NextGen YouthWork

Integrated Action Plan Report

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URBACT

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Content

About Youth Work

What is Youth Work?

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Social · **Cultural** · **Educational** · **Environmental** · **Political**

For Youth · **By Youth** · **With Youth** · **Individually** · **In Groups**

Professionals · **Volunteers** · **Non-Formal Learning** · **Informal Learning** · **Voluntary**

What Is Youth Work?

Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political activities by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and voluntary participation.

About Youth Work

Where is Youth Work Happening?

Youth Centres and Youth Clubs

Physical, open-access spaces for leisure, informal learning, group activities, and support

Street and Outreach Youth Work

Meeting youth where they spend time: parks, squares, shopping malls, housing estates, bus stations

School-Based Youth Work

Collaboration with schools: workshops, mentoring, conflict mediation, preventing early school leaving

Sports, Arts, and Cultural Events

Football, dance, drama, music, art — used to build skills, confidence, and social inclusion

Counselling and Individual Support

One-to-one counselling: mental health, relationships, employment, education, and family challenges

Group Work and Thematic Workshops

Topics: life skills, digital literacy, sexual health, anti-bullying, substance use, career guidance, or democratic participation

Community and Neighbourhood Events

Festivals, volunteering, community clean-ups, intergenerational activities, local decision-making events

Residentials, Camps, and Excursions

Multi-day camps or day trips offering experiential learning, teamwork, and personal development

Youth Participation Structures

Youth councils, advisory boards, student parliaments, youth forums — youth co-decide on local policies

Employment and Skills Programmes

Job-readiness clubs, entrepreneurship workshops, CV clinics, apprenticeships, and mentoring programmes

Photo: Allan Lainez, unsplash.com

About NextGen YouthWork

Participating Cities

Northern and Western Europe
Oulu, Aarhus, Eindhoven
Decisive city role, significant city budgets, strong traditions

Southern Europe
**Cartagena, Perugia, Viladecans**
Well-developed institutions, significant role for project-based funding

Eastern Europe
Iași, Klaipėda, Tetovo, Veszprém
Coordinating role for municipalities, fragmented structure, reliance on project and EU funding

Oulu

Aarhus

Klaipėda

Eindhoven

Veszprém

Iași

Perugia

Tetovo

Viladecans

Cartagena
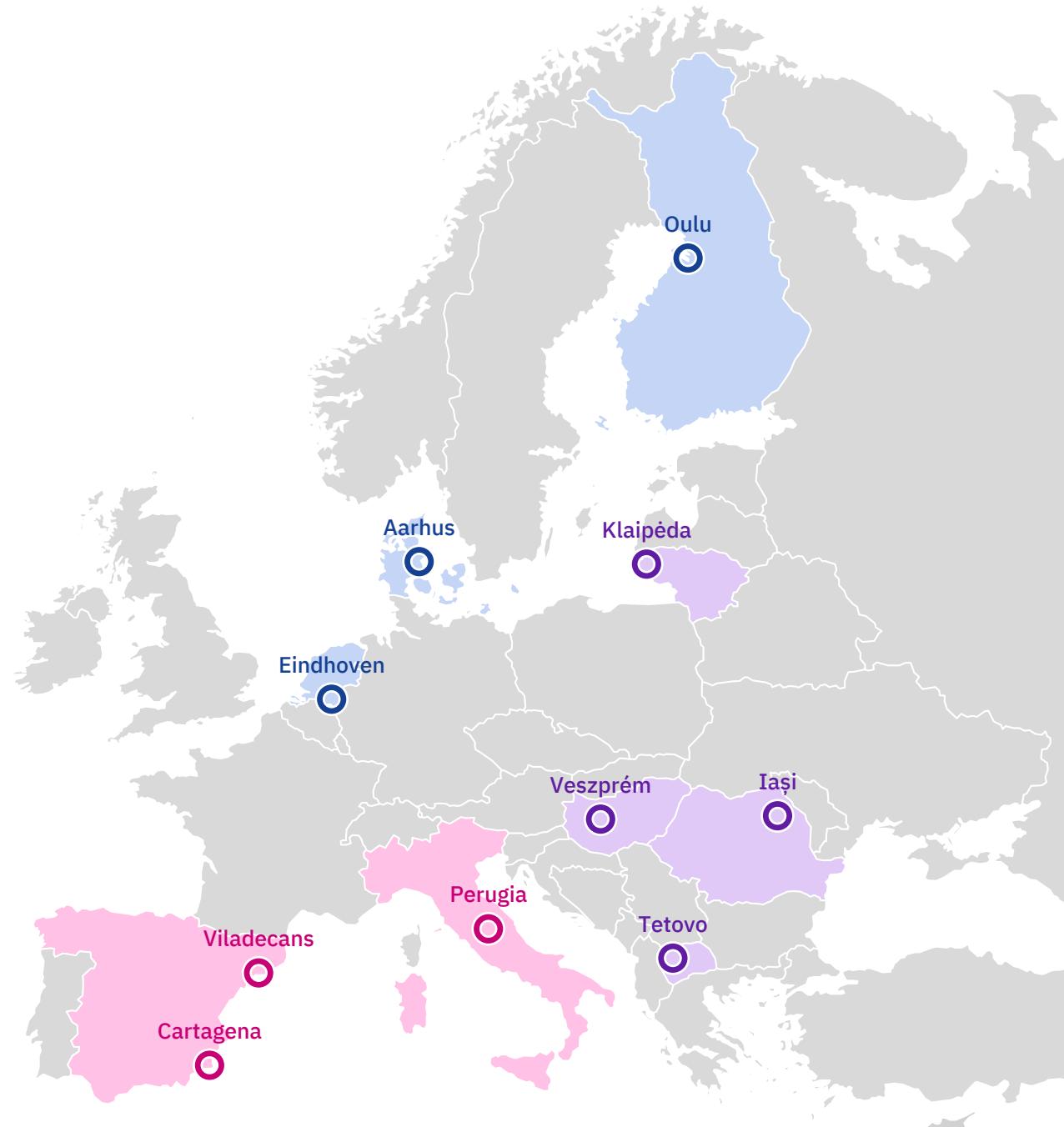
About NextGen YouthWork

Why Is Hybrid Youth Work Needed?
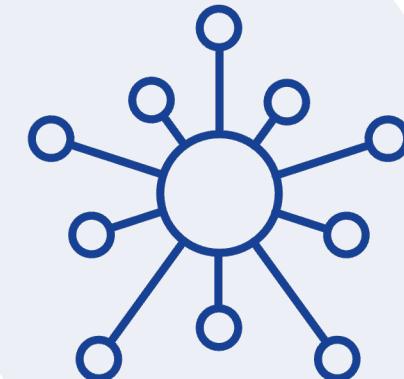
A Structural Shift in Youth Work

The network was established explicitly to address structural shifts in youth behaviour caused by widespread digitalisation. Globally, youth spend a significant portion of their time online—on platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, or various gaming platforms—a trend that grew sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic and shows no sign of declining. This sustained online engagement directly leads to declining use of physical public spaces and traditional youth centres.

Need for Integration

This structural shift poses complex policy problems, requiring that hybrid youth work become the standard rather than the exception. As young people who experience social isolation or loneliness often face physical barriers to reaching out to professionals, youth work must innovate quickly to reach vulnerable populations online with digital information and counselling. This task necessitates integrated, city-wide responses rather than maintaining isolated projects or disconnected services.

Shared Vision

The NextGen YouthWork Network is therefore grounded in a shared vision to empower young people and transform municipal capacity. This shared vision centres on assisting young people to become curious, critically thinking, and engaged participants in the digital world. Municipalities commit to developing comprehensive digital youth work capabilities and acting as innovative, responsive hybrid service providers.

About NextGen YouthWork

The Baseline, IAPs and Diversity

The Baseline Study and the Action Plans

The transition from a preliminary concept to defined local strategies was grounded in the initial analysis phase, summarised by the Baseline Study. The study outlined the key findings on common challenges and capacity gaps across the partnership and explained how the Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) would serve as tools to translate collective network learning into local priorities.

The Integrated Action Plans serve as a strategic roadmap designed for measurable change, outlining specific actions and initiatives.

- For **Aarhus**, the IAP provides a pathway to translate the city's pre-existing high-level Strategy for Digital Inclusion into concrete, operational actions, drawing inspiration from the network.
- In **Cartagena**, the plan delineates a medium-term strategy that covers enhanced public communication, bolstered digital competencies for staff, and implementation monitoring to ensure accountability.
- **Tetovo**'s IAP aims to establish a framework for youth empowerment, participation, employability, entrepreneurship, and access to inclusive infrastructure, ensuring alignment with national and European strategies.

Differences in Scale   **Differences in Economy**   **Differences in Experience**

Diversity informed, not fragmented the network's approach

Common Challenges and Capacity Gaps

Youth workers often lack sufficient knowledge of digital platforms and AI tools to integrate them effectively into their work. Many youth professionals find that the digital space exacerbates existing challenges, such as contributing to social isolation, loneliness, and mental health issues among young people.

- **Veszprém** highlights the risks of digital dependency and its impact on mental health.
- In **Aarhus**, the primary difficulty lies in reaching vulnerable youth through digital media and ensuring equal access to digital opportunities.
- In **Tetovo**, the analysis highlighted mental health issues rooted in social network influences, bullying, and economic stress, leading to anxiety, aggression, and ultimately, migration risks.

Diversity and Universal Focus

Cities varied significantly in size and economic context: **Eindhoven** and **Oulu** are renowned for their high-tech industries and being forerunners in digitalisation, while **Veszprém** and **Tetovo** face the struggle of smaller-sized cities retaining their youth. **Iași**, though lacking a strong youth work tradition, is a regional economic hub experiencing rapid growth in the IT and communications sectors. **Viladecans**, located in the Barcelona metropolitan area, struggles with unequal access to services. Despite all differences, partners came together around the need to adopt hybrid models of youth service delivery, combining physical presence with effective digital outreach to reach marginalised populations.

About NextGen YouthWork

Thematic Backbone of the IAPs
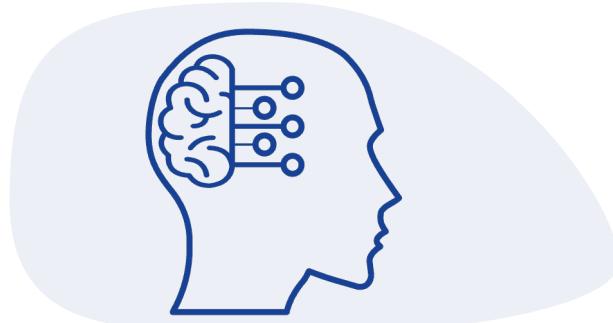
Capacity Building for Professionals

A primary challenge identified early on was the digital skills gap among professionals. Youth workers often lack the necessary methodological and technological support, hindering their ability to engage effectively in the rapidly evolving digital realm, resulting in reactive rather than proactive digital outreach. Therefore, empowering youth workers through dedicated, continuous training is fundamental to adapting youth services to modern needs.

Cartagena defines actions that bolster digital competencies, including digital skills training on tools like Canva and the implementation of continuous improvement workshops on digital platforms.

Klaipėda emphasises strengthening the competencies of at least 70% of youth workers by 2030 through continuous capacity-building, including knowledge on video creation and AI.

Perugia aims to train youth policy workers in the use of popular social media, designing training modules focused on generative AI and its applications for digital storytelling and music videos.

Eindhoven prioritises building digital capacity among youth workers to equip them with the skills to engage effectively in online environments, drawing inspiration from partners like Aarhus.

Hybrid Spaces and Sustainable Infrastructure

Successful hybrid youth work requires dedicated physical centres seamlessly integrated with reliable, accessible digital spaces. Many cities noted the lack of known, protected offline spaces and an urgent need to link digital activities back to safe physical community hubs. Investment in both 'hard' infrastructure (e.g., gaming rooms, platforms) and 'soft' measures (new models of service delivery) is essential to provide coherent, comprehensive support that addresses social issues.

Oulu utilises hybrid facilities, such as the Byström One-Stop Guidance Centre, which provides youth support across educational, health, and work matters in a low-threshold physical space, complementing services offered via the NuortenOulu Discord digital youth space.

Veszprém focuses on establishing and operating a Youth Centre that exists in both physical and digital spaces, promoting integration of online and offline leisure and support services.

Perugia plans to experiment with new spaces for youth gatherings and to regenerate parts of the city with young people, viewing the space not only physically but also as an arena for debate, expression, and co-creation.

Based on Oulu's model, Eindhoven aims to develop a Sustainable Online Youth Centre and views hybrid facilities as necessary to ensure its youth workers are easily accessible and approachable online.

About NextGen YouthWork

Thematic Backbone of the IAPs

Innovative Outreach Strategies

Traditional municipal communication often fails to reach disconnected or vulnerable youth. The third pillar focuses on transforming outreach strategies using youth-centric channels, formats, and language to bridge the gap between young people's communication habits (often prioritising instant messaging and social media) and static institutional models. The goal is to move beyond mere presence to proactive engagement and dialogue.

Cartagena: The city is consolidating its digital communication by formally adopting WhatsApp as an official communication platform, redesigning its website for intuitive navigation and youth-friendly language, and leveraging digital displays at public bus stops.

Viladecans: Actions focus on maximising engagement by reactivating the Youth Service's TikTok channel and creating a specialised WhatsApp channel for one-way information dissemination relevant to youth interests.

Aarhus: The strategic goal involves adopting hybrid service models such as the BRUS project, which offers counselling via digital tracks to ensure help and support are accessible and flexible for vulnerable young people.

Youth Participation and Co-Creation

Genuine, meaningful participation is central to the viability and success of hybrid youth services. This pillar aims to shift young people's role from passive recipients to active collaborators, empowering them to influence municipal policies and co-design the physical and digital services they use. This helps overcome youth disaffection and ensures that services remain relevant to their needs.

Viladecans: The city emphasises promoting co-creation through support for existing youth-led projects and the creation of a formal Youth Forum, coupled with regular consultative processes under the banner Have your say!.

Cartagena: The city uses Youth Correspondents in schools and at the university to disseminate information and provide feedback directly from their peers to the City Council services, creating a crucial bidirectional connection.

Tetovo: A core objective is to create sustainable youth and women involvement in policymaking, setting a target of at least 40% by 2030.

Perugia: Interventions focus on defining tools and processes to encourage youth participation in public policies and actively promote their involvement in the city's social and cultural life.

About the Process

The Integrated Approach as a Connector Across Policies, Levels and Stakeholders
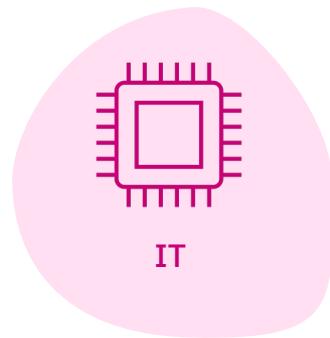
IT　　**Social Services**　　**Health Services**　　**Education**　　**Urban Planning**

Breaking Policy Silos

Digital youth work acts as a unique connector between departments that rarely collaborate, such as IT, Social Services, Education, and Urban Planning. By focusing the IAP on the hybrid needs of young people, cities have forced a shift from independent departmental actions to cross-sectoral cooperation. This horizontal integration ensures, for example, that a digital platform is not just a technical tool managed by IT, but a service-delivery arena designed by social workers and content-managed by youth themselves.

Viladecans targets a full range of sectors that shape youth policies, specifically generating impact across Education, Health, Community Action, Employment, Housing, and Civic Engagement.
**Perugia** sets a central strategic objective to create a network of stakeholders capable of integrating and coordinating the range of opportunities related to digital innovation, overcoming the typically limited school-municipality collaboration.
The Youth Department of **Cartagena** established direct collaboration with the City Council Press Office and utilised infrastructure funded by NextGenerationEU transport digitalisation funds to implement digital displays at bus stops.
Veszprém—in a unique example of inter-project integration—explicitly linked its NGYW actions with its BiodiverCity URBACT IAP, using youth community spaces as sites to promote urban biodiversity.

About the Process

The Integrated Approach as a Connector Across Policies, Levels and Stakeholders

EU Youth Strategy

National Youth Strategy

Local IAP

HARD   **SOFT**
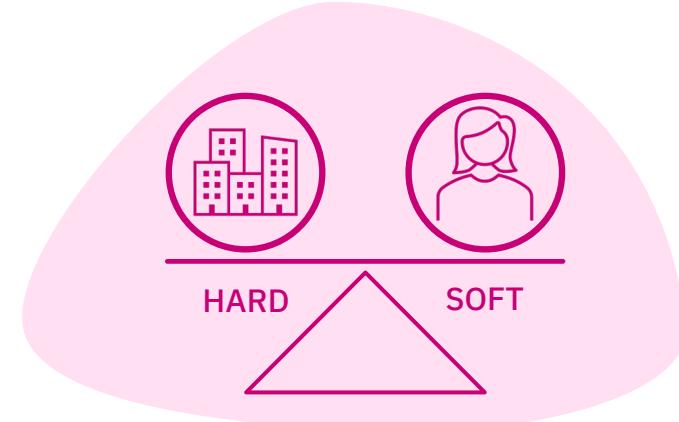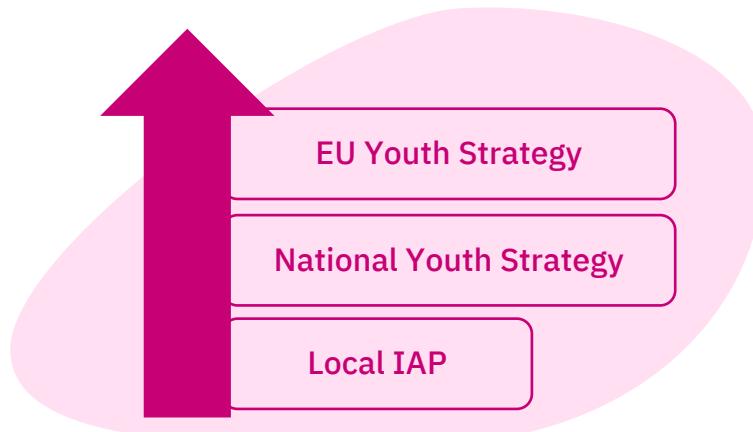
From Local Pilot to European Strategy

The IAPs are not standalone documents; they are strategically anchored in regional, national, and European agendas. This vertical integration ensures that local actions contribute to the EU Youth Strategy, the Digital Decade Policy Programme, national or regional youth or other sectoral strategies. Aligning with these high-level frameworks, cities increase their capacity to secure long-term financing through different programmes.

Aarhus: The local action plan operationalises the city's high-level Strategy for Digital Inclusion, translating broad principles such as 'minimising barriers' into concrete actions, such as the Robot Café.

Tetovo: The plan is fully aligned with the National Youth Strategy (2023–2027), but sets more ambitious local targets, such as 40% youth representation in local councils compared to the 32% national goal.

Klaipėda: Local digital infrastructure goals are aligned with the Lithuania 2050 vision, focusing on advanced digital tools to reduce social and cultural exclusion regardless of place of residence.

Viladecans: The strategy is built upon the National Youth Plan of Catalonia 2030, focusing on rights-based innovation and intersectionality.

Balancing Hard and Soft Interventions

A core aspect of the integrated approach is the hard/soft balance. Cities have recognized that providing 'hard'" infrastructure (digital hubs, VR equipment, gaming rooms) is ineffective without 'soft' investments in professional capacity building, mental health support, and new service methodologies. This balance ensures that technology serves as a resonating chamber for human relationships rather than a replacement for them.

Perugia: The city's vision emphasises that while solid infrastructure is needed, investment in people is essential—not just in youth, but in the adults who guide them.

Veszprém: The plan balances 'hard' resources like a physical Youth Centre (House of the Future) with 'soft' measures such as regular needs assessments and mental health support for youth workers.

Aarhus: The BRUS Project exemplifies this balance by maintaining physical treatment facilities while providing digital tracks like SMS counselling to reach those with mental or social barriers.

About the Process

The Co-Production Process Combining Local Roots and Network-Level Learning

ULGs as collaborative engines

Participatory tools for co-creation and youth engagement

Locally rooted Integrated Action Plans

Core Meetings and Study Visits for peer learning

Draft and Final IAP peer reviews and expert guidance

Transnational cross-fertilisation and refined IAPs

Validated and robust Integrated Action Plans
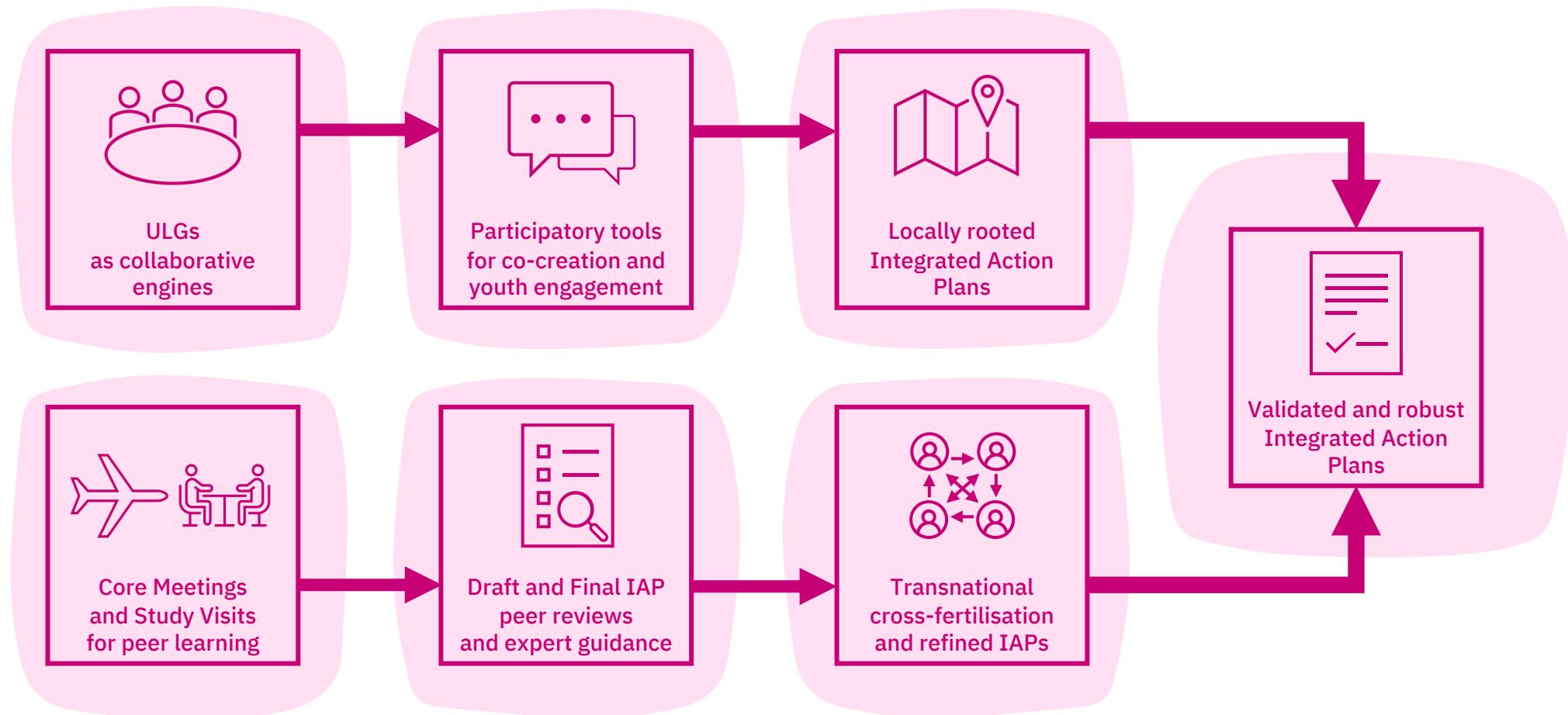
About the Process

The Co-Production Process Combining Local Roots and Network-Level Learning

Local Stakeholder Dynamics

The local planning process centred on the ULG, which functioned as a collaborative engine in each city. These groups varied in composition and intensity of youth involvement, ranging from 10 to 30+40 members across the broader network. While some cities leveraged existing participation frameworks, others used the project to establish new connections between municipal departments (IT, Social Services, Education) and the youth sector. High levels of political ownership were evident when deputy mayors and senior officials validated IAP directions.

Aarhus: The ULG functioned as a platform where local stakeholders, including young people and professionals, contributed their expertise to identify specific challenges facing vulnerable youth.

Viladecans: Youth voices were incorporated through dedicated participatory methods like Creative Tables and the Have your say! consultative processes.

Tetovo: Community engagement through forums led to the restoration of the Youth Council premises, which now serves as a hub for young people.

Klaipėda: The ULG brought together municipal leaders, cultural institutions, and NGOs to develop test actions to strengthen youth workers' digital capacities.

Network Learning and Guidance

At the network level, the co-production was fueled by Core Meetings (CMs), Online Meetings (OMs), Study Visits (SVs) and structured peer learning. These moments allowed cities to learn from their partners—adapting successful tools from more digitally mature partners—while receiving continuous guidance from the Lead Expert. Reflection moments, such as the Draft and Final IAP Peer Review sessions, were crucial for refining local actions and strengthening coherence across the network.

Oulu: The IAP was developed within the URBACT framework, utilising collaboration with network cities to learn from other cities and systematically identify future cooperation opportunities.

Eindhoven: The city gained valuable insights from Oulu, Aarhus, and Cartagena, adopting models such as Youth Correspondents and Online Youth Centres into its local logic.

Iași, **Veszprém** and **Tetovo** learned from Cartagena's Informajoven and inspired their actions on creating youth centres.

Lead Expert Support: The process was supported by various methodological tools to support cities in the IAP co-designing process.

Ad-Hoc Expert Support: Cities benefited significantly from the insights of Eleni Feleki on objectives, indicators and monitoring, while Alberto Lorente Saiz helped cities develop three follow-up projects.

Barriers and Enablers

Several key factors enabled or hindered successful co-production. Meaningful co-creation was made possible by building trust and providing practical tools for engagement. Conversely, barriers included high staff turnover, limited digital literacy among some stakeholders, and the time-intensive nature of the integrated planning cycle. Institutional readiness proved vital; cities that had more developed youth work structures were often able to move faster into the testing phase.

Viladecans: Identified risks included cyclical participation and exhaustion among active youth and the challenge of reaching groups of vulnerable youth.

Perugia: A major hurdle was the digital skills gap among youth workers, which required proactive training to bridge the professional development gap.

Tetovo: Identified behavioural risks such as resistance to mental health discussions due to stigma, requiring storytelling to normalise dialogue.

Klaipėda: High costs and language barriers (English-only systems) were noted as obstacles during the piloting of documentation tools like LogBook.

Aarhus: The city had to work on minimising barriers such as the lack of resources or skills needed to use digital services effectively.

About the Process

From the Baseline Study to Final IAPs: Learning Curves and Strategic Maturation

Stage 1:
Identifying Wicked Problems

Stage 2:
Testing and Learning

Stage 3:
Achieving Institutional Anchoring

SUCCESS: Aarhus Robot Café

LEARNING: Klaipėda LogBook

Baseline Diagnosis

The journey from the initial Baseline Study to the finalised Integrated Action Plans represents a significant evolution in strategic depth and operational focus within NextGen YouthWork. Initially, many cities viewed digital youth work through a fragmented lens, focusing on isolated social media tools or specific technological gaps. In the activation stage, cities identified broader "wicked problems" such as the digital divide, social isolation, and youth mental health, but lacked clear pathways for municipal intervention. However, the iterative URBACT planning cycle—moving from diagnosis to visioning and testing—forced a shift toward systemic thinking, where digital interventions are now understood as components of a broader local governance framework.

Learning Through Testing

The introduction of Testing Actions acted as the primary catalyst for this evolution, allowing cities to transition from abstract ideas to Proof of Concept initiatives. These testing actions were not merely small projects; they were critical learning moments that helped cities refine their hypotheses, measure real-world impact, and reduce the long-term perceived risk of full-scale implementation. Partners realised that a successful hybrid model requires more than just a digital platform; it necessitates horizontal integration—such as breaking down silos between different departments—and securing dedicated staff roles, such as Youth Officers.

Evolution Toward Governance

The final versions of the IAPs are more realistic, focused, and feasible due to the peer-review process. By seeing one another's reality during study visits, cities were able to adopt and adapt proven models from more digitally mature partners, such as Oulu and Eindhoven. This cross-fertilisation ensured that the final plans were not only ambitious but also technically viable and aligned with local needs. The final IAPs transformed from simple lists of activities into strategic roadmaps detailing governance structures, funding mixes, and risk management strategies.

About the Process

Adapting URBACT Methods to Hybrid Youth Work

Problem Tree	Newspaper of Tomorrow	Impact Navigator	Aarhus Test Card	Integration Assessment	Self-Assessment of IAPs
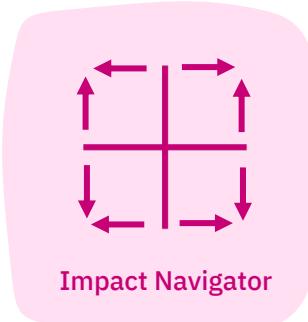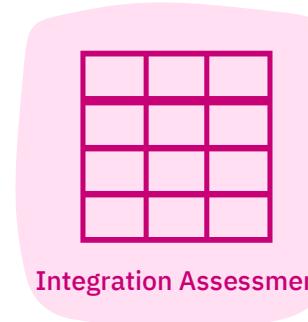
Problem Definition and Visioning

The foundational diagnostic phase utilised the Problem Tree methodology to understand the root causes of cities' specific issues. By visually mapping how various factors lead to effects such as social isolation and mental health challenges, cities built a shared understanding. Moving from problems to possibilities, the Newspaper of Tomorrow and Three Horizons methodologies enabled ULGs to project into the future and define a joint long-term vision.

Perugia used the 5 Whys technique alongside the Problem Tree to overcome fragmented perspectives and build a coherent model of social marginalisation.

Viladecans applied the Problem Tree methodology with young people to delineate local challenges.

Veszprém used the Newspaper of Tomorrow to successfully create a joint vision first with members of Youth ULG then with the ULG.

Action Design and Prioritisation

Once the vision was established, the Impact Navigator served as the primary tool for ideation, enabling stakeholders to brainstorm broadly and then prioritise actions based on their potential for impact and feasibility. Cities also learned about the Aarhus Test Card, which proved handy for designing Testing Actions. This tool compelled cities to define clear hypotheses and research questions before committing to long-term implementation.

Viladecans and used the Impact Navigator to propose and prioritise IAP actions across different departments.

Eindhoven held a Superhero Brainstorm to explore possibilities for online youth work during the first ULG meeting.

Oulu utilised the Integration Assessment Grid to ensure actions balanced 'hard' infrastructure with 'soft' social investments.

Adaptation and Validation

In the transition to digital and hybrid contexts, cities adapted traditional tools with modern technology. The Self-Assessment Tool served as a quality check, ensuring that each city's IAP includes all crucial information before final submission. And some cities used simple tools, such as the Menti platform, to collaboratively identify the desired services for a future Youth Centre.

Veszprém gained experience in SDG localisation in previous projects and used a specific Learning Kit to link local actions to global sustainability goals.

Klaipėda piloted the Logbook system, moving youth work from paper-based reporting to data-driven decision-making.

Eindhoven implemented an Interactive Survey at the Night of the Nerds to gather data from 70+ young people about their social media habits and digital needs.

About the Results

Summary of the Visions of NextGen YouthWork Cities

Aarhus
A digital city where young people are curious, engaged, and equipped

Oulu
Young people are well-being changemakers of the future

Eindhoven
Create a safe, trusted, and inspiring environment online and offline

Klaipėda
Dynamic centre for inclusive, innovative, digital youth work

Perugia
Become a more inclusive, dynamic, and participatory city

Iași
Become a smart, inclusive, and participatory city

Viladecans
Consolidate youth service as inclusive and participatory environments

Veszprém
Youth work supports the well-being of young people

Cartagena
Progressing towards a Digital Youth City

Tetovo
Empower, Innovate, Thrive – Youth are involved in decision-making
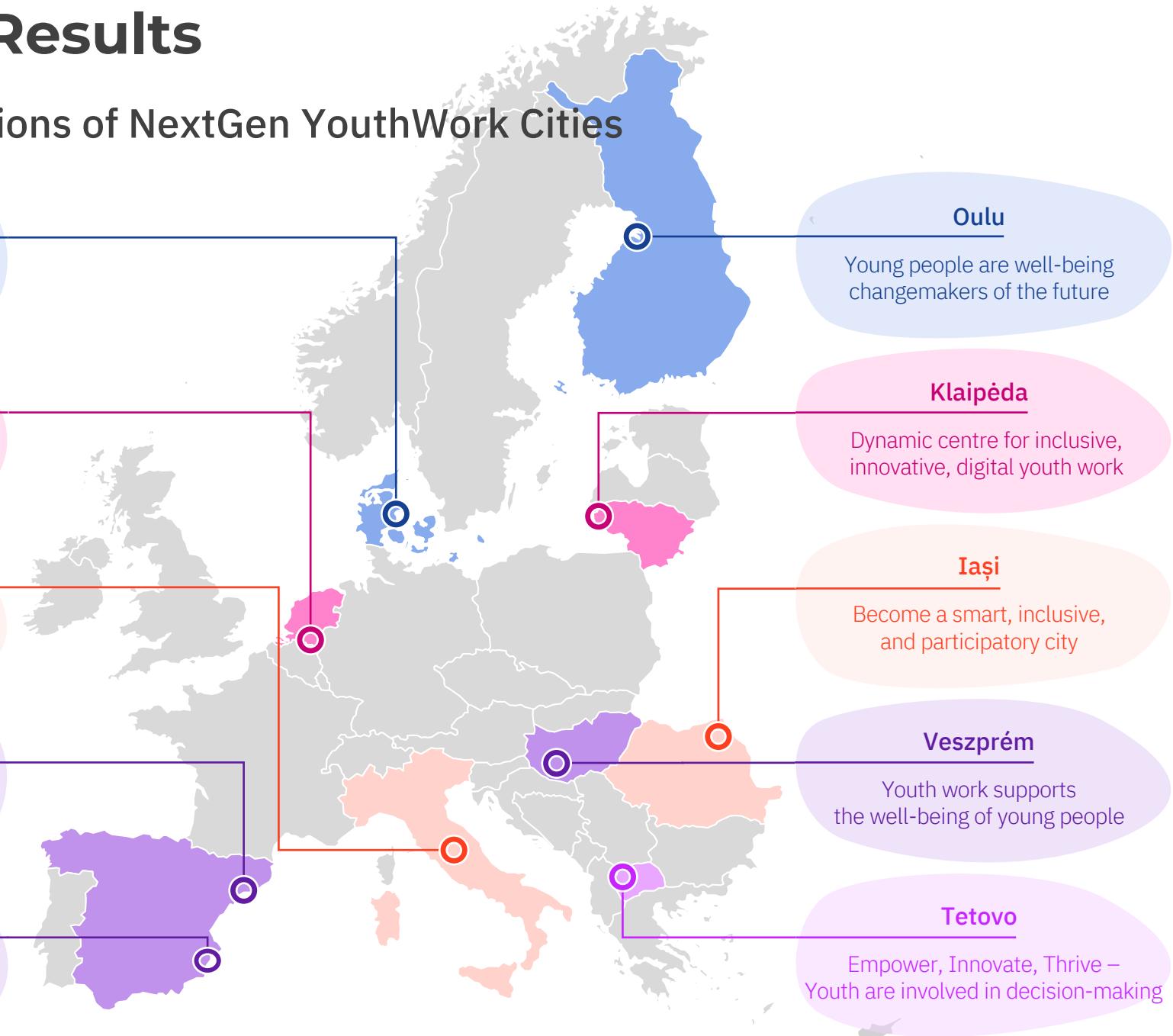
About the Results

First Future Steps of NextGen YouthWork Cities

Aarhus
Introduce Digital Detox Zones and explore AI integration for youth initiatives

Eindhoven
Further develop Dynamo Centraal and train new youth workers via online youth work e-learning

Perugia
Amplify youth voices through collaboration with youth workers and associations

Viladecans
Enhance its hybrid communication model and expand youth participation through the Youth Forum

Cartagena
Develop WhatsApp as an official communication channel, featuring a chatbot for scheduling and activities

Oulu
Further develop digital platforms and promote online gaming tournaments

Klaipėda
Advance the Digital Youth Centre concept and leverage e-gaming as a youth engagement tool

Iași
Create a digital/hybrid youth centre and a mobile hybrid youth centre

Veszprém
Operate the ForYou Youth Centre and establish a Discord channel for youth support

Tetovo
Integrate hybrid youth work into its strategies to ensure continued engagement

About the Results

Transnational Added Value
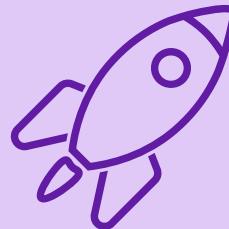
Acceleration via Good Practices

The concrete added value of the NGYW network lies in its ability to accelerate learning and legitimise local change. By engaging in frequent physical and online meetings and structured peer reviews, practitioners built the confidence necessary to advocate for digital transition within their own municipal administrations. The network allowed cities to learn from their partners, adapting proven models to save time and resources during the local planning phase. This collaborative environment turned objectives into tangible local actions.

Eindhoven: Valuable insights were gained from various cities; Oulu's Online Youth Centre model, Aarhus's Digital Inclusion approach, and Cartagena's Youth Correspondents helped Eindhoven to refine its own approach.

Klaipėda: The municipality was particularly impressed by Oulu's Discord platform and Eindhoven's approach to integrating computer games into youth work, leading to plans for a local gaming room and VR tools.

Veszprém: The initiative for a local youth community space was directly inspired by good practices observed during the Oulu project meeting and the Cartagena study visit.

Iași: Lacking a long-standing tradition of youth work, Iași used the network to initiate concrete projects based on the Byström One-Stop model from Oulu and the Mandarache Award and Informajoven of Cartagena.

Legitimisation and Multi-directional Learning

Furthermore, the network proved that diversity is a strategic asset rather than a barrier to cooperation. While more digitally mature cities like Oulu and Eindhoven provided technical blueprints for online hubs, they, conversely, drew inspiration from the social participation models of cities like Cartagena and Viladecans. This multidirectional knowledge flow ensured that every city, regardless of size or starting point, could contribute to and benefit from the collective 'network wisdom'. The network functioned as a collection of Good Practices providing a compass for navigating the complex challenges of youth work.

Aarhus: The collaboration helped translate high-level overall tactics from the existing city strategy into concrete, operational actions.

Viladecans: Redefining youth policies was made possible through the opportunity for exchange and learning, helping the city adapt its professional profiles to a hybrid context.

Oulu: Despite being a leader in digital work, Oulu was inspired by the self-directed youth activities at Cartagena's Informajoven, sparking a joint project to increase the mobility of young adults.

Tetovo: For a city where youth work is in its infancy, joining a European network allowed for the restoration of the Youth Council premises and the creation of a space where youth work together for the first time.

About the Results

Policy Recommendations

Co-Design, Don't Just Deliver

Cities agree that youth should be active partners in designing, developing, and evaluating digital services—not just passive recipients. Involving young people from the outset by co-creating tools, programmes, and communication strategies results in services that are more relevant and naturally engaging.

Multidisciplinary teams that include youth in decision-making help unlock their creativity and insight, while also empowering them to take ownership of solutions. This participatory approach ensures that services truly meet young people's needs, fosters trust, and builds long-lasting engagement and a sense of belonging.

Policymakers must provide institutional support, dedicated funding for co-creation and pilot initiatives, and frameworks that allow for meaningful youth involvement at every stage.
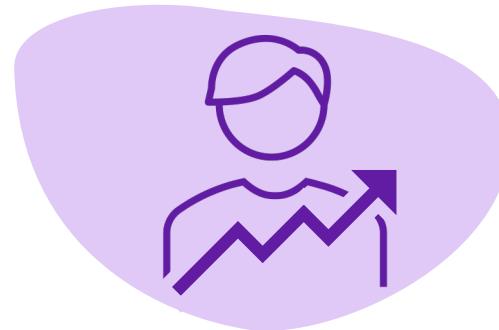
Invest in Youth Workers

Continuous investment in youth workers is fundamental for successful hybrid youth work. Practical, ongoing training helps staff develop digital skills, manage online communities, and confidently use new tools—including AI and emerging digital platforms.

Cities highlight the effectiveness of hands-on sessions, mentoring systems, and structured peer support networks. Recognising youth workers' dual roles across online and offline environments is essential; resources and support must be balanced accordingly. A stable, well-trained workforce is key to building trust with youth and ensuring quality services as digital transformation advances.

Investing in professional development not only boosts staff confidence and adaptability but also supports the long-term sustainability of digital youth work.

Build Integrated Spaces

Effective hybrid youth work requires accessible, welcoming spaces, both physical and digital, that make young people feel safe, valued, and included.

Cities like Oulu, Cartagena and Viladecans provide central youth centres, while also developing robust digital environments such as Discord servers and official WhatsApp or TikTok channels. These platforms are designed to replicate the safety, inclusivity, and vibrant community of physical spaces in an online context. The adoption of the one-stop shop model—integrating multiple services into a single location or platform—means youth can access support, information, and social opportunities all in one place.

Meeting youth where they are ensures services are relevant, easy to access, and tailored to young people's diverse and evolving needs.

About the Results

Policy Recommendations
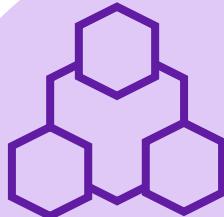
No Strategy, No Budget, No Magic

Sustainable hybrid youth work requires digital services to be integrated into local strategies and action plans, with stable and predictable funding as a foundation. To achieve this, cities are developing dedicated policies, allocating municipal funds, and carefully balancing resources between online and offline activities.

Funding for co-creation, pilot projects, and workforce development must be a priority from the beginning—not an afterthought. Continued investment in innovation, training, and infrastructure ensures that digital initiatives remain effective and adaptable.

Ultimately, long-term commitment and the formal recognition of hybrid youth work as an essential public service are crucial for delivering impact, ensuring equity, and securing sustainability for future generations.

No City Can Do Hybrid Youth Work Alone

Success in hybrid youth work is rooted in strong cross-sector collaboration. Cities recommend bringing together youth organisations, NGOs, schools, private companies, and other municipalities to share expertise, expand outreach, and pool resources.

Establishing formal cooperation frameworks, joint initiatives, and regional partnerships helps enhance service quality and ensures scalability. Digital tools and platforms enable cities to collaborate across borders, as demonstrated by the spread of online youth centres and mentoring apps adopted by multiple municipalities.

Building multiprofessional teams and fostering ongoing stakeholder engagement are vital for supporting youth, creating a resilient support network, and ensuring that innovative practices can be shared and sustained beyond borders.

Photo: Alex Perez, unsplash.com
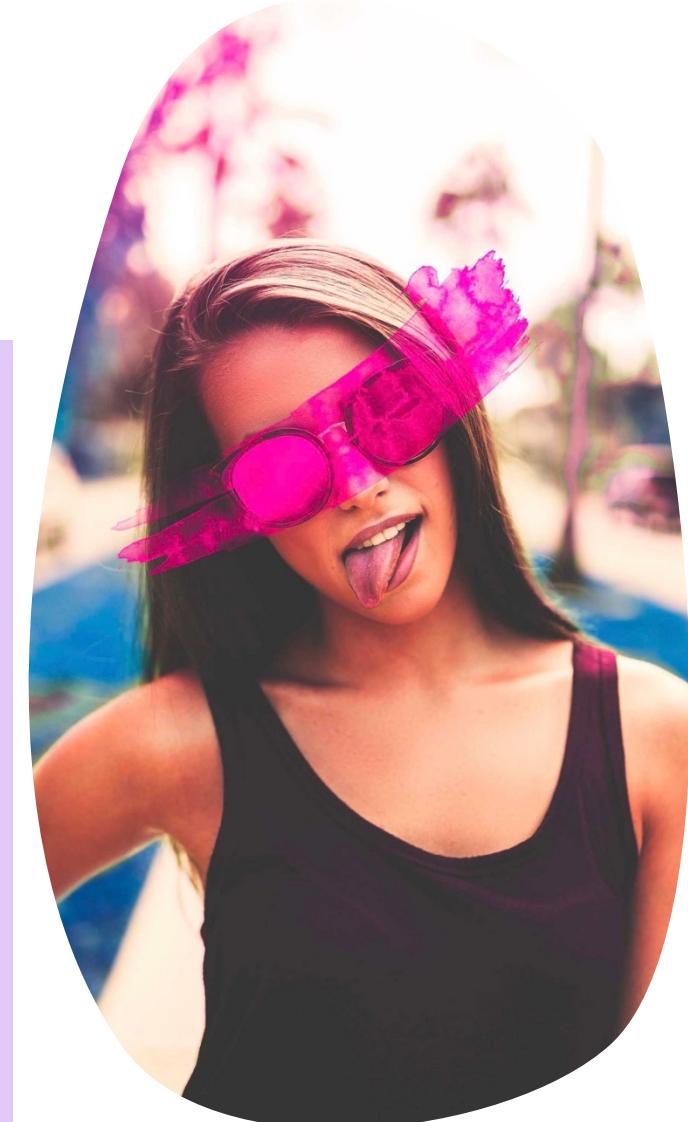
About the Results

Follow-Up Projects
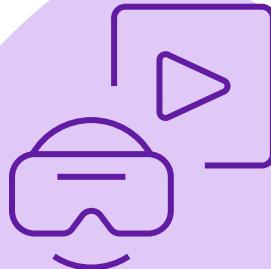
Digital Horizons:
Piloting Digital Tools: AI, VR, Gaming

This Creative Europe project aims to bridge the gap between young people's digital lives and the ability of cultural and youth institutions to engage them meaningfully. It establishes a transnational framework for experimentation, creating "experimental laboratories" where youth workers, technologists, and educators collaboratively pilot tools like AI, Virtual Reality (VR), and gaming. Specific pilot ideas include Aarhus testing AI for social work, Cartagena implementing an AI-enhanced virtual assistant, and Tetovo using VR for job interview simulations. The project focuses on building creative competencies and ensuring inclusive access to digital culture for marginalized youth.

Key outcomes will include documented pilot models, training curricula, and policy recommendations.

Youth Work on the Wheel:
Hybrid and Mobile Youth Centres

This Erasmus+ KA3 project focuses on creating a scalable European model for "Hybrid Youth Centres" by integrating mobile, physical, and digital environments. It addresses declining participation in traditional centres and seeks to validate a standardized European Youth Needs Assessment Tool for evidence-based service design. The project adapts successful practices, such as Eindhoven's Mobile Youth Centre Bus, to reach underrepresented groups like young women and youth with disabilities. Activities include testing co-created digital platforms, such as Discord-based online centres, and deploying mobile units to areas with limited infrastructure.

The initiative will produce a Hybrid Youth Work Inclusion Toolkit and European-level policy recommendations.

Digi-Citizens: Youth Ambassadors for a Human-Centred Digital Transition

This project establishes a transnational network of Digital Youth Ambassadors—local volunteers who serve as links between their peers and local governments. These ambassadors receive training to promote ethical technology use, democratic participation, and mental well-being, while helping municipalities create youth-reflective digital policies. The goal is to cultivate critical digital literacy to combat misinformation and fake news while addressing the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence. The work plan includes 10 thematic packages focused on e-participation tools and enhancing digital skills for future jobs.

The final objective is a sustainable European framework with a training program and certification system for ambassadors.

URBACT

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