CASE STUDIES

Good-practice piloting:

Lessons learned and implications for transfer and upscaling

November 2023

ACTIon

Promoting active citizenship through civic education and active online participation of youth role models

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Dear readers,

We are happy to present you 8 different case studies from the piloting phase within the ACTIon project.

The piloting phase was implemented in the period from June 2022 to June 2023, in which 5 partner organizations from Germany, Greece, Bulgaria and North Macedonia implemented a variety of activities using ACTIon's two innovative methodologies: MOLA (Model for Opinion Leaders' Online Activation) and DigiPAC (Digital Participation and Active Citizenship).

Both methodologies were implemented on the national and community level, combining online and offline education methods that complement and foster active participation of young people.

By their nature, both methodologies and piloting approach of the partners promoted the active awareness of creating safe spaces for young people's voices, decisions and positioning on the topics of democracy, fundamental rights and values education.

In these case studies, you will find different experiences and views from the practitioners, trainers, teachers and young people through their use of DigiPAC and MOLA.

The good practice case studies in the use of DigiPAC are oriented towards youth participation, digital **youth participation and active citizenship** and showcase how young people and youth-led organizations worldwide can approach **strengthening capacities of high school teachers and youth workers in enhancing** youth participation, digital **youth participation and active citizenship.**

The good practice case studies using MOLA are oriented towards empowering young people with proper tools and knowledge that they can use as an opinion leader.

The methodologies offered by the ACTIon project are available as a resource for any interested organizations to implement good practices when working with young people. This includes youth participation and youth empowerment as essential parts of coordination that contribute to the prevention, preparedness, and response to future public health emergencies.

The guiding principle is keeping the young people at the heart of ACTIon!

About the project

The main goal of the ACTIon project is to promote active citizenship through civic education and active online participation of youth from socially disadvantaged groups. The main target groups of the project are adolescents and young people (aged 14-25), youth activists, volunteers and informal peer leaders in non-formal education and community settings, such as youth organizations and community education centers. The specific objectives are:

- To improve social and civic competences, to encourage knowledge, understanding and ownership of values and fundamental rights
- To encourage digital skills and competencies of digitally excluded groups (migrants and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds)
- To strengthen critical thinking and media literacy among students, parents and educational staff

The ACTIon project used innovative good practices that use offline and online training models and tools to develop two training programmes. The project partners piloted them in formal and informal community-based educational settings in four countries:

MOLA- Model for Opinion Leaders' Online Activation

The Model for Opinion Leaders' Online Activation – MOLA was developed by project partner HESED for ACTIon with the adaptation of Cair's Popular Opinion Leader (POL) model used for HIV prevention. In this model, Opinion Leaders are identified and trained to influence the health-related behavior and attitudes of their friends and peers online.

DigiPAC- Digital Participation and Active Citizenship

Digital Participation and Active Citizenship – DigiPAC was developed by the project's coordinator – nexus, a German social research institute that specializes in citizen participation. The overarching aim of the programme is to help young people gain various digital and democratic competences. The programme handbook serves as an easy-to-use guideline for the implementation of the programme and is aimed at professionals who wish to implement it with a group of young people – teachers, youth workers and more.

The ACTIon project is co-funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ program, Key Action 3 to run from 15.01.2021 to 14.01.2024.

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CASE STUDY:

Youth Summer Camp with DigiPAC in Samokov, Bulgaria

Transforming young people into future active and responsible citizens

Co-funded by the
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Executive summary

[HESED](#) implemented pilot activity "Youth Summer Camp" using DigiPAC methodology in Samokov, Bulgaria in June 2022 in partnership with a local youth organization. The goal of this piloting action was to transform young people into future active and responsible citizens.

The participants were a mixed group of 28 Roma and Bulgarian young people, aged between 14 and 17 years of age, from secondary schools from the municipality of Samokov. During the three days of the youth camp, the participants were involved in activities that encouraged youth participation and were familiar with the topics of active citizenship and participation in digital spaces. For this purpose, DigiPAC methodology developed by the nexus Institute was actively used. In addition to the topics of fake news, personal experiences with social media, and rights and responsibilities online, young people worked together during the training on the issues of discrimination, hate speech, ethnic tolerance, democratic and civic principles and cultural diversity.

During the youth camp, the participants offered youth-lead ideas for small projects on important topics related to improving youth participation in the region.

Case study

The youth camp in Samokov was attended by a mixed group of 28 local young people (Bulgarian and Roma). The idea of this youth camp was based on the identified challenge of HESED that local young people who do not know each other, or if they do, do not belong to common friend-groups. The work carried out with local young people aimed:

- to promote digital citizenship among young people
- to promote ethnic tolerance and cultural diversity

What the young people have in common is: their age, that they attend school, that they spend much of their time online, the place where they live (they know the specifics of the city), and that they all live in a democratic society. Young people, as citizens of a democratic society, need to know their rights and responsibilities online and offline. By knowing them and caring for them, they create a secure and safe environment for themselves and others. Thus, they promote positive ethnic tolerance and cultural diversity that will make them active and responsible citizens.

Outcomes, impact and sustainability

During the youth camp, the participants offered youth-led ideas for small projects on important topics related to improving youth participation in Samokov. The following project ideas were given and adopted during the youth camp:

- Improving the awareness of high school graduates about opportunities for continuing education at universities in Bulgaria and abroad
- Increasing the sensitivity of young people to children with autism / with special educational needs
- Creating a youth platform for culture – an online site presenting cultural events in the city

Currently/Ongoing: HESED has a close collaboration with the local administration from the Municipality of Samokov and plans to include youth initiatives in the Roma integration strategy.

Trainers' experiences using DigiPAC

Some of the young people that participated in a youth camp had no previous experience related to non-formal activities. With their participation in each subsequent activity, they began feeling more confident each day of the training. They expressed their opinions more confidently and participated more actively in discussions and exercises. Their feedback became more detailed and informative. They used their newly gained knowledge and made references from one activity to another.

The first day it was noticeable that the young people, who were taken out of their daily routine, were exploring the new environment in which they found themselves. However, this did not have a strong impact on their participation. They adapted quickly and there was no resistance to participating in any activity/exercise or discussion. They enjoyed working independently in small groups and then introducing their results to the larger group. Structured in this way, the exercises positively influenced their activity, both in the process of practical work and in the presentations and discussions.

From dynamic point of view, a pleasant surprise was in their efforts to distribute responsibilities by working in small groups and assigning roles so that each participant could feel comfortable and safe to participate. Additionally, the desire of some of the young people to create a positive atmosphere in which the more anxious participants could express themselves and participate equally. These efforts were made mostly to comfort the Roma girls who demonstrated an uncomfortable feeling for participating in group format due to a lack of previous experience and public-speaking skills.

A pleasant surprise was also the desire and willingness of young people to continue their participation and to work for their community as well as the development of youth-run projects and their willingness to contribute as volunteers. The outcomes of the training showed that the young people were not as rigid and indifferent to social processes as one would expect and that on the contrary, if there is adequate help and favourable conditions for participation, young people could be generators of valuable ideas and game-changers in their communities.

The topics that the young people chose for their projects clearly showed that they function through democratic values – empathy and care for those less fortunate, development of specific skills and competences, mutual assistance, distinguishing good will from malice.

A big advantage of the programme is that it could be provided as a whole training but also it could be provided as separate modules according to the needs of the specific group that is involved.

Competences acquired by young people

- Knowledge of which behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable in the online space - Netiquette
- Basic concepts related to media literacy – discrimination, hate speech
- Sensitizing the concepts of democracy, rights, responsibility
- Building social skills – communication, self-presentation, teamwork, active listening

- Promotion of cooperation
- Understanding human rights and children's rights
- Identifying false information and taking concrete action against fake news
- What is child and youth participation?
- Active participation in the community
- Introduction to the O.P.I.N platform
- The F.I.R.E. application

3 domains of digital competences were promoted for young people to act out democracy in the digital world by conveying both **civic education** and **digital competences**. In doing so, this enabled and empowered young people to become active **digital citizens the following topics that were covered:**

- **"Being Online"** includes domains that relate to competences needed to access digital society and freely express oneself
- **"Wellbeing Online"** refers to domains that can help the user to feel safe and engage positively in digital society
- **"It is my right!"** includes competences related to the rights and responsibilities of citizens in complex, diverse societies in a digital context.

Young people's experiences

To present the experience of the young people, we made short interviews and produced video material. The videos are available in Bulgarian (Video 1 and Video 2) and quotes from the interviews with three young people are available in English below:

Interview 1: *"The third day the lecture was very interesting and so were the exercises. The discussions and exercises we did are useful for everyday life. I liked the lectures very much, but it gave me pleasure to participate, because it is not like in school – to learn my lesson, then to go in class – to tell what you have learnt and everything to continue as before. Here we participate in the process itself and we do not learn by reading, but by doing. In fact, we are doing an exercise from which we draw conclusions, this is a much more effective way in my opinion of learning, and I think that not only for me but for others this method really worked.*

We studied a lot of different things, but the things that are not taught in school are things related to democracy. Since we live in a democratic state, I think it is imperative that young people know what democracy is, what it is made of, how it moves. In general, this is one thing, in my opinion, that gives us freedom, and it is a bit embarrassing that many people do not know what freedom they possess, besides we have obligations as citizens and obligations work in our favour. Some people my age do not know what democracy is, which is sad because we are approaching our coming of age and soon we will have right to vote and make decisions as citizens.

I've learned that a social environment can show different perspectives, and every perspective is important."

Interview 2: *"I think that everything I learned in the training will be useful someday on some occasion. For example, how to deal with violence online, i.e., if someone is trying to abuse me online - to know how to react and what to do or if I see that someone is also bullying somebody else -to know how to react in order to help him."*

Interview 3: *"All the things in general are quite useful because they are related to us as citizens, as individuals, but maybe the thing I will really use is how to deal with fake news. We live in a world where social networks are inevitable and they are quite a huge distributor of both news and fake news, so I'm very glad that I learned how to sift them out."*

CASE STUDY:

DigiPAC introduced in schools all over Greece

Raised awareness of basic concepts of digital youth participation among teachers and schools

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Executive summary

In the period from July 2022 to June 2023, Action Sinergy from Athens, Greece, implemented piloting activities within the ACTIon project. They decided to select and promote an online methodology from the DigiPAC training and had the opportunity to involve teachers and schools from all over Greece. This was particularly important in overcoming geographic obstacles.

In the piloting phase, the DigiPAC guide was introduced in 24 schools that cover almost all of the Greek regions. DigiPAC was piloted from one of the most northern cities in Greece (Soufli) to one of the most southern parts (island of Karpathos). Piloting was carried out in one of the most populous schools in Athens as well as villages (like Pialeia) with less than 800 permanent inhabitants.

The pilot in Greece has impacted more than 500 students. Through the activities, the students were able to cultivate skills of critical thinking, respect and acceptance of diversity, empathy and awareness. The students shared personal experiences, made connections between the examples and their personal experiences and expanded on issues of cyberbullying. In particular, they acquired skills of active citizenship to question, judge, reflect and choose.

The activities have led to the creation of individual and group projects and, more importantly, have given practitioners the tools to talk about an issue that really concerns the students, whereas the teachers usually do not have a method to approach.

This highlights the importance of the method and its ability to serve different contexts. Through DigiPAC, it was possible to reach learners that usually do not participate in any kind of training or project and promote important concepts such as digital youth participation.

Case study

Within its piloting activities, Action Sinergy implemented the DigiPAC training to introduce the methodology to teachers and schools in Greece. The training had the following objectives:

- To raise awareness of basic concepts related to digital youth participation among teachers and schools
- To increase awareness of the dangers and risks related to digital participation
- To build the capacity of the teachers to use the DigiPAC guide in order to talk about the issues related to digital youth participation

The DigiPAC training of teachers in Greece was organized online in a series of sessions totaling 9 hours. The program consisted of 3 main sessions, each lasting for 3 hours.

Trainers' experiences using DigiPAC

The selection of an online methodology of training has given us the ability to involve teachers and schools from all over Greece. This was particularly important because teachers outside Athens have much fewer professional development opportunities than teachers that live in the capital city. In this

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way, geographic obstacles were overcome. The participation in the training was highly appreciated by the teachers.

Outcomes, impact and sustainability

Testimonials from teachers that participated show that their participation in the project helped them to acquire a framework of ethics regarding the use of the internet and to help their students to be critical of news and information of all kinds.

Through the follow up activities in the schools, the students were able to cultivate skills of critical thinking, respect and acceptance of diversity, empathy and awareness. The students shared personal experiences, made connections between the examples and expanded on issues of cyberbullying.

In particular, they acquired skills of active citizenship to question, judge, reflect and choose.

As a result of the piloting activities in Greece, a total of:

- **24 teachers became familiar with DigiPAC methodology and basic concepts related to digital youth participation**
- **More than 500 students were part of follow-up activities within DigiPAC.**

The DigiPAC methodology will be further used by the trained teachers and schools in future activities with students in all over Greece.

What do teachers think?

"Students made progress in understanding what is acceptable/allowable in communication through group chats online, agreeing on the boundaries of jokes and setting limits on behaviours that annoy them, learning how to react when they or other people feel uncomfortable. They worked on a real-life video posting event in a class group chat and used a misbehaviour in a positive way in online communication with their peers."

Sofia Lamera, Professor at the High School of Axios, Greece.

"Having participated in ACTIon, young people are sure to have acquired skills in critical thinking, internet safety, communication with others, empathy, citizenship, and teamwork. Personally, I learned to find the source of an image in order to determine if it is fake news (search for an image saved with Google Lens). I also learned the characteristics of fake news, the rules of safety online, the code of ethical conduct online (netiquette), "digital self-regulation", "active digital citizenship", "digital competence", "digital citizenship", "digital citizenship", "digital active citizenship", and the basic concepts of media literacy. In addition, for both the teacher and the students, skills of open and critical thinking and empathy were developed. Finally, I hope that I contributed to the development of democracy in the digital world by imparting civic education and empowering young people to become active digital citizens."

Eleni Georgolopoulou, Professor at the Music School of Lefkada, Greece

"*I learned that young people are very much influenced by the internet and need to be properly informed. They also really liked the teaching about human rights based on the pictures and the discussion that followed. Through discussing fake news and narrating situations such as the first day of school, they engaged experientially with the right to education. Through role plays, the students were on the one hand made aware of the dangers of the internet, and on the other hand empowered as to how to protect themselves. They pledged to be distrustful of people they do not know who approach them online.*"

Panagiota Karnava, Professor at the High School of Kerkyra, Greece

"*The internet is a way of life for all young people who use it every day. However, I didn't know how to inform them about how to use it safely. After participating in the ACTIon project, students understood concepts such as democracy and human rights. They particularly liked the activity on human rights with the pictures, in which they were given the opportunity to express their opinions, exchange views and interact, respecting the opinions of others. They showed interest in fake news and the narration of everyday situations, such as the first day at school. Through role-playing and hands-on activities, they were made aware of the dangers of the internet and informed about safe ways to use it. Finally, they pledged to be more careful on social media and with strangers who approach them online*".

Zoitsa Petsi, Vocational Education Teacher, Athens, Greece

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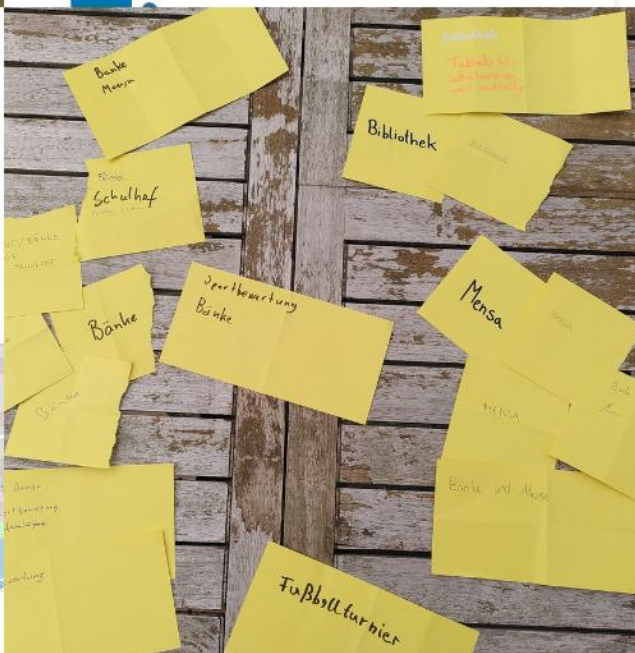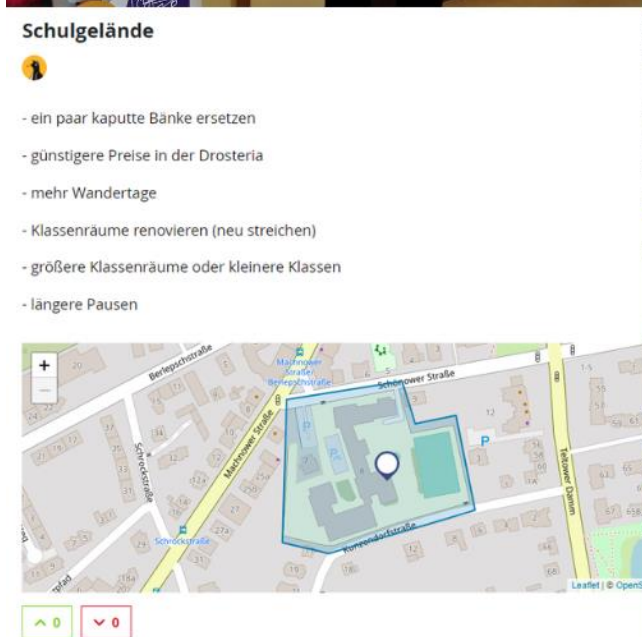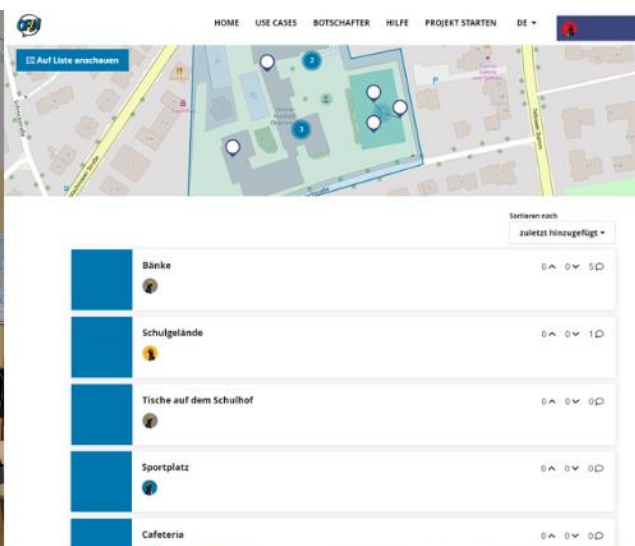Erasmus+ Programme
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CASE STUDY:

DigiPAC piloting in Germany

Workshop with students for digital youth participation and active citizenship in Droste-Hülshoff Gymnasium

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Executive summary

Upon invitation from the Droste-Hülshoff Gymnasium student council, the nexus institute was asked to tailor the workshop to the needs of the students, with a focus on the themes of democracy, civic skills, and participation. For this purpose, training activities were selected from modules of the DigiPAC training programme.

The workshop at Droste-Hülshoff Gymnasium took place on the 29th of June, 2022 with a mixed group of students from 7th-11th grade. In this workshop young participants became familiar with the topic of democracy building and youth participation. **The goal of the workshop was for young people to understand what the participation of citizens in society actually means in a democracy, and then deal more intensively with the topic of youth participation.**

The DigiPAC training programme enables and empowers youth to take up role model positions, spread what they have learned to their peers, and thereby positively influence their own social groups. Therefore, nexus worked on motivation and initiative of young people to participate and engagement of young people to improve their school environment.

The **platform for digital youth participation "OPIN"** was used in order to develop projects to improve and actively shape life at school.

Case study

nexus institute implemented the workshop at Droste-Hülshoff Gymnasium on the 29 June 2022. The participants consisted of a mixed group of students from 7th-11th grade. The topics covered during this activity were democracy building and youth participation. The goal of the workshop was for young people to understand what the participation of citizens in society actually means in a democracy, and then deal more intensively with the topic of youth participation.

The specific objectives of this activity were:
- to motivate and initiate young people to participate
- to increase engagement of young people to improve their school environment.

Using the spatial brainstorming tool on the digital youth participation platform OPIN, students were able to gather ideas as to how they could improve their school environment. This resulted in widely variable recommendations, which reflected the individual needs and perspectives of the students. This allowed students to critically reflect upon other students' recommendations and perspectives, leading to productive and at times controversial discussions. Additionally, the spatial brainstorming tool provided a pragmatic way for students to visualize and interact with the proposed ideas (for example, by placing pins for each suggestion on the map of their school).

Trainers' experiences using DigiPAC

DigiPAC provided a solid basis for the training that was carried out. An additional benefit of the DigiPAC training modules was that individual exercises were able to be implemented according to the ability and needs of the students.

Additional feedback from the teachers involved in the project day was very positive and reflected the collaborative and educational environment that was developed throughout the day. One critique was related to the theoretical level of input that was delivered, which was seen as providing less than expected on the topic of democracy education. However, it was the experience of the implementers that the level of understanding for students is often highly variable and dependent upon both the age groups and type of school in which the training is being conducted.

As such, a key learning from the pilot activity is that it is always necessary to customize the DigiPAC materials for the target group.

The activity "Stairs to youth participation" (DigiPAC, Module C), in which students were asked to take on the roles of each step of youth participation and present their step to the group, was a personal highlight. The activity worked very well and was a positive example of how to solidify concepts and engage a group of mixed-age students in the content.

An added benefit of using OPIN is when initiators would like to gather suggestions over a longer period, and when it is not possible for participants to meet in person.

Young people's recommendations for the school environment

Primarily, recommendations from the students concerned tangible additions to the school, such as the addition of benches and/or tables in the school courtyard or a library. Other recommendations were more conceptual or rule-based, concerning the regulated usage of the sports facilities, longer breaks, and more hiking days. Additionally, one recommendation concerning the equality/fair treatment of boys and girls in sports sparked a controversial and productive discussion within the group with regards to perceived gender equality and social justice.
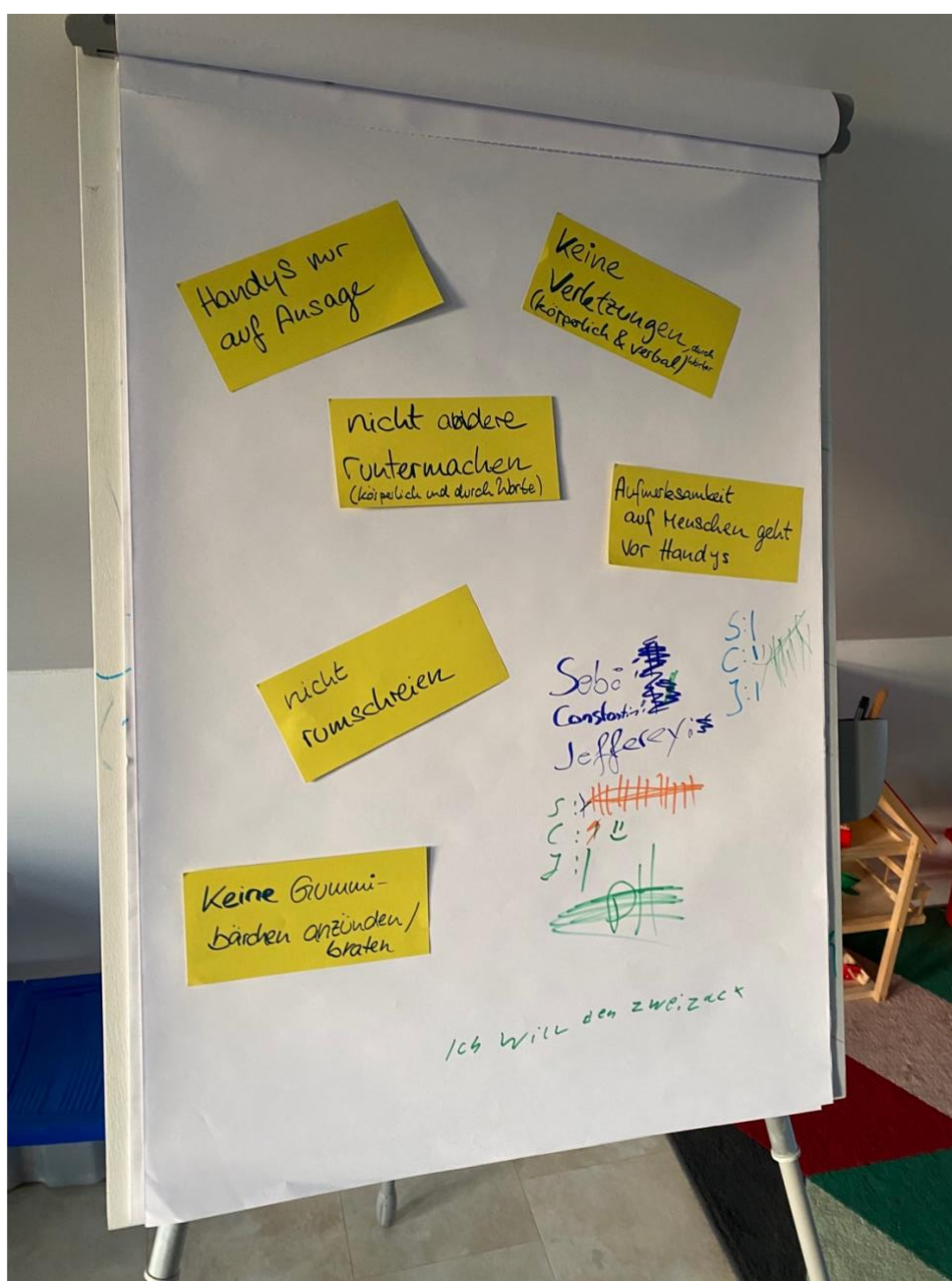
CASE STUDY:

Co-Creation by trainers in Germany (Grenzläufer)

Digital is better - A day about being online

Executive summary

nexus organised a workshop for young people on the topic **"Digital is better** - A day about being online". The activity was carried out in collaboration with a trainer from Grenzläufer - a youth work NGO that offers youth and family support - in February, 2023 in Mittenwalde (small town near Berlin), Germany.

The main goal of this piloting activity was to talk with young people about what they experience in the digital world. The focus was not on implementing something in terms of the module's content, but rather to explore where young people are actually online, to work a lot from their experiences, and to be able to exchange and develop ideas with each other based on their experiences.

This good practice case study highlights the trainer's perspective on DigiPAC's relevance and the adaptations taken to adjust to the needs and resources of young people in order to tailor the training programme.

Case study

The main goal of this piloting activity was to talk with young people about what they experience in the digital world. The piloted project was intended as a one-day school vacation offer and was first announced through a flyer to all organisation's facilities as well as to the management of the assisted living facility for young people (WGs). Originally, the target group was youth ages 13-21 years old.

The students were generally interested and engaged with the topics we discussed; however, it was difficult to maintain concentration for long periods of time and throughout the day.

The statements and views presented beneath are extracted from a follow-up interview with the trainer

The young people showed us what [media, channels, tools] they use online, and we asked a lot of questions in response, for example "What have you experienced online so far?" and had a very good conversation. With this basis, we could integrate the activity "Social-media and me".

We then set about gathering participants' own experiences and sharing with one another. One of the participants had parental controls at home regarding how much Internet they can use, one didn't, and one didn't have any access (for example, cell phone and computer). It was interesting to see them discuss with each other as to what may be the benefits of having controls on how much Internet they use and compare their experiences with each other.

The materials are definitely relevant for the target group. I think the focus on "Who am I?" and "How do I present myself?", "How do others present themselves?", and "How does this affect all of us?" is very interesting for the youth. I think it is very important to deal with these questions, as it relates to questions of how these topics affect us as a society. Also, these topics are very relevant to their generation and is part of their lives in an integral way.

I think the programme is perhaps too specific to be integrated in project days in schools. We mainly work with social competence trainings and primary schools, and are primarily concerned with making sure that the youth are able to work together and develop social skills in general. A weekly series in the setting of an assisted-living facility and housing group could be a good option.

Trainers' experiences using DigiPAC

"Assuming we were to offer the training again for youth 14 and older who live in assisted living at Grenzläufer, I could imagine implementing all of the DigiPAC's modules. Module C could be implemented in a context in which youth workers who have continuous and regular contact with the same group of young people could integrate the module. Also, the activity in which youth participate to gather ideas as to what could be improved in their surroundings would fit well to the youth that we worked with, since they are connected to the place in which they live and would definitely be able to contribute ideas as to what could be changed."

CASE STUDY:

DigiPAC piloting in North Macedonia

Strengthening youth work in enhancing digital youth participation and active citizenship in three regions in North Macedonia

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Executive summary

In the period from June 2022 – June 2023, [Coalition of youth organizations SEGA](#) implemented a piloing phase within the ACTIon project, with focus on **strengthening capacities of youth workers in enhancing digital youth participation and active citizenship in Pelagonia, Skopje and the Eastern regions in North Macedonia.** *The objective was to pilot the methodology with the involvement of youth workers and practitioners for the activation and digital participation of young people at the local level.*

The DigiPAC methodology was introduced to youth workers from these regions in order to support **youth initiatives and increase their knowledge of digital youth participation, whereby a total of:**

- *20 youth workers piloted the DigiPAC methodology at the local level*
- *412 young people took part of the follow-up activities and were familiarised with digital youth participation and the [OPIN tool](#) for digital youth participation.*
- *26 projects were created on OPIN based on the needs of the young people, in which they had a chance to comment and participate in the process.*

These capacity-building activities provided the youth workers and youth organizations a unique chance to discover the DigiPAC methodology that they can use in their work programmes and non-formal activities.

Furthermore, through the OPIN project implementation, the experience made them aware of the importance of collaborating **with decision-makers on some initiatives and projects proposed by young people.**

Case study

Objective: SEGA implemented a DigiPAC piloting project to build the capacities of youth organization for activation and digital participation of young people at the local level.

The pilot project activities focused on the collaboration with youth organizations, motivation and support of youth initiatives, and collaboration with local decision-makers. The collaboration was established in the preparatory phase of the trainings in Pelagonia, Skopje and the Eastern region.

- August 2022: First DigiPAC training for youth workers from Pelagonia region
- October 2022: Second DigiPAC training for youth workers and high school teachers from Skopje
- April 2023: Third training in Shtip for youth workers from the Eastern region.

After the collaboration and conducted trainings, trained youth workers realized follow-up activities - workshops with young people introducing digital youth participation using OPIN and motivating them for active participation on the local level. After the workshop and collecting ideas on the OPIN platform, the organisations collaborated with decision makers in order to realize the initiatives and ideas developed by young people.

SEGA supported the youth workers during follow-up activities.

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Trainers' experiences using DigiPAC

The programme that we have created for DigiPAC trainings was based on a variety of non-formal methods that were used from the toolkit and simulated with the youth workers. Almost all the DigiPAC modules (Parts A-B-C) were covered in a three-day training programme created by SEGA.

While all three parts attracted the interest of youth workers, Part C for youth participation and the special practical session for using the OPIN tool was particularly emphasized in the training programme as it has the best potential for future implementation by youth workers.

OPIN, as an innovative online tool for e-participation, was introduced to all youth workers and each of them were asked to create profiles for their own organizations on the platform to motivate them to use this tool for their projects in the future.

Outcomes, impact and sustainability

The introduction of the unique methodology of DigiPAC to youth workers engaged and motivated them to organize **local follow-up activities** with young people (workshops). Their feedback regarding DigiPAC shows that they find this methodology easy to use and they are willing to integrate it in their daily practices regarding youth activities and programmes.

As a result of the piloting activities in North Macedonia, a total of:

- **20 youth workers** piloted the DigiPAC methodology at the local level
- **412 young people took part of the follow-up activities** and got familiar with digital youth participation and the OPIN tool
- **26 project ideas** were created for improving the local environment, such as opening youth centres where young people can spend quality time, more sport parks, building bike and walk roads, indoor pools. Additionally, the topics of media literacy, fake news, and human rights were created on OPIN, commented on and participated in by young people.

Some examples of project ideas: Youth Council Prilep, Victori, Hidden Hero in Each Kid, Network of European Citizenship and Identity-North Macedonia

What do youth workers think?

"The DigiPAC manual offered a simple and very subtle methodology with a set of exercises that were quite interesting and understandable for both the facilitators and the participants of the workshops. The topics covered were easily applicable to the target group and contributed to the development of a fruitful mutual interaction between the participants. Getting to know each other through social networks, video discussion, and youth participation dimension proved to be the most attractive exercises among the participants. We use the DigiPAC manual as an excellent tool in continuity with our daily work during the realization of workshops and trainings with young people."

Marija Tashkoska, Youth worker, Youth Council Prilep

"The methodology from the DigiPAC manual is quite useful and easy to apply, it inspires new ideas among young people on how to build themselves as digital citizens. The topics of the handbook deepened the young people's understanding of digital participation and in a way enabled them to apply it in their everyday life. For the young people, the most interesting part was the digital tool OPIN, on which they created their own profiles, set up projects that relate to their needs in the local community and had the opportunity to give their comments, opinions, views regarding the projects that were set up. We will continue to use the DigiPAC manual in our daily work when implementing activities with young people."*

Stefani Mazucanec, Youth worker, Youth Council Prilep

"The methodology that was provided in the manual was interesting and useful for young people. The way it was used by the piloting groups was a unique experience showing the interest in cooperation and interaction. The topics were carefully chosen and were relevant for the youth. Using the manual itself was easy for me as a youth worker and I will use it further in my daily work with young people."

Ivana Atanasovska, Youth worker, Together Macedonia, Bitola

"Using the manual was not difficult at all, on the contrary, every step was well explained and it was easy to follow the procedure. The methodology was interesting and useful, and the topics themselves were carefully selected in order for the young people to show interest, be motivated to participate and cooperate on the workshops themselves".

Dimitar Atanasovski, Youth worker, Together Macedonia, Bitola

Executive summary

In October 2022, Coalition of youth organizations SEGA conducted a piloting activity to introduce the methodology and **strengthen the capacities of high school teachers and youth workers in enhancing digital youth participation and active citizenship in Skopje.**

This piloting activity is connected with the collaboration between high schools in the Skopje region. This collaboration was established, and 4 high schools accepted the invitation to be part of the training activity. The DigiPAC methodology was introduced to the teachers of high schools in order to support **young people's initiatives and increase their motivation** to participate in non-formal activities.

Therefore, the following outcomes were achieved:

- 4 high schools have used OPIN and will use OPIN in the future
- 70 students took part in the follow-up workshops and got familiar with digital youth participation and the OPIN platform
- 6 projects were created on OPIN based on the needs of the young people, whereby they had a chance to comment and participate in the process.

These capacity-building activities provided teachers a unique chance to discover the DigiPAC methodology that they can use in their school work programmes and non-formal activities.

Furthermore, through the implementation of projects on OPIN, this experience has made them aware of the importance of collaborating **with decision in order to realize initiatives and projects given by young people.**

Case study

Objective: SEGA implemented a DigiPAC piloting project to build the capacities of high school teachers to support young people's initiatives and increase their motivation to participate in non-formal activities.

Activities: The piloting project activities focused on the collaboration with high schools in order to motivate and support youth initiatives and promote collaboration with local decision makers. This collaboration was established in the preparatory phase of the training in the Skopje region. In October 2022, Coalition SEGA realized a second DigiPAC training for high school teachers and youth workers from Skopje.

After the collaboration and conducted trainings, high school teachers realized follow-up activities - workshops with students introducing digital youth participation using OPIN and motivating them to participate in non-formal activities.

After the workshop and collecting ideas on the OPIN platform, students collaborated with their teachers in order to implement their ideas for improvement the school environment. OPIN, as an innovative online tool for e-participation, was introduced to high school teachers and each of them were asked to create profiles for their own organizations on the platform to motivate them to use this tool for their projects in the future.

SEGA supported the teachers during follow-up activities.

Outcomes, impact and sustainability

The introduction of the unique methodology of DigiPAC to teachers motivated them to **organize local follow-up activities** with students (workshops). Their feedback regarding DigiPAC shows that they find this methodology easy to use and they are willing to integrate it in their daily practices regarding non-formal activities and programmes with students.

As a result of these piloting activities in North Macedonia, a total of:
- **4 high schools** piloted the DigiPAC methodology at the local level
- **70 high school students** took part in the follow-up activities and got familiar with digital youth participation and the OPIN tool.

6 project ideas for improving the school environment, such as projects for ecology, local initiatives for the food providers near the school, media literacy evaluation for young people, youth participation in schools, a movie room in the school and more were created on OPIN, commented on and participated in by young people.

Some examples of project ideas: SEPUGS "Vasil Antevski - Dren", ASUC "Boro Petrushevski", SUGS "Maria Kiri - Sklodovska"

What do high school teachers think?

"The toolkit that we got to use contains really interesting activities that can be integrated into the curricula, especially for the subjects of civic education and sociology. Visually presented workshops are easy to use and it encourage the critical opinion of young people about everyday minor and major problems. In the materials themselves, the goals that would be fulfilled after the execution of the activities are clearly shown".

Kristijan Stojanovski, Professor in high school, SEPUGS "Vasil Antevski-Dren", Skopje, North Macedonia

"The DigiPAC methodology of the ACTIon project, which was implemented by the coalition SEGA, was successfully implemented in our high school "Maria Kiri - Sklodovska" Skopje. Our students - young people were delighted with the project, because they had a role in something that needs to be decided, especially when it comes to young people. This means that their voice was heard, and they learned new things related to youth participation using DigiPAC. The methodology from the handbook was very understandable with interesting content, which were fully conveyed to the young people and they feel empowered and ready for new challenges. With expectations of new projects of this nature".

Dragana Mirkovikj, Professor in high school, SUGS "Maria Kiri - Sklodovska" Skopje, North Macedonia

"The transferred methodology for DigiPAC provides step-by-step instructions that make it very easy to implement the program. All 3 modules of the training program are well explained with a

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detailed description of the activities, and the topics offered are quite interesting for instilling a theoretical basis in young people about democratic values as well as forming their own knowledge, skills and competences with the help of digital tools".

Maja Aevska, Professor in high school, ASUC "Boro Petrushevski" Skopje, North Macedonia

CASE STUDY:

MOLA in Kyustendil, Bulgaria

Activation of young mothers to become opinion leaders and role models in their communities

Co-funded by the
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of the European Union

Executive summary

In the period of February to March 2023, HESED conducted a training for 13 young mothers from Kyustendil, Bulgaria using the methodology MOLA. The training aims to activate opinion leaders in social networks (Facebook) to conduct campaigns on important topics for the communities in which young people live. The programme and the model were easily adapted to any other topic on youth activation. **In the training, we had 13 enthusiastic young girls – mothers who categorically stated their desire to participate** and to comply with the arrangements made for the sessions, participated actively in the discussions and with a specific proposal for activities in the time between two sessions. The atmosphere in the group was extremely pleasant, motivated and willing, and the participants were invested in their development.

The MOLA training program offered:

- The opportunity to see what their online image is and how others perceive them
- Easy algorithms to search for information that is useful for them and their children
- Accessible means for the detection of fake news and disinformation
- Provision of a database of verified online sources and materials related to raising children and helping them extract the most important messages and how to apply them in their daily lives
- The opportunity to improve their skills in digital storytelling in order to be useful to other young people who have similar interests and searches.

The MOLA model has the potential to be used to activate opinion leaders and conduct campaigns on other important topics for young people. Positive campaigns can be conducted to raise awareness on various topics related to health, active lifestyles, access to services, etc.

Case study

The reality in which we live implies the active use of new technologies, one's inclusion in various social networks and a significant existence "online", professionally or personally, for work or pleasure. Being "online" is a way of life, especially for young people. HESED conducted a MOLA training for activation of young mothers from Kyustendil, Bulgaria. **The training aimed to activate opinion leaders in social networks (Facebook) to conduct campaigns on important topics for the communities in which young people live.**

The trainings objectives were:

- To enhance the digital citizenship of young people from disadvantaged groups by improving their digital literacy and critical thinking
- To empower active participation of the young people
- To improve their access to information, services and rights
- To activate them to become opinion leaders and role models in their communities.

Outcomes, impact and sustainability

The MOLA model has the potential to be used to activate opinion leaders and conduct campaigns on other important topics for young people. Positive campaigns can be conducted to raise awareness on various topics related to health, active lifestyles, access to services, etc. This is what we did with 13 enthusiastic young girls – mothers who categorically stated their desire to participate, gained knowledge for the proper use of social media, created online materials and were influencing their community. A great advantage of the model is the use of natural channels of communication and social networks of the young people themselves, which makes it possible to reach homogeneous age groups and audience interests. The model can be further applied and adapted to other social networks in which young people have an increased presence, such as Tik-Tok, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

Trainer's experience using MOLA

"The MOLA model was relevant to their needs because it enabled them to develop extremely useful skills and competencies – to search for information online on topics that are important and significant to them and to be critical, to use algorithms and mechanisms to check the credibility of content, to participate in digital media in a pleasant and safe way, and to send good, clear and useful messages to their community.

The skills related to the recognition of false information were most clearly noticed. The young people actively used the "THINK" model. Even during the session, they shared personal experiences of how they succumbed to fake content online and, accordingly, their desire to distinguish truth from falsehood intensified through their personal experience so far. In the following sessions, they continued to share how they used the model in relation to various information they came across online.

After the e-health session and their introduction to the Superdoc platform, which was already known by 3-4 young mothers, there was an increased interest in using the application. Assistance was provided in keeping a few hours with various specialists. We have found that there are only a few medical specialists from our town who are presented in the platform, and the young people suggested motivating family doctors to register on the platform and provide better opportunities for the mothers who are about to choose a paediatrician for their new-born children to make an informed choice by knowing the rating of the specialist and the comments of the users. This is a good example of active citizenship that was initiated by our group.

Knowing the program and the model, I believe it could be easily adapted to any other topic for youth activation.

As early as the invitation stage, we met enthusiastic young people who categorically stated their desire to participate. They themselves invented publications that challenged themselves – for example, whether people would react to them in the expected way or whether a publication about healthy foods with chia and seeds would garner as many likes as the familiar and preferred foods. This gave them the opportunity to break their own prejudices and broaden their worldview.

I was pleasantly surprised by the digital skills of some of the young girls related specifically to making digital storytelling through various applications. The topic of digital storytelling caused great interest among them. During the session on digital stories, emphasis was placed precisely on the power of these short videos to convey strong messages with appropriate video material (pictures, photos, text, music). They were very inspired and created interesting products. They managed to do so extremely independently.

I think, with confidence, that each of the topics set in the sessions is in place. There is a need for every activity and exercise. In such a structured way, the training gives you the opportunity to build and upgrade your skills, which are extremely useful in the online environment in which we all live.

It is evident, on the basis of weekly publications, how the young people use the acquired knowledge and try to build an image of a role model for their communities. They check the information they share and aim to send specific messages with it in an appropriate and safe way. Their activity continues to be as high in connection with weekly publications.

If I have to describe the programme in 3 words they would be:
Attention, care and give away."

Teodora Fetinova, Trainer from HESED
The full interview is available in Bulgarian.

Young mothers' experiences with MOLA

Interview 1: *"Lots of energy, warmth, positive emotion, and new friendships. We went through several topics. which were very important for our families, for our children and for the digital space in which each one of us is present and is constantly there. We need to know how to distinguish false and true information and what sources of information online we can trust. Each of us learned the necessary lesson. I think everyone should participate in such a group to understand what is hidden in the digital space, how we can be opinion leaders, distinguish real and false information. I can tell all mothers, all citizens in society to participate and learn the necessary lesson"*

Interview 2: *The group brought me amazing experiences with great moments and many positive people. I would recommend my close friends to participate in such a group, I think it is useful for others to participate because they will learn a lot of new things. Everything was more than fine."*

In the session "Digital story telling", participants made short videos on different topics related to health. The short videos created by the young people in Bulgarian can be seen here:

- Unhealthy foods
- Breastfeeding facts
- Benefits of Eating Fruits and Vegetables

CASE STUDY:

MOLA in Sofia, Bulgaria

Empowering young opinion leaders in Sofia using MOLA

OPEN SPACE FOUNDATION

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of the European Union
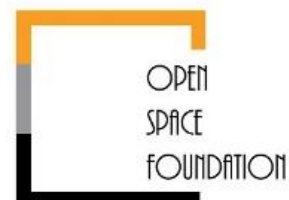
Executive summary

Analysing the behaviour of young people in the schools where Open Space Foundation works for the past 2-3 years, they noted that (young people):

- Want to be online,
- Want to be interesting / liked with the publications they make;
- Are looking for entertainment that comes fast, loud and "WOOOO!".
- Need someone else to legitimize that a certain entertainment (even their own experience) is valuable.

In the piloting phase, OSF conducted three trainings in order to empower young opinion leaders using MOLA. The first group consisted of 10 youth (14-16 years-old), Christians and Muslims from Turgovishte town. The second group consisted of 10 boys, Christians, Muslims and Roma (13 years old) from Veliki Preslav town; and the third group of 10 youth (18-27 years-old) living in Sofia city. Third MOLA training was implemented with a group of Bulgarian and foreign volunteers (18-27 years-old) between January and April 2023.

In the programme, methods of non-formal education and a combination of resources (curriculum) that are available for self-education (e.g., at home) were used. The goal of our work was to empower the participants with proper tools and knowledge that they can use as an opinion leader.
The programme consisted of 2 phases: **Training** and **Activation**.

The goals of our training were:
1. To train young people to be able to influence the insecurity of their peers regarding their behaviour and to set good examples and models of ethical and sustainable behaviour from which to learn.
2. To empower them with proper tools that they can use as an opinion leader.

So far, OSF conducted:

- **3 trainings**
- **30 young people took part in the trainings**
- **2 teachers in a local high school in Turgovishte and Sofia city are familiar with MOLA.**

Case study

The MOLA 3 training programme was implemented by OSF with a group of Bulgarian and foreign volunteers (18-27 years-old). The goal of the program was to empower young people with the proper tools and knowledge that they can use as an opinion leader.

Using the MOLA methodology, we have created a programme that consists of 2 phases: **Training** and **Activation**.

Phase 1: Two-days training, 6 sessions total, which took place in January 2023. The sessions were a combination of giving new information and knowledge, presenting new tools, and exercises for practice.

The sessions delivered information about:

- How they can be successful, effective and safe when they search for information online
- How to recognize fake news and what to do in such cases.

New tools introduced:

- Responsible behaviour as an opinion leader and specific examples (THINK model)
- Guidebook how to be good storyteller and create content online
- F.I.R.E. App – Module 4, curriculum created on the basis of the MOLA programme, adapted for self- and independent education.

In the exercises, they practiced:

- How to analyse facts and opinions
- How to present themselves online
- How to analyse the digital footprint that each one of them leave on the Internet.

Phase 1 ended with creating an individual plan for posting in the next 6 weeks.

Phase 2: Activation

Over the next 2 months, young people created content and posted it to their profiles on platforms they like and use. The topics they chose are different: football, movies, books…. They presented random people or their own personal example, with a message on to show their peers good real-life examples.

MOLA is an easy-to-use programme. Individual sessions can be split up and incorporated into classroom lessons or civics lessons at school. The OSF team will use it as a tool in our work with young people. With this programme, we could train youth to be real multipliers and to activate their peers.

Youth workers' experiences using MOLA

The training took place over two days in 6 training sessions. In the introductory session, we presented them with videos (how to search for information, how Google collects our data, and Internet safety tips) that were made for the purpose of the F.I.R.E. app. This allowed us to see their live reactions and whether we were achieving our goals:

- both in terms of the informativeness of the content
- as well as attractiveness and efficiency in conveying the necessary information.

The topic of the training obviously excited them. In the "Fact vs. Opinion session", serious clashes of position emerged. The game definitely raised the mood of the group and gave way to the next topic: Fake News. In the discussion, it became clear that they do not have criteria for reliable media, and they also doubt the national media regarding their approach and manipulation of information. Sessions three and four were dedicated to introducing the Opinion Leader Model and Digital Storytelling, after which we shared various resources and useful tools for participants to use in the future.

For the needs of our group, we decided to replace the topic of online health-related behaviour with a discussion of our rights online and what Netiquette is. In the next session, participants were invited to generate possible solutions to influence their peers and friends. Through brainstorming, they generated several solutions related to youth passivity and apathy towards real action, which has been replaced by "life on the web". At the end of the meeting, each young person shared how they see their work online in the coming weeks.

In the following 6 weeks, we held 3 general meetings with the young people and 3 more with each of them individually. They shared the results of their work and gave each other feedback. Several interesting results were created by young people:

- New Instagram profile from which to start "building an influencer career". In the first meeting after the training, it was discussed with two youngsters the meaning of being an anonymous opinion leader and being one with your real name. Both youngsters are currently posting through their own profiles and are very keen to continue working with this model.
- Another youth dared to share in Facebook wall various social activities in which he participates, and which help him to develop but he thought that they would not be interesting to his classmates. He shared his satisfaction with the reactions he got on Facebook.
- Another participant chose to return to his great hobby, football, after the circumstances of his life pushed him to another path: to study engineering sciences and abandon sports. The task he has set himself is to use his own example to motivate his peers to go out and do sports. He found a club and resumed football training. He shares that he was surprised at the reactions he caused. Even people with whom he has not communicated for a long time have reconnected with him and commented positively on his messages. His plan is to continue posting on the topic, featuring seniors who are still on the field and in great shape as well as football as a team interaction.

Links:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/CneZbfYKSJv/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cnem-oXKb5f/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

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Young people's experiences

Participants shared what **they learned from the MOLA sessions:**

- New tricks in terms of searching for information on the Internet.
- Described the "Fact vs. Opinion" session as very useful and well presented.

- The way the content is presented, and the games that make it easier for the information to be absorbed.

They identified as an "Aha" moment (what you wouldn't have learned/ what wouldn't have happened if you hadn't come to the training):

- I have seen many ideas, and learned how some are thought. The people always are very interesting.
- I wouldn't have realised that people had different vision of the things I didn't like. I've become more emphatic.
- I'm not a fan of social media, but this training gave me the opportunity to see things differently.

After the Activation stage:

- I was surprised how many people watched my videos. Even people that we didn't speak years now texted me and greet me
- It is easy to get followers
- Not so many people put attention on my new posts. What is not correct?
- I had a period of time in which I wasn't so active in social media, but I see now that this could help me a lot.