and the facilitator/trainer/educator.

Lead and guide by example. Once you have defined the impact you aim to achieve with the activity, prepare the tools you will use to measure it, whether they are qualitative or quantitative. How can you claim that an activity has had an impact on the participants, the community, or even the organization without measuring it?

DIGIVOGUI is evaluated using the theory of change (Weiss, 1995), which is a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to occur in a specific context. It focuses on mapping out, or "filling in," the "missing middle" between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to the desired goals. This is achieved by identifying the long-term goals and working backward to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these relate causally) for the goals to be reached. These are mapped out in an impact matrix, which provides a clear vision of the different levels of impact achieved with the project.

Be ready to give feedback but also receive feedback

Feedback is a comment on something someone has said or done. We are going to explore in more detail the communication competence later in this manual, however, be ready to give and receive feedback never from a judgmental or destructive criticism point of view but from a supporting and assertive background.

Respect for the other is the fundamental element here. Highlight the positive aspects of what they said or did and listen to everything very carefully and give them the specific reasons for a different point of view. Impartiality is not always possible, however, if you can detach yourself from the situation and emphatically give the participant a supportive and factual answer, you are increasing their opportunity of learning.

Some tips we leave to you are:

- ensuring that people start giving the feedback with a positive statement;
- respecting the other person and not making any derogatory remarks;
- focusing on the behavior, not on the person;
- giving a reason for what they are saying and by taking responsibility for what they say by using "I - messages"

Receiving feedback can be difficult, especially when there is disagreement. Encourage people to listen carefully without immediately defending themselves or their position. It is particularly important that individuals fully understand what the person providing the feedback means and take time to evaluate what has been said before accepting or rejecting it (Brander et al., 2012). Suggestion: For more information on sandwich feedback, refer to the resources in this manual.

Silence is also an answer
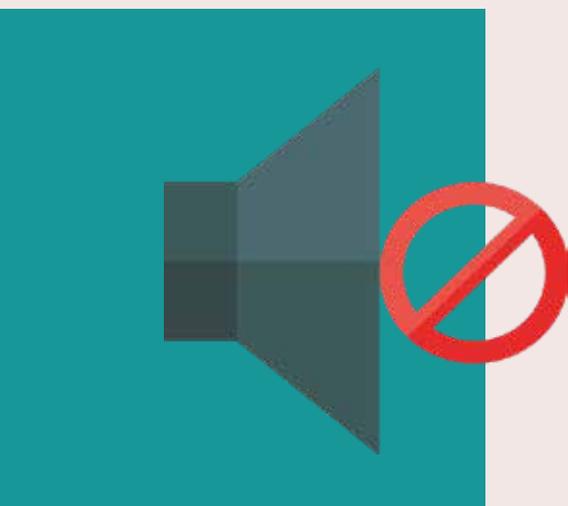
Young people will not always be ready or willing to give you the answers and behaviors you expect from them, especially at the moment you want it to happen. One of the main challenges newcomers to facilitation or training face is how to deal with silence, particularly when using techniques like brainstorming or during debriefing. Everyone processes information differently and at different paces, so when frustration starts to surface because you interpret silence as a lack of participation, remember that this is not always the case. Silence can also be interpreted as "I'm not ready for this now, but maybe when I am, I will approach you.

Guerrero 2013 taxonomy of silence According to Guerrero (2013), the pragmatic function of silence in communication can be understood through several different roles that silence plays in interactions.

Guerrero's work highlights how silence is not just the absence of speech, but a significant and intentional part of communication. Here are the key categories of silence based on its pragmatic function:

1 Silence as a Communication Strategy

Silence can be strategically used in communication to achieve a particular goal, such as:

→ To gain time: Pauses may be used to think, reflect, or prepare a response.

→ To emphasize a point: A silence can create dramatic effect or underscore the importance of what was just said.

→ To avoid saying something inappropriate: Silence can act as a buffer when people choose not to say something that might be hurtful or controversial.

2 Silence as a Tool for Negotiation

In negotiations, silence can serve as a tactic for control:

→ To express power: By remaining silent, an individual can show dominance or create discomfort in the other party.

→ To force others to speak: Silence can pressure the other person to fill the gap, often revealing more than they intended.

3 Silence as Emotional Expression

Silence is a powerful tool for expressing emotions non-verbally, such as:

→ To show disagreement: Silence can be a response to a statement or action that one does not agree with, without direct confrontation.

→ To express sadness or sorrow: In situations of grief or mourning, silence can communicate emotional states that words may fail to capture.

→ To indicate surprise or shock: A stunned silence may be a natural response to something unexpected.

4 Silence as a Reflective or Contemplative Tool

Silence is often used in reflective thinking, allowing individuals time to process information:

→ To reflect: Silence can offer the space for personal thought and self-reflection.

→ To evaluate: After receiving information, silence may be used to carefully evaluate and process before responding.

5 Silence as a Signal of Relationship Dynamics

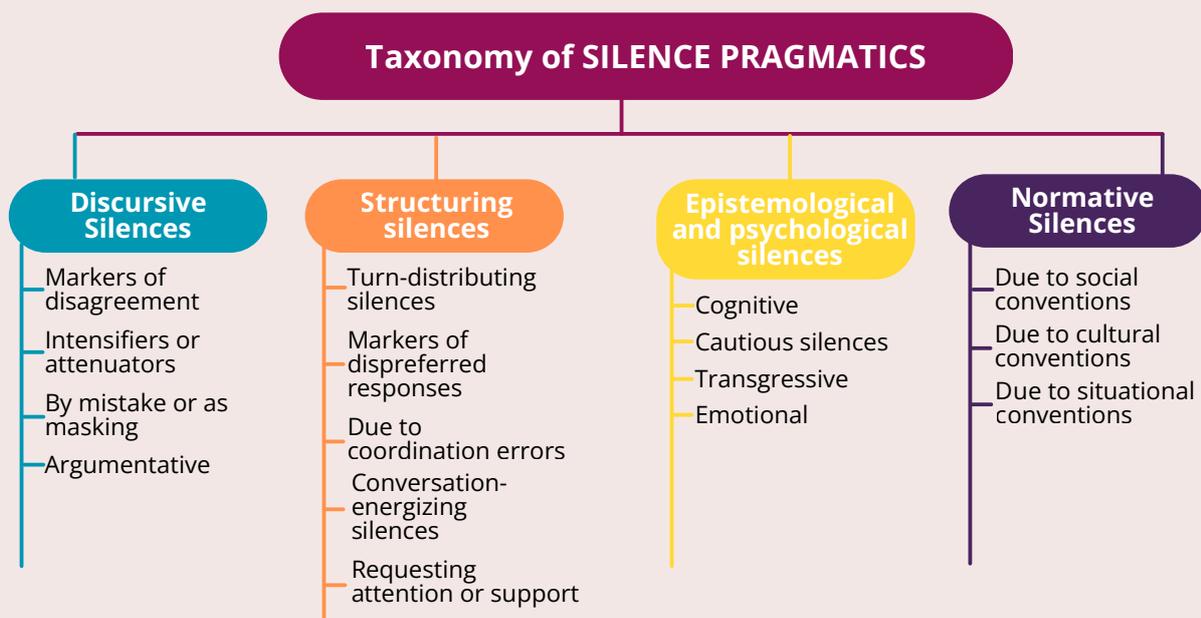Silence plays an important role in establishing and managing relationships:

→ To create intimacy: Comfortable silence between close individuals can be a sign of mutual understanding and ease.

→ To manage conflict: In the midst of an argument, silence may be a way of stepping back to cool down or avoid escalating the conflict.

→ To maintain or break social norms: Silence can serve as a response when social norms are breached or when communication should be controlled (e.g., in a formal setting).

6 Silence as a Cultural Phenomenon

The pragmatic function of silence can vary greatly depending on cultural norms. Different cultures have different values regarding when silence is appropriate, and silence can be used to communicate various messages depending on the cultural context:

→ Respect and deference: In some cultures, silence can signify respect or reverence, especially in hierarchical relationships.

→ Social acceptance or rejection: Silence may also signal social exclusion or disapproval in certain contexts.

The pragmatic function of silence can vary greatly depending on cultural norms. Different cultures have different values regarding when silence is appropriate, and silence can be used to communicate various messages depending on the cultural context:

Taxonomy of SILENCE PRAGMATICS

Discursive Silences
- Markers of disagreement
- Intensifiers or attenuators
- By mistake or as masking
- Argumentative

Structuring silences
- Turn-distributing silences
- Markers of dispreferred responses
- Due to coordination errors
- Conversation-energizing silences
- Requesting attention or support

Epistemological and psychological silences
- Cognitive
- Cautious silences
- Transgressive
- Emotional

Normative Silences
- Due to social conventions
- Due to cultural conventions
- Due to situational conventions

Fernández, L. C., & Guerrero, B. M. (2013). Silencio y prototipos: la construcción del significado pragmático de los actos silenciosos en la conversación. Diálogo de la lengua: Revista de filología y lingüística españolas, (5), 33-53.

b) Some practical advice

1 You are going to be challenged every step of the way

Embrace the challenge, whether it's an unpredictable situation or questions you don't know the answers to. Use these opportunities to learn from both the challenges and your participants. These moments should be times when you reflect on your personal and professional identity throughout the process. Take your time on this journey, allow yourself to fail, and strive to do better next time. This is a field where you'll continually need to update your knowledge and techniques to respond in the most appropriate way to these challenges.

2 Know how to establish your own boundaries.

Understanding how to set personal and professional limits is essential to maintain any type of healthy relationship. This is even more important when we work with young people, and mostly young people with fewer opportunities. Ensure you understand your position towards the participants and that the participants understand this position and know what to expect from you. A person with healthy boundaries understands that making their expectations clear helps in two ways: it establishes what behavior you will accept from other people and what behavior other people can expect from you (Tawaab, 2021).

3 Power dynamics

This is the main reason why establishing limits is so important. Wanting it or not, as a trainer or facilitator you already start the relationship with the participants from a more powerful point of view. You are the one stablishing the setting for the relationship dynamic. However, as spiderman says "With great power comes great responsibilities". You have the power to be a role model to the participants and you also have the power to manipulate them. If you in fact want to make a change in this world, choose wisely.

4 Collaborative Strength: The Vital Role of Multidisciplinary Work in Vocational Guidance

Vocational guidance benefits significantly from a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates insights from various fields to address the complexities of career decision-making. By integrating contributions from psychology, sociology, economics, education, and related disciplines, career guidance professionals can better support individuals in making informed decisions.

Psychology emphasizes understanding individual perceptions, motivations, and emotional challenges, helping clients navigate dilemmas that may hinder decision-making. This approach also enhances career adaptability and decision-making frameworks, which are crucial in guiding clients toward successful outcomes.

Sociology offers valuable perspectives on social mobility, lifestyle, and the structural constraints that influence career decisions. It highlights how societal systems and cultural norms shape the opportunities and challenges individuals face throughout their career trajectories. From an economic standpoint, vocational guidance incorporates principles such as utility and resource allocation to optimize career outcomes and address the implications of labor market dynamics. Economics also examines the risks and rewards associated with career choices, ensuring clients can make decisions that align with their personal and professional goals.

Education plays a pivotal role in vocational guidance by developing the skills and knowledge necessary for career success. Additionally, systemic and constructivist theories, such as the System Theory Framework, provide a cohesive understanding of how individuals interact with complex societal systems. These frameworks help individuals navigate uncertainties and align their career aspirations with available resources and opportunities.

This multidisciplinary approach ensures that vocational guidance is comprehensive, equipping clients with the tools to make well-informed decisions and adapt to the evolving demands of the modern career landscape.

5 Autonomy is the key.

At the end of the journey participants take with this program, whether they are the youth worker reading this manual or the young person from our community, we aim to empower them. With empowerment comes autonomy. The goal is that we do such a good job that they can continue working on these competencies independently, with the right tools to go wherever they choose.

6 Self-disclosure

Have you ever said too much in a job interview? To a professor? Or even to your hairdresser? Well, when done thoughtfully, self-disclosure can open the doors to meaningful interpersonal relationships. Conversely, when we reveal more than we intend to, it can lead to embarrassment, lower self-esteem, and the deterioration or even termination of relationships. As with all types of communication, increasing your competence regarding self-disclosure can have many positive effects. Self-disclosure refers to any verbal or nonverbal communication that reveals something about the self. It is the purposeful sharing of personal information with another person. It doesn't always have to be deep to be useful or meaningful. Superficial self-disclosure, often in the form of 'small talk,' is key to initiating relationships (Green, Derlega & Mathews, 2006).

Let the participants know carefully chosen aspects about yourself to show how you can relate to them. However, revealing too much can jeopardize the relationship and, consequently, the participants' learning journey and the achievement of the goals

7️⃣ Age is a number: the age gap can be a power play.

Think of yourself ten years ago. The competencies, vision of the world, knowledges, and capability to be influenced will for sure be different. Of course, age is a number, but the knowledge and competencies that come with life experience can lead to the trap of power play in your relationship with the participants.

🔟 Your own stereotypes

Impartiality is one of the most difficult principles to define and achieve as a facilitator. Being able to detach from our own preconceived ideas and listen without judgment, even when the words and ideas expressed clash with our own beliefs and worldview, can be challenging.

According to psychological theories, categorizing things to give structure to our mind is an adaptive and useful process. However, be aware of your own stereotypes and the role they play when interacting with participants. Are you unconsciously passing on your own beliefs, or are you supporting them in forming their own?

Of course, personal beliefs will always influence how we act and interpret situations. However, as a facilitator, you should be mindful of them and open to listening when participants challenge your worldview. You can present different perspectives and approaches, but ultimately, it's up to them whether to change their stereotypes. And who knows — this process might also lead you to change your own.

III. Definition of the competencies to be trained.

When defining the competencies to approach during DIGIVOGUI, we tried to take into consideration not only the 8 key competencies for lifelong learning, but also the fundamentals for vocational guidance training, in order to be able to inform not only the youth professional about the essential training set to develop with the participants but also to give a general background on what is going to be essential when the youngster makes a professional or personal transition. So, the competencies that are going to frame the DIGIVOGUI intervention training and MOOCs are:
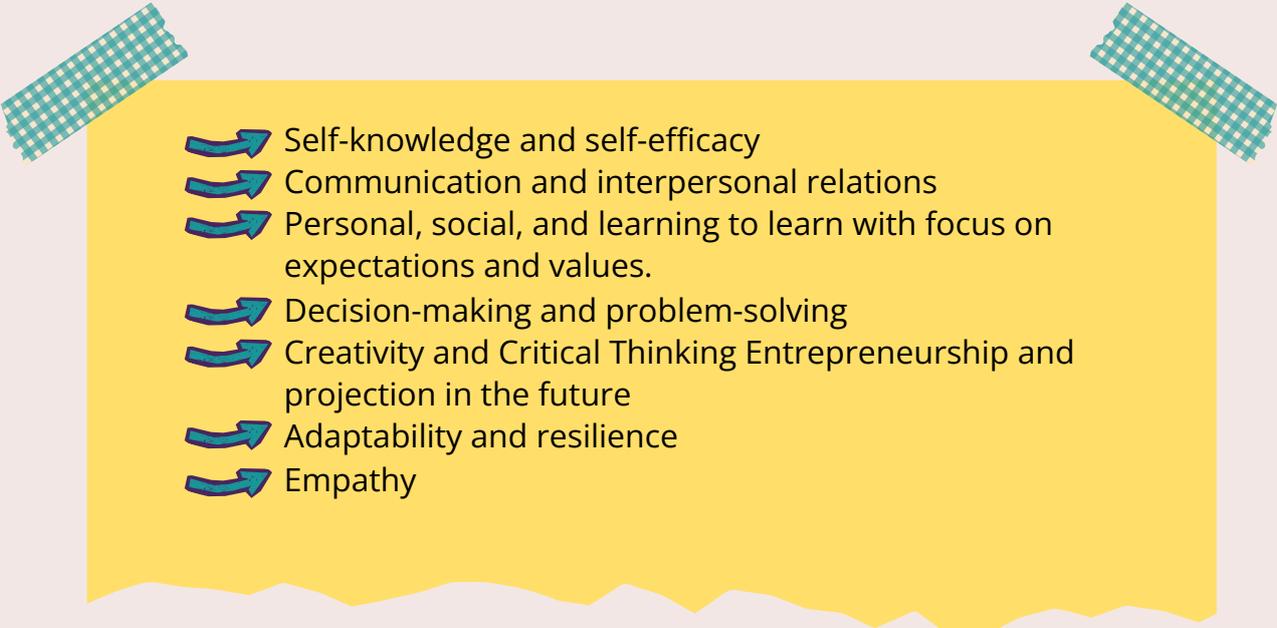
- Self-knowledge and self-efficacy
- Communication and interpersonal relations
- Personal, social, and learning to learn with focus on expectations and values.
- Decision-making and problem-solving
- Creativity and Critical Thinking Entrepreneurship and projection in the future
- Adaptability and resilience
- Empathy

Of course, all these competencies are interconnected and trigger a domino effect, raising other important sets of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to prepare young people for the future. However, in practical terms, we chose to focus on helping the reader develop a detailed understanding and preparation of these specific competencies, based on an extensive literature review and practical experience. We consider them fundamental for the implementation of the program across all its branches and in connection with the MOOCs.

a)Self-knowledge and self-efficacy

Self-knowledge refers to a person's understanding of their internal processes, including their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. According to Gravill, et al. (2002), self-knowledge involves "an accurate awareness of one's own beliefs, values, strengths, limitations, and behaviors" (p. 2).

This understanding is crucial for individuals seeking to improve their personal and professional lives, as it allows them to make informed decisions and take actions that align with their goals and values.

Self-efficacy, on the other hand, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform a particular task or achieve a specific goal successfully. According to Bandura (as cited in Self-awareness and self-efficacy, 2021), self-efficacy is "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 3). Self-efficacy is a key factor in motivation and achievement, as individuals who believe in their ability to succeed are more likely to take on challenging tasks and persist in the face of obstacles.

Thus, self-knowledge and self-efficacy are important aspects of personal development and success. Self-knowledge involves understanding one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, while self-efficacy involves believing in one's ability to succeed in specific tasks or goals.

Developing self-knowledge and self-efficacy can help individuals make informed decisions, set, and achieve goals, and overcome challenges in their personal and professional lives.

IN VOGUI - Pratical Example (Self-knowledge and self-efficacy)

"How can I know what to do in the future if I don't know who I am?"
This question often shapes vocational guidance sessions with young people, to which they often respond, "Wow, that makes sense!"

When talking with friends or meeting someone new, questions about personal interests, likes, dislikes, and hobbies always seem to come up. Knowing who we are, what we like and don't like, plays a key role in shaping both our personal and professional lives — and ultimately the career path we choose.

When guiding young people, consider their individuality — what makes them who they are — as one of the most important aspects of the vocational guidance journey. Take note and support their exploration of:

- Interests
- Hobbies
- Limitations (e.g., if I am a very sociable person and I know that I need people around to thrive, being alone in an office all day maybe is not the best career option)
- Grades (they are not the most important part of the process, but according to the national system, it´s important to adjust career possibilities to the grades that will allow the youngster to pursue it)

We often hear, "It's not that I don't know what I like, I just like too many things." In this case, help the youngster narrow down their choices by defining their priorities — challenge them to explore different options and consider which ones they can realistically see themselves doing for a long part of the day as a job.

Also, work with them on the concept of change. Who they are today is different from who they were yesterday, and with that, their interests, hobbies, and limitations will also change — and that's perfectly okay. Developing this competence is a process, a journey, not a destination.

Self-efficacy is closely tied to this process. It relates to our self-perception of success — we need to know ourselves to understand how we evaluate success, both personally and professionally, and to recognize the impact this has on our lives.

b) Communication and Interpersonal relations

Communication skills refer to a set of abilities that enable individuals to effectively convey information, ideas, and emotions to others. Effective communication is essential for building and maintaining relationships, achieving personal and professional goals, and resolving conflicts.

According to Prada & Garrido (2016), communication is part of life itself, so people often take it for granted. However, if we think about it, only living beings can communicate, which suggests that communication is an essential part not only of living but of living with others. Communication skills are key to developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships and building a social network.

It is a dynamic, complex, and ongoing process through which human beings send and receive information with the aim of understanding and being understood by others. Developing communication skills helps us address our own needs while respecting and being aware of the needs of others. In general, communication competencies can be developed in three areas:

➡ Nonverbal communication (a huge part of our communication is nonverbal, and it refers, for example, to hand gestures, interpersonal distance, body orientation towards the speaker and touch and physical contact among others)
➡ Conversational competencies – One of the biggest challenges we face, especially during adolescence (but not only), is using communication for social affirmation, starting conversations, and keeping them alive.
➡ Assertiveness (there are different forms of communication, and they all are useful and adaptative towards the context, however assertiveness refers to the honest expression of our needs, desires, and feelings while we respect the other).

Many components of communicative competence include empathy, control, flexibility, sensitivity, and knowledge. (Hannawa & Spitzberg 2015, p. 24).

One important aspect of communication skills is active listening, which involves fully engaging with the speaker and seeking to understand their perspective. Active listening is a key component of effective communication, as it helps build rapport and understanding between individuals.

Let´s take a closure look to communication styles and interpersonal relations. Assertiveness is a relatively new concept and there is no commonly accepted definition between authors (Caballo, 1993, Castanyer, 2003, Gillen, 2001, Del Prette, 2003,2005), however the majority of researchers agrees that there are 3 main forms of communication that people use and that vary depending on the local, situation and interlocutors:

➡ **Passive communication** - it´s related to an anxiety state that leads to escape confrontation with others, guided by the wish to be understood, concerning external respect and opinion and search for validation. Some signs that we can associate with this form of communication are low visual contact, low voice tone, hesitation when speaking, posture shrunk, deficient hand and body movement.

➡ **Aggressive communication** - also related to anxiety, originated by an exacerbated wish to win, by the excessive concern of defending the own idea, projects, and perspectives towards others. It´s characterized by excessive visual contact, a high and dry tone of voice, a defensive posture, and pointing and squeezing fingers as hand gestures. It can also be seen in the need to blame and criticize others, interrupt with frequency, and use of orders and sarcasm.

➡ **Assertive communication** – anxiety is a normal and adaptive response, and if trained, it can take other forms, allowing the individual to defend their rights while simultaneously respecting those of others. In recent years, the term assertiveness has become synonymous with "social skills" and, further, "social competencies." It is characterized by adequate visual contact, so the listener understands the speaker's position, a moderated tone of voice, and a body language that aligns with the message being conveyed. Assertive communication involves active listening, fostering mutual understanding, treating people with respect, accepting different opinions and solutions, explaining one's convictions, staying focused on the topic at hand, and being goal-oriented.

According to Jardim and Pereira (2006, p. 110), the development of assertiveness requires systematic training, where individuals learn and relearn which behaviors provoke certain reactions. They avoid mimicking or intonations that don't match the message, become insightful enough to understand and explain their reactions, and are able to express themselves positively, rather than deprecatingly. This also helps facilitate the expression of others, creating a safe environment where feelings and thoughts can be shared, promoting mutual learning.

According to Guffey and Loewy (as cited in Communication skills, n.d.), effective speakers "use vivid and descriptive language, employ appropriate nonverbal cues, and modulate their tone and pace to maintain audience interest" (para. 3). Effective speakers also use persuasive techniques to influence their audience and achieve their objectives. In summary, communication skills are crucial for personal and professional success. They involve the ability to listen actively, speak clearly and persuasively, write coherently, and interact effectively. Active listening and persuasive speaking are important components of effective communication. Strong communication skills can help individuals build relationships, navigate conflicts, and achieve their goals.

IN VOGUI – Practical example (Communication and Interpersonal relations)

In the European Solidarity Corps program, one of the main principles we establish with young people doing individual volunteering is that communication is everything. Often, in projects where the young person stays for a long period of time with the receiving organization, the main issues that arise are related to intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.

Not everyone is trained from a young age in how to be assertive, and that is the beauty of competencies – no matter your age or background, you can always improve. The same applies here.

If the volunteers, who work, live, and spend 24/7 together, can still cooperate after 10 months, it is due to the improvement of communication and the support of respecting themselves and others in any context.

This is where empathy comes in, which we will explore further in this manual. However, human beings are made of patterns, and their behavior is also based on patterns. In this way, it is our responsibility as educators to put ourselves in the shoes of the participants and understand that external factors may influence their way of communicating, and we must provide them with tools to mediate this communication. And when we can't, we must also be humble enough to apologize or even admit our limitations.

Read the room, and adapt your way of communicating in every form – verbal, non-verbal, and interpreting the message – to the needs and profile of your participants.

Defining limits as a facilitator, trainer, youth worker, is also an obligation. Take into consideration that in any activity we start from a power position and the participant will only react to the action you give to them.

If we are talking about youngsters, be very careful with the power play and manipulation trap because as we have great power to do good, we also have great power to influence even their career decisions.

Think about yourself 15 or 20 years ago; if someone you admire and who says they are there to help you succeed tells you to follow a particular path, even unconsciously, you would likely be more inclined to follow that path. Be impartial and ethical within the limits of what you can do.

As part of the social sphere, we also depend on our communication competencies to promote our product, make ourselves visible, and ensure the community listens to what we have to say. In today's world, the ability to promote ourselves and any product we genuinely believe in is essential for sustaining our success in the future. Also, "everything is about networking." Having a strong social network, key local partners, and the ability to communicate and build solid relationships with them is crucial for guaranteeing the impact and sustainability of any project and, often, our only security in reaching the target group.

Suggestion: search more about personal branding.

c) Personal, social, and learning to learn - Expectations and values.

The definition of expectations presupposes the projection of the future of a desirable event, which may or may not be realistic. Demotivation or discouragement are often associated with the non-fulfillment of expectations for various circumstances. The importance of young people being trained to form realistic expectations is related to the importance of being able to accomplish self-efficacy and knowing that they can attain the goals they set for themselves. So, it´s always essential that the trainer, facilitator, or educator can present factual and up-to-date information to prepare the youngster on how to adjust their dreams and desires to the present-day reality.

Expectations management is also essential to promote personal fulfillment and reduce procrastination and feelings of disappointment and discouragement towards proposed tasks.

Values are desirable principles or qualities (Merriam-Webster Unabridged Online Dictionary, 2009). Disagreements based on values differences are complicated to resolve because compromising means compromising your values. Organizations, schools, and other youth field organizations often develop a list of corporate values. The professional needs to understand the real organizational and personal values and, mostly, the participants´ values.

Developing a mutual understanding of personal, professional, and organizational values and dealing with differences during the early phases of implementation of any activity will significantly reduce the potential for insolvable conflicts. Understanding these differences and developing an appreciation for the value of this diversity for everyone involved can prevent conflict later in the project.

IN VOGUI – Practical example (Expectations and values)

In 2019, when the first VOGUI started its activities, the first session with the young people always focused on expectations, and we always began with the quote, "It's all about aligned expectations and values." We also used the following example: Imagine that you want to be an IT engineer, but somewhere along the way, you discover that you feel better when you are surrounded by people. What can you do? Do you think your values are aligned with the profession you are choosing?

Literature shows that one of the main reasons people feel dissatisfied with their choice of academic degree or job is when the values of the profession or the organization are not aligned with their own values. Imagine experiencing a daily conflict between your values and your job – how painful would that be?

Here, we share the central values that we have identified for ourselves while working happily in this field:

- Pragmatic
- Empathic
- Team worker
- Open- minded
- Creative
- Challenge
- Flexibility
- Initiative
- Ethic integrity

Quality Loyality Trust

Yours may be the same or different, but be aware of both your own values and those of your workplace to see if they align. Also, consider whether they align with the values of your participants.

What about expectations? Expectations are always at play when working with people. Be aware of your participants' expectations beforehand—not to control them, but to adapt to them and be realistic about the group you're facing. Imagine you're implementing an Erasmus+ mobility program and expecting to involve 100 women from the Roma community in the sessions. Well, inform yourself first about the feasibility of this and what might constrain your expectations. Our advice? Read the room, understand their needs, and consider their perspectives on the world!

d) Decision making and problem solving – planning and compromising with objectives.

Decision-making can be defined as the ability to choose between different responses to reach certain long or short-term goal (Samanez-Larkin & Ridderinkhof, 2013). On the other hand, problem-solving skills are used to describe how a person uses their abilities to find a way out of a problematic situation.

This skill can easily be linked to creative thinking (Khoiriyah and Husamah, 2018). Stages of the process of problem-solving and decision-making (Garrido & Prada, 2006)

01. Definition of the problem	• Identify the problem. • Clarify misunderstandings. • Identify new perspectives/ approaches to the problem
02. Presentation of the bases	• Share previous relevant experiences. • Be pragmatic: the solution should be low-cost and easy to apply immediately.
03. Creation of ideas	• Brainstorming. • Define an action plan. • "A problem with a solution is never a problem, just a challenge" - to be solution-oriented is also a learning process; train yourself to face problems as challenges.
04. Cluster of ideas	• Start making the connections between the different solutions and if they are congruent with the final goal. • Cluster the information in a practical and clear way. • Structure the ideas resulting from brainstorming.

05. Choosing the ideas	- Select one or more ideas (practical and effective solutions). - Determine the pros and cons of each idea. - The process ends with the combination of deleting the invalid solutions and highlighting the promising ones
06. Verification/ compromise	- Analise to each extent there is a compromise in your team and/or target group towards each idea. - Push the team to recognize their feelings and avoid embarrassments due to personal interests.

Table 2. Stages of the process of problem-solving and decision-making (in Garrido & Prada, 2006)

The definition we are working with to define a problem is 'conflict,' viewing it as a tool with great potential for learning if properly resolved. It can stimulate learning and serve as an effective way to prepare participants to handle the daily conflicts they will encounter when entering higher education or the labor market.

Conflict resolution is related to an individual's ability to satisfy their own interests while also considering the interests of those around them. It involves identifying pros and cons, points of agreement and disagreement, and integrating both parties' perspectives, thereby creating added value for both sides by considering their knowledge and discussion in order to reach a meaningful conclusion.

Research shows that both problem-solving and conflict resolution are essential skills for adapting to work environments, and they can impact job complexity and salary (Ayres and Malouff, 2007; Mainert et al., 2019). It is crucial for young people to develop these skills to have a more positive work experience and feel more satisfied.

One method used to train problem-solving and decision-making skills is to provide participants with specific strategies to apply to real-world situations. Giving people a problematic scenario and offering them different tools to resolve it helps them discover new solutions and make decisions. Another approach would be to engage in group problem-solving activities, allowing participants to share different perspectives and solutions.
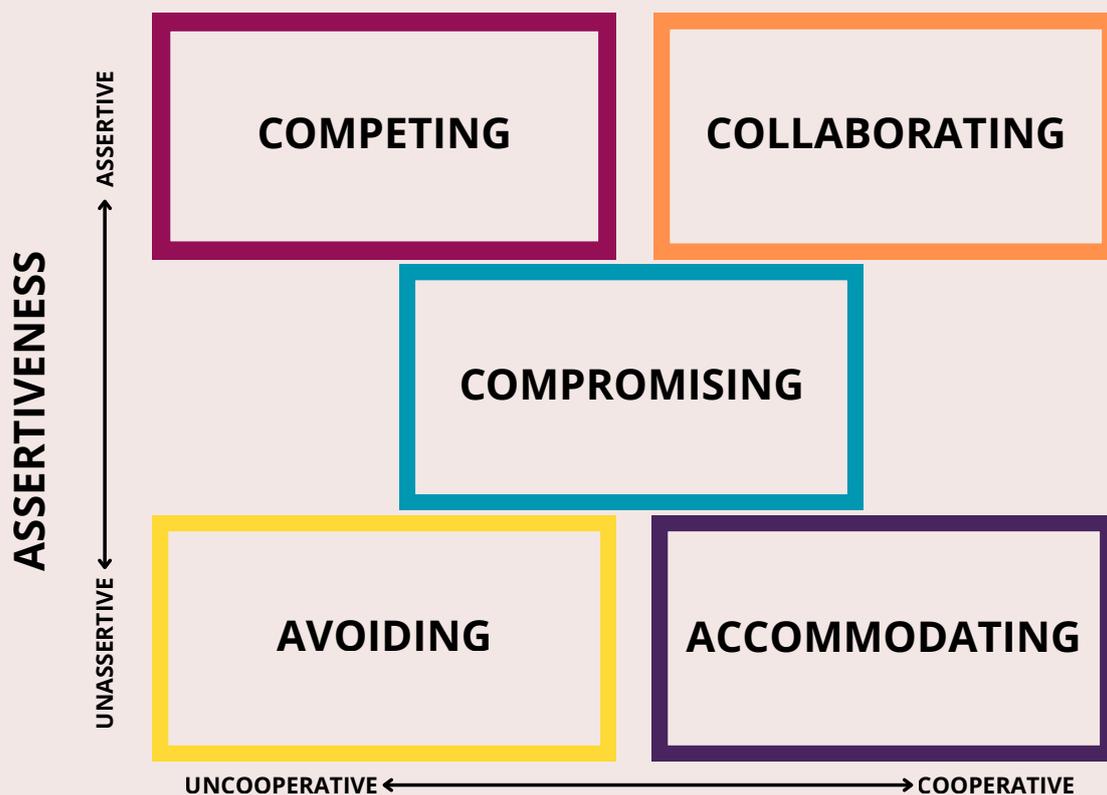
d.1) Conflict Resolution

Conflict can be defined as a dynamic process of perceived incompatibility or disagreement between individuals or groups, arising from differences in needs, values, goals, or interests. It is an inevitable aspect of human interaction and becomes pronounced when individuals or groups perceive that their objectives or actions are being hindered by others. In youth work, conflict often emerges in social, cultural, or developmental contexts where diverse perspectives and experiences intersect.

The nature of conflict is multidimensional and can be understood through several key attributes:

- Inevitability: Conflict is a natural and unavoidable part of human interaction. In youth work, it often arises due to the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and developmental stages of the individuals involved.
- Subjectivity: Conflict is often rooted in perception. A situation may not objectively involve incompatible goals, but if it is perceived as such by one or more parties, conflict arises.
- Relational and Contextual: Conflicts are shaped by the relationships and context in which they occur. In youth work, the dynamics between youth workers, participants, and community members play a critical role in how conflicts develop and are resolved.
- Dual Potential: Conflict is not inherently negative. While it may lead to tension or disruption, it also holds the potential for growth, learning, and strengthened relationships when managed constructively.
- Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI): Highlights five conflict-handling styles (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, accommodating), providing a foundation for understanding and managing conflicts in diverse scenarios.

Understanding yourself and your conflict management style is crucial for youth workers because it provides insight into how you approach and handle conflicts, especially in dynamic and emotionally charged youth settings. Rather than needing to change your inherent style, recognizing and working with your natural conflict tendencies can help you become more effective in conflict resolution and youth engagement.

One method used to train problem-solving abilities or decision-making skills is to give participants specific strategies to apply to some situations. It seems that giving people a problematic scenario and showing them different tools to resolve it helps them find new solutions and make decisions. Another way to train these skills would be to engage in group-solving activities and share different perspectives or solutions with participants.

ASSERTIVENESS

ASSERTIVE ← → UNASSERTIVE

COMPETING

COLLABORATING

COMPROMISING

AVOIDING

ACCOMMODATING

UNCOOPERATIVE ← → COOPERATIVE

In youth work, self-awareness and understanding your conflict management style are crucial for building strong, respectful relationships with young people. Rather than changing your personality or approach, working from your authentic style allows you to engage effectively and sensitively with youth, empowering them to develop their own conflict resolution skills. By knowing yourself, you can work with your inherent strengths, adapt to different situations, and become a more effective, approachable, and empathetic youth worker. All six modes of handling conflict are useful in various situations, and each represents a set of useful social skills.

You can take an online questionnaire and find out where you stand!

Role of Youth workers in conflict management

YW play a crucial role in conflict management and resolution, particularly because they work with young people in developmental stages where social, emotional, and interpersonal skills are still forming. Their roles often overlap and are dynamic, depending on the context and nature of the conflict.

Here are the key roles you may assume:

Mediator

Youth workers act as neutral third parties to facilitate communication between conflicting parties.

Key Tasks:
Create a safe and neutral space for discussions.
Encourage active listening and mutual understanding.
Help the conflicting parties explore common ground and develop solutions.

Facilitator

They guide group discussions or interactions to prevent or address conflicts in a collaborative manner.

Key Tasks:
Facilitate activities or discussions that encourage teamwork and cohesion.
Use structured dialogue methods to resolve conflicts constructively.
Promote inclusive participation to ensure all voices are heard.

Educator

Youth workers teach conflict resolution skills as part of their broader Educator role in youth development.

Key Tasks:
Educate young people on effective communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills.
Introduce tools like "I-statements," active listening, and collaborative negotiation.
Conduct workshops or role-plays to practice conflict management scenarios.

Advocate

They ensure that the voices and needs of young people are represented and respected in conflict situations.

Key Tasks:
Support marginalized or vulnerable youth in expressing their concerns.
Advocate for fair treatment and solutions that prioritize the best interests of all parties.
Address power imbalances, particularly in conflicts between youth and authority figures (e.g., teachers, parents).

Role Model

Youth workers demonstrate appropriate conflict resolution behaviors through their own actions and interactions.

Key Tasks:
Model calm, respectful, and empathetic behavior during conflicts.
Show how to navigate disagreements constructively without aggression or avoidance.
Demonstrate integrity and consistency in handling their own conflicts.

Counselor

They provide emotional support and guidance to youth involved in conflicts

Key Tasks:
Help young people process emotions related to the conflict (e.g., anger, frustration, anxiety).
Encourage self-reflection to understand their role in the conflict.
Support youth in developing personal coping strategies.

Preventative Agent

Youth workers play a proactive role in preventing conflicts before they escalate.

Key Tasks:
Foster a culture of respect, inclusion, and open communication within the group.
Identify early signs of tension or potential conflict and address them promptly.
Create structured programs or activities that promote understanding and reduce potential triggers.

Bridge Builder

They work to build understanding and relationships between conflicting parties.

Key Tasks:
Encourage dialogue between individuals or groups with differing perspectives.
Highlight shared goals or values to build unity.
Support reconciliation efforts and long-term relationship repair.

Cultural Mediator

In multicultural or diverse settings, youth workers address conflicts that arise from cultural misunderstandings or differences.

Key Tasks:
asks: Promote cultural awareness and sensitivity.
Help youth navigate differences respectfully and constructively.
Mediate conflicts that stem from stereotypes or biases.

Conflict Manager

Youth workers oversee and manage the overall process of conflict resolution, ensuring it remains fair and productive

Key Tasks:
Set boundaries and ground rules for conflict resolution discussions.
Ensure that the process remains focused on resolution and does not escalate further.
Follow up on agreements or resolutions to ensure they are upheld.

Youth workers, in all their diverse fields of expertise, are uniquely positioned to provide a supportive environment for young people to learn and grow from conflict. They create the proper environment for the development of youth skills, enabling them to handle future conflicts independently, while fostering a culture of mutual respect, understanding, and nonviolence.

In fulfilling these roles, keep in mind that they are not exclusive. Youth workers contribute to the personal development of young people and help create a more harmonious and collaborative environment in youth programs and communities.

"Fake it until you make it" may sound strange, but decision-making is difficult for everyone. It's a leap into the unknown, which can be very frightening. However, if you approach it with the mindset of, "I don't know exactly what I'm doing, but I'll try my best," over time, it will become easier to handle discomfort. Your comfort zone will expand, and you'll become more confident in making decisions with certainty.

Suggestion: If you want to learn more about this, look up the concept of learning zones.
Also, ask yourself, "What's the worst that could happen?" If you realize you can handle the consequences, take the leap of faith. You can always step back to move two steps forward. Most decisions related to academic or career choices in early life will not have a lifelong impact. Decisions are not permanent, and you are allowed to change your mind.

Young people are already going through the challenging process of identity formation. Imagine the pressure of thinking that a decision made at 17 will determine the rest of your life. Keep this in mind when guiding them through these choices.
Decision-making is also a crucial skill in every field, especially in a constantly changing world. Participants will bring you difficult or highly personal dilemmas. Remember that they are often in a more vulnerable position than you. They feel safe, which is why they share and trust you. Listen carefully and present yourself as steady and capable of making the best decision with the available information. You won't always be able to control everything, but you should be prepared to respond thoughtfully and include participants in the decision-making process, serving as a role model.

At the same time, avoid the trap of "playing all-mighty." Your role is to support participants in developing autonomy and the ability to make their own decisions. With the fast pace of daily life, it's easy to fall into the trap of "welfarism"—instead of empowering participants, you may unintentionally make them dependent on you to make decisions for them. This prevents them from developing new skills and reinforces a maladaptive coping mechanism.

Final thought: We challenge you to rethink the word "problem." In any language you are reading this manual, find a synonym for problem. For us, it's simply a challenge to solve—never a block. Words have power—refine your vocabulary and encourage participants to do the same.

e) Empathy

It isn't easy to define empathy as its meaning has evolved and changed over the years (Goldstein and Michaels, 2021). It is vulgarly used in the current language suggesting that an empathic person is someone sensible, warm, and friendly. Our daily practice shows that it is way more than that. The first definition was introduced in 1897, related to perception and appreciation of works of art, referred to as "feel in" - the artistic product and caption of the feeling expressed.

Etymologically it means "enter inside of the feeling", having then the capability of understanding the subjective experience of the other one. In psychology, there is still no consensus to its definition, however, most include the idea of being able to understand and feel other people's emotions or thoughts but being able to separate it from their own experiences (Bertrand et Al., 2018 ; Mustscher et Al., 2013).

The ability to relate to other people's feelings has been the object of many recent studies. Results show that empathy is an essential skill for jobs connected with healthcare or teaching (Singh, 2014 ; Lamiani et Al., 2020). Not only does it help one's job satisfaction, but it also enables them to have better leadership. (Singh, 2013) This is why the development of empathy seems essential for youngsters as they try to find their path in the labor market. Studies have shown the positive effect of empathy training, primarily for people working in social fields (van Berkhout et Al., 2016). Researchers use different methods for training: experimental training, didactic and skill training, and mindfulness (Lam et Al., 2011). All these methods have shown positive results, especially on the cognitive components of empathy, which shows that there are many ways to train this skill. During facilitation, investigating the participants experiences, perceptions and explore possibilities with them to solve what themselves recognize as their daily needs is a main tool to work in cooperation and shaping a better future, where empathy works as an ally to support change – a change in perception of oneself and/or one´s possibilities. We will explore a bit more later, but all the success on Non-Formal Education and even more in Vocational Guidance is related with the relationship created and supported by empathy (Kidd, 2006). Kolden et al (1994) suggest that the relationship serves two fundamental purposes: to provide conditions for change and to provide the power by which change can be facilitated.

IN VOGUI – Practical example (Empathy)

"Walk the walk of the talk you talk" (Anonymous). As we stated before, the relationship that we establish with the participants is a central key to success, but also consistent and congruent with what we preach. Being relatable is not forced; it is something that comes with the understanding that the journey is messy for everyone and understanding that different people will walk the walk-in different ways, but the destination is the same, having a realized and fulfilled future.

When we started our own process of vocational guidance, for some of us, it was clear, while for others, the phrase that defines it is "I have no idea what to do." Well, some of us still arrive at our 40s or 50s with no idea what to do. The demands of society and our contexts are all different, and having the emotional intelligence to understand this and read it in participants is a fundamental trait. It can be trained as well, but it takes time and practice. So, with every step of this journey, remind yourself that the basic principle is that we are humans learning from other humans how to live according to the demands of our communities and environments.

Empathy, as we define it, is based on a psychological background. Consider that the writing team of this manual consists of psychologists with specific training and knowledge in the subject. That said, an intervention based on non-formal education is not therapy or counseling, but rather a means to acquire important tools that can have a therapeutic effect on the participant. Be very careful when opening doors that you do not know how to close. We strongly advise any professional who is not a psychologist using this manual to have a strong awareness of their limitations and, when necessary, seek intervention from a professional in the field or work in a multidisciplinary team. The tools described here are powerful, so be mindful that your action can only go so far. Ethical principles are an essential asset in any practice.

To give you a strong example of how empathy has a substantial effect on establishing relationships with participants, we would like to share a real-life example. During a Youth Exchange (Erasmus+ program), focused on inclusion, we used the "Step Forward" dynamic (from Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People). The dynamic involves distributing roles to participants, based on real-life situations. During the last time we conducted this activity, the facilitator made it seem as though the roles were given randomly. However, since the activity took place on day 2, the facilitator had already assessed the room, observing the participants' behavior and backgrounds. Although the activity was not designed for participants to identify with the roles, in the end, due to practice, they all, to some extent, did. This happened because, through simple simulations, the facilitator was able to work on empathy, and even though the roles had no concrete relation to the participants' personal experiences, in their minds, they created a character that allowed them to step into someone else's shoes.

f) Creativity and Critical Thinking

The interest in creativity as a scientific area, dates to the second half of the twentieth century (Torrance, 1983). It is uniformly agreed upon that creativity is a complex and multifaceted construct that can manifest itself in a myriad of different ways (Abraham, 2016; Dietrich, 2004; Smith, Ward, & Finke, 1995 cited by Dietrich, 2019).

Creativity, according to Dietrich (2019) "is often pegged to those who can produce art such as paintings or songs or scripts, or who can skillfully dance or act. The thing is, whenever someone thinks about creativity, it's either going to be something we learn or an inborn talent. Because of this, creativity is often assumed as something lateral, without really putting much credence as to what is behind the output that is usually the one given praise". Other authors, as Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1961) also defended the idea that every individual has a creative potential that must be cultivated, especially in the school context. Sakamoto (2000) says that creativity is the expression of a human potential for achievement, which manifests itself through human activities and generates products during its process. Csikszentmihalyi (1966), refers that "creativity does not occur within individuals, but it is the result of interaction between the individual's thoughts and the sociocultural context. Creativity must be understood not as an individual phenomenon, but as a systemic process" (p. 23).

Seabra (2008) mentions the author Money (1963), a specialist in this phenomenon, who states that a person can be involved in different ways depending on which facets of the process are at play.

This author considered that the creativity process would have:

- A creative situation is the context in which creativity arises and is observed. This consideration encompasses all the elements that constitute a complex situation in which creative processes take place or, at the very least, are stimulated. The combination of these elements can facilitate creative expression, just as other elements can inhibit it (Seabra, 2008).

- The product of creativity can be an object, an idea, a theory, or different solutions to a problem. In this sense, behaviors, thoughts, ideas, and objects that stem from any human activity can also be considered creative products. Experts suggest criteria for judging creative products, but there is no single, infallible criterion that can definitively determine whether a product is creative or to what degree. This highlights one of the challenges in the scientific study of creativity: just as the differential study of psychological characteristics begins with an objective and quantitative assessment of behavioral differences, creativity must be understood as a creative performance, which, by its very nature, cannot be measured with great objectivity and depends on a set of criteria that are difficult to apply in traditional psychological assessments (Seabra, 2008).

- The creation process, which involves the mental operations that make up the so called "creative thinking". According to Francia (2021) Guilford (n.d) an American psychologist defined two types or modes of thinking: convergent and divergent.

- Convergent thinking is oriented towards the known and the correct solution, while divergent thinking arises when a problem is still to be defined or to be discovered without an apparent indication of an immediate solution. The divergent thinking was closely linked to the creative act. On the other hand, it also represents the ability to produce a range of possible solutions to a given problem, particular to a problem that did not predict a single correct answer. Many authors see creativity as a set of mental processes has been the central idea of problem-solving studies, where creativity is considered sometimes more important than intelligence in problem solving (Seabra, 2008).

This leads to the following questions: Should we place creativity in the sphere of individual attributes (traits) or in the sphere of behavioral properties (habits)? Is the subject creative, or is it the product of a specific activity carried out by any subject?
For psychologists and educators, creativity has been considered a characteristic of individuals that explains many phenomena of variation in performance that cannot be easily justified by intelligence. In this sense, creativity has been seen as an alternative way to understand human performance. The results of research allow us to affirm that, similar to intelligence but to a greater degree, creativity is a characteristic in which the effects of cognitive abilities are combined with those related to temperament and character. Therefore, human creativity must be understood as an integrated aspect of the entire personality in relation to performance (Seabra, 2017).

We are living in the age of creativity and innovation. The automated and computational thinking of the last century is gradually being merged with humane, empathetic, and comprehensive thinking. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) states, "It is easier to develop people's creativity by changing the environmental conditions than by trying to make them think creatively" (p. 1). An organizational culture that encourages creativity is essential. For this, people must be taught to use their skills, creativity must be rewarded, and techniques to generate ideas in groups must be employed. It is no longer enough to have a few creative individuals in an organization; the organization itself must be composed of creative people.

Among other competencies, creativity is widely acknowledged as vital for progress in knowledge societies and innovation-driven economies. It is also increasingly valued in relation to individual and collective identity, mobility, and well-being.

At the individual level, creativity is thought to encompass curiosity, intellectual restlessness, tolerance for uncertainty, risk, and ambiguity, as well as the capacity to be adaptable and flexible. At the collective level, creativity fosters social engagement, community identity and cohesion, stimulates economic growth, and supports the effective functioning of democratic societies.

Efforts are being made to teach and assess creativity primarily in compulsory education, but also in vocational, higher, and non-formal education and training. However, creativity is not systematically taught or otherwise fostered, especially in formal settings, which require regular monitoring of progress despite its increasing inclusion in national curricula.

Many definitions of critical thinking have been proposed, but no consensus has been reached. In every field, this competence has a slightly different meaning. One of the first advocates for the value of critical thinking, Dewey, defined it as a mental process that allows facts and reasons to suggest alternative facts (or reasons), ensuring that previously held beliefs about these facts are critically reassessed and validated (Jardim, 2006). This concept seems closely related to creative thinking, which could be defined as the ability to express oneself and find unique solutions.

Research indicates that both skills are positively correlated with cognitive learning abilities, making it essential to develop them further among students (Siberian et al., 2019). As information becomes more accessible and many sources become available, it is crucial to teach students how to search for and select the information they need.

Critical thinking skills can be trained through specific courses that explain their theoretical background or integrated into broader courses. Incorporating this skill while learning other topics could be an effective way to develop it. Recent studies have also shown the impact of technology (such as online discussions) on the development of this skill (Alsaleh, 2020). Regarding creative thinking, it is important to encourage students to seek multiple solutions and apply their knowledge across different fields.

IN VOGUI – Practical example (Creativity and Critical thinking)

Every day, creativity is the vital force that allows us to keep going and working in the field of youth. It is the main driver of the decision-making process and keeps us motivated to find solutions to the challenges that constantly make us question whether this is the right path. Even the writing of this manual was driven by creativity and a continuous process of decision-making, finding creative solutions at every step of the way.

One of the main obstacles identified by youth organizations and youth workers is precisely how to reach young people. It seems a bit contradictory that someone or something devoted to a specific target group must find specific solutions for how to make themselves known by the target group. Well, in our everyday practice, making ourselves known in any field is part of the recruitment and branding process and in the era where "the survival of the fittest" depends on social media and access to information, creativity to say "I'm here!" is the main source of differentiation for a lot of recruitment companies and even for accessing some educational opportunities.

Some tips for keeping your creativity flowing are:

⇒ Give yourself enough rest time doing activities that are not strictly related with the goal you want to achieve.
⇒ Choose something to focus on that sparks your passion!
⇒ Technics

Also, engage in spontaneous conversations with the participants. Provide informal moments that allow you to discuss their real needs and concerns, receive their suggestions as feedback to be implemented, and consider them when planning any program or project. This is also a good way to train critical thinking together and stay up to date with current topics, understanding what interests them and what captivates their attention. Their engagement in the sessions is often greater if they can relate to the topics you're discussing, especially if it's something from their reality, as they can feel like an important part of the conversation. For example, whenever we try to explain teamwork or logical and creative thinking, we use the example of the game "Among Us." It's a popular strategic video game among young people, where players must define strategies to discover who the killer is. This way, they often become more involved and better understand what we mean.

g) Entrepreneurship and Projection in the Future

The EntreComp: the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework is a reference framework designed to explain what entrepreneurship competencies mean. EntreComp defines entrepreneurship as the capacity to act on opportunities and ideas, transforming them into value for others. The value created can be financial, cultural, or social.

The goal is to increase the number of people who have sufficient knowledge about the impact of community participation, self-employment, and entrepreneurship, so they consider alternative career paths.

For that reason, it is essential that educators, trainers, and facilitators have a solid understanding of entrepreneurial competencies. According to Bird (1995), these can be defined as underlying characteristics, such as generic and specific knowledge, motives, traits, self-images, social roles, and skills, that contribute to the birth, survival, and/or growth of ventures.

The ability to plan, implement, and understand the management process of a small-scale business or association is directly related to the ability to project into the future.

Projecting into the future involves venturing into the unknown and attempting to shape the future by aspiring to and anticipating new possibilities. Fantasies, desires, wishes, and dreams have long stimulated literary creativity and the capacity to aspire.

Entrepreneurial competencies are defined as underlying characteristics possessed by a person that contribute to the creation of new ventures. These characteristics include generic and specific knowledge, motives, traits, self-images, social roles, and skills, which may or may not be consciously recognized by the person. Some of these competencies are innate, while others are acquired through learning, training, and development.

Thus, an entrepreneur's success is governed by entrepreneurial competencies. If they possess these competencies, they are more likely to achieve their entrepreneurial goals. According to Paul Wilken, 'entrepreneurship becomes the link between need achievement and economic growth. Thus, the need for achievement is the guiding force behind entrepreneurial activities. It is the desire to succeed, and it motivates individuals to undertake innovative activities.

Therefore, when training young people in entrepreneurship, certain traits and competencies should be considered: (a) adaptability to situations, (b) alertness to the social environment, (c) ambition and achievement orientation, (d) assertiveness, (e) cooperation, (f) decisiveness, (g) dependability, (h) dominance (desire to influence others), (i) energy (high activity level), (j) persistence, (k) self-confidence, (l) tolerance for stress, and (m) willingness to assume responsibility.

The popular Kakinada experience, conducted by McClelland and Winter (1969), has proven beyond doubt that entrepreneurial competency can be developed in human minds through proper education and training.

That is also why it is crucial to encourage young people's participation in the community, and why this is a fundamental principle of DIGIVOGUI. Participation is a fundamental right. Through active participation, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities, helping them to acquire lifelong learning competencies (to learn more, search for Youthpass), develop knowledge of human rights and citizenship, and promote positive civic action. To participate effectively, young people must be provided with the proper tools, such as information, education on their civil rights, and access to them.

The UN has long recognized that young people are a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic growth, and technological innovation. Therefore, training their entrepreneurial competencies is crucial not only for their development but also for the sustainable and efficient development of communities and societies.

IN VOGUI – Practical example (Entrepreneurship and Projection in the Future)

Our approach to entrepreneurship in DIGIVOGUI is more aligned with social entrepreneurship and social participation, leading to social innovation.
As Taylor Swift said when receiving an award for innovation in the music industry in 2022:

"I never, a single time, woke up in the morning and thought: you know what I'm going to do today? I'm going to innovate some stuff! The things need to be innovated, and I'm going to be the one who does it! But what I did do was try to make the right decision for me at the time, whether it had been successfully done before or not. They are shining a light on the choices I made—the ones that worked out, the ones that turned out to be good ideas—but I really want everyone to know, especially young people, that the hundreds of thousands of dumb ideas I had led me to the good ones. You must give yourself permission to fail."

This is precisely what this competence aims to develop—the permission to fail, to have good ideas alongside a bunch of bad ones, but most importantly, to allow ourselves and our target group to feel safe when failing.

This is the foundation for strategic thinking and future projection: identifying a daily need, recognizing it as a common need within a community, and finding creative solutions to address it. Including young people—the driving force of societies—during this process enhances the potential for sustainable development of the idea, making it innovative and fresh.

It's not necessary to reinvent the wheel; however, if the format of the wheel no longer works in a particular context or with a particular group of people, listen to the perspective of those who will have to take the wheel in the future. That will ensure that the wheel becomes more inclusive, effective, and useful in the long run.

h) Adaptability and resilience

During the process of vocational guidance, one of the key competencies to consider is adaptability, as it is central to the definition of vocational guidance itself. It is crucial to promote attitudes and career strategies that enable individuals to respond effectively to the challenges of the modern world—career adaptability (Savickas, 2013). Adaptability refers to a person's ability to adjust to changes in their environment. When considering career aspirations, such changes directly influence how flexible an individual can be.

Savickas (2013) defines adaptability as the individual resources needed to cope with the unknown, complex, and ill-defined challenges inherent in current and future career development tasks, occupational transitions, and personal traumas throughout the life cycle (Savickas, 2013, pp. 15–16). Savickas and Porfeli (2012) further state that career adaptability can be represented by the dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence.

The number of transitions and the unpredictability of career paths have increased in recent years (Brown & Roche, 2015). In both academic life and the labor market, young people are now expected to possess different skills than those required in the past. Therefore, young people are increasingly expected to take responsibility for managing their careers and to develop adaptability skills (Öztemel & Akyol, 2021). These career-related challenges make adolescence a particularly important period for the design, delivery, and evaluation of vocational interventions.

Ideally, vocational interventions—though adapted to the circumstances and characteristics of the recipients (Oliveira, Teixeira, & Dias, 2017)—should be designed to withstand contextual changes and maintain effectiveness. However, due to the lack of answers in the literature, accounting for changes in the context of the intervention and participants should be a key consideration for those designing and implementing vocational programs.

It is impossible to discuss adaptability without addressing resilience. The concept of resilience has gained increasing attention across different fields as a key area of research. One thing is clear: it is widely recognized as an essential competence to be developed among young people and is fundamental to their growth. Etymologically, resilience means "to return to the initial state" or "to bounce back."

In the psychological domain, resilience has been defined as the ability to overcome stress and adversity (Rutter, 1999). A more recent, pedagogically focused definition by Jardim and Pereira (2006) describes resilience as the capacity to apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills to prevent, minimize, or overcome the negative effects of crises.

A resilient person is someone who, when facing adversity, can draw on their intra- and interpersonal resources to develop the competencies needed for success in their personal, social, and professional life. This understanding helps define the conditions, processes, and outcomes for developing resilience within the context of vocational programs and interventions.

Strategies to promote resilience should focus on helping individuals expand their personal and collective resources to effectively navigate obstacles.

IN VOGUI – Practical example (Adaptability and Resilience)

We live in a constant state of adaptation, in every field and in every area. The world today changes at an unprecedented pace, and in the era of information, one of the most important assets is the awareness that what took months to plan can change in just a few seconds. It is essential to understand that sometimes the best thing we can do is to take two steps back to be able to take one step forward.

When implementing any activity, we carefully review the session plan multiple times and collect participants' feedback during reflections at the end of the day — and for what purpose? Simply because we are facilitating their learning process, and if that requires a little extra effort on our part, then that is what should be done. Again, read the room! When participants feel safe, they will express what they need. That is why no session plan or timetable should be seen as static — it must be flexible.

During a vocational guidance process, young people may try to skip steps or even go off track; however, they trust your judgment. Explain the process to them, include them in the decision-making process, and help them understand that it is necessary to learn how to walk before running. If it makes sense in the context of your group, show them the consequences of trying to move too quickly along this journey. Remember, this is the participants' process — not yours.

It is a challenging situation that will require a great deal of resilience, not only from the trainer or facilitator but also from the participants.

Furthermore, if you are working with external stakeholders, you will need to demonstrate even greater patience — not only adapting to the needs of the participants but also to the needs of your partners.

Poetically enough, we conclude this chapter the same way we started the first one: by acknowledging that realities change. When working with national and international groups, you must remain aware of their backgrounds and adapt to the conditions at every moment.

Two very practical and recent examples of this adaptation are linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first VOGUI team, when preparing to implement VOGUI locally in Portugal, had initially planned for all sessions to be held in person, including additional activities such as the professions fair. However, with the onset of the pandemic, all sessions and the fair were adapted to be held online. Just as we adapted, so did the stakeholders and participants.

What could have been catastrophic ended up strengthening the relationship between all parties. In a world where everything was changing, we remained a constant.

Do not forget to go out, get to know the reality you are working in, and understand the needs of your target group. Benchmark and identify what you can already use to your advantage. This is not a solitary job — and never will be. Success is achieved when we move an entire community together. If they see the need, they will change with us — but first, do not forget to make your own bed. Welcome to impact!

MEMENTO VOGUI

TRAIN PERSONAL & SOCIAL COMPETENCES

dynamic, ever-evolving accumulation of related capabilities that facilitate learning on a personal level

Articulate thoughts, feelings and actions in function of personal goals and demands of a situation and culture

Consequences for the individual and their relationships with others

Multidimentional concept
Capacity to operationalize in a given situation

KNOWLEDGE

ATTITUDES

SKILLS

TIPS AND TRICKS ON THE YOUTH FIELD
- Establish the learning envirionment
- Involve the participants in the all process
- Two heads think better than one
- It´s all about planning
- Debriefing, Debriefing, Debriefing
- Be carefull with the time
- Don´t put yourself in a pedestal
- Make your own bed first
- Giving and receiveing feedback
- Silence is also an answer

HOW WE ACT IN A GIVEN SITUATION AND GIVE MEANING TO EXPERINCES = DEAL WITH TRANSITION MOMENTS DAILY REQUIRED BY SOCIETY

COMPETENCES THAT FRAME THE DIGIVOGUI INTERVENTION
-Self-knowledge and self-efficacy
-Communication and interpersonal relations
-Personal, social and Learning to learn with focus on expectations and values.
-Decision-making and problem-solving
-Empathy
-Creativity and Critical Thinking
-Entrepreneurship and projection in the future
-Adaptability and resilience

TRAINING VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE BASED ON NFE

let's digivogui

05

I. Do it yourself!

Here, you, the reader, are challenged to put into practice the theoretical knowledge you acquire throughout the reading of this manual. Or, if you prefer to start from the end, you can explore this part first and use the index to search for your answers. The process is yours, and there are no wrong answers! Get ready to be challenged throughout these case studies. Take your pen, notebook, or any other writing material you wish (you will need to write!), and welcome to a small taste of non-formal education!

a)Case Studies

01.Sense and sensibility

Angelica is a youth worker at a local organization in Neverland. The organization was asked to implement a vocational guidance program based on NFE twice a week for 9th graders. There, Angelica met Sara, a 15-year-old who was struggling with bullying at school. Angelica noticed Sara's demotivation and behavioral changes throughout the sessions. At the end of one session, she decided to approach Sara. Angelica listened attentively to Sara's concerns, validated her feelings, and reassured her that she was not alone. She worked individually with Sara to develop strategies to address the bullying issue, providing support and encouragement. The next session, originally planned to focus on adaptability and resilience competencies, was instead modified to focus more on the consequences of bullying and empathy, altering the session's plan. Sara, in turn, felt heard and supported, which helped her regain her confidence and cope with the situation.

01.DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. What are the personal and social competencies highlighted by this case study in the youth worker?
B. In your perspective, what were the positive and negative points on the approach of Angelica towards Sara?
C. What would you do differently? Why?
D. What do you think about the change in the planning made by Angelica? Is approaching the class with the subject a good move? Why?
E. Which steps can you identify to be useful to work on empathy with young people in this study case?
F. What can be the consequences of the decision to change the planning? We suggest you to make a list of pros and cons
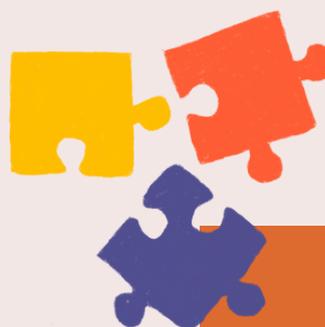
02."Why me?"

Emily, a 17-year-old teenager, was dealing with a lot of pressure due to the national exams for university and shared with her school counselor that she was feeling overwhelming anxiety and couldn't find a way or time to take care of herself. As a result, she felt that her self-esteem was significantly decreasing. Miss Thompson, her counselor, suggested that she start visiting her weekly and approached the subject by actively engaging in conversations about Emily's interests, dreams, and struggles. Miss Thompson acknowledged Emily's feelings of anxiety and self-doubt without dismissing or minimizing them. She encouraged Emily to explore her strengths and talents while simultaneously beginning the process of vocational guidance through her interests. They also discussed what academic fulfillment meant for Emily, where the national exam grades could take her, and the long-term impact a bad grade at 17 could have on her goals. They then worked collaboratively to develop strategies to manage her anxiety, and Emily even improved her academic performance.

02.DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. Why did the counselor, to approach Emily´s needs, focus on the exploration of her interests, dreams, and struggles?
B. What personal and social competences were explored with Em?
C. Which NFE educational activities could be put into practice to explore Em´s strengths and talents?
D. In what way can you relate this case with the vocational guidance process?

03. "Two ears, one mouth."

Maria, a 16-year-old teenager, was dealing with conflicts with her peers at school. The team of youth workers implementing some sessions at the school noticed disruptive behaviors on her part in the hallway, recognizing the importance of effective communication in resolving conflicts among students. They decided first to talk to Maria's class and then to communicate with the school psychologist and class teacher about the situation. They approached Maria's class with effective communication techniques, explaining assertiveness and role-playing different reactions to communication actions. However, even during the session, Maria's behavior changed rapidly, and she felt attacked by the trainers/facilitators, even asking to leave the room. They then communicated the situation to the counselor and approached Maria together, providing a non-judgmental space for her to share her concerns and experiences. They explained to her what active listening means while demonstrating it and provided support and guidance on how to communicate effectively with her peers. Maria was able to work through her conflicts and develop healthy communication strategies with her peers.

03. DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. What would you change or maintain, taking into consideration the actions of the facilitators' team?

B. Based on the literature review and practical advice given in this manual, how would you proceed in this situation?

C. "Teamwork makes the dream work." Comment on this sentence using the case as an example.

D. What do you think are your limits of action as a facilitator in this situation?

E. Communication was the main personal and social competence to be worked on during this case. We invite you to reflect on your main communication style when working with young people. Write down the main aspects you identify with in each style and what you could improve in each of these aspects. (Note: it is very important that you actually write, as the reflection will be more powerful this way.)

F. What does it mean to create a non-judgmental space? Identify situations in your practice where you create these moments.

04. "Emotions? What is that?"

Jorge, a 15-year-old student, struggled with managing his emotions and reacting impulsively in school. His teacher, Miss Fernandez, who had taken an Emotional Intelligence training course, recognized the importance of Jorge developing self-awareness to help him understand and regulate his emotions. She knew a program based on NFE was being run at the nearby Youth Center and took Jorge there to seek help. The program facilitators engaged Jorge in reflective exercises and discussions, both individually and in groups, to help him identify his triggers and emotional patterns. With the help of the Youth Center team, Jorge began therapy and was encouraged to practice mindfulness techniques to increase his self-awareness in the present moment. Jorge became more aware of his emotions and developed strategies to manage them effectively.

04. DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. Emotions play a significant role in decision-making. How do you think Jorge's impulsivity could influence his vocational guidance process?
B. What set of competencies do you think Jorge is working on?
C. In the case of Miss Fernandez, what personal and social competencies is she putting into practice? Which ones does she need to develop further?
D. As a youth worker, are you aware of your emotional triggers and the role they play in the development of an activity? Reflect and write about concrete examples where this has happened or could happen for you, and how it might affect the learning path of the participants you work with.

05."Aspire or inspire: This is the question?"

Leonor, a 20-year-old university student, struggled with setting goals and staying motivated in her academic pursuits. One of her teachers, who had faced similar challenges in the past, recognized the importance of self-awareness to help Leonor understand her strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations. However, the teacher felt that she didn't have all the necessary tools to provide the best support possible to Leonor. So, she searched for them and began educating herself on how to address this topic with young people based on NFE.

In the next class, the teacher suggested goal-setting exercises that encouraged the students to reflect on their interests, values, and long-term aspirations. She also provided regular feedback and divided them into small groups. Although she had to slightly interrupt the curriculum, this approach helped everyone stay more focused and motivated.

Throughout this process of self-reflection and goal-setting, Leonor realized that she was not alone in her struggle, as most of her classmates faced similar challenges. She gained a deeper understanding of herself and developed strategies for achieving academic success.

05.DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. Taking close attention to this case, what role do you think expectations play here?
B. What do you think Leonor's expectations are? Do you think they align with the expectations others have for her? Why?
C. How could you approach this subject with Leonor and help her manage expectations?
D. What do you think of the teacher's multidisciplinary approach? Why?
E. Which goal-setting educational exercises based on NFE would be relevant to apply in Leonor's case?
F. Why is it important for Leonor to be guided in exploring her values?

06."Changes don´t always have to be difficult".

Catherine, a 13-year-old girl, struggled to adapt to changes in her routine and environment due to her family's recent move to a new city. Without the presence of her old friends and hobbies, she was facing identity issues and anxiety about adapting to her new circumstances. Her school counselor, Mrs. Garcia, recognized the importance of supporting Catherine in coping with the transition. Mrs. Garcia engaged Catherine in activities that encouraged flexibility, problem-solving, and resilience, helping her to re-establish her sense of self in the new environment and make new decisions aligned with her long-term goals. She also provided support and guidance to help Catherine navigate the challenges of adjusting to a new school and community.

06.DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. Why is it important to train Catherine's flexibility of thought in this case?
B. What do you think is the connection between creativity and adaptability?
C. How can we, through NFE, support Catherine throughout this adaptation process so that she gains personal and social competencies that she can apply in similar situations in her life?
D. As youth workers, which network of partners should we activate to respond to this case?
E. How does Catherine's resilience play a role in this case? If you want to learn more, we suggest reviewing the chapter on vocational guidance in this manual.

07."Organizing responsibilities."

Alex, a 16-year-old student, was always late for the Vocational Guidance sessions based on NFE at his school. The facilitator noticed this and approached Alex to provide him with a safe space to share what was going on or to gather feedback on whether the sessions made sense to him. Since the process is voluntary, he could decide that it no longer made sense for him.

Alex eventually shared that he was struggling to adapt to the demands of his part-time job while maintaining his academic and extracurricular commitments. He didn't want to give up on any of them, but inevitably some things were falling behind, and he needed the money.

The facilitator recognized the need for Alex to develop adaptive competencies to balance his responsibilities effectively and face the choices that the new conditions and demands of life required of him. Through NFE, Alex engaged in exercises that encouraged time management, prioritization, and effective communication. The facilitator also provided guidance on stress management and self-care to help Alex maintain his well-being while managing multiple commitments.

After this process, Alex decided to give up on the sessions and prioritize other areas of his life.

07.DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. NFE is based on voluntary participation. How can you ensure that, during your activities, participants feel free to choose whether to stay?

B. What kind of educational activities based on NFE can be implemented to help Alex develop adaptability? We suggest creating a session plan on this topic.

C. In your opinion, did the program fail Alex since he decided to leave the sessions? Why or why not?

D. In your daily practice, if you encountered a similar case, what would you do differently?

08."Doing it on my own."

John, a 17-year-old student, wanted to start a nonprofit organization to support local environmental initiatives. After attending some sessions at school on the topic of entrepreneurship, the psychologist at the region's youth center recognized the importance of helping John develop entrepreneurship skills to turn his vision into a successful venture.

John first engaged in activities that encouraged research on environmental issues, fundraising strategies, networking and job shadowing with local stakeholders, and community outreach efforts. He also received guidance on leadership skills and project management to help him build a strong nonprofit organization.

One of the main obstacles John faced was the lack of time due to his school commitments. To manage this, he started using his free time during vacations and weekends to work part-time on his project and even participate in Erasmus+ projects related to the theme, without neglecting his academic goals.

John also realized that by developing entrepreneurship skills, he could transform his passions and interests into professional fulfillment and civic engagement. By participating in activities focused on market research, product development, financial planning, and branding — with the support of knowledgeable mentors and within a multi-action framework — he was able to foster both personal growth and success.

08.DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. Here, we are going to present to you the same question we pose to every young person when discussing entrepreneurship: "What are the social and personal competencies of an entrepreneur?"

B. Can everyone, like John, become an entrepreneur? Why?

C. How can we relate a facilitator's, trainer's, or educator's daily practice to entrepreneurial competencies and future projections? Consult the resources in this manual to learn more.

D. Why is it important to establish a strong local network from a young age, and to what extent is it related to social participation and social entrepreneurship?

E. What role do John's passions and interests play in the process of becoming an entrepreneur?

09."Welcome to your first not so big decision."

Eva is a 12th-grade student in the field of science and technology. Her favorite subjects are English and Biology. Her parents always wanted Eva to become a doctor; however, her grades throughout high school do not allow her to pursue that goal. When she was called for an appointment with the vocational counselor at school, she admitted that she was confused and had no idea what she wanted to do. She couldn't even visualize herself in a specific career path because she was used to others defining her goals for her. However, due to the new circumstances she is facing, she now has to make a decision about what to do next.

The vocational counselor listened attentively to Eva's doubts and built a trust-based relationship where she felt safe to share her deepest uncertainties about her future. Together, they worked on self-awareness, expectations, and future competency building, creating a collaborative career plan based on Eva's interests, needs, and long-term goals. Eva is now preparing to retake her exams and plans to take a gap year to do international volunteering before applying for something more related to social sciences.

09.DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. What means in your own words – projection in the future?

B. Do you think most people assume that everyone must have well defined pre-established long-term goals? Why?

C. What are the positive aspects that you highlight on the vocational counselor approach to Eva?

D. Which NFE techniques that you know can be applied in this case by the counselor?
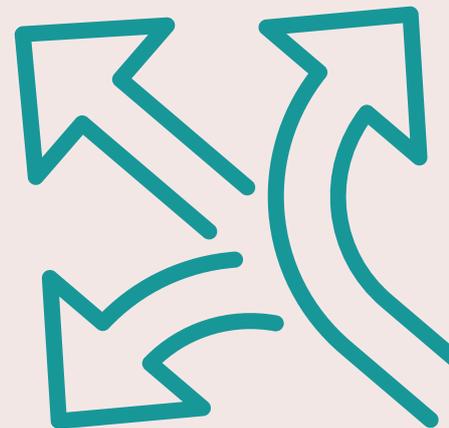
10. "The 80/20 rule."

Isabella is a project manager and trainer working for an NGO in her local community. She oversees the implementation of international activities to train youth workers in the organization. She was challenged to deliver training on a topic she is very passionate about — Gender Equality — but she faced some difficulties in preparing the sessions because the topic is so broad and covers many possible approaches.

Since she didn't know the group beforehand and had more experience with youth exchanges than with training youth workers, she reached out to her more experienced colleagues for advice on the key aspects to cover, considering that the participants had only one week to prepare for the sessions. Based on her colleagues' input and the extensive research she conducted on the topic, Isabella created plans A, B, and C, taking into account the different levels of expertise the group might present. This way, she ensured she would be as prepared as possible to adapt to any situation.

10.DIGIVOGUI Questions

A. Based on this case, which competence demonstrated by Isabella do you consider the most important?
B. Do you think Isabella's approach with her colleagues will be effective? Why? Is this a common practice for you?
C. Why do you think it is important for Isabella to be aware of what is crucial to address with her participants and to have plans A, B, and C?
D. In Isabella's situation, what would your approach be? Would it be the same or different? Why?
E. What is the connection between this case and the competences of creativity and critical thinking?

II. Let´s go DIGIVOGUI! (the Moocs)

A MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) is an online course designed to be accessible to a large number of participants worldwide. MOOCs provide educational content in various subjects, often for free or at a low cost, and are available to anyone with an internet connection. They typically include lectures, reading materials, discussion forums, assignments, and quizzes.

A key feature of MOOCs is their openness—meaning anyone can enroll—and their massiveness—meaning they are designed to accommodate large numbers of students simultaneously. MOOCs are offered by universities, educational platforms, and other organizations, allowing learners to gain knowledge and skills in different fields.

As a tool, a MOOC serves as a platform to deliver education and training to a wide audience. It provides a digital infrastructure that enables scalable, flexible, and accessible learning experiences for individuals globally.

As a methodology, a MOOC embodies a learning approach that emphasizes self-directed learning, peer-to-peer interaction, and scalable education. It enables learners to engage with content at their own pace, from any location, and often encourages collaborative learning through forums and group activities. This methodology aligns with modern trends in education that prioritize flexibility, accessibility, and learner-centered experiences.

MOOC and the Green Transition

The digital transition refers to the integration of digital technologies into all aspects of life, including the economy, education, and governance. This transition aims to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and innovation, while enabling individuals and organizations to adapt to an increasingly digital world.

MOOCs are a key enabler of the digital transition as they are inherently digital platforms that leverage technologies such as the internet, video, and interactive learning tools to provide education. By offering courses on digital skills like coding, data science, artificial intelligence, and digital marketing, MOOCs directly contribute to digital literacy, preparing the workforce for the demands of a digital economy.

Additionally, MOOCs support the digital transition by promoting inclusive access to education, ensuring that individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those in remote or underserved areas, have the opportunity to acquire digital skills. This is crucial for ensuring that the digital transformation is equitable and inclusive.

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session planning materials

06

Sessions planning materials

In vocational guidance and non-formal education, it's essential to recognize that effective facilitation stems from thorough preparation. In programs like DIGOVOGUI, planning is 80% of the job and the other 20% is facilitation. Here's how to ensure success:

1 Study the Materials: Read all activity details at least twice. Familiarize yourself with the structure, timing, and materials needed.

2 Leverage Resources: Revisit the MOOCs or related training resources as often as necessary to build confidence and clarity.

3 Visualize the Session: Mentally walk through the activity, considering the group's dynamics, needs, and potential responses. Anticipate challenges and opportunities.

4 Prepare Extras: Always have more materials than needed to avoid disruptions or exclusions due to shortages. Good planning not only makes facilitation smoother but also allows you to focus on participant engagement and achieving the session's goals.

The Ten Golden Rules of Session Planning in Non-Formal Education

1 Thou shalt set clear objectives – Know what you want participants to achieve and ensure all activities align with these goals.

2 Thou shalt engage participants actively – Design interactive, participatory activities that foster engagement and learning.

3 Thou shalt be flexible – Adapt your plan as needed based on the group's needs, energy, and responses.

4 Thou shalt balance structure with freedom – Provide a clear framework while allowing space for participant input and expression.

5 Thou shalt cater to different learning styles – Use a variety of methods (discussions, role-playing, etc.) to meet diverse participant preferences.

6 Thou shalt reflect during and after – Incorporate moments for participants to reflect on their learning and adjust your approach as necessary.

7 Thou shalt create a safe space for all – Foster an inclusive, respectful environment where everyone feels valued and encouraged to participate.

8 Thou shalt prepare thoroughly – Review your materials and activities beforehand to ensure everything flows smoothly.

9 Thou shalt expect the unexpected – Prepare for flexibility, and be ready to manage surprises or changes during the session.

10 Thou shalt be a guide, not a lecturer – Facilitate, don't dictate; support participants in discovering and learning for themselves.

DigiVogui

SESSION plan

Facilitator:

Date:

Target Group: Age, interests, background, size of the group
Duration: minutes /hours

Session Theme:

Learning Objectives:

Materials needed: Whiteboard, Flipcharts, markers, sticky notes, surveys, evaluation forms, multimediatools...

Resources: Comprehensive Guides; Expert guests to co-facilitate; videos on the subjects, links to printable materials, Handouts...

Phase 1: Introduction
This is the initial phase, where you create a positive and inclusive atmosphere. The goal is to make participants feel comfortable, set the tone for the session, and outline the purpose. You can use an Icebreaker; Share session objectives and Establish ground rules.

Phase 2: Main activity:
This is the core part of the session where the primary learning or activity occurs. It focuses on skill-building, knowledge sharing, or problem-solving in an interactive and experiential manner.
Use non-formal methods like role-playing, group discussions, or creative tasks.

Phase 3: Integration
This final phase consolidates the learning and ensures that participants can connect the session's content to their personal goals or future actions.
Reflection and Feedback: Facilitate individual or group reflections on what was learned, achieved, or experienced.
Action Planning: Help participants identify how they can apply the learning in real-life contexts.
Acknowledgment: Thank participants for their involvement and summarize the key takeaways.
Closure Activity: End on a high note with a closing ritual, short activity, or final thought that reinforces the session's objectives.

resources

07

IN A NUTSHELL- NFE Practical

YOUTH GOALS

COMPASS

COMPASITO

FEEDBACK SANDWICH

YOUTH PASS

Epilogue

08

DGIVOGUI: A Journey toward Vocational Growth and Empowerment

As we reach the conclusion of this transformative journey it is essential to reflect on the lessons learned and the path that lies ahead. DIGIVOGUI is more than a manual, it is a movement toward empowerment, inclusion, and lifelong learning. It equips youth workers, educators, and changemakers with the tools to nurture resilience, creativity, and adaptability in young people. Now it's time to consider the Lessons to Carry Forward.

First, **Vocational Guidance as a Path to Identity**.
Vocational guidance is not just about career choices; it is about discovering purpose and shaping a meaningful future. Through self-awareness and critical reflection, young people gain the confidence to design their own life paths, rather than merely following predefined expectations.

Non-Formal Education as a Catalyst for Growth
Education goes beyond classrooms. Experiential learning, storytelling, and hands-on practice empower young individuals to develop essential life skills. In today's evolving world, flexibility, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving are just as valuable as technical expertise.

The Power of Community and Collaboration
None of us can change the world alone. Networking, mentoring, and inclusive participation create stronger societies. By fostering social entrepreneurship and civic engagement, young people can contribute to sustainable and meaningful change.

Embracing Change with Creativity and Innovation
The future belongs to those who dare to innovate. Encouraging curiosity and creating a safe space to explore and fail is essential for personal and professional growth. As one visionary put it: "You must give yourself permission to fail." Every mistake is a stepping stone to success.

A Commitment to Inclusion and Equity
Every young person, regardless of background, deserves the opportunity to thrive. Diversity enriches solutions, broadens perspectives, and drives meaningful progress. True vocational guidance means recognizing potential everywhere and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Looking Ahead: A Future We Shape Together
Our journey does not end here; it evolves. The DIGIVOGUI mission is a living process, continuously shaped by the contributions of youth workers, educators, and young people themselves, therefore flexibility and adaptability are key.

Our shared commitment is anchored on:
The empowerment of young minds to dream boldly and act with confidence.
Fostering environments of inclusion, respect, and collaboration.
Embracing digital and green transitions as opportunities for positive transformation.
Believing in the potential of every individual to create change.

As Eleanor Roosevelt once said,

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

Together, let us continue to believe, empower, and create—building a future where every young person finds their voice, their purpose, and their place in the world.

With appreciation and determination,
The DIGIVOGUI Consortium
(Psientífica, CPD, Bravo, Schedia stin poli)

09

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