

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

After the successful completion of the two years project DiGi Youth and currently, on its further development within DiGi YOUTH 2, the consortium of five organisations is working on empowering youth workers and organisations to be able to fully embrace opportunities and be prepared for challenges in the world of digital technologies and media.

First edition of DiGi YOUTH, responded to the need to make youth work more digital. It had been developed and started before the coronavirus pandemic. During its lifetime it proved to be a very useful project, giving answers to many challenges and promoting opportunities that emerged in the field of youth work during the pandemic.

## **POLICY PAPERS**

Policy recommendations are focused on five fields that have been reckoned as the most important for the development of youth work. These recommendations aim to stimulate, intrigue, and provoke further thoughts among youth organisations, youth workers and relevant authorities and stakeholders.

## **MAIN LESSONS LEARNT**

For its further development, sustainability, and wider impact, digital Youth work needs:

- ✔ to become more digital, especially after the coronavirus pandemic period
- ✔ to be looked at not only as a static concept - method, activity, or tool - but also as a dynamic process of digitalisation;
- ✔ networking, best practice sharing, and peer-to-peer learning;
- ✔ more systematic planning based on needs assessment;
- ✔ more professional trainings offered pro bono;
- ✔ to be more inclusive: involve disadvantaged youth more in all processes;
- ✔ promotion of distinction between purely digital activities and use of digital tools in traditional youth work;
- ✔ empowerment in the use of media products and tools, including games and gamification - in this context, emphasis on media and information literacies and cooperation with media organisations are needed;
- ✔ more consultation with policy and other decision makers.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

### DIGITAL YOUTH WORK:

It would be beneficial for youth organisations and other youth work providers - and ultimately young people - to include digitalisation of their activities in their strategic planning. This approach would ensure interconnectedness and greater versatility of digital youth work activities. In addition, it is important to promote better access for young people, in particular those with fewer opportunities and those living in remote areas, or where face-to-face access is not feasible, to youth work services through the use of digital technologies.

It's recommended for public-service media to provide more content focusing on youth work and non-formal learning, and cooperate with youth organisations and other youth work providers in this regard. Such content could be distributed through more channels, respecting intellectual property rights.

Digital youth work shall put an emphasis on the safety and protection of young people in an online environment and shall equip them with the necessary competencies. This topic should be included in relevant curricula and activity programmes.

Since digital tools have room for improvement - online and offline use, functions, instructional manuals, etc. - the cooperation with developers of these tools should be encouraged and supported. In addition, creativity of many youth workers and active engagement of youth is missing when organising online events (youth is not that motivated to join online events due to Covid-19, they are fed up with online activities).

Given the complexity of digital youth work, more support under grant programmes should be provided for its development. Special funds could be made available, especially within the cultural sector (media production) and communication technologies.

It should be ensured that digital youth work providers take care of ethical considerations, professional communication (based on netiquette), and safety and well-being of participants, team members, and other people involved in it.

### DIGITAL LEARNING:

- Active networking with local governmental and non-governmental organisations, municipalities, and policymakers should be in place.
- Digital youth work should be planned according to the needs and hopes of young people: their interests, preferences, aspirations, hobbies, styles, and online habits.
- It is necessary to raise the level of digital and media literacy, especially in relation to digital security when working with youth online.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

### DIGITAL COMPETENCIES:

- Youth workers in urban and suburban settlements should be offered more options to develop their digital competencies.
- Support to young people in understanding the importance of digital youth work for their daily activities should be provided by experienced stakeholders.
- Target groups' need assessment and information about latest developments and trends in digitalization are necessary before planning a training or any other activity.
- Youth workers should practice and improve not only digital competencies in various youth work settings, but develop and improve soft skills (e.g personal and interpersonal skills, communication skills, presentation skills, creative thinking, leadership skills) as well.

### DIGITAL TOOLS IN YOUTH WORK:

- There is a variety of digital tools available, but more awareness about their effectiveness and use according to the target audience should be promoted. In this context, more learning and networking opportunities for youth workers and others working with young people should be available.
- It's important to continuously enrich youth work activities with the use of tools and resources that new technology brings to the effective learning process of young people.
- Games can play a significant and effective role in helping youth workers develop personally and in achieving the outcomes intended for youth work.

### INCLUSIVE YOUTH WORK THROUGH DIGITAL MEANS:

- More digital tools that support inclusion and give a priority to vulnerable groups should be developed; tools need to include more information and practical examples of how to include disadvantaged youth and should reflect the needs of disadvantaged youth.
- As digital youth work needs to be more inclusive, disadvantaged people should be involved in the processes, such as the development of tools and methods, planning of the activities, and carrying out various events.