



YOUTH WORK FOR RESILIENCE

Comparative Analysis Report

Research: “Supporting Young People Affected by War:
Challenges, Needs and Responses”

Countries: Italy, Germany, Poland, Ukraine



Center for
Euroinitiatives

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Introduction

Research Background and Purpose

This comparative analytical report presents the findings of the research “**Supporting Young People Affected by War: Challenges, Needs and Responses**”, conducted in Italy, Germany, Poland and Ukraine within the framework of the Erasmus+ KA 2 Capacity Building project “**Youth Work for Resilience.**”

The research aims to strengthen the capacity of youth workers and youth organisations to support young people affected by war by identifying current challenges, needs, effective practices and possible intervention approaches within youth work. The findings provide an evidence base for the development of training programmes, youth work methodologies and future project activities responding to the consequences of war and armed conflict.

The survey was addressed to **youth workers, youth leaders, educators, trainers, psychologists, social workers, representatives of youth organisations, youth centres, schools, municipalities and other professionals engaged in youth work.** It sought to gather insights into:

- challenges faced by youth workers and organisations when working with young people affected by war;
- barriers preventing young people from participating in youth activities and community life;
- support and competencies needed by youth workers to respond effectively to emerging needs;
- promising practices and approaches that strengthen resilience, participation and inclusion among young people affected by war;
- possible directions for future youth work interventions and capacity-building activities.

The research was implemented through national surveys conducted among professionals working with young people in four countries Germany, Italy, Poland and Ukraine.

Percentages presented in this report are calculated from the number of respondents who answered each question. For multiple-choice questions, percentages may exceed 100%, as respondents were able to select more than one answer.

Definition of “Young People Affected by War”

Within this research, the term “**young people affected by war**” refers to young people, typically aged 13–30, whose lives, wellbeing, opportunities for development and participation have been directly or indirectly influenced by the consequences of armed conflict, particularly the war in Ukraine and its cross-border effects.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- young people living in active war contexts, particularly in Ukraine, where exposure to violence, insecurity, displacement, disruption of education and limitations on social participation remain part of everyday life;
- refugees and displaced young people living in host countries such as Poland, Germany and Italy, who are rebuilding their lives in new environments while facing uncertainty, interrupted educational and professional pathways, and integration challenges;

- young people with conflict-related migration experiences who may have experienced multiple vulnerabilities, including loss of support networks, interrupted education, family separation or precarious living conditions;
- young people in host communities whose opportunities, social relations and participation are influenced by the arrival of displaced populations, increased pressure on local services, changing community dynamics and emerging social tensions.

The research recognises that the impact of war extends beyond direct exposure to armed conflict and includes long-term psychological, social, educational and economic consequences affecting young people across different national contexts.

Research Context

The research was conducted within the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Capacity Building project “**Youth Work for Resilience**”, implemented by:

- **Wrocław Foundation for European Education and International Cooperation FREYA** (Poland);
- **Centro Studi Sereno Regis ODV** (Italy);
- **pewobe g GmbH in Frankfurt (Oder)** (Germany);
- **Center for Euroinitiatives** (Ukraine).

The project is supported by the **Foundation for the Development of the Education System – National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme and the European Solidarity Corps**.

The project is aimed at enhancing the resilience and development of young people affected by war in Ukraine by fostering collaboration among partner organisations, sharing best practices in youth work, and equipping with the necessary tools and methods. It aims to build the capacities of the partnering organisations, support local initiatives led by and for young people, and promote social cohesion through engaging youth affected by war in meaningful participatory activities.

Scope of the Research

The research focused on four key areas:

1. Challenges faced by youth workers

Identifying the main difficulties experienced by youth workers and organisations when working with young people affected by war, including psychosocial, organisational and contextual challenges.

2. Challenges faced by young people

Exploring the barriers that limit participation, inclusion and access to opportunities for young people affected by war.

3. Identification of effective practices

The research process also includes the collection and analysis of youth work practices from local and national levels that support resilience, participation, inclusion and psychosocial wellbeing among young people affected by war. Each partner contributed with 2-4 practices.

4. Identification of possible intervention approaches

Examining priorities for future youth work activities and identifying areas where capacity building, training and project development can contribute to addressing the needs of young people affected by war.

Use of the Findings

The findings presented in this report serve as the evidence base for the development of the international training seminar “**Youth Work for Resilience**” and subsequent national capacity-building activities implemented within the project. The results are intended to support youth organisations, educators, decision-makers and practitioners in designing more effective, inclusive and trauma-informed youth work responses for young people affected by war.

Research Methodology

The research used a mixed-methods approach combining three complementary methods: a comparative survey, focus group discussions and the collection of youth work practices. This design made it possible to analyse both the scale of needs and challenges across countries and the practical experiences of youth workers supporting young people affected by war. The combination of quantitative, qualitative and practice-based evidence strengthened the reliability of the findings and supported the development of practical recommendations for youth work, training and future Erasmus+ project activities.

Comparative Survey

The comparative survey collected quantitative and open-ended data from youth workers, youth leaders, educators, trainers, representatives of youth organisations, youth centres, schools and other professionals engaged in youth work. The survey explored the challenges faced by young people affected by war, barriers to their participation, changing needs, difficulties experienced by youth workers, required competencies and possible areas for future youth work intervention.

The survey was conducted in four partner countries: Italy, Germany, Poland and Ukraine. The survey findings provide the main comparative quantitative evidence for the report. They make it possible to identify common trends across the four countries, compare country-specific needs and priorities, and assess which challenges and forms of support were most frequently reported by respondents.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were conducted in Italy, Germany, Poland and Ukraine to complement the survey findings and provide deeper qualitative insight.

The focus groups explored:

- lived experiences behind the survey results;
- how barriers to youth participation work in practice;
- what effective youth work looks like when supporting young people affected by war;
- what support systems are missing for young people and youth workers;
- country-specific realities, including active-war conditions in Ukraine and integration challenges in host countries.

The focus group discussions help explain why certain barriers are significant, how youth workers respond to complex situations, and what kinds of support, partnerships and competencies are needed in practice.

Collection of Youth Work Practices

In addition to the survey and focus groups, project partners collected youth work practices that support young people affected by war. This method focused on identifying practical examples of activities, methods and approaches already used by organisations and practitioners in the field.

The practice collection helped identify:

- practical methods already tested in youth work settings;
- approaches that strengthen resilience, participation and inclusion;
- transferable elements that can be adapted for future youth work activities;
- examples that can inspire Erasmus+ training, local initiatives and capacity-building activities.

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the research **“Supporting Young People Affected by War: Challenges, Needs and Responses”**, conducted in Italy, Germany, Poland and Ukraine within the Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building project **“Youth Work for Resilience.”** The research aimed to identify the challenges faced by young people affected by war, barriers to their participation and inclusion, support needs of youth workers, effective youth work practices and possible intervention approaches.

The research used three complementary methods: a comparative survey, focus group discussions and the collection of youth work practices. The survey gathered responses from 226 youth workers, youth leaders, educators and other professionals across the four countries: Ukraine — 100 respondents, Poland — 70, Italy — 36 and Germany — 20. Focus groups added qualitative insight into lived experiences and country-specific realities, while the collection of youth work practices provided practical examples of approaches that support resilience, participation and inclusion.

Main Findings

The research shows that youth work with young people affected by war has become increasingly complex, emotionally demanding and multidimensional. Across the four countries, youth workers reported that young people affected by war need more than access to activities or services. They need safe and inclusive spaces, trusted relationships, emotional support, opportunities for peer connection, and possibilities to rebuild a sense of agency, belonging and future orientation.

A strong cross-country finding is the growing importance of psychosocial support in youth work. Survey responses and focus group discussions confirm that youth workers frequently encounter anxiety, emotional withdrawal, grief, trauma-related reactions, loss of motivation, uncertainty about the future and social isolation among young people. At the same time, youth workers often feel insufficiently prepared to respond to these needs, especially when situations require psychological first aid, crisis response, trauma-informed methods or referral to specialised services.

The research also confirms that participation barriers are both visible and hidden. Visible barriers include language difficulties, lack of transport, financial limitations, unsafe environments, lack of accessible spaces, bureaucratic obstacles and limited information about opportunities. Hidden barriers include emotional exhaustion, fear of rejection, depression, distrust of institutions, uncertainty about the future, lack of confidence and feelings of guilt or responsibility connected with war and displacement.

Another important finding is that effective youth work is strongly relational. Young people affected by war benefit most from approaches based on trust, continuity, peer support, active participation and meaningful relationships with youth workers and other young people. The collected practices and focus group examples show that resilience is strengthened when young people are not treated only as beneficiaries of support, but are invited to co-create activities, volunteer, initiate projects, participate in decision-making and contribute to their communities.

Comparative Trends Across the Four Countries

Several common trends were identified across Italy, Germany, Poland and Ukraine. First, **youth work is increasingly expected to provide psychosocial support, even when organisations were not originally designed for this role. This creates a need for stronger cooperation between youth work, education, social services and mental health professionals.**

Second, safe spaces are essential in all countries, although their meaning differs by context. **In Ukraine, safe spaces are connected to both physical and emotional safety under conditions of ongoing war. In Poland, Germany and Italy, safe spaces are more closely linked to integration, language accessibility, non-discrimination, cultural mediation and belonging in the host community.**

Third, youth workers across all countries **need stronger competencies in trauma-informed youth work, psychological first aid, inclusive facilitation, intercultural communication, working with emotional withdrawal, and supporting young people with diverse vulnerabilities.** The research also highlights **the need for supervision, peer exchange and self-care mechanisms for youth workers themselves.**

Fourth, the collected practices show that **creative and non-formal education methods are particularly effective.** Art-based activities, storytelling, theatre, photography, youth exchanges, camps, youth-led initiatives, peer support groups, career orientation and safe youth spaces help young people express emotions, build confidence, connect with others and imagine future pathways.

Finally, the research shows that **many support systems remain fragmented and project-based.** Short-term funding limits continuity, while weak cooperation between institutions makes it difficult to provide comprehensive support. **Young people affected by war often need long-term accompaniment rather than one-off activities.**

Country-Specific Differences

The **Ukrainian** findings reflect the reality of youth work in an active war context. Security risks, air raids, shelling, disrupted education, limited transport, displacement and grief directly shape young people's participation. Youth workers in Ukraine often support young people who have lost relatives, live in frontline or border communities, experience isolation, or struggle to imagine their future. At the same time, Ukrainian youth work demonstrates

strong examples of youth agency, volunteering, creative activities, youth-led projects and community-based resilience.

In **Poland**, the research highlights the transition from emergency support to long-term integration. Language barriers, emotional withdrawal, uncertainty about the future and lack of stable support systems are central challenges. Young people without adequate parental support appear particularly vulnerable, as parents may themselves be affected by economic pressure, migration stress and trauma. The Polish context points to the need for language-sensitive, trauma-informed and coordinated integration support.

In **Germany**, the findings emphasise belonging, “silent trauma” and the need for active inclusion. Young people may seem adapted externally while continuing to experience grief, guilt, anxiety or social isolation. Language barriers also affect parents’ ability to access information about youth work opportunities for their children. German practices highlight the value of creative methods, residential exchanges, peer relationships and integrated cooperation between youth work and psychosocial support.

In **Italy**, the research points strongly to structural inclusion and rights-based youth work. It highlighted bureaucracy, housing discrimination, legal uncertainty, lack of cultural mediation, educational integration challenges and social marginalisation. The findings from Italy also highlight the need to avoid comparing or ranking the suffering of different groups affected by war, displacement and migration. Youth work in Italy therefore needs to combine psychosocial support with anti-discrimination, cultural mediation, access to rights and political awareness.

Recommendations

The research findings suggest that future youth work with young people affected by war should be trauma-informed, inclusive, participatory and context-sensitive. Youth workers should be supported to create safe spaces where young people can build trust, express themselves, connect with peers and slowly restore a sense of agency.

Training and capacity-building activities for youth workers and organisations working with youth should include psychological first aid, trauma-informed approaches, referral pathways, working with grief and emotional withdrawal, inclusive facilitation, intercultural communication, language-sensitive methods and youth worker wellbeing. Training should also use the collected youth work practices as concrete case studies, helping participants adapt tested methods to their own local contexts.

Future project activities should strengthen youth-led and peer-support approaches. Young people affected by war should be involved not only as participants, but also as co-creators, volunteers, peer educators and initiators of local actions. This is especially important for strengthening resilience, confidence and belonging.

At the system level, stronger cooperation is needed between youth organisations, schools, mental health services, social services, municipalities, cultural institutions and local communities. Integrated support systems are necessary to ensure that young people can access both psychosocial support and meaningful participation opportunities.

The research also recommends longer-term and more flexible funding for youth work with young people affected by war. Short-term projects can provide important support, but resilience-building requires continuity, stable relationships and sustained community-based work.

Overall, the findings confirm that youth work has a crucial role in supporting young people affected by war. Its value lies not only in responding to trauma, but also in helping young people rebuild trust, relationships, participation, hope and a sense of future.

Application for the Training Seminar and Erasmus+ Project Activities

The research findings provide a clear evidence base for the design of the international training seminar and the next stages of the Erasmus+ project. The training should respond directly to the needs identified through the survey, focus groups and collected practices by combining theoretical input, practical tools, peer exchange and adaptation of existing youth work methods.

The training seminar should prioritise trauma-informed youth work, psychological first aid, recognition of emotional distress, and referral pathways. Youth workers across all four countries reported that they increasingly face situations connected with grief, trauma, anxiety, emotional withdrawal and crisis responses, while often lacking sufficient preparation and professional support. Therefore, the training should help participants understand what youth work can realistically provide, where its limits are, and how to cooperate with psychologists, social workers, schools and specialised services.

Another important implication is the need to strengthen inclusive and context-sensitive youth work. The training should address different realities in the four countries: active war and security-related barriers in Ukraine; language, integration and emotional withdrawal in Poland; silent trauma, belonging and parent communication in Germany; and structural barriers, cultural mediation, rights and anti-discrimination in Italy.

The collected youth work practices should be used as concrete case studies during the training. They can help participants analyse what already works in the field, identify transferable elements, and adapt methods to their own organisations and communities.

Finally, the project should include space for youth worker wellbeing, supervision and peer learning. The research shows that supporting young people affected by war is emotionally demanding and often leads to overload or burnout. Therefore, the project should model sustainable youth work practices by creating opportunities for reflection, mutual support and exchange between practitioners from different countries.

Overall, the training seminar and Erasmus+ project activities should translate the research findings into practical capacity building. They should equip youth workers with skills, methods and support systems to create safe, inclusive and participatory youth work responses that strengthen resilience, belonging and future orientation among young people affected by war.

PART I. Comparative analysis

Respondent Profile

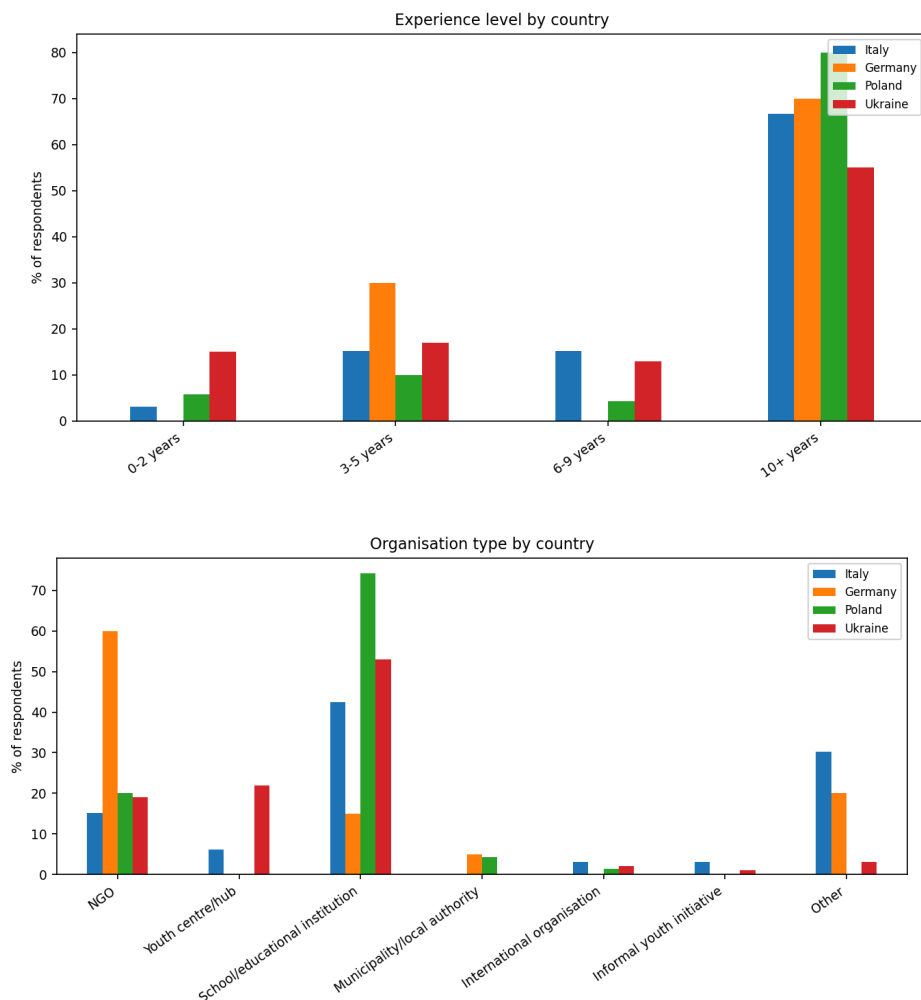
This section presents the profile of survey respondents across the four participating countries: Italy, Germany, Poland and Ukraine.

The survey reached a total of 226 respondents from four countries: Ukraine – 100 respondents, Poland – 70, Italy – 36 and Germany – 20. Respondents included youth workers, youth leaders, teachers, educators, trainers, project coordinators, representatives

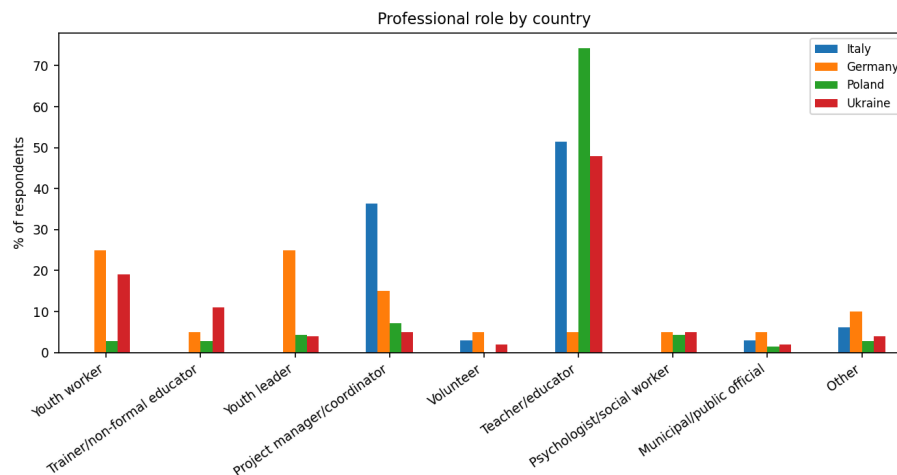
of schools, NGOs, youth centres, municipalities and other professionals engaged in youth work.

Organisational and Professional Profile of Respondents

The respondent profile differs substantially across countries. Italy, Poland and Ukraine include a strong representation of schools and educational institutions, while Germany is dominated by NGOs and non-formal youth work actors.



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Country	Main organisation types	Main roles	Experience profile	Direct involvement
Italy	School/educational institution (42%); Other (30%); NGO (15%)	Teacher/educator (52%); Project manager/coordinator (36%); Other (6%)	10+ years (67%); 3-5 years (15%)	Occasionally (52%); Regularly (33%)
Germany	NGO (60%); Other (20%); School/educational institution (15%)	Youth worker (25%); Youth leader (25%); Project manager/coordinator (15%)	10+ years (70%); 3-5 years (30%)	Regularly (60%); Occasionally (35%)
Poland	School/educational institution (74%); NGO (20%); Municipality/local authority (4%)	Teacher/educator (74%); Project manager/coordinator (7%); Psychologist/social worker (4%)	10+ years (80%); 3-5 years (10%)	Regularly (60%); Occasionally (24%)
Ukraine	School/educational institution (53%); Youth centre/hub (22%); NGO (19%)	Teacher/educator (48%); Youth worker (19%); Trainer/non-formal educator (11%)	10+ years (55%); 3-5 years (17%)	Regularly (67%); Occasionally (19%)

The experience level is high in all countries: the share of respondents with more than ten years of experience ranges from 55% in Ukraine to 80% in Poland. This gives the findings practical credibility, while the sectoral imbalance must be considered: Poland and Italy are particularly education; Germany is NGO; Ukraine combines schools, youth centres and NGOs, making its evidence especially relevant for community-based youth work in active-war conditions.

Link with Focus Group Participant Profiles

The focus group discussions complement the survey profile by adding more detailed qualitative perspectives from practitioners in each country.

Country	Focus group context	Main professional background of participants	Main youth work context
Italy	Interviews with professionals from NGOs, a school and services working with young people in Turin	Human rights educators, non-formal education practitioners, refugee support workers, school teacher, social workers	Structural inclusion, migration, education, rights, psychosocial support
Germany	Focus group with representatives of six organisations in Brandenburg	Municipal youth work, youth associations, psychosocial support, art initiatives, integration work, youth exchanges	Integration, belonging, mental health, intercultural participation
Ukraine	Focus group with eight youth workers from different regions	NGOs, youth centres, educational institutions, youth workers from frontline / border and safer regions	Active war context, insecurity, displacement, grief, disrupted education
Poland	Focus group with organisations working in Wrocław and beyond	Municipal integration space, human rights foundation, cultural education organisation	Refugee inclusion, language barriers, long-term support, psychosocial needs

The focus group participant profiles help balance and deepen the survey findings. For example, while the Polish survey is strongly education-based, the Polish focus group adds perspectives from municipal integration, human rights and cultural education. Similarly, the German focus group reflects the country's strong NGO and non-formal youth work profile, while also bringing in psychosocial support and international youth exchange perspectives. The Ukrainian focus group adds important depth to the survey by showing how youth work operates in frontline, border and safer regions under active-war conditions.

Country-Specific Profiles based on the focus groups

Ukraine: Youth Work in an Active War Context

Main specificities

- Youth work takes place under active war conditions.
- Security and mobility are central barriers.
- Young people experience disrupted education, fear, displacement, grief and isolation.

- Youth workers face emotional exhaustion while also living in the same war context.
- Youth-led initiatives, creative activities and safe spaces are key resilience factors.

Main needs

- trauma-informed and crisis-sensitive youth work;
- psychological first aid and referral skills;
- grief support;
- safe and accessible spaces;
- youth worker supervision and self-care;
- career guidance and future orientation;
- support for frontline and border communities.

The Ukrainian focus group presents a reality fundamentally different from the other three countries. Ukrainian youth workers operate under conditions of ongoing war, where physical insecurity shapes everyday participation. Participants represented Kharkiv region, Sumy, Mykolaivka (Sumy region), Kremenchuk (Poltava region), Oleksandriia (Kyrovograd region) and Ivano-Frankivsk. Their work includes support for internally displaced young people, young people from frontline and border communities, young people who have lost relatives, and youth experiencing isolation, anxiety and uncertainty.

Participants described their work with words such as:

“Flexibility.”

“Acceptance.”

“Important.”

“Development.”

“Relevant.”

This reflects the need for constant adaptation in conditions where the security situation, mobility, emotional wellbeing and access to infrastructure can change rapidly.

A participant from Sumy emphasised the broad impact of the war:

“All young people in Sumy have been affected by the war.”

For practitioners working close to the border, youth work is shaped by a lack of public transport, evacuation, disrupted schooling and fear of movement. In some communities, public transport has not operated for months, and young people can participate only if parents or partners provide transport.

The Ukrainian context is also marked by direct experiences of loss and grief. Youth workers described camps and activities involving young people who had recently lost parents or close relatives. One participant reflected:

“One participant had lost her father only two months earlier. The challenge was having people in the team who had the competencies to work with this group.”

Ukraine therefore requires crisis-sensitive youth work that combines safety planning, psychosocial support, grief work, inclusive participation and strong referral pathways.

Key insight

Youth work in Ukraine functions as social infrastructure that helps young people maintain connection, agency and hope under conditions of prolonged insecurity.

Poland: From Emergency Support to Long-Term Integration

Main specificities

- Strong focus on refugee inclusion and long-term adaptation.
- Language is a central barrier to participation.
- Emotional withdrawal and depression are major hidden barriers.

- Young people without parental support are especially excluded.
- Support systems are fragmented and often project-based.

Main needs

- language-sensitive youth work;
- specialists fluent in relevant languages;
- psychological support for war trauma;
- long-term integration programmes;
- supervision and peer exchange;
- anti-discrimination work;
- stable funding and coordination.

The Polish focus group reflects a host-country context where organisations support refugees, newcomers and young people affected by war through integration, education, culture, human rights and community-based support.

The participating organisations included:

- Passage of Dialogue, a municipal public space in Wrocław for meetings, social activities, integration and educational events;
- Non Licet Foundation, working for more than 29 years on violence prevention, human rights and support for people experiencing exclusion;
- Potok Culture Initiatives Foundation, working on culture, education and cross-cultural communication.

The Polish discussion highlighted the transition from emergency response to the need for long-term, stable and coordinated support. Language was identified as one of the most important barriers. It affects not only communication but also belonging, access to information, confidence and peer relationships.

Participants also stressed hidden psychological barriers, especially emotional withdrawal, depression and uncertainty about the future. Young people may be formally present in schools or activities but remain emotionally disconnected.

The focus group identified a major system gap:

“There is no system-wide and ongoing support available to aid migrants with war experience.”

This indicates that support often depends on temporary project funding and individual organisational commitment rather than stable public systems.

Key insight

Youth work in Poland needs to move from emergency response towards stable, coordinated and trauma-informed integration support.

Germany: Integration, Belonging and Psychosocial Youth Work

Main specificities

- Youth work increasingly performs psychosocial functions.
- “Silent trauma” is a key concern.
- Inclusion does not happen automatically in mixed groups.
- Language barriers affect young people and parents.
- Creative and art-based approaches are highly valued.
- Strong emphasis on cooperation between youth work, schools, mental health services and local authorities.

Main needs

- integrated psychosocial support;

- trauma-informed methods;
- translated communication with parents;
- creative methodologies;
- long-term funding;
- stronger coordination between systems.

The German focus group involved six organisations operating in Brandenburg, including municipal youth work, youth associations, psychosocial support services, art initiatives, integration-focused organisations and providers of international youth exchanges and holiday camps.

Participants described their work using words such as:

“Responsibility.”

“Flexibility.”

“Changing.”

“Hope.”

“Overload.”

The German discussion showed that youth work has increasingly taken on psychosocial functions. Participants noted that mental health challenges among young people had increased since the COVID-19 pandemic and that psychosocial wellbeing is now relevant not only for young people affected by war but for youth work in general.

A key country-specific theme was “silent trauma.” Participants described young people who appear well-adjusted externally but continue to struggle internally with anxiety, grief, guilt or uncertainty. This makes it difficult for youth workers to recognise needs and provide appropriate support.

Germany’s specific focus lies in active facilitation of inclusion. Participants observed that refugee youth may be physically present in mixed groups but remain socially isolated, often communicating only with young people from the same country of origin. Inclusion therefore does not happen automatically; it requires intentional methods, translation, parent communication, peer support and long-term relationship-building.

Key insight

Youth work in Germany should strengthen belonging, peer relationships and integrated support structures that connect psychosocial care with participation.

Italy: Structural Inclusion, Rights and Social Justice

Main specificities

- Strong focus on migration, rights and structural barriers.
- Youth workers support not only Ukrainian youth but also young people from Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan and other conflict or migration contexts.
- Bureaucracy, housing discrimination, legal uncertainty and lack of cultural mediation strongly affect participation.
- Participants emphasised the political dimension of youth work and warned against depoliticising the sector.
- Strong concern about hierarchies of suffering and unequal treatment of different refugee groups.

Main needs

- linguistic-cultural mediation;
- professional psychological support;
- housing and rights-based support;

- anti-discrimination and geopolitical education;
- staff supervision;
- recognition of social workers and youth workers.

The Italian focus group included professionals from NGOs, a school, refugee support services and youth work organisations based in Turin. Participants represented Giosef Torino, Red Nova, Civico Zero Torino and a school context.

The Italian discussion had the strongest structural and political dimension. Participants spoke not only about trauma and integration but also about bureaucracy, housing discrimination, legal uncertainty, access to rights, public narratives, racism and unequal treatment of different groups of refugees and migrants.

Participants working with Ukrainian youth highlighted educational and university integration as a major challenge. The lack of linguistic-cultural mediators in schools was seen as a barrier to building relationships between Ukrainian youth and Italian peers.

One major theme was the “temporary mindset” among displaced Ukrainian families during the first years after arrival. Many families expected to return to Ukraine soon and therefore avoided investing fully in Italian systems such as school, employment or local community life. This created a “disconnect” where young people were physically in Italy but emotionally, socially and educationally still connected to Ukraine.

Italian participants also warned against creating a “hierarchy of pain” between different groups affected by war, displacement and migration. They argued that youth work should remain politically aware, anti-discriminatory and attentive to different forms of trauma and exclusion.

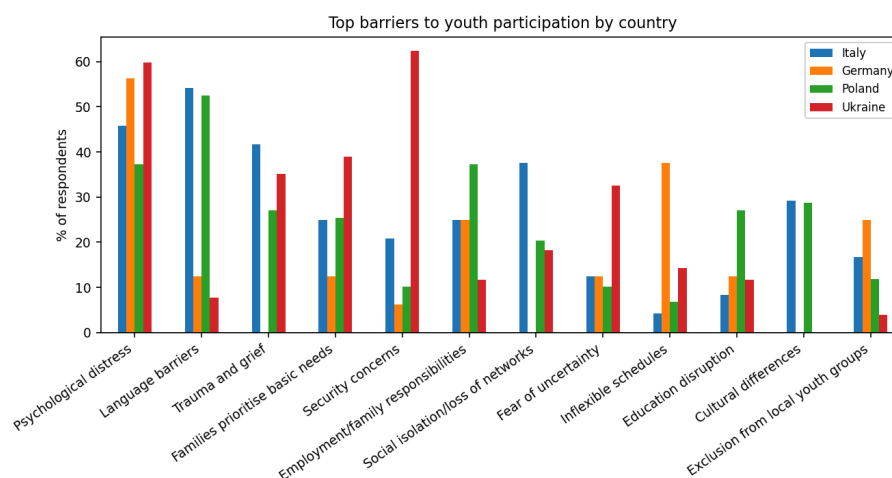
Key insight

Youth work in Italy must combine psychosocial support with structural inclusion, access to rights, anti-discrimination and political awareness.

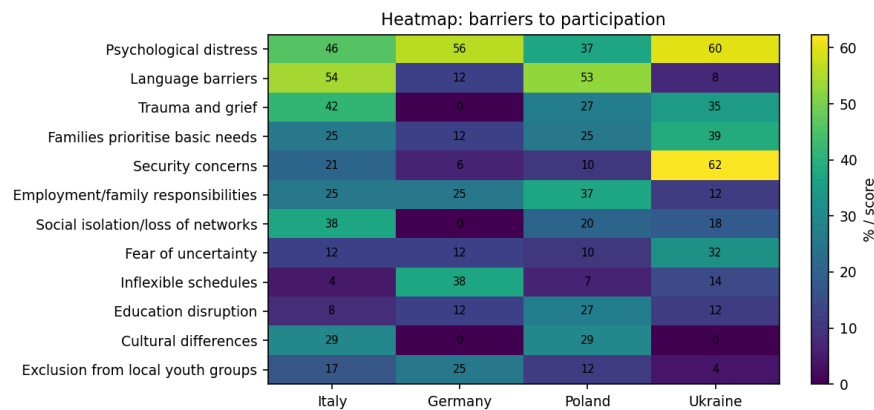
Challenges Faced by Young People Affected by War

Barriers preventing participation in youth activities

The most visible common pattern is the connection between psychological barriers and practical participation barriers. War-related distress, trauma and grief appear in all countries. However, the form of exclusion differs: host countries emphasise language, integration and access to opportunities, while Ukraine emphasises security, safe spaces and uncertainty.



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Country	Barrier 1	Barrier 2	Barrier 3	Barrier 4	Barrier 5
Italy	Language barriers (54%)	Psychological distress (46%)	Trauma and grief (42%)	Social isolation/loss of networks (38%)	Cultural differences (29%)
Germany	Psychological distress (56%)	Other (50%)	Inflexible schedules (38%)	Discrimination (31%)	Exclusion from local youth groups (25%)
Poland	Language barriers (53%)	Psychological distress (37%)	Employment/family responsibilities (37%)	Cultural differences (29%)	Trauma and grief (27%)
Ukraine	Security concerns (62%)	Psychological distress (60%)	Families prioritise basic needs (39%)	Trauma and grief (35%)	Fear of uncertainty (32%)

- Common across all countries: psychological distress, trauma or grief, social isolation, and practical access barriers.
- Italy: language barriers are the highest barrier (54%), followed by psychological distress and trauma/grief; this suggests a strong integration and psychosocial profile.
- Germany: psychological distress is the leading barrier (56%), followed by language barriers, social isolation and financial/access obstacles.
- Poland: language barriers (53%), mental health problems and employment/family responsibilities are key, reflecting a school-based and refugee-inclusion context.
- Ukraine: security concerns (62%), psychological distress (60%), prioritisation of basic needs (39%), trauma/grief (35%) and uncertainty (32%) dominate, reflecting direct exposure to war and instability.

The focus group discussions confirm and deepen the survey findings by showing how barriers to participation are experienced in everyday youth work practice. Across the four countries, participants identified common barriers such as psychological distress, emotional withdrawal, uncertainty about the future, language and communication difficulties, social isolation, lack of trust, lack of safe spaces, financial and practical barriers, insufficient family

support, discrimination and exclusion. However, the meaning and intensity of these barriers differ significantly depending on the national context.

In **Ukraine**, barriers are strongly connected to security, mobility and disrupted social life. Young people may avoid activities because of shelling, air raids, unsafe streets, lack of public transport or parents' fear of letting them go outside. As one participant explained, "Many young people do not go anywhere alone. Ninety percent come in pairs because they do not feel safe." The focus group also highlighted the long-term impact of COVID-19 followed by full-scale war: some young people have lost face-to-face communication skills and are afraid to interact with unfamiliar people. Economic barriers and fear of mobilisation, especially among young men, were also identified as hidden obstacles to participation.

In **Poland**, the main barriers are language, emotional withdrawal and lack of parental support. Limited language skills reduce young people's confidence, access to information and ability to build peer relationships. Participants also stressed that young people may be formally present in activities but emotionally disconnected due to trauma, depression or uncertainty about the future. Young people without adequate parental support were seen as particularly excluded, as parents may themselves be overwhelmed by economic pressure, migration stress and trauma.

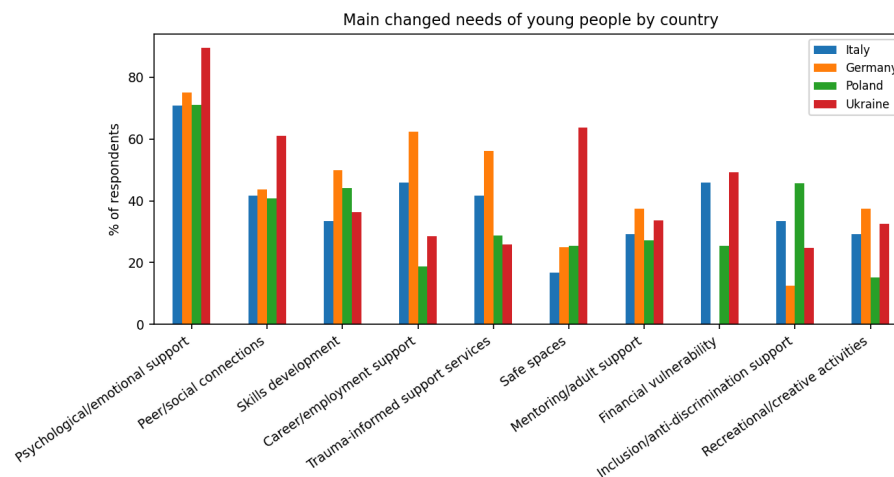
In **Germany**, psychological distress and language barriers often interact. Participants described "silent trauma," where young people appear adapted but continue to struggle internally with grief, guilt or anxiety. Parent communication is also important: if parents do not understand information about youth work opportunities, young people may not access them. Refugee youth may also remain socially isolated even when physically present in youth spaces, which shows that inclusion requires active facilitation.

In **Italy**, barriers are more strongly structural. Participants highlighted bureaucracy, housing discrimination, legal uncertainty, lack of information, language and mediation gaps, educational integration difficulties and precarious living conditions. The "temporary mindset" among displaced Ukrainian families was also identified as a barrier, as some young people remained physically in Italy but emotionally and socially connected to Ukraine, delaying integration. The Italian focus group also pointed to the institutional expectation of gratitude, which can leave young people's complex emotions and losses unrecognised.

Overall, the focus groups show that barriers to participation are not only practical but also emotional, relational and structural. Effective youth work therefore needs to combine safe spaces, psychosocial sensitivity, language and cultural mediation, peer connection, practical support and active inclusion strategies adapted to each country context.

Changed Needs of Young People

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Country	Need 1	Need 2	Need 3	Need 4	Need 5
Italy	Psychological /emotional support (71%)	Financial vulnerability (46%)	Career/employment support (46%)	Peer/social connections (42%)	Trauma-informed support services (42%)
Germany	Psychological /emotional support (75%)	Career/employment support (62%)	Trauma-informed support services (56%)	Skills development (50%)	Peer/social connections (44%)
Poland	Psychological /emotional support (71%)	Inclusion/anti-discrimination support (46%)	Skills development (44%)	Peer/social connections (41%)	Trauma-informed support services (29%)
Ukraine	Psychological /emotional support (90%)	Safe spaces (64%)	Peer/social connections (61%)	Financial vulnerability (49%)	Skills development (36%)

The strongest cross-country result is the increased need for psychological and emotional support: Italy 71%, Germany 75%, Poland 71% and Ukraine 90%. This is the clearest evidence base for making psychosocial and trauma-informed youth work the core of the future training seminar. National patterns differ: Italy combines mental health with career guidance and financial vulnerability; Germany shows a strong career-guidance and trauma-sensitive support profile; Poland combines mental health, integration/anti-discrimination and skills development; Ukraine combines mental health, safe spaces, peer support and financial vulnerability.

The focus group discussions confirm that the needs of young people affected by war have changed significantly and differ depending on the country context. Across the four countries, young people need not only access to activities, but also safety, emotional support, trusted

relationships, peer connection, practical guidance and opportunities to rebuild a sense of future.

In **Ukraine**, the most urgent needs are connected to safety, grief, hope and future orientation. Young people are living with the direct consequences of war, including insecurity, displacement, disrupted education, loss of relatives, fear of movement and uncertainty about the future. Youth workers stressed that young people need safe spaces, psychological and emotional support, opportunities to maintain social connections, and activities that help them believe that they still have a future in Ukraine.

In **Poland**, the focus group highlighted language, adaptation and emotional withdrawal as central needs. Young people affected by war need support in understanding and navigating a new environment, building confidence in communication, and overcoming isolation. Participants noted that some young people may be formally present in schools or activities but remain emotionally disconnected because of trauma, uncertainty or lack of parental support. This points to the need for language-sensitive, trauma-informed and long-term integration support.

In **Germany**, the main needs relate to belonging, hidden or “silent” trauma, and communication with parents. Young people may appear adapted while internally struggling with grief, guilt, anxiety or uncertainty about family members and the future. They need youth work spaces where they can feel accepted, build peer relationships and participate without pressure to speak about traumatic experiences. The focus group also showed that parents’ limited access to information can prevent young people from joining activities, so communication with families should be part of youth work outreach.

In **Italy**, the changed needs are strongly connected to mediation, rights, housing, education and long-term integration. Young people affected by war and displacement need support not only with emotional wellbeing, but also with access to services, school and university integration, cultural mediation, legal orientation, housing and labour market pathways. The focus group also showed that some displaced young people and families remain in a “temporary mindset,” expecting to return home soon and therefore postponing integration. Youth work in Italy therefore needs to combine psychosocial support with rights-based, anti-discrimination and structural inclusion approaches.

Overall, the focus groups show that the changed needs of young people affected by war are multidimensional. Psychological support is essential, but it is not sufficient on its own. Young people also need safety, language support, social belonging, accessible information, family-sensitive outreach, opportunities for participation, and practical pathways for education, employment and community life.

Resilience factors identified in the research

The survey open-ended responses and focus group findings show that resilience among young people affected by war should not be understood only as an individual psychological capacity. Across the four countries, resilience appears as a relational, social and practical process. It is strengthened when young people have access to supportive relationships, safe spaces, peer connection, meaningful participation, creative expression, psychological support and opportunities to imagine a future.

Theme	Interpretation for youth work
Supportive relationships	Family, peers, mentors and trusted adults are repeatedly described as the foundation of resilience.
Safe and accepting spaces	Young people need environments where they can speak, rest, participate and have the feeling of predictability.
Peer networks and belonging	Belonging counters isolation, especially for displaced/refugee youth and young people studying online or living in temporary contexts.
Participation and useful action	Volunteering, youth initiatives and community projects help restore agency and a sense of control.
Psychological support and self-regulation	Respondents mention psychological counselling, emotional support, breathing/grounding methods, art therapy and structured support.
Creativity, sport and non-formal education	Creative, recreational and experiential activities are valued as accessible ways to reconnect, express emotions and build skills.

Supportive Relationships

Supportive relationships were one of the strongest resilience factors identified across the research. Young people affected by war need trusted adults, youth workers, educators, mentors and peers who can provide emotional safety, consistency and recognition. Focus group participants repeatedly stressed that young people recover and regain confidence when they feel that someone listens to them, believes in them and takes their experiences seriously.

In the Italian focus group, stable human relationships were described as the “secret ingredient” of resilience. German participants similarly stressed trust, belonging and meaningful relationships.

Professionals emphasised that young people need not only services, but also approachable and reliable adults who can accompany them through uncertainty, displacement and integration processes.

The survey open-ended responses also pointed to the importance of trust, empathy, individual attention and long-term accompaniment. Respondents highlighted that young people need adults who are able to listen without judgement and support them without reducing them only to their traumatic experiences.

Safe Spaces

Safe spaces were identified as essential in all countries, although their meaning differs depending on the context. In Ukraine, safe spaces are linked to both physical and emotional safety. Young people need places where they can gather despite insecurity, air raids, disrupted transport and parental fears. In Poland, Germany and Italy, safe spaces are more closely linked to belonging, non-discrimination, language accessibility, cultural mediation and emotional comfort in a new environment.

Focus group participants showed that safety is not only about the absence of danger. It also means being accepted, heard and respected. One participant from Ukraine described the importance of inclusive spaces by recalling that:

“A young person with disabilities told us that for the first time in 25 years they felt truly heard.”

This example shows that safe spaces can become transformative when young people who are usually excluded experience recognition and genuine participation.

Peer Support

Peer support appeared as another important factor strengthening resilience. Young people affected by war often lose social networks because of displacement, migration, online schooling, evacuation or separation from friends and family. Youth work can help rebuild these connections by creating spaces where young people meet others with similar experiences, share concerns, and develop a sense that they are not alone.

In Germany, focus group participants stressed that refugee youth may remain socially isolated even when physically present in youth spaces. This means that peer connection does not happen automatically; it requires active facilitation, group-building and inclusive methods. In Poland, peer contact was linked to adaptation and overcoming emotional withdrawal. In Ukraine, peer groups and youth spaces help young people maintain social life despite war-related disruption.

Survey open-ended responses also highlighted peer communication, group activities, youth clubs, exchanges and informal meetings as important ways to strengthen confidence and emotional stability.

Participation and Youth Agency

The research strongly suggests that resilience grows when young people are not treated only as beneficiaries of support, but as active participants and co-creators. Youth agency means giving young people opportunities to make decisions, initiate activities, volunteer, lead projects, support peers and contribute to their communities.

In the Ukrainian focus group, youth workers described successful examples where young people became active after participating in youth exchanges, volunteer teams or local youth spaces. One participant explained:

“Young people felt that someone believed in them. Later they wrote a project proposal themselves and continued the initiative.”

Another participant summarised the importance of agency as follows:

“The secret ingredient is believing in young people and giving them opportunities to do things independently.”

These findings are also reflected in the survey open-ended responses, where respondents often mentioned active participation, volunteering, youth-led initiatives and involvement in community life as practices that help young people regain confidence and motivation.

Creativity and Self-Expression

Creative and non-formal education methods were repeatedly identified as effective tools for strengthening resilience. Creativity allows young people to express emotions indirectly, process difficult experiences in a safer way, build confidence and experience joy, relaxation and connection.

In Ukraine, participants described photography walks, arts workshops, creative schools and youth camps as effective formats. One participant explained:

“Young people love everything creative. We found a balance between learning and creating an atmosphere of rest and enjoyment.”

In Germany, creative projects using animation, storytelling and art helped young people explore mental health topics in ways that felt less threatening than direct discussion. In Italy, theatre, word groups, art-based activities and non-formal education were used to support expression, dialogue and intercultural understanding.

The survey open-ended responses also confirmed the importance of creative methods, including art, theatre, music, storytelling, media, games, camps and youth exchanges. These methods are particularly useful because they combine emotional expression with social connection and active learning.

Psychological Support

Psychological and psychosocial support emerged as a central resilience factor across all research methods. Young people affected by war may experience anxiety, grief, emotional exhaustion, depression, guilt, panic reactions or uncertainty about the future. Youth workers are often the first adults to notice these needs, but they cannot replace professional mental health services.

Focus group participants in all countries stressed the need for stronger cooperation between youth workers, psychologists, social workers, schools and specialised services. In Ukraine, youth workers described difficulties in knowing when and how to refer young people to crisis support. In Poland, participants emphasised the need for specialists in war trauma. In Germany, psychosocial support was seen as increasingly integrated into youth work. In Italy, participants highlighted the need for continuous psychological support for both young people and professionals.

Survey open-ended responses similarly identified psychological support, trauma-informed approaches, emotional regulation, safe communication and access to specialists as important conditions for resilience.

Normality and future Orientation

Youth work should not only focus on trauma. Young people also need joy, friendship, learning, play, creativity, career planning and opportunities to imagine a future.

In Ukraine, this is especially urgent:

“Young people increasingly think not about who they want to become, but how far away from the border they can go.”

The ability to imagine a future was another important resilience factor. War, displacement and uncertainty often disrupt young people’s educational, professional and personal plans. Many young people struggle to think beyond immediate survival, safety or adaptation.

In Ukraine, future orientation was especially important because young people face direct insecurity and uncertainty about life in their communities. One participant observed:

“Young people increasingly think not about who they want to become, but how far away from the border they can go.”

This finding shows that youth work should support not only emotional recovery but also future planning. Career guidance, skills development, mentoring, youth exchanges, volunteering, civic engagement and educational opportunities can help young people rebuild a sense of direction.

In Italy, Germany and Poland, future orientation is linked to integration, language learning, education, employment pathways and long-term belonging in host communities. The collected practices show that job orientation, mentoring, skills development and youth-led projects can help young people move from uncertainty towards agency.

Community Belonging

Finally, community belonging was identified as a cross-cutting resilience factor. Young people affected by war need to feel that they are part of a community where they are accepted, valued and able to contribute. Belonging reduces isolation and strengthens emotional wellbeing, motivation and participation.

In Ukraine, belonging is connected to maintaining hope and connection to local communities despite war. One focus group participant stated:

“Young people need a community where they can find opportunities, friends and reasons to believe there is a future in Ukraine.”

In Germany and Poland, belonging is closely connected to integration, language, peer relationships and overcoming isolation. In Italy, it is linked to cultural mediation, access to rights, education, housing and recognition of young people's complex identities.

Overall, the research shows that resilience is built through a combination of emotional, social and practical support. Young people affected by war become more resilient when they have safe spaces, trusted relationships, peer support, opportunities for creativity and participation, access to psychological support, and real pathways towards education, employment and community life.

Challenges in Youth Work

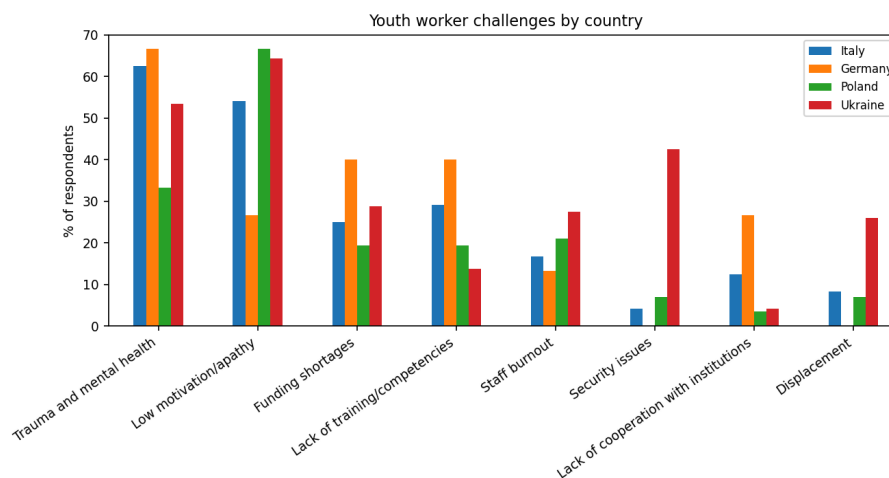
The survey and focus group findings show that youth workers across the four countries face a combination of emotional, methodological, organisational and contextual challenges. While the intensity and form of these challenges differ by country, several common patterns are visible: trauma and mental health needs are increasingly present in youth work; young people often show low motivation, withdrawal or uncertainty; youth workers lack specialised competencies and referral pathways; and many practitioners experience emotional overload and burnout.

Survey Findings: Main Difficulties Faced by Youth Workers

The survey results show that trauma and mental health challenges are among the most visible difficulties in all four countries. They are the top challenge in Italy and Germany and remain among the two most frequently mentioned challenges in Poland and Ukraine. Low motivation and apathy are especially high in Poland and Ukraine, suggesting emotional exhaustion, uncertainty about the future and reduced engagement among young people

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affected by war. Funding shortages appear as an important challenge, particularly in Germany and Ukraine. Security issues are uniquely prominent in Ukraine, where they rank third among youth work challenges.



Country	Top challenge 1	Top challenge 2	Top challenge 3
Italy	Trauma and mental health (62%)	Low motivation/apathy (54%)	Lack of training/competencies (29%)
Germany	Trauma and mental health (67%)	Funding shortages (40%)	Lack of training/competencies (40%)
Poland	Low motivation/apathy (67%)	Trauma and mental health (33%)	Staff burnout (21%)
Ukraine	Low motivation/apathy (64%)	Trauma and mental health (53%)	Security issues (42%)

The survey indicates that youth work with young people affected by war is no longer limited to organising activities or providing educational opportunities. Youth workers are increasingly required to respond to emotional distress, trauma-related reactions, disengagement, insecurity and complex social needs. This creates a strong demand for trauma-informed methods, psychological first aid, crisis recognition, referral skills and sustainable support systems for practitioners.

Focus Group Findings: Challenges Behind the Survey Results

The focus group discussions help explain how these survey findings appear in everyday practice. Across Italy, Germany, Poland and Ukraine, youth workers reported that trauma, grief and emotional distress have become part of their regular work with young people. However, the way these challenges appear differs significantly by context.

In **Ukraine**, trauma is directly connected to the ongoing war. Youth workers support young people who live with shelling, air raids, displacement, insecurity, loss of relatives and disrupted education. Some young people live in frontline or border communities, where public transport may not function and participation depends on whether families consider it safe to leave home. Youth workers also encounter young people who have recently experienced loss. One participant described working with a young person whose father had

died only two months earlier, stressing that the main difficulty was having team members with the right competencies to support such experiences.

In **Poland**, trauma often appears less visibly. Participants described emotional withdrawal, silence, depression, low motivation and uncertainty about the future. Young people may attend activities or school but remain emotionally disconnected. This creates a challenge for youth workers, who need to recognise distress even when young people do not openly speak about their experiences.

In **Germany**, participants described the phenomenon of “silent trauma.” Some young people appear adapted to their new environment but continue to struggle internally with anxiety, grief, guilt or uncertainty about family members who remain in dangerous areas. Youth workers also noted that some young people want to speak openly about war, while others avoid the topic completely. This requires facilitators to create spaces where different emotional responses are respected.

In **Italy**, trauma was discussed not only in relation to war but also in connection with migration journeys, institutional exclusion, racism, housing instability, bureaucracy and precarious legal or social conditions. Italian participants stressed that trauma-informed youth work should avoid reproducing exclusion through rigid educational or institutional practices. The Italian findings show that young people affected by war may need support not only with emotional wellbeing but also with access to rights, education, housing and long-term integration.

Lack of Competencies and Referral Pathways

Both the survey and focus groups show that youth workers often feel insufficiently prepared for the complexity of situations they face. Across the four countries, participants identified the need for stronger competencies in:

- trauma-informed youth work;
- psychological first aid;
- recognising signs of crisis;
- referral to specialised services;
- inclusive facilitation;
- intercultural communication;
- language-sensitive methods;
- working with grief and loss;
- managing emotionally intense groups.

In Ukraine, participants specifically mentioned difficulties in deciding when and how to refer young people to specialised support. One participant reflected:

“Sometimes I referred young people too early, and sometimes too late. I need stronger skills in identifying when crisis intervention is needed.”

In Italy, participants highlighted the challenge of managing emotionally intense group situations and preventing the transfer of trauma from young people to youth workers or other participants. Polish participants identified language, psychological skills and appropriate methodology as key missing competencies. German participants emphasised trauma-informed approaches, psychological first aid, intercultural communication and crisis management.

These findings suggest that youth workers need not only general training but also practical tools, clear procedures and cooperation mechanisms with psychologists, social workers, schools and specialised services.

Low Motivation, Apathy and Emotional Withdrawal

Low motivation and apathy appeared strongly in the survey, especially in Poland and Ukraine. Focus group findings suggest that this should not be interpreted simply as a lack of interest. In many cases, low motivation is linked to emotional exhaustion, uncertainty, disrupted education, loss of social connections and difficulty imagining the future.

In Ukraine, young people may struggle with motivation because daily life is shaped by insecurity, fear of movement, online learning, family stress and uncertainty about whether they can remain in their communities. In Poland, low motivation may be linked to adaptation difficulties, language barriers, emotional withdrawal and lack of parental support. In Germany and Italy, motivation is affected by social isolation, unclear future plans, temporary mindsets, school integration challenges and bureaucratic or structural barriers.

This means that youth workers need to approach low motivation with sensitivity. Rather than seeing it as passivity, they should recognise it as a possible sign of distress, exhaustion or disconnection.

Emotional Overload and Burnout Among Youth Workers

The focus groups also show that youth workers themselves are under significant emotional pressure. Supporting young people affected by war requires constant emotional availability, flexibility and responsibility. However, many youth workers lack structured supervision, peer support and psychological support.

In Ukraine, the boundary between professional and personal life is often blurred because youth workers are also living in the same war context as the young people they support. One participant reflected:

“In our field, work often becomes life. I immerse myself deeply in it and at the same time I am afraid of losing my resources.”

In Italy, staff and mediators have supported high-distress situations for years without sufficient supervision. Participants argued that high-quality support for young people is impossible if professionals themselves are not cared for. In Poland, participants called for supervision from professional psychologists and access to specialists in war trauma. In Germany, supervision, peer exchange and professional psychological support were identified as essential for youth workers dealing with trauma-related needs.

These findings show that youth worker wellbeing is not an additional issue but a core condition for effective youth work with young people affected by war.

Overall, the survey and focus group findings confirm that youth workers are increasingly expected to respond to complex psychosocial, social and structural needs. Trauma and mental health challenges, low motivation, lack of specialised competencies, burnout, funding limitations and weak referral systems are central challenges across the four countries.

The findings suggest that youth work with young people affected by war requires a stronger support framework. Youth workers need training in trauma-informed and inclusive approaches, access to supervision, cooperation with mental health professionals, sustainable funding and practical tools for working with grief, emotional withdrawal,

uncertainty and low motivation. Without these supports, youth workers risk being placed in situations where they are expected to respond to needs that exceed their mandate, competencies and emotional capacity.

System Gaps and Underused Partnerships

The survey and focus group findings show that youth work with young people affected by war is limited not only by individual competencies or organisational capacity, but also by broader systemic gaps. Across the four countries, respondents and focus group participants highlighted the lack of long-term funding, weak coordination between services, insufficient access to specialised mental health support and underused partnerships with schools, municipalities, cultural institutions and international actors.

Lack of Long-Term and Flexible Funding

The survey confirmed that funding for youth activities is one of the strongest support needs in all four countries. It was the highest-rated support need in Italy, Germany and Ukraine, and among the top three in Poland. This shows that youth workers and organisations need stable resources to provide safe spaces, psychosocial support, transport, materials, interpretation, local initiatives, camps, exchanges and follow-up activities.

The focus groups explained why funding is not only a technical issue, but a condition for quality youth work. Short-term and project-based funding creates discontinuity and makes it difficult to build trust, stable relationships and long-term support systems. In Poland, participants stressed that many activities are implemented only during limited project periods, with no guarantee of continuation. In Germany, participants noted that successful programmes are at risk when the topic is no longer high on the public agenda. In Italy, participants warned that civil society and the third sector are often treated as a temporary “patch” for gaps in public systems, rather than as professional and political partners in long-term support.

Weak Coordination Between Systems

Another important systemic gap is weak coordination between youth work, schools, local authorities, mental health services, social services and civil society organisations. The survey showed strong needs for training, peer exchange and methodological support, while the focus groups demonstrated that youth workers often lack clear cooperation mechanisms and referral pathways.

In Germany, participants highlighted fragmentation between youth work, education, psychosocial services and local authorities. In Poland, insufficient coordination among support actors makes it difficult to provide continuous support to young refugees and migrants with war experience. In Italy, fragmented services, bureaucracy and limited access to public mental health systems were described as major obstacles. In Ukraine, cooperation with schools, local authorities and cultural institutions depends strongly on local conditions and personal relationships; in some communities, cooperation is effective, while in others it remains weak or formal.

This fragmentation means that young people affected by war may receive support from separate institutions, but not always from a coordinated support system.

Lack of Accessible Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

The research shows that mental health and psychosocial support remain insufficient, fragmented or difficult to access in all four countries. Survey findings identified trauma and mental health as one of the main challenges faced by youth workers, while focus group participants repeatedly stressed the need for specialised support and referral pathways.

Needed improvements include:

- psychologists specialising in war trauma;
- cultural and linguistic mediation;
- clear referral pathways;
- supervision for youth workers;
- integrated psychosocial support in schools and youth work settings;
- continuous rather than short-term support.

The findings also show that youth workers cannot be expected to replace psychologists or specialised services. At the same time, they often become the first trusted adults to notice emotional distress, withdrawal, anxiety or crisis reactions among young people. This creates a need for closer cooperation between youth work and mental health professionals.

Underused Partnerships

The focus groups identified several partnerships that could strengthen youth work with young people affected by war but are not yet used to their full potential.

Schools are essential partners because they often have direct access to young people affected by war. However, focus group participants noted that schools may be overloaded, formal or insufficiently prepared to work with trauma, displacement and emotional withdrawal. **Mental health services** are urgently needed but are often difficult to access, especially when language, cost, waiting lists or lack of trauma-specialised professionals are barriers.

Local authorities can play an important role in coordination, funding and access to spaces, but their support varies significantly. **Cultural institutions** also have strong potential, especially for creative and non-formal practices, but this potential remains underused. **Youth organisations** need stronger networking and peer exchange, while international partners can provide solidarity, learning and mobility opportunities if these are connected to local follow-up and do not replace locally embedded youth work.

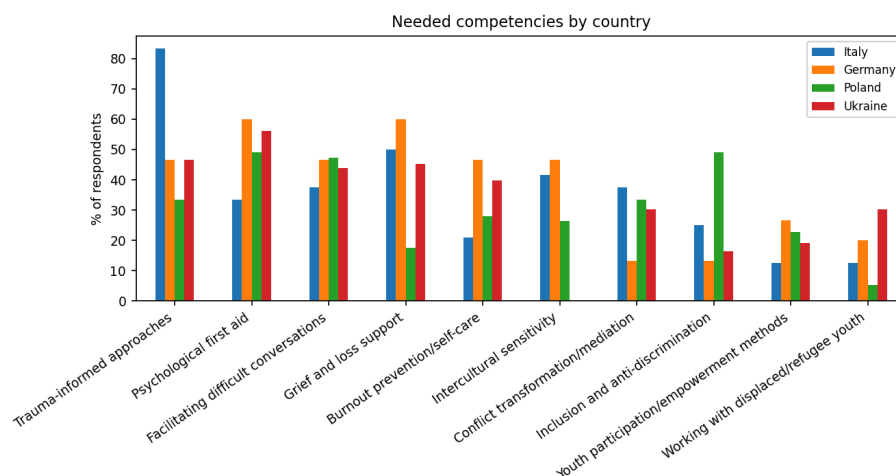
Overall, the survey and focus group findings show that effective youth work with young people affected by war requires more than motivated practitioners and good methods. It needs a supportive ecosystem: stable funding, coordinated services, accessible mental health support, clear referral pathways, strong partnerships and recognition of youth work as an essential part of resilience-building.

Professional competencies needed

The survey and focus group findings show that youth workers supporting young people affected by war need a stronger and more specialised set of professional competencies. The competency gap is strongly psychosocial: respondents across all four countries prioritised psychological first aid, trauma-informed approaches, grief and loss support, and facilitation

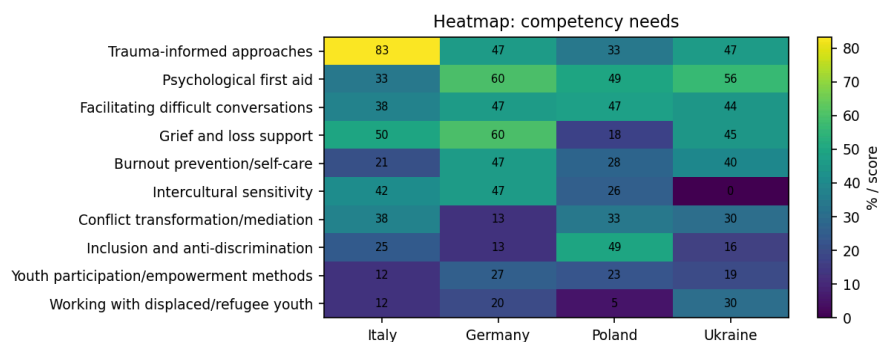
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of emotionally difficult conversations. At the same time, the findings also show the importance of intercultural sensitivity, inclusion, anti-discrimination, conflict transformation, referral skills and self-care.



Survey Findings: Priority Competencies by Country

The survey results show both common needs and country-specific priorities.



Country	Competency 1	Competency 2	Competency 3	Competency 4	Competency 5
Italy	Trauma-informed approaches (83%)	Grief and loss support (50%)	Intercultural sensitivity (42%)	Facilitating difficult conversations (38%)	Conflict transformation/mediation (38%)
Germany	Psychological first aid (60%)	Grief and loss support (60%)	Trauma-informed approaches (47%)	Facilitating difficult conversations (47%)	Burnout prevention/self-care (47%)
Poland	Psychological first aid (49%)	Inclusion and anti-discrimination (49%)	Facilitating difficult conversations (47%)	Conflict transformation/mediation (33%)	Trauma-informed approaches (33%)

Ukraine	Psychological first aid (56%)	Trauma-informed approaches (47%)	Grief and loss support (45%)	Facilitating difficult conversations (44%)	Burnout prevention/self-care (40%)
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The competency gap is strongly psychosocial. Trauma-informed approaches rank first in Italy and second in Ukraine; psychological first aid ranks first in Germany, Poland and Ukraine. Grief and loss support is in the top three in Italy, Germany and Ukraine. Poland additionally highlights inclusion and anti-discrimination, confirming that refugee inclusion and school-community integration are important competence fields. Italy shows a stronger need for intercultural sensitivity, while Germany shows a balanced need across psychological first aid, grief, trauma-sensitive work and conflict sensitivity.

The focus group discussions deepen the survey findings by showing how these competency needs appear in everyday youth work practice. Across all countries, youth workers described situations where they had to respond to trauma, grief, anxiety, withdrawal, panic reactions, uncertainty, conflict, discrimination or emotional overload. Many participants stressed that they often meet young people with complex needs but do not always feel prepared to decide how far youth work support should go and when referral to specialised services is needed.

In **Ukraine**, the need for trauma-informed approaches, psychological first aid and grief support is linked to direct exposure to war. Youth workers support young people who live under shelling, experience displacement, lose family members, or come from frontline and border communities. Ukrainian participants also stressed the need for clearer referral skills. One participant reflected: “Sometimes I referred young people too early, and sometimes too late. I need stronger skills in identifying when crisis intervention is needed.” This shows that youth workers need practical tools for recognising crisis signs and cooperating with psychologists or specialised services.

In **Poland**, the focus group findings explain why psychological first aid, inclusion and anti-discrimination are priority competencies. Youth workers and educators often work with young people who face language barriers, emotional withdrawal, depression, uncertainty and adaptation difficulties. Some young people may be physically present in schools or activities but remain socially or emotionally disconnected. This requires youth workers to recognise hidden distress, use inclusive methods and create spaces where young people can participate without stigma or pressure.

In **Germany**, participants described “silent trauma” as a key challenge. Young people may appear adapted but continue to struggle internally with grief, guilt, anxiety or worry about relatives. This explains the strong need for psychological first aid, grief and loss support, trauma-informed approaches and facilitation of difficult conversations. German participants also stressed the need for self-care and supervision, because youth workers increasingly carry emotional responsibilities without always having sufficient institutional support.

In **Italy**, the competency needs are linked not only to trauma and grief, but also to migration, rights, structural exclusion and cultural mediation. Youth workers need intercultural sensitivity, conflict transformation, facilitation of difficult conversations and the ability to work in contexts marked by bureaucracy, housing discrimination, legal uncertainty, racism and unequal treatment of different groups of refugees and migrants. Italian focus group participants also stressed the need to manage emotionally intense group processes and avoid transferring trauma from one participant to another.

Main Competency Areas

The combined survey and focus group findings point to several priority competency areas for youth workers.

First, youth workers need **trauma-informed youth work competencies**. This includes understanding how trauma can affect behaviour, motivation, communication, trust and participation. Youth workers need to avoid approaches that put pressure on young people to disclose painful experiences, while still creating spaces where emotions can be expressed safely.

Second, they need **psychological first aid and crisis recognition skills**. Youth workers should be able to identify signs of emotional distress, panic reactions, depression, withdrawal or crisis, provide initial support, and understand when professional referral is necessary.

Third, **grief and loss support** is essential, especially in contexts where young people have lost family members, homes, communities, friendships or a sense of normal life. Youth workers need tools to support young people without replacing professional psychological care.

Fourth, youth workers need skills in **facilitating difficult conversations**. War, displacement, discrimination, identity, belonging, guilt and future uncertainty can be emotionally sensitive topics. Facilitators need to manage such conversations safely, inclusively and without escalating conflict or retraumatizing participants.

Fifth, **intercultural sensitivity, inclusion and anti-discrimination** are crucial, especially in host-country contexts. Youth workers need to support young people who face language barriers, cultural adaptation, social exclusion, racism, unequal access to services or lack of recognition.

Sixth, **conflict transformation and mediation** are important for working with mixed groups, managing tensions, supporting dialogue and building trust between young people from different backgrounds.

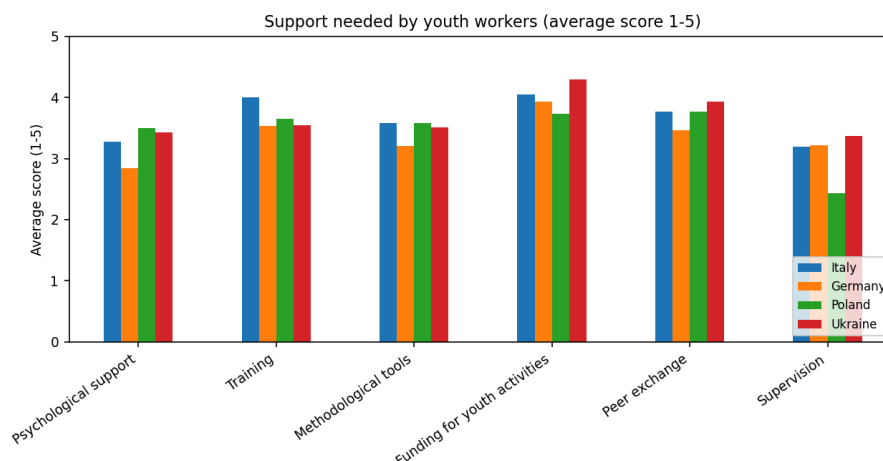
Finally, the findings highlight the importance of **burnout prevention and self-care**. Youth workers supporting young people affected by war often face emotionally intense situations. Without supervision, peer exchange and boundaries, they risk emotional exhaustion. Supporting youth worker wellbeing is therefore a professional competency need and a condition for quality youth work.

Overall, the research shows that youth workers need a combination of psychosocial, intercultural, facilitation and self-care competencies. The strongest common need is the ability to work safely with trauma, grief, emotional distress and uncertainty. However, these competencies must be adapted to country-specific realities: active war and direct loss in Ukraine; refugee inclusion and school-community integration in Poland; silent trauma and belonging in Germany; and mediation, rights and structural inclusion in Italy.

Support needed by youth workers

The survey and focus group findings show that youth workers supporting young people affected by war need stronger financial, professional and emotional support. Across all four

countries, respondents emphasised the need for funding, training, peer exchange and practical tools.



Country	Support need 1	Support need 2	Support need 3
Italy	Funding for youth activities (4.05)	Training (4.00)	Peer exchange (3.76)
Germany	Funding for youth activities (3.93)	Training (3.53)	Peer exchange (3.47)
Poland	Peer exchange (3.76)	Funding for youth activities (3.73)	Training (3.65)
Ukraine	Funding for youth activities (4.29)	Peer exchange (3.93)	Training (3.55)

Funding for youth activities is the highest or among the highest-rated support needs in all four countries. This reflects the need for stable resources to organise safe, inclusive and continuous activities, including youth spaces, transport, materials, interpretation, psychosocial support, camps, exchanges and local initiatives.

Training is also a strong cross-country need. Youth workers require practical competencies in trauma-informed youth work, psychological first aid, grief and loss support, inclusive facilitation, intercultural communication, referral pathways and self-care. The focus groups confirmed that youth workers increasingly face emotional distress, withdrawal, trauma, low motivation and complex family or social problems among young people, while often lacking sufficient tools to respond.

Peer exchange is another important support need. Practitioners want opportunities to share methods, discuss difficult situations, learn from colleagues and adapt practices from other countries. This is especially relevant in an Erasmus+ project, where partners work in different contexts: active war in Ukraine, refugee inclusion in Poland, psychosocial youth work in Germany, and rights-based integration in Italy.

The focus groups also highlighted the importance of supervision and emotional support for youth workers. Although supervision was rated unevenly in the survey, participants in all countries described emotional overload, blurred boundaries and the risk of burnout. Youth workers need spaces for reflection, peer support and professional guidance.

Overall, the findings show that quality youth work with young people affected by war cannot rely only on individual commitment. It requires stable funding, practical training, peer learning, supervision and stronger cooperation with schools, psychologists, social services, municipalities and other support systems.

PART II. Collection of Youth Work Practices

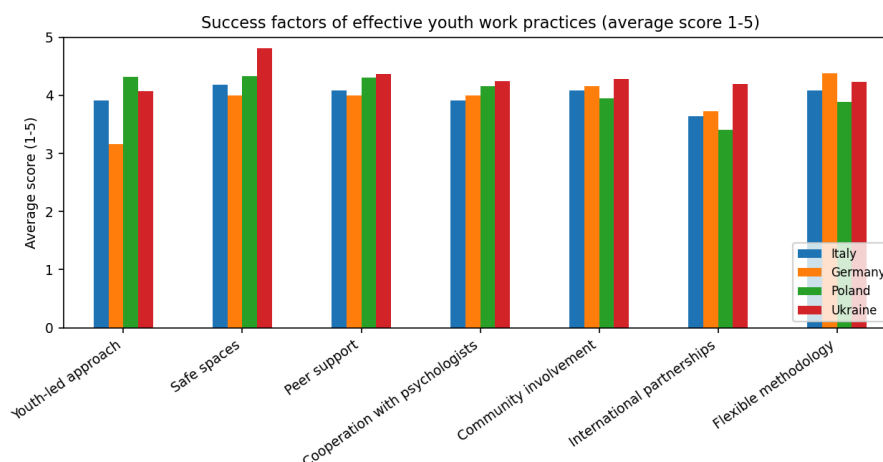
Effective Youth Work Practices

The collection of youth work practices, survey open-ended responses and focus group findings show that the most effective youth work approaches combine emotional safety, peer connection, active participation and practical usefulness for young people. Across the four countries, respondents identified several main families of practice: psychosocial group activities, safe spaces, peer support, youth-led initiatives, creative and non-formal methods, mentoring, community-based action and international exchange.

The strongest practices are not isolated psychosocial interventions. They are approaches that help young people feel safe, rebuild trust, connect with others, express themselves and regain a sense of agency.

Success Factors Identified in the Survey

The survey asked respondents to assess which factors contribute most to successful youth work with young people affected by war. Across all countries, safe spaces, peer support and community involvement were rated highly.



Country	Success factor 1	Success factor 2	Success factor 3
Italy	Safe spaces (4.18)	Peer support (4.08)	Community involvement (4.08)
Germany	Flexible methodology (4.38)	Community involvement (4.15)	Safe spaces (4.00)
Poland	Safe spaces (4.33)	Youth-led approach (4.32)	Peer support (4.31)
Ukraine	Safe spaces (4.81)	Peer support (4.37)	Community involvement (4.29)

- Safe spaces rank extremely high, especially in Ukraine (4.81/5) and Poland (4.33/5).

- Peer support is consistently important, confirming the need to build peer-to-peer and group-based methods into the seminar.
- Cooperation with psychologists is important in all countries and should be framed as interdisciplinary cooperation rather than outsourcing all psychosocial responsibility to specialists.
- Flexible methodology is particularly important in Germany and Ukraine, where needs and participation conditions are unstable.
- International partnerships are valued, but should support local capacity and not replace locally embedded youth work.

Safe and Supportive Spaces

Safe spaces were identified as one of the most important effective practices in both the survey and focus groups. However, the meaning of a safe space differs across country contexts. In Ukraine, safe space includes physical safety, emotional support and continuity amid war. Young people need places where they can meet despite insecurity, air raids, disrupted transport and parental concerns. In Poland, safe space means language-sensitive and welcoming integration. In Germany, it means belonging and active inclusion in mixed groups. In Italy, safe space is connected to trust, rights-based support, cultural mediation and freedom from discrimination.

Survey open responses also highlighted the importance of safe environments. One respondent noted:

“Creating safe environments where young people can meet, build trust, learn together and develop future opportunities is essential for restoring confidence and participation.”

This confirms that safe spaces are not only physical locations. They are relational environments where young people feel accepted, respected and able to participate without fear, pressure or stigma.

Peer Support, Youth-Led Initiatives and Meaningful Participation

Peer support was one of the strongest practice elements across countries. Young people affected by war often lose social networks because of displacement, migration, online learning, evacuation or separation from friends and family. Peer-based activities help them realise that they are not alone and create opportunities for mutual support.

Polish survey responses particularly emphasised peer learning and inclusion:

“Peer-support activities help young people regain confidence and create meaningful relationships in a new environment.”

Youth-led approaches were especially visible in Poland and Ukraine. In Ukraine, focus group participants described how young people developed volunteer teams, initiated mental health projects, organised activities and continued engagement in youth spaces after exchanges. One participant explained:

“Young people felt that someone believed in them. Later they wrote a project proposal themselves and continued the initiative.”

Youth-led practices are effective because they transform young people from recipients of support into active agents of resilience and recovery. They help rebuild confidence,

responsibility and a sense of control over life. In the Ukrainian survey responses, this was also connected to volunteering:

“When adolescents feel support from peers, they understand they are not alone. When they volunteer and help others, they regain a sense of control over their lives.”

Creative and Non-Formal Education Methods

Creative and non-formal methods were repeatedly identified as effective in the survey and focus groups. They allow young people to express emotions indirectly, build confidence and process difficult experiences in a safer way.

In Germany, participants described a creative project where young people explored mental health through animation and storytelling. Such methods made it possible to speak about difficult topics without forcing direct disclosure. In Ukraine, participants mentioned photography walks, arts workshops, creative schools and camps. One participant explained:

“Young people love everything creative. We found a balance between learning and creating an atmosphere of rest and enjoyment.”

In Italy, focus group participants referred to educational theatre, non-formal education, job orientation sessions, word groups, art-based activities and intercultural learning. These practices combine emotional expression with learning, dialogue and social connection.

Creative methods are especially useful because they do not reduce young people to trauma. They create space for joy, imagination, identity, skills and future orientation.

Psychosocial and Multidisciplinary Practices

The research shows that psychosocial support is central to effective youth work, but it should not be placed only on youth workers. Cooperation with psychologists and other specialists is important in all countries and should be understood as interdisciplinary cooperation rather than outsourcing all psychosocial responsibility to specialists.

In Italy, Civico Zero’s “Word Group” was identified as a strong example of psychosocial and multidisciplinary practice. The group is facilitated by a psychologist and supported by cultural mediators. It is flexible, informal and open, allowing young people to share thoughts and experiences without pressure. Themes can later be explored through artistic activities or individual support.

In Germany, focus group participants emphasised integrated models connecting youth work and psychosocial support. In Poland, participants identified access to psychological expertise and specialists in war trauma as essential. In Ukraine, youth workers stressed the need for referral skills, trauma-informed methods and better preparation to respond when young people experience panic attacks, grief or emotional breakdowns.

Ukrainian survey responses also stressed the value of combining psychological support with peer communication, volunteering and non-formal education:

“Psychological support, communication with peers, volunteering and non-formal education help young people process their experiences and strengthen confidence in the future.”

Effective psychosocial practices therefore combine emotional safety, group support, creative methods, clear referral pathways and cooperation with specialised services.

Community-Based Action and Future Orientation

Community involvement was one of the highest-rated success factors in Italy, Germany and Ukraine. Effective practices help young people connect not only with peers, but also with their wider community. This can include volunteering, local initiatives, youth councils, community events, cultural activities, mentoring, intergenerational work and cooperation with schools or municipalities.

German respondents highlighted flexible and community-based approaches that support integration and belonging:

“Young people need spaces where they can participate voluntarily, build relationships and feel accepted regardless of their background.”

“Community-based activities that combine psychosocial support, informal learning and practical participation opportunities are particularly effective.”

Italian responses also connected effective youth work with future-oriented development:

“Career guidance combined with peer support helps young refugees and displaced young people reconnect with their future plans.”

Community-based action is important because it gives young people a visible role. Instead of being seen only as vulnerable or displaced, they can contribute, organise, support others and become recognised as active members of the community.

Mobility, Exchanges and International Encounters

International and residential experiences were identified as effective in Ukraine, Germany and Italy. Youth exchanges, camps and international encounters can help young people experience normality, build friendships, develop intercultural understanding and temporarily distance themselves from war-related stress.

In Ukraine, focus group participants explained that youth exchanges often encouraged young people to remain active after returning home:

“Several participants later joined the youth space, started organising activities and even developed their own projects.”

In Germany, residential youth exchanges and holiday camps helped young people build trust and friendships by living and learning together. In Italy, international youth work was described as a space where peer learning and solidarity can happen intensively and where young people from conflict contexts can be recognised beyond victimhood.

International partnerships are therefore valuable, but they should support local capacity and not replace locally embedded youth work. The most effective international activities are those connected to follow-up actions in local communities.

Cross-Country Synthesis

Across all four countries, effective practices share several common characteristics.

Practice element	Evidence across countries
Safe spaces	Consistently ranked among the most important success factors
Peer support	Strongly linked to resilience, confidence and belonging
Cooperation with psychologists	Important for addressing trauma and mental health needs
Community involvement	Helps young people rebuild social networks and feel useful
Youth participation	Restores agency, responsibility and self-confidence
Creative methods	Support expression, learning and emotional processing
Flexible methodology	Allows adaptation to changing needs and unstable conditions
Meaningful engagement	Volunteering, initiatives and practical activities increase motivation

Overall, the most successful youth work practices combine emotional support with participation, peer connection, creativity and community engagement. They help young people affected by war move from isolation towards belonging, from uncertainty towards agency, and from receiving support towards contributing to others.

These findings have direct relevance for the Erasmus+ training seminar. The training should use collected practices as case studies and support participants in adapting them to their own contexts. Particular attention should be given to safe spaces, peer support, youth-led initiatives, creative methods, psychosocial cooperation, community-based action and international exchange with strong local follow-up.

Purpose of the practice collection

The collection of youth work practices aims to identify and analyse youth work approaches that support the resilience of young people affected by war, with a particular focus on Ukrainian youth and other young people experiencing war-related displacement, trauma, insecurity or disruption of their social environments.

This part of the research uses a qualitative, practice-based approach. It focuses on documenting and analysing youth work initiatives implemented by youth organisations, youth centres, municipalities, educational institutions and other actors working directly with young people affected by war or in war-affected contexts.

The collection is intended to show how youth work can respond to the needs identified through the survey and focus groups. It gathers examples of practices that support young people's psychosocial wellbeing, participation, inclusion, peer connection, agency and resilience through youth work methods, including non-formal education, safe spaces, creative activities, peer support, volunteering, mentoring and community-based action.

The good practices are collected through descriptions of initiatives using a standardised good practice template developed for the research. The template requests information on:

- the context of the initiative;
- the target group of young people;
- objectives and main activities;
- youth work methods used;
- participation of young people;
- observed impact and outcomes;
- challenges and lessons learned;
- potential for transferability to other contexts.

The practices are selected and analysed according to the following criteria:

- relevance to the needs of young people affected by war;
- evidence of positive impact on participants;
- meaningful participation of young people in the initiative;
- use of youth work approaches, including non-formal education, peer support and safe spaces;
- innovation or creativity in addressing challenges related to war, displacement and social disruption;
- transferability, meaning the potential for adaptation in other local, national or international contexts.

Practices meeting several of these criteria were selected for further analysis and inclusion in the collection. The aim is not only to present successful examples, but also to identify practical elements that can inspire future youth work activities, Erasmus+ training programmes and local initiatives supporting young people affected by war.

Comparative analysis of practices

The most common types of practices include:

- Psychosocial support and mental health promotion through individual counselling, group support, trauma-informed approaches, and creative therapies.
- Safe spaces for young people, providing opportunities for recovery, emotional expression, and social interaction.
- Non-formal education programmes, including youth camps, workshops, leadership training, peer learning, and experiential learning.
- Arts-based and creative activities, such as storytelling, animation, music, photography, theatre, and art therapy.
- Intercultural dialogue and social integration initiatives, bringing together local and displaced young people through shared activities.
- Youth participation and leadership programmes, encouraging young people to design, implement, and evaluate community initiatives.
- Holistic support services, combining psychosocial support with legal assistance, language learning, education, employment guidance, and community engagement.

The practices primarily respond to the following needs:

- Recovery from war-related trauma and prolonged stress.
- Access to mental health and psychosocial support.
- A sense of safety, stability, and belonging.

- Social inclusion and prevention of isolation.
- Opportunities to rebuild peer relationships and community connections.
- Development of resilience, self-confidence, and coping skills.
- Educational continuity and access to non-formal learning.
- Language acquisition and cultural orientation.
- Employment readiness and social integration for displaced young people.
- Meaningful participation, leadership, and civic engagement.

For Ukraine, the most relevant practices are those that strengthen resilience within communities directly affected by war, including:

- Trauma-informed youth work and psychosocial support programmes.
- Safe spaces and youth centres providing long-term emotional and social support.
- Peer support groups and youth-led community initiatives.
- Leadership development and civic participation programmes that empower young people to contribute to community recovery.
- Mobile and outreach youth work reaching rural and frontline communities.
- Creative and arts-based approaches that help young people process traumatic experiences.
- Capacity-building programmes for youth workers, psychologists, and community facilitators.
- Community-based initiatives that rebuild trust, social cohesion, and local resilience.

For host countries receiving displaced young people, the most relevant practices focus on integration and inclusion, including:

- Language learning and cultural orientation programmes.
- Intercultural youth exchanges and dialogue.
- Inclusive youth clubs, camps, and community activities involving both local and displaced young people.
- Employment guidance, career counselling, and vocational support.
- Legal assistance and access to public services.
- Holistic support centres combining psychosocial, educational, and employment services.
- School-based inclusion programmes supported by intercultural mediators and youth workers.
- Community-building initiatives that reduce discrimination and strengthen mutual understanding.

Cross-country transferability

Several elements demonstrate strong transferability regardless of the national context:

- Trauma-informed and resilience-focused youth work.
- Safe space methodology.
- Non-formal education and experiential learning.
- Peer-to-peer learning and mentoring.
- Arts-based and creative methods for emotional expression.
- Youth participation and co-design of activities.
- Intercultural learning and dialogue.
- Multi-agency cooperation between youth organisations, schools, municipalities, psychologists, and social services.
- Community-based approaches tailored to local needs.
- Continuous mentoring and follow-up after project activities.

- Monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation based on participants' feedback.

The analysis highlights a common **set of competencies required for youth workers**:

- Trauma-informed practice and psychological first aid awareness.
- Facilitation and group management skills.
- Non-formal education methodology.
- Intercultural competence and diversity awareness.
- Active listening, empathy, and effective communication.
- Conflict transformation and mediation skills.
- Safeguarding and child protection knowledge.
- Community outreach and partnership-building.
- Mentoring and coaching skills.
- Project planning, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Ability to create inclusive, participatory, and psychologically safe environments.
- Basic knowledge of mental health promotion and referral mechanisms.
- Flexibility, adaptability, and crisis-response skills.
- Digital facilitation and communication skills where appropriate.

Link between practices and research findings

The analysis of the documented practices demonstrates a strong alignment between the needs identified through the research and the approaches implemented by youth organisations, municipalities, schools, and civil society organisations across Europe. Although the practices differ in scale and context, they consistently address the key challenges faced by young people affected by war.

High need for psychosocial support

The research identified psychosocial support as one of the most urgent needs. Nearly all documented practices integrate mental health and wellbeing into their activities, either as a primary objective or as a cross-cutting component.

Examples include trauma-informed youth work, psychological counselling, peer support groups, arts-based interventions, creative expression through storytelling, animation, music and theatre, as well as mentoring and emotional support provided within youth centres and community programmes. Several practices combine psychosocial support with non-formal education, recognising that emotional recovery and personal development are closely interconnected.

Young people need safe spaces

The practices consistently demonstrate that creating physically and emotionally safe spaces is a prerequisite for participation and recovery.

Safe spaces are established through youth centres, schools, residential camps, community hubs, and dedicated support centres where young people can build trust, develop relationships, express emotions, and participate without fear of discrimination or judgement. Many practices also apply trauma-informed and safeguarding principles to ensure that activities are responsive to the experiences of war-affected young people.

Language barriers limit participation

Research highlighted language as one of the major barriers to participation, particularly for displaced young people living in host countries.

Many practices directly address this challenge through language courses, speaking clubs, intercultural mediation, bilingual support, intercultural assistants in schools, and communication-friendly non-formal education methods. Several initiatives deliberately

combine language learning with social activities, helping young people build confidence while strengthening relationships with local peers.

Youth need agency and belonging

The research emphasises that young people want to be active contributors rather than passive beneficiaries. This finding is strongly reflected across the documented practices.

Many initiatives actively involve young people in designing activities, facilitating workshops, implementing community projects, creating artistic outputs, participating in peer learning, and contributing to decision-making processes. These participatory approaches strengthen young people's sense of ownership, belonging, self-confidence, and civic engagement while rebuilding trust in communities.

Youth workers lack trauma-informed tools

The documented practices confirm the growing recognition that youth workers require additional competencies to effectively support young people affected by war.

Many successful initiatives rely on trauma-informed youth work, cooperation with psychologists, multidisciplinary teams, supervision, and specialised training for youth workers, teachers, and volunteers. The practices demonstrate that strengthening professional capacity is essential for creating safe environments and responding appropriately to complex emotional and behavioural needs.

Young people need future orientation

The research highlights the importance of restoring hope and helping young people envision positive futures despite uncertainty.

Many practices respond by combining psychosocial support with leadership development, career guidance, skills development, volunteering, civic participation, educational support, and employment preparation. Rather than focusing only on recovery from trauma, these initiatives encourage young people to identify their strengths, develop competencies, and actively shape their own futures and contribute to their communities.

Overall observations

Across all countries, the practices illustrate a shift from crisis response towards resilience-building and long-term inclusion. The most effective initiatives combine psychosocial support, non-formal education, meaningful participation, intercultural dialogue, and community engagement within integrated, youth-centred approaches.

The analysis also highlights several cross-cutting success factors: multidisciplinary cooperation, trauma-informed practice, youth participation in decision-making, safe and inclusive environments, strong local partnerships, and flexible community-based responses. These elements appear consistently across the documented practices and represent transferable principles that can inform future youth work policies and programmes supporting young people affected by war.

Table with examples of practices

Research finding	How practices respond	Practices demonstrating this finding
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High need for psychosocial support	Psychosocial support is integrated into youth work through counselling, peer support, mentoring, trauma-informed facilitation, creative methods, and emotional skills development.	Ukraine: Happy Girls Club (Sad Community); Healthy Minds (Zolotonosha). Germany: War Trauma Recovery Project; Teen Spirit / Inside the Croco / Mind Capture; JRK:zusammen. Italy: Civico Zero; WISE Holistic Support Centres. Poland: Secondary School No. 15 (psychological support and counselling).
Young people need safe spaces	All countries highlight the importance of safe physical and emotional spaces where young people can recover, build trust, and participate in community life.	Ukraine: Happy Girls Club; Healthy Minds. Germany: War Trauma Recovery Project; Teen Spirit; JRK:zusammen. Italy: Civico Zero; WISE Holistic Support Centres. Poland: Secondary School No. 15 (safe school environment).
Language barriers limit participation	Practices in host countries address language barriers through language courses, intercultural mediation, bilingual support, speaking clubs, and inclusive education.	Italy: Civico Zero (Italian language courses); WISE (speaking clubs and cultural orientation). Poland: Secondary School No. 15 (Polish as a second language, intercultural assistants). Germany: JRK:zusammen and War Trauma Recovery Project (intercultural exchange).
Youth need agency and belonging	Young people are involved as active participants, peer leaders, organisers, artists, facilitators, and community actors rather than passive beneficiaries.	Ukraine: Happy Girls Club (Girls' Leadership School, local initiatives); Healthy Minds (youth-led initiatives, mentoring). Germany: Teen Spirit; JRK:zusammen; War Trauma Recovery Project. Italy: Storytelling Workshop; Puppet-making Workshop; Civico Zero. Poland: Project-based learning and participation in school life.
Youth workers lack trauma-informed tools	Successful practices combine youth work with trauma-informed approaches, multidisciplinary teams, psychologists, mentoring, safeguarding, and specialised facilitator guidance.	Ukraine: Happy Girls Club (UNICEF facilitator manual, referral mechanisms); Healthy Minds ("Do No Harm", psychologists, mentoring). Germany: War Trauma Recovery Project; Teen Spirit. Italy: WISE multidisciplinary model; Civico Zero. Poland: Psychological support teams and teacher training.

Young people need future orientation	Practices strengthen hope and resilience by supporting education, career planning, leadership, volunteering, civic participation, and community engagement.	Ukraine: Happy Girls Club (career guidance, digital skills, leadership); Healthy Minds (leadership, local initiatives, community development). Italy: WISE (employment support and labour market integration); Civico Zero (education and employment orientation). Germany: JRK:zusammen (long-term engagement); Teen Spirit (self-development). Poland: Educational continuity and academic support.
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Key observations

The review of the documented practices demonstrates that the research findings are strongly reflected in youth work across different European contexts. Although the initiatives target different groups and operate in different settings, they share several common principles:

- Integrated support is more effective than isolated interventions. The most successful practices combine psychosocial support, non-formal education, participation, and community engagement rather than addressing only one need.
- Participation itself contributes to resilience. Young people recover more effectively when they are trusted as active contributors and decision-makers rather than passive recipients of support.
- Safe spaces are both physical and relational. The documented practices create environments where young people experience trust, acceptance, meaningful relationships, and emotional safety.
- Trauma-informed approaches strengthen the quality of youth work. Practices that combine youth work with psychological expertise are better equipped to respond to the complex needs of war-affected young people.
- Future orientation is a protective factor. Opportunities for learning, leadership, volunteering, employment, and community engagement help young people move beyond crisis management and regain a sense of purpose and hope.

Three interconnected levels of support identified across the practices

1. Healing – psychosocial support, safe spaces, trauma-informed approaches, emotional recovery.
2. Belonging – inclusion, peer relationships, intercultural dialogue, community participation.
3. Future-building – leadership, education, employment, civic engagement, youth-led initiatives.

PART III. Recommendations

Recommendations for youth work development

The survey, focus group findings and collected youth work practices show that youth work with young people affected by war needs to become more trauma-informed, inclusive, participatory and better connected to wider support systems. The recommendations below

are addressed to youth workers and organisations, training providers, local authorities and institutions, and Erasmus+ project implementation.

Recommendations for Youth Workers and Organisations

Youth workers and organisations should create safe and inclusive spaces adapted to each country context. In Ukraine, this means combining emotional safety with physical safety and flexibility in response to security risks. In Poland, Germany and Italy, safe spaces should focus on language accessibility, belonging, cultural mediation, anti-discrimination and integration.

Youth work activities should combine psychosocial support with participation, creativity and peer connection. The most effective practices identified in the research were those that helped young people feel safe, build trust, connect with peers, express emotions and participate actively.

Youth workers should develop youth-led initiatives that give young people responsibility and agency. Young people affected by war should not be treated only as beneficiaries of support, but as individuals with capacities, aspirations, ideas and rights. Volunteering, peer education, youth-led projects and community initiatives can help young people regain confidence and a sense of control.

Creative and non-formal education methods should be used more widely. Art, theatre, photography, storytelling, animation, camps, youth exchanges and group-based methods allow young people to process difficult experiences indirectly and safely, while also supporting learning, confidence and social connection.

Youth work organisations should strengthen cooperation with psychologists, social workers, schools, cultural mediators and specialised services. Youth workers should not be expected to replace mental health professionals, but they need clear referral pathways and cooperation mechanisms.

Recommendations for Training Providers

Training providers should design capacity-building programmes that respond directly to the competency gaps identified in the research. Priority topics should include trauma-informed youth work, psychological first aid, grief and loss support, recognition of crisis signs, referral pathways and cooperation with psychologists.

Training should also strengthen skills in intercultural communication, inclusive facilitation, anti-discrimination, conflict-sensitive practice and facilitation of difficult conversations. These competencies are especially important in contexts where young people face language barriers, integration challenges, social isolation or unequal access to services.

Training programmes should provide practical tools for working with hidden trauma, emotional withdrawal, low motivation and uncertainty about the future. Youth workers need to understand that low participation or apathy may be signs of distress rather than lack of interest.

Training should include modules on youth worker wellbeing, boundaries, supervision and burnout prevention. Supporting young people affected by war is emotionally demanding, and sustainable youth work requires care for practitioners as well as for young people.

Collected youth work practices should be used as case studies in training activities. Participants should analyse what works, identify transferable elements and adapt methods to their own local realities.

Recommendations for Local Authorities and Institutions

Local authorities and institutions should recognise youth work as an essential part of resilience-building and social inclusion systems. Youth work should not be seen only as leisure provision, but as a key support structure for young people affected by war, displacement and insecurity.

Municipalities and public institutions should provide longer-term and flexible funding for youth activities. Short-term project funding is not sufficient to build trust, continuity and sustainable support systems. Funding should support safe spaces, youth centres, outreach, transport, materials, interpretation, psychosocial support and local follow-up activities.

Stronger coordination is needed between schools, youth organisations, mental health services, social services, municipalities, cultural institutions and civil society actors. Local authorities can play an important role in creating referral pathways, coordination platforms and cooperation agreements.

Schools should be supported to cooperate more closely with youth organisations. Since many young people affected by war are reached through educational settings, schools need methods, partnerships and external support to address trauma, emotional withdrawal, language barriers and inclusion.

Mental health and psychosocial support should become more accessible. This includes access to psychologists with experience in war trauma, cultural and linguistic mediation, supervision for youth workers and integrated psychosocial support in schools and youth work spaces.

Recommendations for Erasmus+ Project Implementation

The Erasmus+ project should translate these youth work development recommendations into practical capacity building and local action. The international training seminar should focus on trauma-informed, inclusive and participatory youth work with young people affected by war.

The training should combine theoretical input, practical exercises, case studies, peer exchange and adaptation of collected practices. Participants should leave the training with concrete tools that can be applied in their organisations and communities.

The project should support local follow-up initiatives in each partner country. These initiatives should be based on the research findings and adapted to national contexts: safety, grief and future orientation in Ukraine; language, adaptation and emotional withdrawal in Poland; belonging, silent trauma and parent communication in Germany; and mediation, rights, housing, education and long-term integration in Italy.

Erasmus+ activities should strengthen peer exchange between youth workers from different countries. Partners should share methods, discuss difficult cases, compare approaches and build a common understanding of trauma-informed, inclusive and participatory youth work.

International mobility and partnerships should support local capacity rather than replace locally embedded youth work. Exchanges, seminars and international encounters should be

connected to follow-up actions in local communities, so that learning is transferred into practice.

The project should also include reflection on youth worker wellbeing and supervision. This can be done through peer support groups, reflective sessions, mentoring or structured debriefing during and after project activities.

The Erasmus+ project activities should address the systemic gaps identified in the research. The training seminar and follow-up actions should therefore support not only individual competence development, but also cooperation between organisations, mapping of referral pathways, development of local partnerships and exchange of sustainable youth work practices across countries.

Overall, youth work development in this field should focus on building a supportive ecosystem around young people affected by war. This means combining safe spaces, psychosocial support, participation, creativity, peer connection, professional training, local partnerships and sustainable funding.

Recommended Training Seminar Curriculum

The survey and focus group findings strongly support a training seminar programme that combines trauma-informed competence development with practical intervention design. Youth workers across all four countries reported that they increasingly work with trauma, grief, emotional withdrawal, uncertainty, integration challenges, low motivation and complex psychosocial needs. At the same time, they need practical tools, peer exchange, referral knowledge, self-care strategies and methods that can be adapted to different country contexts.

The training seminar should therefore be designed as a practice-oriented capacity-building programme. It should support participants to analyse real youth work situations, test methods, adapt collected practices and design follow-up interventions for their local communities.

Priority Learning Needs

Priority	Training topic	Evidence from research	Especially relevant countries
1	Trauma-informed youth work	High demand for mental health support; trauma-informed approaches rank high, especially in Italy and Ukraine	All countries, especially Ukraine and Italy
2	Psychological first aid and referral pathways	Psychological first aid is the top competency need in Germany, Poland and Ukraine	All countries

3	Working with grief, loss and uncertainty	Grief and loss support is among the leading competencies in Italy, Germany and Ukraine	Ukraine, Germany, Italy
4	Safe-space design and group facilitation	Safe spaces are a major youth need and high-rated success factor; facilitation of difficult conversations is a major competency gap	All countries, especially Ukraine and Poland
5	Working with displaced and refugee youth	Language barriers, inclusion and refugee integration are major host-country challenges	Poland, Italy, Germany
6	Youth participation, peer support and volunteering	Resilience is strengthened by belonging, agency and useful action	All countries
7	Career guidance and skills development	Career guidance and skills needs are prominent, especially in Italy, Germany and Poland	Italy, Germany, Poland
8	Burnout prevention, supervision and self-care	Staff burnout and emotional overload appear across countries	All countries

Country-Specific Adaptation of the Training

The seminar should include a common international curriculum, but it should also allow space for country-specific adaptation.

Country	Adaptation recommendations
Italy	Emphasise language-sensitive inclusion, psychosocial support, intercultural approaches, rights-based youth work and career guidance for young people building future pathways in host communities
Germany	Emphasise trauma and mental health, career guidance, resilience programmes, referral systems and cooperation between NGOs, schools and specialised services
Poland	Emphasise school-community cooperation, language and inclusion support, peer-support models, skills development and anti-discrimination competence

Ukraine Emphasise safety planning, work in frontline, border and displaced communities, safe physical spaces, psychosocial support, grief work, crisis response and youth agency under insecurity

Methodological Approach

The seminar should use non-formal education methods and reflect the same principles that the research identified as effective in youth work: safety, participation, peer connection, flexibility, creativity and practical relevance. Training methods should include case studies, role plays, group facilitation labs, mapping exercises, creative reflection, peer intervision and peer learning, small-group work, practice adaptation and local action planning.

The collected youth work practices should be used as learning material throughout the seminar. Participants should analyse why each practice works, what needs it responds to, what risks should be considered and how it could be adapted to different local realities.

Expected Outcomes of the Training Seminar

By the end of the seminar, participants should be able to:

- understand the main psychosocial, social and structural needs of young people affected by war;
- apply trauma-informed principles in youth work settings;
- provide basic psychological first aid and identify when referral is needed;
- facilitate difficult conversations on war, loss, identity, belonging and uncertainty;
- create safe and inclusive spaces adapted to different country contexts;
- use creative and non-formal methods to support expression and resilience;
- design peer-support and youth-led activities;
- integrate future orientation, career guidance and skills development into youth work;
- protect their own wellbeing and use supervision or peer support mechanisms;
- develop practical local interventions for follow-up Erasmus+ project activities.

Overall, the recommended training curriculum should help youth workers move from identifying needs to designing concrete responses. It should equip them with practical tools, strengthen international peer learning and support the development of local youth work initiatives that are trauma-informed, inclusive, participatory and sustainable.

Country-Specific Recommendations

The research findings show that while many needs are shared across the four countries, youth work responses should be adapted to each national context. The recommendations below summarise the main country-specific priorities for future youth work development and project activities.

Italy

Youth work in Italy should focus on **structural inclusion, cultural mediation, housing and rights, anti-discrimination and psychosocial support**. The findings show that young people affected by war and displacement often face not only emotional distress, but also bureaucracy, legal uncertainty, housing difficulties, discrimination and barriers to education and services.

Future youth work activities in Italy should combine psychosocial support with rights-based and anti-discrimination approaches. Cultural and linguistic mediation should be strengthened, especially in schools, youth services and community activities. Youth work should also support long-term integration by connecting young people to education, career guidance, housing information, social services and opportunities for participation.

Germany

Youth work in Germany should focus on **belonging, silent trauma, parent communication, creative methods and integrated support systems**. The findings show that young people may appear adapted while still experiencing anxiety, grief, guilt or uncertainty. Social isolation can remain hidden, especially when refugee youth are physically present in youth spaces but do not fully participate in mixed groups.

Future activities in Germany should strengthen active inclusion, peer relationships and belonging. Youth workers need tools to recognise hidden distress and facilitate participation without pressuring young people to speak about trauma. Communication with parents should be improved through language-sensitive information and outreach. Creative methods, residential activities and cooperation between NGOs, schools, psychosocial services and local authorities should be further developed.

Poland

Youth work in Poland should focus on **language support, emotional withdrawal, long-term integration, parental support and access to war-trauma specialists**. The findings show that language barriers strongly affect confidence, peer relationships, access to information and participation. At the same time, young people may be formally present in schools or activities but remain emotionally disconnected.

Future youth work activities in Poland should combine language-sensitive methods with peer support, school-community cooperation and psychosocial awareness. Youth workers and educators need tools to recognise emotional withdrawal, low motivation and hidden distress. Support for parents is also important, as parental stress, economic pressure and adaptation challenges can limit young people's participation. Stronger cooperation with psychologists and specialists in war trauma should be developed.

Ukraine

Youth work in Ukraine should focus on **safety, grief, crisis response, youth agency, mobility barriers and support for frontline and border communities**. The findings show that young people in Ukraine are directly affected by war through insecurity, air raids, displacement, loss, disrupted education, fear of movement and uncertainty about the future.

Future youth work activities in Ukraine should combine safe physical spaces with psychosocial support, grief work, psychological first aid and clear referral pathways. Special attention should be given to young people in frontline, border and displaced communities, where transport, safety and access to services are major barriers. Youth-led initiatives, volunteering, creative methods and community-based activities should be strengthened because they help young people regain agency, confidence and hope.

Across all four countries, youth work should remain trauma-informed, inclusive and participatory. However, the emphasis differs: Italy requires stronger structural and rights-based support; Germany needs active inclusion and integrated psychosocial systems; Poland needs language-sensitive and long-term integration support; and Ukraine needs crisis-sensitive youth work adapted to active-war conditions. Future project activities should therefore combine a shared international framework with flexible country-specific adaptation.

Final Comparative Conclusions

The three research methods confirm that youth work with young people affected by war must be understood as a multidimensional response combining psychosocial support, participation, inclusion, safe spaces, peer connection and future orientation. The survey demonstrates the scale of needs, barriers and priorities across the four countries. The focus groups explain how these challenges are experienced in everyday practice and how they differ between active-war and host-country contexts. The collection of youth work practices shows that effective responses already exist and can be adapted across countries if youth workers receive appropriate training, support and resources.

A key conclusion is that war has increased the demand for psychosocial support in all four countries. Youth workers now regularly encounter trauma, grief, emotional withdrawal, anxiety, low motivation, insecurity, displacement and uncertainty. This is the most consistent finding across the survey and focus group discussions. However, psychosocial support alone is not sufficient. Young people also need stable relationships, peer connection, creativity, education, career pathways, participation opportunities and spaces where they can contribute to their communities.

Safe and inclusive spaces are central to youth work with young people affected by war. Their meaning, however, differs by context. In Ukraine, safe spaces are connected to physical safety, protection from insecurity, emotional support and continuity amid war. In Poland, Germany and Italy, safe spaces are more strongly linked to belonging, language accessibility, inclusion, cultural mediation, anti-discrimination and access to rights. This means that youth work responses should be based on shared principles but adapted to local realities.

The research also shows that resilience is relational and collective. Young people become more resilient when they experience trust, stable relationships, peer support, meaningful participation and repeated positive experiences. Youth-led initiatives, volunteering, creative methods, community action and international exchanges can help young people regain agency and confidence. Effective youth work should therefore avoid treating young people only as victims of war. It should recognise them as individuals with capacities, aspirations, rights and the ability to contribute.

Another important conclusion is that youth workers need stronger professional support systems. The survey highlighted the need for trauma-informed competencies, psychological first aid, grief support, referral skills, inclusive facilitation and self-care. The focus groups confirmed that youth workers often carry heavy emotional responsibility without sufficient supervision, peer exchange or access to specialists. Supporting youth worker wellbeing is therefore essential for maintaining quality, ethical and sustainable youth work.

The findings also confirm the importance of cooperation between sectors. Youth work cannot respond alone to the complex needs of young people affected by war. Stronger cooperation is needed between NGOs, schools, youth centres, psychologists, social services, municipalities, cultural institutions and communities. Clear referral pathways, accessible mental health support, cultural and linguistic mediation, and long-term funding are necessary to build a supportive ecosystem around young people.

Country-specific differences should guide future action. Ukraine requires crisis-sensitive and security-aware youth work, with attention to grief, mobility barriers, frontline and border communities, safe physical spaces and youth agency under insecurity. Poland needs stronger language support, long-term integration, parental support, peer connection and access to war-trauma specialists. Germany should focus on belonging, silent trauma, parent communication, creative methods and integrated support systems. Italy requires stronger structural inclusion, cultural mediation, housing and rights support, anti-discrimination work and psychosocial support.

Overall, the research confirms the need for an international training and capacity-building programme that is trauma-informed, participatory, inclusive and context-sensitive. Future Erasmus+ project activities should combine professional development with practical local interventions, peer exchange among practitioners and adaptation of collected youth work practices. The project should help youth workers move from identifying needs to designing concrete responses that strengthen safety, belonging, resilience and future orientation among young people affected by war.

Annexes

Annex 1. Survey questionnaire

Section 1. Respondent Profile

1. Which type of organisation do you currently represent?

- ☐ Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
- ☐ Youth centre/youth space/hub
- ☐ School / educational institution
- ☐ Municipality / local authority
- ☐ International organisation
- ☐ Informal youth initiative
- ☐ Youth Council
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

2. What is your current role?

- ☐ Youth worker
- ☐ Youth leader
- ☐ Trainer / non-formal educator
- ☐ Project manager / coordinator
- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Teacher / educator
- ☐ Psychologist / social worker
- ☐ Municipal officer/civil servant

- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
3. In which country are you currently working? (Please select one)
- ☐ Germany
- ☐ Italy
- ☐ Poland
- ☐ Ukraine
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
4. In which community do you work? (please select the options which are most relevant to your experience)
- ☐ Rural area (villages, remote or sparsely populated areas)
- ☐ Small town (limited services and opportunities compared to larger cities)
- ☐ Urban area (city or metropolitan area)
- ☐ Disadvantaged urban area (e.g. low-income neighbourhoods, marginalised districts, areas with limited access to services)
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____
5. How many years of experience do you have in youth work?
- ☐ 0–2
- ☐ 3–5
- ☐ 6–10
- ☐ 10+
6. Do you currently work with young people affected by war?
- ☐ Yes, regularly
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Indirectly
- ☐ No, I don't work with young people affected by war
6. Do you currently work with young people affected by war from Ukraine?
- ☐ Yes, regularly
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Indirectly
- ☐ No, I don't work with young people affected by war from Ukraine

Section 2. Challenges Faced by Young People

7. In your observation, what are the main barriers preventing young people affected by war from participating in youth activities? (Select up to 5)
- ☐ Psychological distress
- ☐ Young people needing to work or support family members
- ☐ Inability to afford transportation or materials
- ☐ Families prioritising basic needs over youth activities
- ☐ Safety concerns
- ☐ Lack of communication channels in displaced communities
- ☐ Weak outreach to marginalised groups
- ☐ Exclusion from local youth groups
- ☐ Social isolation and loss of networks
- ☐ Discrimination
- ☐ Language barriers in host communities

- ☐ Rigid schedules that do not consider school disruptions
- ☐ Lack of inclusive or safe spaces.
- ☐ Digital divide
- ☐ Lack of trust
- ☐ Cultural differences
- ☐ Challenges in education
- ☐ Lack of stable community spaces
- ☐ Fear of uncertainty
- ☐ IDPs/refugee youth living in temporary accommodation or frequently changing the place of residence
- ☐ Living trauma and grief
- ☐ Other: _____

8. How has war changed the needs of young people affected by war you work with? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Increased need for psychological and emotional support
- ☐ Greater demand for safe spaces
- ☐ Increased need for social connection and peer support
- ☐ Stronger need for career guidance and employment support
- ☐ Need for skills development (digital, language, soft skills)
- ☐ Increased financial vulnerability
- ☐ Greater need for civic engagement opportunities
- ☐ Increased demand for crisis-related information (safety, rights, services)
- ☐ Need for inclusion and anti-discrimination support
- ☐ Increased need for flexible or online participation formats
- ☐ Greater need for mentorship and adult support
- ☐ Increased need for recreational and creative activities
- ☐ Need for trauma-informed support services
- ☐ No significant change observed
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Please comment on your choice:

9. In your experience, what strengthens resilience among young people affected by war? (Open-ended)

Section 3. Challenges in Youth Work

10. What are the main challenges you face when working with young people affected by war? (Select up to 3)

- ☐ Trauma and mental health issues
- ☐ Low motivation / apathy
- ☐ Displacement (IDPs)
- ☐ Lack of funding
- ☐ Burnout among staff
- ☐ Security issues
- ☐ Limited access to safe spaces

- ☐ Lack of training / competencies
- ☐ Lack of cooperation with institutions
- ☐ Other: _____

11. What professional competencies do youth workers need to further develop in order to work effectively with young people affected by war? (Select up to 5)

- ☐ Trauma-informed approaches
- ☐ Basic psychological first aid
- ☐ Conflict transformation and mediation
- ☐ Facilitation of difficult conversations
- ☐ Working with grief and loss
- ☐ Inclusion and anti-discrimination competences
- ☐ Gender-sensitive approaches
- ☐ Working with displaced youth (IDPs/refugees)
- ☐ Preventing burnout and self-care strategies
- ☐ Community resilience-building methods
- ☐ Youth participation and empowerment methods
- ☐ Dealing with hate speech
- ☐ Prevention of radicalisation
- ☐ Intercultural sensitivity
- ☐ Conflict sensitivity
- ☐ Media literacy and critical thinking
- ☐ Monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes
- ☐ Development of non-formal education programmes
- ☐ Digital tools for youth work
- ☐ Human rights education in the context of youth work
- ☐ Advocacy and civic engagement
- ☐ Fundraising and resource mobilisation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

12. What support do you personally need to improve your work? Please rate each type of support (1 = less needed, 5 = highly needed):

Psychological support ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Training ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Methodological tools ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Financial support for implementing activities with young people ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Peer exchange ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Supervision ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Other (please specify): _____

Section 4. Possible Ways of Interventions

12. What types of youth work interventions are most needed in your community right now?

- ☐ Psychosocial support activities
- ☐ Civic engagement initiatives
- ☐ Skills development programmes
- ☐ Career guidance

- ☐ Arts and creative activities
- ☐ Volunteer programmes
- ☐ Dialogue and inclusion initiatives
- ☐ Mentoring support and counseling
- ☐ Peer learning activities
- ☐ Other: _____

13. What should be prioritised in future youth projects responding to war-related challenges?
(Select up to 5 priorities)

- ☐ Psychosocial and mental health support for young people
- ☐ Trauma-informed youth work approaches
- ☐ Safe space creation
- ☐ Inclusion of internally displaced young people (IDPs) and refugees
- ☐ Support for young people from frontline/de-occupied areas
- ☐ Resilience-building programmes
- ☐ Peer-to-peer support initiatives
- ☐ Civic engagement and youth participation in decision-making
- ☐ Conflict transformation and dialogue initiatives
- ☐ Career guidance and employment support
- ☐ Skills development (digital, soft skills, leadership)
- ☐ Volunteerism and community solidarity actions
- ☐ Anti-discrimination and inclusion initiatives
- ☐ Gender-sensitive youth work
- ☐ Support for youth with disabilities
- ☐ Capacity building for youth workers
- ☐ Burnout prevention and staff wellbeing
- ☐ Cooperation with local authorities and institutions
- ☐ Strengthening youth centres as community hubs
- ☐ Emergency preparedness and crisis response mechanisms
- ☐ Monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

14. If you could change one thing in the youth work system in your community to better support young people affected by war, what would it be?

Section 5. Practices of youth work (not obligatory)

If you want to share the practice of youth work with young people affected by war which supported young people's resilience, please, answer the questions in this section. If you do not have practice to share, go to another section.

15. Please describe 1 practice you consider effective when working with young people affected by war. Please, share the link to the practices (if any) (Open-ended)

16. What makes youth work practices effective when working with young people affected by war? Please rate each type of support (1 = less needed, 5 = highly needed):

Youth-led approach ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Safe space creation ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Peer support ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Cooperation with psychologists ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Community involvement ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

International partnerships ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Flexible methodology ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Other (please specify): _____

17. If you would like us to contact you for further information about your practices or other activities within the project, please provide your contact details (name, surname, email address, phone number).

☐ I have read the information below and voluntarily consent to the processing of my personal data for project-related purposes.

* The personal data you provide (name, surname, email address, phone number) will be used solely for the purposes of this project, including research follow-up and project-related communication.

Your data will be processed in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-esc/index/privacy-statement>). It will not be shared with third parties outside the project partnership and authorised donor bodies. You may request access, correction, or deletion of your data at any time by contacting [organisation email].

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We truly appreciate your input and the important work you do in supporting young people affected by war. If you have any additional thoughts or would like to stay in touch, please feel free to contact us.

Annex 2. Focus Group Discussion Guide: Youth Work in War Context

Purpose of the Focus Group: to complement the survey by exploring:

- lived experiences behind challenges
 - how barriers to participation actually work
 - what effective youth work looks like in practice
 - what support systems are missing
1. Composition of the Group: 5-6 participants per group
 2. Duration & Structure (2–2.5 hours)
 3. Two moderators of the focus group discussion: one moderates, another one makes notes.

Step-by-step flow of the focus group meeting

Phase 1. Opening & Safe Space (15–20 min)

1. Introduction & Profile Mapping

1. Briefly describe your organization and your current role (e.g., NGO, youth center, or school).
2. How many years have you been active in the youth sector?
3. To what extent does your daily work involve young people directly affected by the war in Ukraine?
4. Check-in question: “What word describes your current work with young people affected by war?”

Phase 2. Experiences & Challenges (35–40 min)

Method: Guided storytelling

1. Invite each participant to share 1 situation where working with young people affected by war was particularly challenging
 - Can you describe a situation where working with young people affected by war was particularly challenging?
 - What made it difficult?
2. Facilitator makes notes
3. What specific skills do you feel are currently missing? (e.g., trauma-informed approaches, psychological first aid, or media literacy) .
4. What kind of personal support do you need to stay resilient (e.g., supervision or peer exchange)?

Phase 3. The Young Person's Perspective (30–35 min)

1. Ask participants to name barriers for participation of young people affected by war. Make notes on the online board (padlet, Zoom) to make it visible for the participants of the focus group.
2. Ask participants to answer the following questions:
 - Which barriers are most critical?
 - Which are most hidden?
 - Which are within youth work influence?
 - "Which young people are most excluded and why?"

Phase 4. Practices & What Works (35–40 min)

1. Ask participants to think of a practice that really worked. What happened?

Use guiding structure:

1. Context
2. What you did
3. Why it worked
4. What changed for young people

Ask participants the following questions:

- What, in your experience, is the "secret ingredient" that strengthens resilience in war-affected youth?
- If you could prioritize 5 areas for future projects, what would they be? (e.g., resilience-building, civic engagement, or capacity building for youth workers)
- What partnerships (with schools, local authorities, or mental health professionals) are currently underutilized?

Phase 5. Needs & System Gaps (20–25 min)

1. Invite participants to share the answers to the following questions:
 - If you could prioritize 5 areas for future projects, what would they be? (e.g., resilience-building, civic engagement, or capacity building for youth workers)

- What partnerships (with schools, local authorities, or mental health professionals) are currently underutilized?
- If you could change just one thing in the youth work system in your community to better support these young people, what would it be?

Phase 6. Closing Reflection (10–15 min)

1. Ask the youth worker if they have anything to add that has not been mentioned before.
2. Ask participants:
 - What insight from today feels most important?
 - What should not be ignored in this research?
- Summarise the key points discussed during the interview.
- Express your appreciation for the youth worker's time and contributions.
- Provide an opportunity for the youth worker to ask any final questions or provide additional information.

Annex 3. Survey data tables.

Appendix: Survey Outcomes - Ukraine

This appendix presents the English translation of the survey outcomes collected in Ukraine. The survey explored the professional profile of respondents, barriers faced by young people affected by war, changed needs, resilience factors, challenges faced by youth workers, required competencies, support needs and effective youth work practices. The total number of survey respondents was 100. For several later questions, the number of answers varies because some respondents skipped individual questions.

1. Respondent Profile

The Ukrainian survey sample is strongly rooted in education, youth centres and civil society. Schools and educational institutions form the largest group of respondents, followed by youth centres or hubs and NGOs. More than half of respondents have over ten years of experience working with young people. Most respondents work regularly with young people affected by war, including young people affected by the war in Ukraine.

Q1. What type of organisation do you currently represent?

Organisation type	Percentage	N
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	19.00%	19
Youth centre / youth space / hub	22.00%	22
School / educational institution	53.00%	53
Municipality / local authority	0.00%	0
International organisation	2.00%	2
Informal youth initiative	1.00%	1
Other	3.00%	3

Other responses included: Youth Council; non-formal youth education; freelance trainer.

Q2. What is your current role?

Current role	Percentage	N
Youth worker	19.00%	19

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Trainer / non-formal educator	11.00%	11
Youth leader	4.00%	4
Project manager / coordinator	5.00%	5
Volunteer	2.00%	2
Teacher / educator	48.00%	48
Psychologist / social worker	5.00%	5
Municipal official / civil servant	2.00%	2
Other	4.00%	4

Other responses included: INGO worker; director and youth worker; director of a youth centre and youth worker; financial manager.

Q3. In which country do you currently work?

Country	Percentage	N
Ukraine	100.00%	100

Q4. In what type of community do you work?

Community type	Percentage	N
Rural area (villages, remote or sparsely populated areas)	42.00%	42
Small town (limited services and opportunities compared to larger cities)	25.00%	25
Urban area (city or metropolitan area)	35.00%	35
Disadvantaged urban area (low-income, marginalised or limited-access neighbourhoods)	2.00%	2
Other	1.00%	1

Q5. How many years of experience do you have in working with young people?

Years of experience	Percentage	N
0-2 years	15.00%	15
3-5 years	17.00%	17
6-9 years	13.00%	13
10+ years	55.00%	55

Q6. Do you currently work with young people affected by war?

Level of involvement	Percentage	N
Yes, regularly	67.00%	67
Occasionally	19.00%	19
Indirectly	10.00%	10
No	4.00%	4

Q7. Do you currently work with young people affected by the war in Ukraine?

Level of involvement	Percentage	N
Yes, regularly	73.00%	73
Occasionally	13.00%	13
Indirectly	10.00%	10
No	4.00%	4

Interpretation

The respondent profile provides strong practice-based evidence from Ukrainian youth work and education contexts. The high proportion of respondents from schools, youth centres and NGOs means that the results reflect both formal education and community-based youth work. The strong level of direct involvement with war-affected young people increases the relevance of the findings for active-war and displacement contexts.

2. Barriers to Participation

Respondents identified security concerns, psychological distress, families prioritising basic needs, traumatic experiences and grief, and fear of uncertainty as the main barriers preventing young people affected by war from participating in youth activities.

Q8. Main barriers preventing young people affected by war from participating in youth activities (up to 5 choices)

Barrier	Percentage	N
Psychological distress	59.74%	46
Young people need to work or support family members	11.69%	9
Unable to pay for transport or materials	15.58%	12
Families prioritise basic needs over youth activities	38.96%	30
Security concerns	62.34%	48
Lack of communication channels in displaced communities	10.39%	8
Weak outreach to marginalised groups	7.79%	6
Exclusion from local youth groups	3.90%	3
Social isolation and loss of networks	18.18%	14
Discrimination	1.30%	1
Language barriers in host communities	7.79%	6
Rigid schedules not accounting for interruptions in schooling	14.29%	11
Lack of inclusive or safe spaces	11.69%	9
Digital divide	2.60%	2
Lack of trust	19.48%	15
Cultural differences	0.00%	0
Educational challenges	11.69%	9
Lack of stable community spaces	16.88%	13
Fear of uncertainty	32.47%	25
IDPs / refugees living in temporary housing or frequently changing residence	15.58%	12
Traumatic experiences and grief	35.06%	27
Other	2.60%	2

The open-ended responses emphasise that lack of interest or apathy should be understood in the context of war-related exhaustion. One respondent explained that young people often have enough energy only for basic needs, while participation in other activities requires resources they no longer have.

3. Changed Needs of Young People

The survey shows that the war has significantly increased young people's need for psychological and emotional support, safe spaces, social connections, peer support and financial stability. No respondents indicated that no significant changes had been observed.

Q9. How has the war changed the needs of young people affected by war?

Changed need	Percentage	N
Increased need for psychological and emotional support	89.61%	69
Increased demand for safe spaces	63.64%	49
Increased need for social connections and peer support	61.04%	47
Stronger need for career guidance and employment support	28.57%	22
Need for skills development (digital, language, soft skills)	36.36%	28
Increased financial vulnerability	49.35%	38
Greater need for civic engagement opportunities	15.58%	12
Increased demand for crisis-related information (safety, rights, services)	29.87%	23
Need for inclusion support and anti-discrimination measures	24.68%	19
Growing need for flexible or online participation formats	23.38%	18
Greater need for mentoring and adult support	33.77%	26
Growing need for recreational and creative activities	32.47%	25
Need for trauma-informed support services	25.97%	20
No significant changes observed	0.00%	0
Other	2.60%	2

Selected open responses to Q10

A response about how young people are currently living during the war.

"I live in Odesa. The city is bombed every day. Children and young people need support and safety. As a scout leader, I hold our meetings in safe places and offer activities that are both fun and developmental. Young people work on environmental and historical projects as a team. We have plans for the summer; if everything goes well, we are planning a tent camp for teenagers."

"I chose these options because, in my work with young people, I clearly observe how the war has affected their basic needs and sense of safety. In particular, the demand for safe spaces has increased significantly — spaces where adolescents can feel calm, accepted and emotionally relieved. At the same time, the need for communication with peers has increased, because mutual support helps them cope with anxiety and share their experiences."

"In addition, many young people have become more financially vulnerable due to the loss of stability in their families, which also affects their educational and life prospects. Therefore, the need for career guidance and employment support is growing, so that they can see real opportunities for the future. There is also a noticeable greater need for mentoring from adults — as a source of support, advice and stability, which is often lacking now."

"All these changes are interconnected and reflect young people's need for safety, support and certainty in conditions of instability."

"Young people need interaction, support and development in safe, accessible and interesting conditions. They need stable access to comfortable conditions for communication with peers and the development of soft skills."

"Support, trust, a fair space and activities — there is a need for all of this."

"I believe that today young people need attention, support, people who will understand them, and spaces where they feel comfortable."

"The war has fundamentally changed the needs of young people. It has almost reduced personal and professional development in small communities to a minimum. This is further compounded by social isolation, constant stress and threats to life."

"We live in war."

"Insufficient digital skills prevent participation in olympiads and competitions that are held online."

"The psychological state of young people is unstable. They have a great need for socialisation, support and active recreation."

"The war has significantly affected all areas of young people's lives and activities, and therefore young people need support, mentoring and a space where they can feel safe."

"The war has a very negative impact on young people."

"The need for such services is very high today, especially in the context of war and constant stress. Many people have experienced loss, fear, forced displacement or other difficult events, so ordinary support is sometimes not enough."

"Young people need adult support."

"Maintaining a positive emotional state."

"Even when staying in a shelter, there is no feeling of full protection. Constant shelling keeps the body under stress. There is no proper space with an appropriate shelter."

"There is a need for safety, employment, quality education and the opportunity to influence decision-making."

"Adolescents receive less attention from adults and need mentors, socialisation and face-to-face interaction."

"Safety."

"During the war, young people are limited in communication, education and career growth; the main issue becomes the preservation of life."

"Young people affected by the war need support."

"Young people today face many problems."

"Increased need for social connections."

"Young people need support from specialists, especially psychologists. There are also no places where they can communicate and spend time with friends."

"Children should go to school and communicate with peers."

"Since we are an urban community located not far from the frontline, our young people are constantly under tension, which they simply cannot release anywhere. The constant threat caused by the war and the problem of trust, because education is constantly online, also have the effect that young people simply close themselves off and develop problems with socialisation."

"Due to active hostilities, there is a need for shelters."

"Young people feel the need to create a safe environment around them."

"I believe that young people spend time working in order to meet their basic needs, and they have little time left to attend activities."

"Young people need comprehensive and continuous support."

"There is a lack of communication."

“Due to the war, young people often find themselves in unsafe conditions, which leads to increased levels of stress and emotional tension. In such circumstances, it is especially important to provide young people with a safe space where they can receive support, help and feel cared for by others.”

“The war has significantly increased young people’s need for psychological support, as many of them experience stress, anxiety and loss. At the same time, financial vulnerability and the need for employment have increased, so it is important to combine emotional support with career support and trauma-informed services.”

“It is now very difficult for young people to adapt to everything.”

“The war has significantly changed the needs of the young people we work with. First of all, there is an increased need for psychological and emotional support, as many of them have experienced stress, loss or forced displacement. There is also a much greater demand for safe spaces where young people can feel protected, communicate and restore their inner balance.”

“In addition, there is a noticeable increased need for social connections and peer support, because many young people have lost their usual circle of communication due to the war. It is important to create conditions for communication, mutual support and the development of a sense of community.”

“It is also important to take into account the growing need for career guidance and employment support, since the war has affected young people’s educational and professional opportunities and forced many of them to reconsider their plans for the future.”

“Young people have become more vulnerable, and problems that previously seemed insignificant have increased.”

“Young people are psychologically traumatised, deprived of offline communication and worried about the lack of clear prospects for their development and careers.”

“First, in my community there is a lack of safe places — this is a global problem, because online formats cannot replace live communication, and there is no safe place for live communication. Second, according to my observations, a certain social isolation has affected young people: they have not learned how to act independently — to discuss, argue, structure their thoughts. As a result, at the first difficulty, they are ready to give up. They need constant support — not because they are afraid or weak, but because they simply do not know how.”

“Usually, young people affected by the war do not have new connections in the place to which they have moved, and may also have problems with housing or finances. Problems with trust in others and with the security situation are also present. Parents sometimes even refuse to let their children go for a walk alone because they see it as dangerous. As for young people who have been affected psychologically, even if they are local, internal problems and experiences come to the foreground.”

“I chose these options because the war significantly affects the psychological state and social life of young people: due to stress and traumatic experience, the need for emotional support, safe spaces and trauma-informed services increases. At the same time, due to the loss of their usual environment, the need for communication with peers also increases, as well as support for inclusion and non-discrimination, especially for those who were forced to change their place of residence.”

“Young people spend a lot of time online and do not have enough socialisation.”

“Young people need support and understanding.”

“The main barriers are both psychological and socio-economic in nature. Traumatic experience and emotional exhaustion reduce young people’s readiness to participate, while

families often prioritise basic needs. Distrust, educational difficulties and fear of uncertainty further complicate participation in youth activities.”

“War changes people a lot, especially young people.”

“Young people in small towns need safe spaces for socialisation.”

“Young people need emotional support and constant social connections.”

“Young people need support, understanding and opportunities for self-realisation in order to overcome barriers and build a sustainable future.”

“Unfortunately, because of the war and the difficult security situation, young people today have limited opportunities for live communication. Yet offline meetings provide exactly what adolescents need so much: sincere communication with peers and adults, support, a sense of belonging and the opportunity to effectively acquire practical skills in different areas.”

“Young people have become more vulnerable and emotionally unstable. There is also a certain helplessness in their actions and in choosing a profession.”

“The biggest problem is the security situation.”

“In my opinion, the problem is growing for young people, especially those with post-traumatic syndrome, to participate in offline activities because of the security situation in the city. In addition, the problem of employment in the city will continue to grow.”

“The answer is based on observations and communication with adolescents, including those affected by the war.”

“They need improved organisation of education, psychological support and socialisation.”

“Young people have become used to working remotely, and socialisation is more difficult for young people from border communities. There is also a minimal number of spaces in safe places and limited safety of movement. Internally displaced young people are more closed during activities.”

“More offline meetings are needed, as well as permanent safe spaces for young people.”

“All the points mentioned above demonstrate the current problems and the state of the situation under martial law.”

4. Resilience Factors

In open responses, respondents most often associated resilience with supportive relationships, safe spaces, peer communication, adult mentoring, psychological support, opportunities for self-realisation, volunteering, community belonging and hope for the future.

Open responses to Q11

“Close people.”

“Teamwork, adult support, new meanings and goals.”

“In my experience, the resilience of young people affected by war is formed through a combination of emotional support, a sense of safety and the opportunity to influence their own lives. The strongest contributing factors are: a safe and supportive space; strong social connections; adult mentoring; and involvement in activities and initiatives.”

“Finding one’s circle of friends and support, and trying to return to previous interests and hobbies.”

“Social connections.”

“Young people’s resilience is strengthened by the experience of independently implementing initiatives, exploring effective examples, exchanging experience, networking visits and conversations with trusted adults.”

“Fairness, attention, responsibility and involvement.”

“Support from the state, social institutions, financial stability and safe living conditions.”

“Psycho-emotional support and adult mentoring.”

“Emotional support from close people: having reliable relationships with family, friends or mentors, and a sense of belonging and acceptance.”

“Young people’s resilience is strengthened by the enormous experience they have gained throughout the time they have lived through military actions.”

“Support from family and community strengthens resilience. Encouragement and recognition of achievements also help.”

“Psychological support and exercises that help cope with stressful situations.”

“The security situation.”

“Communication with experienced people.”

“Positive examples.”

“Personal isolation. There is no opportunity to communicate fully with peers outdoors.

“Movement around the city is limited because of constant attacks.”

“Involving young people in social and educational projects that provide opportunities to communicate and learn.”

“The desire to live, the drive for development, and ultimately the basic wish to survive and live peacefully.”

“Loss of loved ones, housing and unstable financial situation.”

“A sense of patriotism, love for the native land and faith in Victory.”

“In my opinion, young people’s resilience is strengthened most by three things: their own people, useful action and simple self-help skills. When adolescents feel peer support, they understand that they are not alone. When they volunteer or help others, they regain a sense of control over their lives. Knowing simple exercises, such as breathing or grounding, gives them a tool to calm themselves in a critical moment. This transforms difficult experience into the strength to keep acting.”

“The desire to survive at any cost. To live here and now.”

“Confidence that you are involved in important work.”

“The fact that young people are learning to live under constant stress.”

“In my opinion, constant socialisation, friendly family relationships, meeting basic needs, accessible education and financial stability.”

“Empathy, compassion and support.”

“An example of adults’ resilience.”

“Communication, music, sport, hobbies, caring for others.”

“A sense of safety, support from others and the opportunity to express emotions.”

“Young people’s resilience is strengthened most by a safe and supportive environment where there is trust, acceptance and an opportunity to speak openly about their experiences. A sense of stability, involvement in activities, skills development and understanding that they can influence their own future are also important.”

“The resilience of young people affected by war is strengthened through comprehensive support. Safe spaces play an important role, as they allow young people to feel stability and trust. Psychological support, including individual consultations and group activities, has a significant impact because it helps them process their experiences.”

“Social connections and peer support are also very important, as a sense of belonging to a community helps overcome isolation and anxiety. Involvement in activities, volunteering and non-formal education is also effective because it restores a sense of control over one’s own life and builds confidence in the future.”

“In addition, the development of life skills, career guidance and opportunities for self-realisation contribute to strengthening resilience.”

“Talking about the problem and relying on close people.”

"The resilience of young people affected by war is strengthened most by a sense of safety, support from significant adults and peers, the opportunity to speak openly about their experiences, and involvement in learning, activities and future planning. It is important when there is stability, understanding and belief in their abilities nearby."

"Psychological support, communication with peers and civic activism."

"Leisure activities and gradual involvement of young people in other initiatives."

"Physical activities and art therapy."

"The resilience of young people affected by war is strengthened by psychological support, a safe environment, support from family and peers, access to education and development opportunities, as well as a sense of stability, inclusion and control over their own lives."

"Live communication, work with psychologists, art therapy..."

"Live communication, absence of air-raid alerts."

"Trust and a safe space."

"Young people's resilience is strengthened by support from close people and the community, a safe environment, access to psychological support and opportunities for self-realisation. Restoring social connections, stability in education and building faith in the future are also important."

"The end of hostilities!"

"Young people in small towns need safe places for socialisation."

"Communication with a psychologist and peers, art therapy and workshops, sport, camping and leisure activities."

"Support from adults and peers; information support regarding crisis situations; financial support."

"Having an adult they can trust, communication with peers, understanding their emotions and believing that they can influence the future."

"Based on experience of working with adolescents in crisis conditions, the following things strengthen resilience:

- 1. A safe space and a sense of stability.*
- 2. Live communication and support.*
- 3. A sense of belonging.*
- 4. Development of practical skills.*
- 5. Care for mental health."*

"Systematic work on the psycho-emotional state, both independently and with the help of relevant specialists."

"Uncertainty about tomorrow's safety."

"Support from people who are close to them: help in solving difficult life situations, organising learning and leisure, and creating a sense of safety."

"A safe space where one can receive support, a place for communication, development of life skills, learning emotional self-regulation and resilience, and feeling significant, important, capable of expressing oneself and developing."

5. Challenges Faced by Youth Workers

Youth workers most frequently reported low motivation or apathy among young people, trauma and mental health issues, security issues, funding shortages, staff burnout and displacement-related challenges.

Q12. Main difficulties faced when working with young people affected by war (up to 3 choices)

Challenge	Percentage	N
Trauma and mental health issues	53.42%	39
Low motivation / apathy	64.38%	47
Displacement (IDPs)	26.03%	19
Lack of funding	28.77%	21
Staff burnout	27.40%	20
Security issues	42.47%	31
Limited access to safe places	15.07%	11
Lack of training / competencies	13.70%	10
Lack of cooperation with institutions	4.11%	3
Other	1.37%	1

6. Professional Competencies Needed

The competency needs are strongly psychosocial. Basic psychological first aid ranks first, followed by trauma-informed approaches, working with grief and loss, facilitation of difficult conversations and burnout prevention.

Q13. Professional competencies youth workers need to develop (up to 5 choices)

Competency area	Percentage	N
Trauma-informed approaches	46.58%	34
Basic psychological first aid	56.16%	41
Conflict transformation and mediation	30.14%	22
Facilitating difficult conversations	43.84%	32
Working with grief and loss	45.21%	33
Inclusion and anti-discrimination competences	16.44%	12
Gender-sensitive approaches	21.92%	16
Working with displaced young people (IDPs/refugees)	30.14%	22
Burnout prevention and self-care strategies	39.73%	29
Community resilience-building methods	6.85%	5
Youth participation and empowerment methods	19.18%	14
Countering hate speech	6.85%	5
Preventing radicalisation	5.48%	4
Intercultural sensitivity	0.00%	0
Conflict sensitivity	13.70%	10
Media literacy and critical thinking	13.70%	10
Monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes	4.11%	3
Designing non-formal education programmes	2.74%	2
Digital tools for youth work	8.22%	6
Human rights education in youth work	12.33%	9
Advocacy and civic engagement	8.22%	6
Fundraising and resource mobilisation	2.74%	2

7. Support Needed by Youth Workers

Funding for youth activities is the strongest support need, followed by peer exchange, training, methodological tools, psychological support and supervision. The figures below show the weighted average on a 1-5 scale, where 5 means 'very needed'.

Q14. Support needed to improve work with young people affected by war

Type of support	Total responses	Weighted average
Psychological support	71	3.42
Training	69	3.55
Methodological tools	72	3.51
Financial support for implementing youth activities	72	4.29
Peer exchange	72	3.93
Supervision	71	3.37

8. Types of Youth Work Needed in Communities

Respondents identified psychosocial support activities as the most needed form of youth work in Ukrainian communities, followed by volunteering programmes, civic engagement initiatives, arts and creative activities, career guidance and peer-learning activities.

Q15. Types of youth work most needed in the community

Type of youth work	Percentage	N
Psychosocial support activities	67.61%	48
Civic engagement initiatives	38.03%	27
Skills development programmes	26.76%	19
Career guidance	35.21%	25
Arts and creative activities	38.03%	27
Volunteer programmes	39.44%	28
Dialogue and inclusion initiatives	22.54%	16
Mentoring support and counselling	30.99%	22
Peer-learning activities	33.80%	24

9. Priorities for Future Youth Projects

The main priorities for future youth projects are psychosocial and mental health support, creation of safe spaces, support for young people from frontline or de-occupied areas, integration of IDPs and refugees, resilience-building programmes and career guidance.

Q16. Priorities for future youth projects addressing war-related challenges

Priority	Percentage	N
Psychosocial and mental health support for young people	73.24%	52
Trauma-informed youth work	23.94%	17
Creation of safe spaces	59.15%	42
Integration of internally displaced young people (IDPs) and refugees	28.17%	20
Support for young people from frontline / de-occupied areas	46.48%	33
Resilience-building programmes	26.76%	19
Peer-to-peer support initiatives	12.68%	9
Civic engagement and youth participation in decision-making	25.35%	18
Conflict transformation and dialogue initiatives	5.63%	4
Career guidance and employment support	25.35%	18
Skills development (digital, soft skills, leadership)	15.49%	11
Volunteering and community solidarity actions	5.63%	4

Anti-discrimination and inclusion initiatives	2.82%	2
Gender-sensitive youth work	12.68%	9
Support for young people with disabilities	8.45%	6
Capacity building for youth workers	9.86%	7
Burnout prevention and staff wellbeing	19.72%	14
Cooperation with local authorities and institutions	7.04%	5
Strengthening youth centres as community hubs	14.08%	10
Emergency preparedness and crisis response mechanisms	14.08%	10
Monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement	0.00%	0
Other: youth capacity development	1.41%	1

10. System Changes Suggested by Respondents

Open responses to Q17 show a strong demand for systemic changes in local youth work. The most frequently repeated ideas were: stable safe spaces, integration of psychological support into youth work, more youth centres and youth workers, stronger cooperation with local authorities and organisations, more meaningful activities, long-term programmes and access to decision-making for young people.

“Involve volunteers in youth work and strengthen connections with other youth organisations. Cooperation would be very helpful.”

“Create a stable network of safe spaces with professional psycho-emotional support, where young people could regularly receive support, build social connections, develop and feel stability and belonging to the community.”

“Hire a full-time psychologist as part of the team.”

“Strengthen cooperation with local authorities and institutions.”

“Ensure the presence of youth workers in local community districts, including smaller settlements.”

“Promote youth initiatives in a real and practical way.”

“Organise more effective and useful activities, rather than activities done only for reports and photos.”

“Give young people access to decision-making processes on issues that affect them.”

“Create or support an NGO that addresses war-related issues affecting young people.”

“Develop youth work based on young people’s interests, hobbies and active recreation.”

“Improve the functioning of youth centres where young people can receive information, attend trainings, take part in psychological support activities and access other forms of assistance.”

“Create a youth centre for psychological and social support: a safe place where young people affected by war could receive free psychological help, communicate with peers and take part in creative and sports activities.”

“Provide psychological support to young people.”

“Organise joint activities and create opportunities for dialogue with young people.”

“Create a space where young people from the community can gather, discuss problems and share ideas for local development.”

“Develop long-term programmes focused on working with stable groups, rather than only involving large numbers of new participants.”

"Reduce formalism in youth work."

"Organise and properly equip a separate space for a youth centre, where educational, cultural, artistic, psychosocial activities and trainings can be held with the involvement of relevant specialists."

"Create more youth centres and youth spaces."

"Organise regular meetings with peers."

"Introduce a system of informal psychological support integrated into all activities of the youth centre. It is important that a qualified psychologist is not perceived only as a "doctor in an office", but as part of the community — someone who takes part in trainings and games as a mentor. This reduces the fear of asking for help and makes it possible to identify crisis situations at an early stage."

"Provide additional financial support for youth activities."

"Offer examples of successful people as role models for young people."

"Strengthen team unity."

"Increase youth involvement in activities and initiatives."

"Provide more opportunities for young people to work or earn money through youth programmes, so that activities are both interesting and useful."

"Integrate psychological support systematically into all youth initiatives, so that each activity or space includes specialists or basic trauma-informed tools."

"Strengthen the training of youth workers in psychosocial support so that they can better understand the needs of young people affected by war and provide quality assistance."

"Create more safe spaces, including in remote parts of communities."

"Strengthen access to free and high-quality psychological support for young people, taking into account war-related traumatic experiences."

"Improve motivation, funding and employment opportunities for young people."

"Create employment opportunities for young people, including in frontline areas."

"Improve the security situation."

"Add more simple, warm moments of care during activities, such as coffee breaks."

"These moments are not only about food or drinks, but also about rest, informal communication and feeling part of a community. Sometimes such small details create a stronger sense of safety and acceptance than the formal programme itself."

"Open another youth space in Izium, as there is a lack of suitable premises."

"Strengthen psychosocial and mental health support for young people."

"Ensure that every youth centre and youth space has a psychologist as a staff member."

"Provide timely assistance, reduce anxiety and support adaptation."

"Create stable and safe offline spaces for young people on a permanent basis. This includes supporting initiatives such as girls' clubs and Euroclubs as spaces for live communication, emotional support and development. In such spaces, young people can interact with peers and mentors, develop practical skills, feel belonging and gradually recover from war-related experiences."

"Create a youth hub as a safe space for young people."

"Provide long-term psychosocial support for young people."

"Create a permanent programme of activities in the youth hub, involving strong trainers and practitioners for trainings, meetings and joint activities."

"Strengthen psycho-emotional support, leisure activities and creative activities."

"Reduce bureaucracy."

“Support the creation of safe spaces and the facilitation of sessions and meetings for young people.”

11. Effective Youth Work Practices

Q18 asked respondents to describe one effective practice in working with young people affected by war. The responses point to several families of practice: safe youth spaces, girls' clubs, psycho-emotional support sessions, art therapy, peer support, team-building activities, first aid courses, youth centre programmes and trauma-informed club formats.

“Different team-building exercises help adolescents feel safe, among friends and supported.”

“Art therapy and psychoeducation are very effective practices.”

“An effective practice is creating safe youth spaces using a trauma-informed approach and developing peer-to-peer support.”

“In our community, the girls' club became a regular safe space. Girls who had barely left home since the full-scale war began because of fear and anxiety started coming, opening up, getting to know each other and returning to social life.”

“Regular meetings in a safe-space format, such as girls' clubs or Euroclubs, combine communication, emotional support and practical activities. They help young people express emotions, receive support and restore trust, belonging and self-worth.”

“Activities with elements of art therapy are effective.”

12. Success Factors of Effective Youth Work Practices

Respondents rated the effectiveness of different practice elements on a 1-5 scale. The highest-rated factor was the creation of safe spaces, followed by peer support, community involvement, cooperation with psychologists, flexible methodology and international partnerships.

Q19. What makes youth work practices effective when working with young people affected by war?

Practice element	Weighted average
Youth-led approach	4.07
Creating safe spaces	4.81
Peer support	4.37
Cooperation with psychologists	4.24
Community involvement	4.29
International partnerships	4.19
Flexible methodology	4.23

13. Short Analytical Summary

- The Ukrainian survey confirms that youth work in active-war conditions is strongly shaped by security risks, psychological distress, grief, disrupted education and limited safe spaces.
- Young people affected by war need safe environments, psychosocial and emotional support, peer connection, mentoring, financial stability and future-oriented opportunities.
- Youth workers need psychological first aid, trauma-informed approaches, grief support, facilitation skills, self-care and practical referral pathways.
- Safe spaces are the most important success factor in effective youth work practices in Ukraine.

- Future projects should prioritise psychosocial and mental health support, safe spaces, support for frontline and de-occupied communities, and meaningful youth participation.

Appendix: Survey Outcomes - Poland

This appendix presents the English translation of the survey outcomes collected in Poland. The survey explored the professional profile of respondents, barriers faced by young people affected by war, changed needs, resilience factors, youth workers' challenges, required competencies, support needs and effective youth work practices. The total number of survey respondents was 70. For several later questions, the number of answers varies because some respondents skipped individual questions.

1. Respondent Profile

Q1. What type of organisation do you currently represent?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	20.00%	14
Youth centre / youth space / youth hub	0.00%	0
School / educational institution	74.29%	52
Municipality / local authority	4.29%	3
International organisation	1.43%	1
Informal youth initiative	0.00%	0
Other	0.00%	0

Q2. What is your current role?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Youth worker	2.86%	2
Youth leader	2.86%	2
Trainer / non-formal educator	4.29%	3
Project manager / coordinator	7.14%	5
Volunteer	0.00%	0
Teacher / educator	74.29%	52
Psychologist / social worker	4.29%	3
Municipal officer / public official	1.43%	1
Other	2.86%	2

Q3. In which country do you currently work?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Poland	100.00%	70

Q4. What type of community do you work in?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Rural area (villages, remote or sparsely populated areas)	1.43%	1

Small town (limited services and opportunities compared with larger cities)	2.86%	2
Urban area (city or metropolitan area)	88.57%	62
Disadvantaged urban area (e.g. low-income or marginalised districts, areas with limited access to services)	11.43%	8
Other	1.43%	1

Other response: community of people with migration experience, especially Ukrainian families requiring legal, social and integration support.

Q5. How many years of experience do you have in working with young people?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
0-2 years	5.71%	4
3-5 years	10.00%	7
6-9 years	4.29%	3
10+ years	80.00%	56

Q6. Do you currently work with young people affected by war?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Yes, regularly	60.00%	42
Occasionally	24.29%	17
Indirectly	12.86%	9
No	2.86%	2

Q7. Do you currently work with young people from Ukraine affected by war?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Yes, regularly	67.14%	47
Occasionally	18.57%	13
Indirectly	11.43%	8
No	2.86%	2

2. Barriers and Changed Needs

Q8. Main barriers preventing young people affected by war from participating in youth activities

Respondents could select up to five answers. The strongest barriers reported in Poland were language barriers, mental health problems, the need to work or support family members, cultural differences, education challenges, and trauma and grief.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Language barriers in host communities	52.54%	31
Mental health problems	37.29%	22
Need to work or support family members	37.29%	22
Cultural differences	28.81%	17
Challenges in education	27.12%	16
Experienced trauma and grief	27.12%	16
Families prioritising basic needs over youth activities	25.42%	15
Social isolation and loss of networks	20.34%	12

Discrimination	13.56%	8
Exclusion from local youth groups	11.86%	7
Lack of trust	11.86%	7
Safety concerns	10.17%	6
Weak outreach to marginalised groups	10.17%	6
Fear of uncertainty	10.17%	6
Lack of funds for transport or materials	8.47%	5
Lack of communication channels in displaced communities	8.47%	5
Lack of inclusive or safe spaces	8.47%	5
Rigid schedules that do not account for school disruptions	6.78%	4
Displaced/refugee youth in temporary accommodation or frequently changing residence	5.08%	3
Other: low motivation; lack of willingness to integrate with society	3.39%	2
Lack of stable community spaces	1.69%	1
Digital divide	0.00%	0

Q9. How has the war changed the needs of young people affected by it?

The most frequently reported changed need was psychological and emotional support. Respondents also highlighted inclusion and anti-discrimination, skills development, peer connections, trauma-informed support, mentoring and safe spaces.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Increased need for psychological and emotional support	71.19%	42
Need for inclusion support and anti-discrimination measures	45.76%	27
Need for skills development (digital, language, soft skills)	44.07%	26
Increased need for social connections and peer support	40.68%	24
Need for trauma-informed support services	28.81%	17
Increased need for mentoring and adult support	27.12%	16
Greater demand for safe spaces	25.42%	15
Increased financial vulnerability	25.42%	15
Increased demand for crisis-related information (safety, rights, services)	20.34%	12
Stronger need for career guidance and employment support	18.64%	11
Increased need for recreational and creative activities	15.25%	9
Greater need for opportunities for civic engagement	11.86%	7
No significant changes observed	6.78%	4
Greater need for flexible or online participation formats	3.39%	2
Other: educational exclusion	1.69%	1

Q10. Selected translated comments explaining these needs

Open responses show that young people affected by war in Poland need a holistic response combining basic support, psychological care, integration, education, language learning, safe spaces and peer interaction. Several respondents stressed that needs are long-term and cannot be addressed through short-term activities only.

“At the beginning, they need their basic needs to be cared for, including material needs and psychological support; later they need integration, inclusion in a group, help with education and development, safe spaces for play, peer interaction and social participation.”

“War has significantly affected young people’s needs, especially in the areas of mental health, sense of safety and social relationships. We see a greater need for emotional support, peer contact and safe spaces.”

“The main problem is the Polish language, especially in more specialised subjects.”

“Young people who arrived because of the war want to feel normal, not constantly labelled as affected by war. They want to function on equal terms in peer environments, although they still face limitations, for example financial ones.”

“Young people often do not seek psychological support because they are not aware of the emotional problems affecting them.”

3. Resilience Factors

Q11. What strengthens the resilience of young people affected by war?

Open-ended responses identified several recurring resilience factors: safe and supportive relationships, acceptance in the host society, peer contact, psychological support, integration, stability, family support, language learning, creative and recreational activities, and opportunities to develop skills and agency.

“Resilience is strengthened above all by safe and supportive relationships, access to psychological support, a sense of stability and the possibility of building peer contacts.”

“Stable and supportive relationships with peers and trusted adults are key, as well as access to safe spaces where young people can express emotions, build belonging and regain a sense of safety.”

“Peer relationships, without labelling young people affected by war as “war-affected”. They want to be treated equally.”

“A supportive environment that does not pity them. Concrete actions that solve concrete problems: language learning, help with education-related matters, guidance to the right institutions, and equal treatment of Polish and Ukrainian youth.”

“Integration, contact with peers, kindness from adults and participation in community life.”

4. Challenges, Competencies and Support Needs of Youth Workers

Q12. Main challenges faced when working with young people affected by war

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Low motivation / apathy	66.67%	38
Trauma and mental health problems	33.33%	19
Staff burnout	21.05%	12
Lack of funding	19.30%	11
Lack of training / competencies	19.30%	11
Other	15.79%	9
Displacement (IDPs/refugees)	7.02%	4
Safety issues	7.02%	4
Limited access to safe places	7.02%	4
Lack of cooperation with institutions	3.51%	2

Q13. Professional competencies youth workers should further develop

The highest-rated competencies were psychological first aid, inclusion and anti-discrimination, facilitation of difficult conversations, trauma-informed approaches, and conflict transformation or mediation.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Basic psychological first aid	49.12%	28
Inclusion and anti-discrimination competences	49.12%	28
Facilitating difficult conversations	47.37%	27
Trauma-informed approaches	33.33%	19
Conflict transformation and mediation	33.33%	19
Burnout prevention and self-care strategies	28.07%	16
Intercultural sensitivity	26.32%	15
Youth participation and empowerment methods	22.81%	13
Working with grief and loss	17.54%	10
Responding to hate speech	15.79%	9
Preventing radicalisation	15.79%	9
Conflict sensitivity	12.28%	7
Community resilience-building methods	8.77%	5
Human rights education in youth work	7.02%	4
Working with displaced youth (IDPs/refugees)	5.26%	3
Media literacy and critical thinking	5.26%	3
Advocacy and civic engagement	5.26%	3
Gender-sensitive approaches	3.51%	2
Monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes	3.51%	2
Fundraising and resource mobilisation	3.51%	2
Designing non-formal education programmes	1.75%	1
Digital tools for youth work	1.75%	1
Other	1.75%	1

Q14. Support needed to improve youth work practice

The table shows the weighted average on a 1-5 scale and the share of respondents who rated each support type as 4 or 5. Peer exchange, funding and training were the strongest support needs. Supervision was rated lower, which may reflect the school-heavy profile of respondents and different interpretations of supervision in formal education settings.

Support type	Weighted average	Rated 4 or 5
Peer exchange	3.76	67.27%
Funding for youth activities	3.73	66.07%
Training	3.65	61.11%
Methodological tools	3.58	54.54%
Psychological support	3.50	58.93%
Supervision	2.43	16.98%

5. Needed Youth Work Activities and Future Priorities**Q15. Youth work activities most needed in the community**

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Psychosocial support activities	47.37%	27
Skills development programmes	43.86%	25
Peer learning activities	40.35%	23
Civic engagement initiatives	38.60%	22
Dialogue and integration initiatives	33.33%	19
Career guidance	24.56%	14
Artistic and creative activities	22.81%	13
Volunteer programmes / dialogue and integration initiatives	22.81%	13
Mentoring support and counselling	22.81%	13
Other: personal development/confidence building; Polish language for foreigners	3.51%	2

Q16. Priorities for future youth projects addressing war-related challenges

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Psychosocial and mental health support for young people	50.88%	29
Peer support initiatives	40.35%	23
Creating safe spaces	33.33%	19
Trauma-informed youth work approaches	29.82%	17
Anti-discrimination and social inclusion initiatives	26.32%	15
Capacity building for youth workers	26.32%	15
Resilience-building programmes	24.56%	14
Conflict transformation and dialogue initiatives	22.81%	13
Civic engagement and youth participation in decision-making	19.30%	11
Burnout prevention and staff wellbeing	17.54%	10
Career guidance and employment support	14.04%	8
Inclusion of displaced/refugee youth	12.28%	7
Skills development (digital, soft skills, leadership)	12.28%	7
Crisis preparedness and response mechanisms	12.28%	7
Volunteering and community solidarity actions	10.53%	6
Support for youth from frontline/liberated areas	7.02%	4
Support for youth with disabilities	7.02%	4
Gender-sensitive youth work	5.26%	3
Cooperation with local authorities and institutions	5.26%	3
Strengthening youth centres as community hubs	5.26%	3
Other: Polish language for foreigners	1.75%	1

Q17. If you could change one thing in the youth work system in your community, what would it be?

Open responses focused on several systemic improvements: more accessible and long-term psychological support, stronger integration between Polish and Ukrainian young people, more stable funding, safe local spaces, language support, anti-discrimination education in schools, smaller groups, more flexible education, youth participation in decisions, and stronger cooperation between schools, NGOs, institutions, specialists and families.

"I would introduce a more accessible and long-term system of psychological and integration support for young people with experience of war and migration."

"Support is often short-term and project-based, which makes it difficult to build lasting relationships, trust and effective trauma work."

"I would strengthen access to permanent and easily available psychological support for young people, integrated directly into the places they use every day, such as schools and youth centres."

"I would create Polish-Ukrainian classes and projects that connect both groups in order to counter hatred."

"I would increase funding for activities that support young people creatively, socially, educationally and professionally, as well as training for staff and safe local places."

6. Effective Youth Work Practices

Q18. Examples of effective methods in work with young people affected by war

Twenty-two respondents answered this open question. The most frequently mentioned effective approaches included safe spaces, communication and relationship-building, NVC-based communication, dialogue circles, trauma-informed group work, mentoring, psychological support, art activities, structured debates, project-based learning and peer integration activities.

"Young people affected by war primarily need relationships, support and availability. Communication, relationships and then integration and participation are essential."

"Building safe spaces where young people can talk freely and create relationships."

"One of the most effective methods is creating safe spaces based on a trauma-informed approach, combined with group work and mentoring."

"Controlled debate, such as Oxford or Lincoln-Douglas debate, with clear divisions and rules so that young people can safely express their views."

"Project work is good because it engages groups of students and teaches tolerance."

Q19. What makes youth work practices effective?

Respondents rated safe spaces, youth-led approaches and peer support as the strongest success factors. Cooperation with psychologists was also rated highly.

Practice element	Weighted average	Rated 4 or 5
Creating a safe space	4.33	82.22%
Youth-led approach	4.32	81.82%
Peer support	4.31	84.45%
Cooperation with psychologists	4.16	75.56%
Community engagement	3.96	68.89%
Flexible methodology	3.89	63.63%
International partnerships	3.41	47.73%

7. Short Analytical Summary

The Polish survey sample is strongly education-based: 74.29% of respondents represented schools or educational institutions, and 74.29% identified as teachers or educators. This means that the findings strongly reflect school-based experience of supporting young people affected by war, especially Ukrainian students. The high share of respondents with more than ten years of experience gives the results practical credibility.

The most prominent barriers in Poland are language barriers, mental health problems, the need to work or support family members, cultural differences and education challenges. The

open responses show that integration is not only a matter of access to school or activities, but also requires emotional support, peer acceptance, language-sensitive methods and anti-discrimination work.

The survey points to a strong need for psychological and emotional support, inclusion and anti-discrimination, skills development, peer support and safe spaces. It also shows that youth workers need stronger competencies in psychological first aid, inclusive facilitation, difficult conversations, trauma-informed approaches and mediation.

Effective practices in Poland should therefore combine safe spaces, peer support, youth-led participation, school-community cooperation, psychological support, language learning, anti-discrimination education and long-term integration. Future youth work activities should pay particular attention to emotional withdrawal, low motivation, hidden trauma, parental support and the need for stable support systems rather than only short-term project-based activities.

Appendix: Survey Outcomes - Germany

This appendix presents the English translation of the survey outcomes collected in Germany. The survey explored the professional profile of respondents, barriers faced by young people affected by war, changed needs, resilience factors, challenges faced by youth workers, required competencies, support needs and effective youth work practices. The total number of survey respondents was 20. For several later questions, the number of answers varies because some respondents skipped individual questions.

1. Respondent Profile

The German survey sample is strongly rooted in civil society and non-formal youth work. NGOs form the largest group of respondents, followed by schools/educational institutions and other youth work actors. Most respondents have substantial experience: 70% reported more than ten years of experience in youth work. Most respondents work regularly or occasionally with young people affected by war, including young people from Ukraine.

Q1. What type of organisation do you currently represent?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	60.00%	12
Youth centre / youth space / youth hub	0.00%	0
School / educational institution	15.00%	3
Municipality / local authority	5.00%	1
International organisation	0.00%	0
Informal youth initiative	0.00%	0
Other	20.00%	4

Other responses included: independent youth welfare provider; private initiative; NGO working nationally and internationally with a public mandate; trainer in international youth work.

Q2. What is your current role?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Youth worker	25.00%	5
Youth leader	5.00%	1
Trainer / non-formal educator	25.00%	5
Project manager / coordinator	15.00%	3
Volunteer	5.00%	1
Teacher / educator	5.00%	1
Psychologist / social worker	5.00%	1
Municipal employee / public official	5.00%	1
Other	10.00%	2

Other responses included: managing director and project staff member.

Q3. In which country do you currently work?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Germany	100.00%	20

Q4. What type of community do you work in?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Rural area (villages, remote or sparsely populated areas)	15.00%	3
Small town (limited services and opportunities compared with larger cities)	45.00%	9
Urban area (city or metropolitan area)	45.00%	9
Disadvantaged urban area (e.g. low-income or marginalised districts, areas with limited access to services)	20.00%	4
Other	5.00%	1

Other response: international youth work.

Q5. How many years of experience do you have in working with young people?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
0-2 years	0.00%	0
3-5 years	30.00%	6
6-9 years	0.00%	0
10+ years	70.00%	14

Q6. Do you currently work with young people affected by war?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Yes, regularly	60.00%	12
Occasionally	35.00%	7
Indirectly	5.00%	1
No	0.00%	0

Q7. Do you currently work with young people from Ukraine affected by war?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Yes, regularly	55.00%	11
Occasionally	35.00%	7
Indirectly	10.00%	2
No	0.00%	0

2. Barriers and Changed Needs

Q8. Main barriers preventing young people affected by war from participating in youth activities

Respondents could select up to five answers. The strongest barriers reported in Germany were mental health distress, language barriers, social isolation and loss of networks, the need to work or support family members, insufficient outreach to marginalised groups, education challenges, trauma and grief.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Mental health distress	56.25%	9
Language barriers in host communities	37.50%	6
Social isolation and loss of social networks	31.25%	5
Need to work or support family members	25.00%	4
Insufficient outreach to marginalised groups	25.00%	4
Challenges in education	25.00%	4

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Experienced trauma and grief	25.00%	4
Other	25.00%	4
Families prioritising basic needs over youth work activities	12.50%	2
Lack of communication channels to refugee/displaced groups	12.50%	2
Discrimination	12.50%	2
Cultural differences	12.50%	2
Lack of stable community or meeting spaces	12.50%	2
Fear of uncertainty about the future	12.50%	2
Lack of financial means for transport or materials	6.25%	1
Security concerns	6.25%	1
Rigid schedules that do not take school disruptions into account	6.25%	1
Exclusion from local youth groups	0.00%	0
Lack of inclusive or safe spaces	0.00%	0
Digital divide	0.00%	0
Lack of trust	0.00%	0
Displaced/refugee youth living in temporary accommodation or frequently changing residence	0.00%	0

Other responses mentioned concerns about family members in crisis areas, lack of interest, lack of access to information, and difficulties understanding the concept and relevance of youth work.

Q9. How has the war changed the needs of young people affected by it?

The strongest changed needs were psychological and emotional support, career guidance and support in entering work, trauma-sensitive support services, skills development, peer support and mentoring. This shows that youth work in Germany needs to combine psychosocial support with integration, future orientation and practical pathways for participation.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Increased need for psychological and emotional support	75.00%	12
Stronger need for career guidance and support in entering work	62.50%	10
Need for trauma-sensitive support services	56.25%	9
Need for skills development (digital, language and social skills)	50.00%	8
Increased need for social connection and peer support	43.75%	7
Greater need for mentoring and adult support	37.50%	6
Increased need for leisure and creative activities	37.50%	6
Greater demand for crisis-related information (safety, rights, services)	31.25%	5
Greater demand for safe spaces	25.00%	4
Increased need for flexible or online participation formats	18.75%	3
Other	18.75%	3
Greater need for opportunities for civic engagement	12.50%	2
Need for inclusion support and anti-discrimination measures	12.50%	2
Increasing financial difficulties	0.00%	0
No significant changes observed	0.00%	0

Q10. Selected translated comments explaining these needs

Open responses show that young people affected by war need long-term support that combines trauma-sensitive assistance, language support, peer connection, creative opportunities and future-oriented guidance. Respondents also highlighted the shortage of professional support services in the language of the affected young people and difficulties related to parent communication.

"War-related psychological stress shapes an entire generation."

"There is a lack of therapeutic professionals and offers in the language of those affected in order to process and contain traumatic experiences."

"The work remains very difficult because there are still too few professional connections to specialists, such as psychologists. It is also difficult because many parents still do not have sufficient German language skills."

"Young people had to separate from their previous social environment and are looking for new friends and safety. Especially at the beginning, missing language skills and sometimes rejection by classmates can hinder this process."

"War fundamentally destroys the reality of young people's lives. Their needs shift from normal adolescent identity development towards survival and coping strategies. Safe spaces, adult mentors, creative activities, peer support and career guidance are therefore essential."

"The greatest barrier is the language barrier, which makes it difficult to build new contacts and receive help from adults."

3. Resilience Factors

Q11. What strengthens the resilience of young people affected by war?

Open-ended responses identified several recurring resilience factors: stable and supportive relationships, reliable adults, safe structures, peer connections, access to education, creative and recreational activities, language support, psychological support, acceptance, opportunities for self-realisation and hope for the future.

"Continuous, long-term and reliable presence of at least one adult reference person, together with diverse leisure and educational opportunities, gives young people a sense of security, safety and personal development."

"Consistency, reliability, acceptance, mindfulness training, patience and understanding."

"Resilience is strengthened by stable relationships, safe structures and hope for the future."

"Adults who give time, attention and trust."

"Activities in which young people are taken seriously and can try things out."

"Safe relationship-based work, long-term and reliable offers, needs-oriented approaches, asking young people about their wishes and involving them in shaping activities, shared laughter and positive experiences."

4. Challenges, Competencies and Support Needs of Youth Workers

Q12. Main challenges faced when working with young people affected by war

The most frequently reported challenge was trauma and mental health distress. Funding shortages and lack of training or competencies were also reported by 40% of respondents. Other comments pointed to lack of knowledge about existing offers, insufficient coordination between services, barriers faced by parents in accessing work, and racist or discriminatory attitudes.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Trauma and mental health distress	66.67%	10
Lack of financial resources	40.00%	6
Lack of training / competencies	40.00%	6
Low motivation / apathy	26.67%	4
Lack of cooperation with institutions	26.67%	4
Other	20.00%	3
Staff burnout	13.33%	2
Displacement / internally displaced persons (IDPs)	0.00%	0
Security issues	0.00%	0
Limited access to safe spaces	0.00%	0

Q13. Professional competencies youth workers should further develop

The highest-rated competencies were psychological first aid, work with grief and loss, trauma-sensitive approaches, facilitating difficult conversations, burnout prevention and self-care, and intercultural sensitivity. This confirms the strongly psychosocial and intercultural nature of the competency gap in Germany.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Basic psychological first aid	60.00%	9
Work with grief and loss	60.00%	9
Trauma-sensitive approaches	46.67%	7
Facilitating difficult conversations	46.67%	7
Burnout prevention and self-care strategies	46.67%	7

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Intercultural sensitivity	46.67%	7
Methods for youth participation and empowerment	26.67%	4
Work with displaced young people (IDPs/refugees)	20.00%	3
Methods for strengthening community resilience	20.00%	3
Developing non-formal education programmes	20.00%	3
Conflict transformation and mediation	13.33%	2
Inclusion and anti-discrimination competences	13.33%	2
Prevention of radicalisation	13.33%	2
Handling hate speech	6.67%	1
Conflict sensitivity	6.67%	1
Media literacy and critical thinking	6.67%	1
Human rights education in youth work	6.67%	1
Advocacy and civic engagement	6.67%	1
Gender-sensitive approaches	0.00%	0
Monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes	0.00%	0
Digital tools for youth work	0.00%	0
Fundraising and resource mobilisation	0.00%	0
Other	0.00%	0

Q14. Support needed to improve youth work practice

The table shows the weighted average on a 1-5 scale and the share of respondents who rated each support type as 4 or 5. Funding for youth activities was the strongest support need, followed by training and peer exchange. Respondents also mentioned the need for conversation skills when working with traumatic experiences.

Support / practice element	Weighted average	Rated 4 or 5
Funding for youth activities	3.93	80.00%
Training	3.53	53.33%
Peer exchange	3.47	46.67%
Supervision	3.21	42.86%
Methodological tools	3.20	33.33%
Psychological support	2.85	38.46%

5. Needed Youth Work Activities and Future Priorities

Q15. Youth work activities most needed in the community

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Psychosocial support activities	46.67%	7
Career guidance	40.00%	6
Skills development programmes	26.67%	4
Artistic and creative activities	26.67%	4
Peer learning activities	26.67%	4
Civic engagement initiatives	13.33%	2
Dialogue and inclusion initiatives	13.33%	2
Mentoring and counselling	13.33%	2
Other	13.33%	2
Volunteer programmes	6.67%	1

Other responses mentioned German language courses and uncertainty about how to assess the needs.

Q16. Priorities for future youth projects addressing war-related challenges

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Psychosocial and mental health support for young people	66.67%	10
Resilience-building programmes	60.00%	9
Career guidance and support in entering work	53.33%	8
Trauma-sensitive youth work approaches	46.67%	7
Support for young people from frontline or formerly occupied areas	26.67%	4
Burnout prevention and staff wellbeing	26.67%	4
Civic engagement and youth participation in decision-making	20.00%	3

Anti-discrimination and inclusion initiatives	20.00%	3
Capacity building for youth workers	20.00%	3
Cooperation with local authorities and institutions	20.00%	3
Peer-to-peer support initiatives	13.33%	2
Conflict transformation and dialogue initiatives	13.33%	2
Skills development (digital skills, soft skills, leadership)	13.33%	2
Strengthening youth centres as community spaces	13.33%	2
Creating safe spaces	6.67%	1
Inclusion of internally displaced young people (IDPs) and refugees	6.67%	1
Monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement	6.67%	1
Volunteering and community solidarity actions	0.00%	0
Gender-sensitive youth work	0.00%	0
Support for young people with disabilities	0.00%	0
Emergency preparedness and crisis response mechanisms	0.00%	0

Q17. If you could change one thing in the youth work system in your community, what would it be?

Open responses focused on stable funding, multilingual access to information, more staff, better-trained professionals, stronger psychosocial support, better information flow about existing offers, teacher training, open outreach youth work and more resources for young people's own ideas.

"Funding - new funding sources in this field."

"Publish all information in different languages."

"More staff and increased involvement of well-trained professionals."

"Better flow of information about existing offers."

"Comprehensive and permanent establishment of low-threshold psychosocial services."

"Basic knowledge about working with people who have experienced violence and war, together with the attitude that these are young people with potential and resources - not only refugees."

"More money for young people's ideas."

6. Effective Youth Work Practices

Q18. Examples of effective methods in work with young people affected by war

Only four respondents answered this open question. The examples emphasised trauma-sensitive communication, peer buddy systems, relationship-building and protecting young people's integrity and voluntary decision-making.

"When a person speaks about traumatic experiences and existing fears, an appropriate response is needed in order to prevent them from slipping into depression."

"Create student buddy systems in which German young people accompany young people with war experiences through everyday school life and leisure time. This helps them get to know each other, cope with school tasks together, build trust and learn about the new city and leisure opportunities."

"The special situation of young people must be accepted but not ignored. Programmes should protect the integrity of young people and remain open-ended. Giving up must also be explicitly allowed."

Q19. What makes youth work practices effective?

Respondents rated flexible methodology, community involvement, safe spaces, peer support and cooperation with psychologists as the strongest success factors. This reflects the need for adaptable, community-based and psychosocially informed youth work practice.

Support / practice element	Weighted average	Rated 4 or 5
Flexible methodology	4.38	92.31%
Community involvement	4.15	76.92%
Creating safe spaces	4.00	75.00%
Peer support	4.00	75.00%
Cooperation with psychologists	4.00	69.23%
International partnerships	3.73	45.45%
Youth-led approach	3.17	41.67%

Other response: psychological support would be valuable, but may not always be realistic for diverse groups with multiple displacement experiences; therefore, basic knowledge among all youth workers would be very helpful.

7. Short Analytical Summary

The German survey sample is strongly NGO-based and reflects a non-formal youth work and civil society perspective. This differs from the more school-based samples in Poland, Italy and Ukraine. The findings therefore strongly highlight the role of youth organisations, community initiatives, international youth work and flexible non-formal methods.

The main barriers identified in Germany are mental health distress, language barriers, social isolation, trauma and educational challenges. Open responses show that young people affected by war may appear outwardly integrated while still needing stable relationships, psychological support, language-sensitive communication and opportunities for belonging.

The changed needs reported by respondents are strongly connected to psychological and emotional support, trauma-sensitive services, career guidance, skills development, peer connection and mentoring. Germany's findings therefore point to the importance of combining psychosocial support with integration, future orientation and practical opportunities for participation.

Youth workers in Germany need stronger competencies in psychological first aid, grief and loss support, trauma-sensitive approaches, difficult conversations, burnout prevention and intercultural sensitivity. Future youth work activities should also improve referral systems, cooperation between NGOs, schools and specialised services, and accessible communication with parents.

Effective practices in Germany should be flexible, community-based and participatory. They should create safe and inclusive spaces, strengthen peer support, connect young people with trusted adults, use creative and non-formal methods, and build pathways towards education, employment and belonging in the host community.

Appendix: Survey Outcomes - Italy

Supporting Young People Affected by War: Challenges, Needs and Responses

This appendix presents the English translation of the survey outcomes collected in Italy. The survey explored the profile of respondents, barriers faced by young people affected by war, changed needs, resilience factors, youth workers' challenges and support needs, and priorities for future youth work activities. Percentages are presented as in the original survey output; for some questions, the number of respondents differs because not all participants answered every question.

1. Respondent Profile

The Italian respondent group is strongly represented by schools and educational institutions, but it also includes NGOs, social cooperatives, volunteer organisations, cultural associations and other community-based actors. Most respondents have long professional experience: two thirds reported more than ten years of experience in work with young people.

Q1. What type of organisation do you currently represent?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
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Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	16.67%	6
Youth centre / youth space / hub	5.56%	2
School / educational institution	38.89%	14
Municipality / local authority	0.00%	0
International organisation	2.78%	1
Informal youth initiative	2.78%	1
Youth council	0.00%	0
Other	33.33%	12

Other responses included: cultural association, volunteer organisation, aggregation centre, refugee reception coordination group, social cooperative, non-profit association and volunteer association working with young people.

Q2. What is your current role?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Youth worker	0.00%	0
Youth leader	0.00%	0
Trainer / non-formal educator	5.56%	2
Project manager / coordinator	36.11%	13
Volunteer	2.78%	1
Teacher / educator	47.22%	17
Psychologist / social worker	0.00%	0
Municipal officer / public employee	2.78%	1
Other	5.56%	2

Other responses included trainer for labour inclusion and educator.

Q3. In which country do you currently work?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Germany	0.00%	0
Italy	97.22%	35
Poland	0.00%	0
Ukraine	0.00%	0
Other	2.78%	1

Q4. What type of community do you work in?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Rural area (villages, remote or sparsely populated areas)	2.78%	1
Small town (limited services and opportunities compared with larger cities)	19.44%	7
Urban area (city or metropolitan area)	75.00%	27
Disadvantaged urban area	22.22%	8
Other	0.00%	0

Q5. How many years of experience do you have in working with young people?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
0-2 years	2.78%	1
3-5 years	16.67%	6
6-9 years	13.89%	5
10+ years	66.67%	24

Q6. Do you currently work with young people affected by war?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Yes, regularly	30.56%	11
Occasionally	52.78%	19
Indirectly	8.33%	3
No	8.33%	3

Q7. Do you currently work with young people from Ukraine affected by war?

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Yes, regularly	16.67%	6
Occasionally	36.11%	13

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Indirectly	13.89%	5
No	33.33%	12

2. Barriers and Changed Needs

Q8. Main barriers preventing young people affected by war from participating in youth activities

Respondents could select up to five answers. The most frequently identified barriers were language barriers in host communities, psychological distress, social isolation and loss of networks, experienced trauma and grief, and the need to work or support family members.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Psychological distress	44.44%	12
Young people need to work or support family members	25.93%	7
Unable to pay for transport or materials	3.70%	1
Families prioritise basic needs over youth activities	22.22%	6
Safety concerns	18.52%	5
Lack of communication channels in displaced communities	3.70%	1
Weak outreach to marginalised groups	3.70%	1
Exclusion from local youth groups	18.52%	5
Social isolation and loss of networks	37.04%	10
Discrimination	0.00%	0
Language barriers in host communities	51.85%	14
Rigid schedules that do not consider interruptions in schooling	3.70%	1
Lack of inclusive or safe spaces	11.11%	3
Digital divide	3.70%	1
Lack of trust	11.11%	3
Cultural differences	25.93%	7
Educational challenges	11.11%	3
Lack of stable community spaces	7.41%	2
Fear of uncertainty	11.11%	3
Displaced/refugee youth in temporary housing or frequently changing residence	11.11%	3
Experienced trauma and grief	37.04%	10
Other	0.00%	0

Q9. How has the war changed the needs of young people affected by it?

The strongest changed needs were psychological and emotional support, peer connection, career guidance and employment support, financial vulnerability, trauma-informed services and support for inclusion and anti-discrimination.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Increased need for psychological and emotional support	74.07%	20
Greater demand for safe spaces	22.22%	6
Increased need for social connections and peer support	44.44%	12
Greater need for career guidance and employment support	40.74%	11
Need for skills development (digital, language, soft skills)	33.33%	9
Increased financial vulnerability	40.74%	11
Greater need for civic engagement opportunities	11.11%	3
Higher demand for crisis-related information (safety, rights, services)	7.41%	2
Need for inclusion and anti-discrimination support	37.04%	10
Increased need for flexible or online participation formats	3.70%	1
Greater need for mentoring and adult support	25.93%	7
Increased need for recreational and creative activities	29.63%	8
Need for trauma-informed support services	37.04%	10
No significant changes observed	0.00%	0
Other: economic support	3.70%	1

Q10. Selected translated comments explaining these needs

Open responses emphasised psychological fragility, language barriers, social isolation, economic vulnerability, difficulties in school and employment pathways, and the importance of safe and non-stigmatising spaces.

"War does not only destroy physical infrastructure; it deeply fragments the social fabric and the psychological balance of younger generations."

"Young people ask for more education, culture and social spaces."

"Activities should pay attention to the emotional dimension without forcing emotional expression at all costs, and there is a need to rebuild horizontal peer relationships."

"They need to recreate a network in a different language; they need to break the ice, which they would not have needed to do in their place of origin."

"For some young people, language difficulties are combined with non-acceptance of their present situation; trauma operates at several levels and prevents inclusion."

"The young people mainly need psychological support to address their fragilities."

"There is a need to learn the language in order to be included."

"They are alone and vulnerable."

"The war creates fragility and young people need to be supported."

"Low educational attainment, absence of support networks, inadequate reception systems and the priority of economic needs all affect young people's situation."

"Children from Ukraine live with fear of aircraft, sirens and windows; during explosions, glass breaks, and when entering a house they look for a corner without windows."

"For safe spaces, it is important to keep in mind the context from which young people come, especially if they come from areas close to active fighting."

3. Resilience Factors

Q11. What strengthens the resilience of young people affected by war?

Respondents linked resilience to relationships, welcome and kindness, peer support, education, language support, psychological support, hope for the future, connection with the past, and opportunities for young people to be active and recognised.

"Relational networks and peer support, the restoration of routine and normality, activism and youth protagonism strengthen resilience."

"Education and social relationships."

"Being able to believe that there is a future without war in which they can invest."

"Feeling that they are not alone."

"The possibility of maintaining a connection with one's past and being able to imagine a return home."

"A welcoming community can do a lot."

"Psychological support pathways."

"Having family nearby and calm, with work and a future."

"Educational accompaniment and psychosocial support, participatory working methods, and the emergence of talents and desires."

"Feeling trusted in the school, social and family context; opportunities for peer relationships; and the desire to take up opportunities for a new life after the trauma of conflict."

"Language support, individual guidance and psychological support."

"The ability to listen and to recognise oneself in similar stories."

"Finding friends and work."

"Sometimes having no alternatives, or very few, allows young people to discover tools and talents they did not know they had."

"Many young people look for an opportunity to leave the country for short or longer periods, hoping to experience an almost normal everyday life for some time."

4. Challenges, Competencies and Support Needs of Youth Workers

Q12. Main challenges faced when working with young people affected by war

The most frequently reported challenges were trauma and mental health problems, low motivation or apathy, lack of training and competencies, lack of funding, and staff burnout. One respondent also mentioned the lack of housing solutions.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Trauma and mental health problems	59.26%	16
Low motivation / apathy	55.56%	15
Displacement (internally displaced people)	7.41%	2
Lack of funding	25.93%	7
Staff burnout	14.81%	4
Security issues	3.70%	1
Limited access to safe spaces	11.11%	3
Lack of training / competencies	29.63%	8
Lack of cooperation with institutions	14.81%	4
Other: lack of housing solutions	3.70%	1

Q13. Professional competencies youth workers should further develop

Trauma-informed approaches were the strongest competency need. Respondents also highlighted grief and loss support, facilitation of difficult conversations, conflict transformation and mediation, intercultural sensitivity, and inclusion/anti-discrimination competencies.

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Trauma-informed approaches	85.19%	23
Basic psychological first aid	29.63%	8
Conflict transformation and mediation	40.74%	11
Facilitating difficult conversations	40.74%	11
Working with grief and loss	44.44%	12
Inclusion and anti-discrimination competencies	29.63%	8
Gender-sensitive approaches	14.81%	4
Working with displaced young people (IDPs/refugees)	11.11%	3
Burnout prevention and self-care strategies	18.52%	5
Community resilience-building methods	22.22%	6
Youth participation and empowerment methods	22.22%	6
Addressing hate speech	0.00%	0
Radicalisation prevention	7.41%	2
Intercultural sensitivity	37.04%	10
Conflict sensitivity	11.11%	3
Media literacy and critical thinking	0.00%	0
Monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes	3.70%	1
Development of non-formal education programmes	22.22%	6
Digital tools for youth work	0.00%	0
Human rights education in youth work	0.00%	0
Advocacy and civic engagement	0.00%	0
Fundraising and resource mobilisation	0.00%	0

Q14. Support needed to improve youth work practice

The table shows the weighted average on a 1-5 scale and the share of respondents who rated each support type as 4 or 5. Financial support, training and peer exchange were among the strongest needs.

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Support type	Weighted average	Rated 4 or 5	N
Psychological support	3.08	48.00%	25
Training	4.04	73.08%	26
Methodological tools	3.67	66.67%	27
Financial support for activities with young people	4.08	80.00%	25
Peer exchange	3.88	75.00%	24
Supervision	3.33	50.00%	24

Other response: contractual stability.

5. Needed Youth Work Activities and Future Priorities

Q15. Youth work activities most needed in the community

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Psychosocial support activities	62.96%	17
Civic engagement initiatives	18.52%	5
Skills development programmes	33.33%	9
Career guidance	55.56%	15
Artistic and creative activities	29.63%	8
Volunteering programmes	18.52%	5
Dialogue and inclusion initiatives	29.63%	8
Mentoring and counselling support	22.22%	6
Peer-learning activities	29.63%	8
Other	0.00%	0

Q16. Priorities for future youth projects addressing war-related challenges

Answer choice	Responses	Number
Psychosocial and mental health support for young people	55.56%	15
Trauma-informed youth work approaches	29.63%	8
Creation of safe spaces	29.63%	8
Inclusion of internally displaced young people and refugees	25.93%	7
Support for young people from frontline or formerly occupied areas	22.22%	6
Resilience-building programmes	25.93%	7
Peer-support initiatives	25.93%	7
Civic engagement and youth participation in decision-making	14.81%	4
Conflict transformation and dialogue initiatives	33.33%	9
Career guidance and employment support	40.74%	11
Skills development (digital, soft skills, leadership)	14.81%	4
Volunteering and community solidarity actions	11.11%	3
Anti-discrimination and inclusion initiatives	25.93%	7
Gender-sensitive youth work	3.70%	1
Support for young people with disabilities	7.41%	2
Capacity building for youth workers	7.41%	2
Burnout prevention and staff wellbeing	11.11%	3
Cooperation with local authorities and institutions	14.81%	4
Strengthening youth centres as community hubs	7.41%	2
Emergency preparedness and crisis response mechanisms	0.00%	0
Monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement	3.70%	1

6. Suggested System Changes and Effective Practices

Q17. If you could change one thing in the youth work system in your community, what would it be?

Open responses focused on moving beyond short-term projects, reducing bureaucracy, increasing training, strengthening psychosocial support, improving language and school inclusion, supporting employment pathways, and giving more space to young people's voices.

"Overcome the logic of short-term projects in favour of a structural, continuous and integrated support system."

"Create safe spaces for dialogue among young people affected by war."

"There is no specific training for welcoming young people with this background."

"Bureaucracy takes time and energy away from relationships."

"Make the work of educators, psychologists and teachers more organic and integrated."

"Provide stronger psychological support pathways."

"Provide greater economic support."

"Offer more language courses so that young people can be included in the socio-cultural context of arrival."

"Increase exchange between young people with these experiences and local young people."

"Reduce overly rigid and formal modes of school inclusion."

"Give young people more space to speak."

"Provide adequate guidance aimed at employment."

"Provide psychological support at school."

"Offer real job opportunities that help respond to basic needs, while also inviting young people to take care of themselves through peer activities in their free time."

"Facilitate inclusion by overcoming language barriers in continuous communication."

"Provide more training and cooperation with psychological experts."

"Improve access to services."

Q18. Examples of effective practices in work with young people affected by war

Only a small number of respondents provided examples. The responses point to youth exchanges, home-based or individualised support, trauma-informed communication, and activities that help young people reconnect with pre-trauma interests and peer relationships.

"Youth exchanges on this topic."

"Home visits, where possible, so that workers can better understand the background and difficulties of the young people they support."

"After establishing dialogue, identify practices that bring satisfaction to the young person, preferably linked to their life before the trauma, value these practices and build a pathway to reactivate them."

"Supporting peer engagement in recreational settings, for example helping an adolescent girl make her first friends in a gymnastics school."

Q19. What makes youth work practices effective when working with young people affected by war?

Respondents rated the effectiveness factors on a 1-5 scale. The highest-rated factors were safe spaces, flexible methodology, peer support and community involvement.

Practice element	Weighted average	N
Youth-led approach	3.93	14
Creation of safe spaces	4.31	13
Peer support	4.14	14
Cooperation with psychologists	3.64	14
Community involvement	4.00	14
International partnerships	3.69	13
Flexible methodology	4.21	14

7. Short Analytical Summary

The Italian survey results show that young people affected by war need support that combines psychosocial care, language learning, social connection, educational and employment pathways, and inclusion in the host community. The findings are shaped by a respondent profile with strong representation from schools, educators, project coordinators and social/community organisations.

The main barriers are language, psychological distress, social isolation, trauma and grief, and economic pressure. Respondents also highlight that integration is not only a linguistic or administrative process: it requires safe relationships, peer support, cultural mediation, anti-discrimination work and opportunities for young people to imagine a future.

For youth workers and organisations, the strongest needs are trauma-informed competencies, grief and loss support, facilitation of difficult conversations, conflict transformation, intercultural sensitivity, funding for activities, training, peer exchange and methodological tools. Future youth work in Italy should therefore connect psychosocial support with rights-based inclusion, language support, career guidance, creative methods and community-based participation.

Annex 4. Country focus group summaries.

ITALY

Introduction

The following interviews are collected from several workers from various NGOs and a school based in Turin, Italy. Participants were asked questions related to six phases: the opening of the interview and establishment of the interview space as a safe space to speak, experiences and challenges, youth perspectives, best practices, gaps and limitations, and a closing reflection.

Giosef Torino is an association for social promotion that centres its work on human rights education, anti-discrimination, and non-formal education methodologies, with a specific geopolitical priority on the Euromed region. Representing Giosef Torino are Anna (President, active in youth work for 20 years), Federica (active for 6 years in accounting and facilitation), Davide (active in youth work 20+ years) and Valentina (an educator and pedagogue finishing her first year of civil service).

Francesca is the Program Manager of Red Nova, a third-sector organization established in Turin in 2020, originally as the country office for the Danish Refugee Council. Maurizio Russo serves as a history and Italian teacher in a Turin school, a position he has held since 2016, though his broader career spans over a decade of work in popular education across diverse settings including Naples, France, Central America, and Brazil.

Finally, Sara Guidi is the coordinator of Civico Zero Torino, a project supporting young people aged 14–21, primarily with migratory backgrounds, with particular attention to unaccompanied minors and youth experiencing social marginalization. The project works in partnership with the City of Turin and focuses on preventing exploitation, abuse, and involvement in illegal activities through educational and social inclusion pathways. Sara brings more than twenty years of experience working with vulnerable youth, including ten years in juvenile justice and another ten years within the Civico Zero project.

Phase 1: Opening & Safe Space

The interviewees were first asked to briefly describe their organisations, their roles, and a word that describes their current work with young people affected by war, coming from war-torn contexts.

Anna, Federica and Valentina's daily work involves constant engagement with youth from conflict zones, particularly Palestine and Lebanon, through non-formal education and intersectional approaches. To describe their current work, the participants chose the words "complex" (Anna), "unpredictable" (Federica), and "unsupported" (Valentina), reflecting a professional environment characterized by high emotional stakes and a perceived lack of institutional backing.

Davide, also representing Giosef Torino for the last two years, incorporates his extensive experience in educational theatre and international exchanges. His daily work involves high-frequency engagement with youth from conflict zones, particularly from Palestine and Lebanon, a strategic priority for his organization. He characterizes his current work with the term "unnerving". This choice reflects the constant tension of navigating systemic barriers and the heavy responsibility of working with individuals whose daily reality is shaped by permanent states of occupation and apartheid, which he finds difficult to reconcile with a standard European perspective.

Having been involved since Red Nova's inception, Francesca has overseen the transition of the entity and its three main lines of humanitarian and social intervention, which include border support, street units for the homeless in Turin, and specialized assistance for those fleeing the war in Ukraine. Since March 2022, she has coordinated the Ukraine Emergency Call Centre, a unique national service that has managed over 13,000 calls, providing everything from emergency shelter to school enrolment and job market orientation. When asked for a word to describe her current work, she chooses "challenging". This choice reflects the complexity of navigating family dynamics where adults often act as intermediaries for youth needs and the significant gap left by an institutional response that often fails to account for the specific trauma associated with war contexts.

Maurizio's daily professional life currently involves direct interaction with Ukrainian youth both within standard classroom settings and specialized Italian language groups. When asked to select a single word to characterize this work, he chooses "fun", a reflection of the fact that despite the heavy context of their arrival, he finds the Ukrainian students themselves to be personally very likeable and engaging.

For Sara and Civico Zero, direct contact with young people from Ukraine has been limited, as they have generally been managed through separate reception systems. When asked to describe work with young people affected by war in one word, she stresses that no specific word sums it up, as a distinction is not made in Civico Zero between war-related trauma and other forms of trauma. Instead, young people are supported through individualized and integrated interventions that address the broad spectrum of experiences linked to migration and social vulnerability.

Phase 2: Experiences & Challenges

The participants were then asked a series of questions regarding their personal experiences, (missing) skills, and challenges they encounter in their work.

Anna and Federica shared several intense scenarios illustrating the complexity of their work. Federica described the logistical and emotional chaos of having participants blocked in Italy due to closed airspace in their home countries while their visas were expiring, creating a desperate race against bureaucratic deadlines. Anna highlighted a deeper, relational challenge: the "constant conflict" and defensive attitude often exhibited by youth from

Palestine. She noted that trauma creates a "self-defence" mechanism where even small sparks like a cup of coffee or a house rule can lead to explosive emotional reactions.

A recurring theme was the normalization of trauma; Federica expressed a sense of being surprised by how youth might mention a dead classmate as casually as "coffee talk," leaving the youth worker unsure of how to stay in the conversation without being patronizing. Regarding missing skills, they identified a need for better group management of high emotional impacts and trauma-informed pedagogical tools. For personal support, they emphasized that systematic, well-funded supervision is essential but currently ignored by public and institutional budgets. Anna specifically called for a "Crisis Office" at the European level to provide operational protection and legal guidance for NGOs working in volatile regions.

In terms of specific challenges, Francesca highlights the difficulties surrounding educational and university integration. She explains that it is not merely a bureaucratic hurdle but a social one; the lack of linguistic-cultural mediators in schools makes it extremely difficult for Ukrainian youth to build relationships with their Italian peers, often resulting in isolated ethnic clusters rather than true integration. Regarding team competencies, she identifies a large absence of dedicated psychological support. While free psychological services were abundant in the first year of the invasion, those resources have largely evaporated, leaving a gap in trauma processing for youth who remain "disconnected" from their homeland. Furthermore, she emphasizes a lack of professional supervision for her staff. For years, operators have managed high-distress calls without formal emotional support or group supervision, leading to significant emotional overload among mediators who were not originally trained for such intense crisis management.

One of the most significant challenges Maurizio encountered involves the delicate nature of trust and silence regarding the war; for instance, he worked with a student who explicitly declined to discuss the situation in Ukraine, leading Maurizio to avoid the topic in history lessons for nearly a year and a half until the student felt ready to engage. Another profound difficulty emerged during a social outing where a student, previously labelled as "unpleasant" or "closed" by other faculty members, revealed that her mother was a prisoner in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. This disclosure highlighted a massive gap in teacher understanding, as Maurizio identifies the lack of Russian or Ukrainian language skills as the most critical missing competence in the school system.

Davide identifies the physical and bureaucratic impossibility of movement as a primary challenge, particularly for youth in Palestine. This creates a state of continuous tension, requiring immense mental, physical, and financial energy to solve logistical crises. Beyond logistics, he finds it challenging to maintain a balance between his own actions and the lived reality of the youth, noting that the term "war" is often reductive when applied to the Palestinian context of long-term apartheid. Regarding missing competencies, Davide highlights a need for trauma management skills, specifically knowing how to create safe spaces that prevent the "transfer" of trauma from the storyteller to the listener. For personal resilience, he advocates for systematized supervision within teams and professional psychological support, rather than mere coaching. He notes that without these tools, operators struggle to decode the "indicators" of trauma, such as unexpressed anger and high tension, leading to severe emotional exhaustion.

One particularly challenging experience for Sara involved supporting an Afghan family with several children who had arrived in Turin and remained hidden from formal services. The family was living in overcrowded and precarious housing, lacked information about available support, and had become disconnected from education and institutional networks. Their

situation was only discovered thanks to peer connections within the local mosque and the youth center. The greatest difficulties were not related to the young people themselves, but to structural barriers within the system, including housing shortages, fragmented services, and inadequate communication. The interviewee recalls the emotional moment when two brothers, after speaking with a cultural mediator for the first time, expressed that it was the first occasion they had truly understood what was happening around them since arriving in Italy.

Regarding missing competencies, Sara identifies the need for continuous geopolitical education and a deeper understanding of the contexts from which young people originate. Such knowledge would improve professionals' ability to interpret vulnerabilities and adapt educational approaches accordingly. They place particular emphasis on trauma-informed approaches that avoid reproducing previous experiences of violence or exclusion, especially in educational settings.

Phase 3: The Young Person's Perspective

Phase three of the interview broadened the scope and asked the participants questions related to the young people themselves, such as the main obstacles that prevent participation from youth, particularly youth affected by war.

Anna, Federica, and Valentina identified visas as the most critical and systemic barrier to participation; the paradox is that those living in the worst conflict zones are the least permitted to travel for international youth work. A hidden barrier they identified is the "dichotomy of responsibility" felt by the youth: they feel a heavy burden to act as "ambassadors" or "educators" for their people's cause, yet they simultaneously crave a week of "spiritual pause" where they can just be normal youth without thinking about war.

They noted that participation is actually higher among youth in conflict because of more of a need to be seen, whereas youth in "democratic" contexts often struggle to find motivation for active citizenship. However, the most excluded youth remain those from rural areas, those with limited socio-economic means, and those facing gender-based restrictions within their families.

Francesca notes that the most significant barrier to participation is the "temporality" mindset that characterized the first two years of the conflict in Ukraine. Many young people and their families avoided enrolling in Italian systems, such as schools or local jobs, because they expected to return to Ukraine shortly; this led to a "disconnect" where they continued remote activities in Ukraine while physically present in Italy. She identifies young people with disabilities as the most excluded group, as they are frequently placed in structures that prioritize basic needs but lack pathways to real social inclusion or peer-to-peer engagement. Within the realm of youth work, she believes that fostering peer-to-peer relationships and addressing the fundamental language barrier are the most effective ways to encourage active participation.

Maurizio echoes this, saying that some barriers facing these young people are often caused by a transitory mindset; unlike traditional migrants who choose to move and see school as a long-term investment, war-displaced youth often view their stay in Italy as temporary and may lack the motivation to invest in a future they cannot yet imagine there. A hidden but critical obstacle is the institutional expectation of gratitude, where the system assumes these students should be thankful for being "saved," which creates an additional emotional burden. Furthermore, many students face a crisis of linguistic identity, particularly those from the Donbas region who are Russian speaking; they are often misunderstood by an institutional system that fails to distinguish between their political nationality and their primary language, sometimes even providing mediators who do not speak their actual tongue.

For Davide, the most critical barrier to participation is a fundamental lack of information; many youths are unaware that free international programs even exist. This is compounded by a deep-seated cultural distrust from families who find it hard to believe that such opportunities are actually free and without hidden threats. Davide also points out a pervasive social prejudice: the idea that youth with "basic needs" (like housing or employment) do not need cultural or mobility opportunities. He argues that telling youth to "focus on school and work first" effectively buries their opportunities for growth. While youth work can address the information gap and work to dismantle the "this isn't for me" mindset, it must do so by being more incisive and present in the most difficult social contexts, such as the more marginalized vocational schools.

For Sara, the principal barriers to participation are rooted in the profound precariousness experienced by many young people. Uncertain legal status, economic instability, temporary accommodation, and family responsibilities often make long-term planning impossible. Young people frequently need to balance school with work, caregiving duties, or preparation for adulthood and independent living. Participation in educational or recreational activities therefore becomes secondary to immediate survival needs.

For girls and young women, additional cultural and social barriers can limit participation. The interviewee notes that these challenges are less visible and require further reflection and experimentation. More broadly, participation is constrained by the lack of time and stability in young people's lives. Although many express interest in activities offered by the centre, their everyday realities often prevent sustained engagement. While many of these barriers are structural, the interviewee believes youth work still has room to experiment with approaches that promote participation and address gender-specific obstacles.

Phase 4: Practices & What Works

Several best practices from each participant were then discussed regarding programs involving youth from a war-torn background, as well as identifying a 'secret ingredient' for resilience.

The group of Anna, Federica, and Valentina identified high-quality, equitable partnerships as their most successful practice. Anna described a study visit to Palestine where the European team "took a step back," giving total planning responsibility to local partners. This authentic cooperation, rooted in listening and sharing responsibility, is what keeps the work sustainable. The "secret ingredient" for resilience, specifically in the Palestinian and Lebanese contexts, is the strong existing tissue of civil society and social activism, according to Federica. This tradition of grassroots resilience allows youth to transition from being victims to becoming youth workers and activists themselves. The international "bubble" of youth work also provides a unique space for peer learning that can achieve in two weeks what local work might take months to accomplish.

A particularly successful practice mentioned is the implementation of job orientation sessions, both online and in-person, which gained momentum over the last six months. These sessions worked because they moved beyond simple information delivery to create a space for human encounter; for many participants aged 18-35, these gatherings provided a chance to exchange experiences with peers and begin preparing for a long-term future in Italy through CV preparation and skills assessments. Francesca identifies the "secret ingredient" of resilience as stable human relations. In her view, having a professional reference who is also approachable and "human" allows young people to build the trust necessary to overcome systemic barriers and move past the isolation of their displacement. Maurizio has found success by moving away from a narrow focus on the Ukrainian conflict and instead involving students in universal themes of reflection. For example, taking a

student to see a documentary about life in Gaza or encouraging participation in the "Train of Memory" allowed them to process themes of war and memory without the immediate pressure of their own trauma. He emphasizes that the "secret ingredient" to supporting these youth is not a mechanistic formula for resilience, a term he finds overused and problematic, but rather active listening and patience. Establishing a relationship of trust is the only way to uncover the complex family fragmentations and personal stories that define their daily reality. A successful practice Davide describes occurred during the "Fair Game" project, which engaged second-generation youth from African and Arab backgrounds. The intervention worked because the team focused on building trust through honesty and fulfilled promises. After the youth shared intense stories of witnessed or suffered violence, the team promised to return and did so, bringing back activities that respected the sensitivity of the stories shared. Davide identifies the "secret ingredients" of resilience as anger and a sense of justice. He believes youth feel strengthened when they realize they are not alone and that there are people outside their immediate context who recognize their struggle as unjust. Ultimately, resilience is fostered when youth realize that the strength to fight for justice exists within themselves.

Rather than identifying a single intervention, Sara emphasizes the importance of attention to individuals and careful observation of small signals that may reveal underlying vulnerabilities. A key element of successful practice is the weekly exchange within the multidisciplinary team, where different professional perspectives are combined to interpret emerging needs and determine appropriate responses.

One particularly valuable practice at Civico Zero is the "Word Group" facilitated by the centre's psychologist and supported by cultural mediators. Open to anyone attending the centre and requiring no registration, the group provides a flexible and informal space where participants can freely share thoughts and experiences. Themes that emerge collectively may later be explored through artistic activities or individual psychosocial support. The combination of dialogue, cultural mediation, art-based approaches, and flexible psychological support enables young people to express themselves without pressure and in ways adapted to their personal circumstances. According to the interviewee, the success of these practices lies in their accessibility, continuity, and capacity to adapt to the changing needs of participants.

Phase 5: Needs & System Gaps

Phase 5 of the interview addressed needs, limitations, system gaps, and priority areas for future development.

The participants from Giosef Torino outlined five priority areas for future development:

1. Re-politicization of Youth Work: Reclaiming the political dimension of the sector rather than just acting as "gap-fillers" for the State.
2. Models for Youth Well-being: Creating spaces for "self-care" and listening to one's own needs.
3. Geopolitical and Anti-Discrimination Work: Specifically focusing on anti-Islamic hatred and its intersection with racism.
4. Media and Narrative Literacy: Developing skills to counter the systematic production of racist and pro-war content generated for clicks.
5. Access to Physical Spaces: Addressing the "territorial" crisis where NGOs and youth lack affordable, non-religious places to meet and organize.

If they could change one thing, it would be to overhaul participant selection processes to make them less elitist, removing linguistic barriers that often exclude the "grassroots" youth who need these opportunities most.

Looking toward future projects, Francesca prioritizes five key areas: legal regularization and orientation, professional psychological support for both users and staff, community-building spaces for host and migrant peers, housing, and labour market opening. She specifically identifies the private housing market as a site of major discrimination, where "foreign" accents or names prevent people with valid documents and jobs from securing homes. Systemically, she advocates for a total overhaul of the bureaucracy in public services. The current complexity of the Italian system creates "incredible barriers" to fundamental rights, such as obtaining a health card or a general practitioner, making basic healthcare inaccessible to those who need it most.

Maurizio highlights a desperate need for genuine linguistic and cultural mediation that is available on a daily basis, rather than the current insufficient two hours of Italian lessons per week. If he could change one thing, it would be the rigidity of the teaching staff, advocating for a fundamental transformation in teacher attitudes to foster greater flexibility and a deeper understanding of displacement contexts. Future projects should prioritize listening directly to student needs and helping them construct a clear purpose for their education in Italy.

Davide identifies integrated mental health support as a primary underutilized partnership. He envisions a system where psychological support is as common and accessible as a local shop, integrated into schools and non-formal education sectors rather than treated as a "box to be checked". If he could change one thing in the system, it would be to reverse the "depoliticization" of youth work. He criticizes the current trend where the third sector is viewed merely as a "patch" to cover the gaps left by the State. He advocates for the sector to reclaim its political value and build stronger networks to resist being pushed into small, specialized "niches" that lack the power to effect real change.

Sara identifies psychosocial support and trauma-informed work as major priorities for future interventions. Continuous professional development and thematic training are considered essential to strengthen the competencies of youth workers and social professionals. Equally important is the recognition and valorisation of social workers, whose roles are increasingly demanding but insufficiently supported both economically and socially.

Significant concerns are raised regarding collaboration with mental health services. Experiences with public mental health centres reveal persistent difficulties, including limited accessibility and a lack of expertise in addressing trauma linked to migration and displacement. Residency requirements and fragmented institutional systems further restrict access to long-term support. According to Sara, these discontinuities often leave people more vulnerable after completing a support pathway than when they first entered it. Greater continuity of care, stronger coordination between services, and better preparation among professionals are therefore seen as essential priorities.

Phase 6: Closing Reflection

Finally, the interview concluded with a closing reflection, allowing participants to voice any additional views or experiences they had, as well as their most important insights.

For Giosef Torino, the most important insight shared was the danger of the "hierarchy of pain," where different conflicts are pitted against each other. Anna stressed the importance of inter-contextual contamination, where organizations working with different groups (e.g., Ukraine and Palestine) share expertise rather than working in silos. They concluded that youth work must remain vigilant against the normalization of violence and the "war promotion" narratives currently prevalent in media, which risk creating a generation characterized by permanent geopolitical anxiety. Their final plea was for institutional partners to treat the third sector as true political allies rather than just "beneficiaries" of funding.

In her final reflections, Francesca emphasizes that the research must not overlook the pervasive discrimination in the right to housing, which remains a primary obstacle to full inclusion. She also reiterates a vital point regarding the sustainability of youth work: the mental health of the operators. Her closing insight is that it is impossible to provide high-quality support to war-affected youth if the professionals and mediators working with them are not also supported and cared for by the system.

The most vital insight Maurizio offers is that the actual voices and stories of the youth are currently absent from research and institutional understanding. He argues that any research or support strategy is only meaningful if it manages to capture these narratives through a structured, thoughtful methodology that creates safe spaces for sharing without forcing traumatic disclosure. The ultimate goal should be to move beyond "fitting in" or "resilience" as an individual adaptation and instead focus on structural listening that honours the students' specific identities and complex life contexts.

The most important insight from the interview with Davide is the necessity of resisting the "siege" on the third sector, where organizations are forced to work with less depth to access limited funding. Davide insists that research must not ignore the geopolitical context and the "double standards" inherent in current narratives, specifically the different treatment of Ukrainian refugees compared to others. He concludes that youth work must maintain a decolonial lens and continue to combat nationalism and supremacism. Without this critical perspective, there is a danger of inadvertently supporting dominant narratives that hide the complexities of conflict and displacement.

Sara identifies continuity of psychosocial support as the most important issue emerging from the discussion. Equally critical is the need to recognize and sustain the role of social workers, whose commitment and expertise are increasingly difficult to maintain within current conditions. Without stronger support and professional recognition, there is a risk that fewer qualified people will remain in the sector.

Finally, Sara stresses the importance of narratives and public discourse. While acknowledging the specific vulnerabilities experienced by people fleeing war, they caution against creating hierarchies of suffering that overlook the needs of other migrants who have also experienced trauma and exclusion. Research and practice should therefore avoid simplistic distinctions and maintain attention to the broader complexity of migratory experiences, ensuring that support systems remain inclusive and responsive to diverse forms of vulnerability.

Conclusion

The interviews underline that work with young people affected by war is complex, emotionally demanding, and deeply shaped by structural inequalities. While the participants identified valuable practices based on listening, trust, and inclusive relationships, they also pointed to significant gaps in institutional support, psychosocial care, and access to rights. A key message emerging from all interviews is that young people should not be seen only through the lens of trauma, but as individuals with diverse needs, capacities, and aspirations. Strengthening support systems therefore requires both better resources for professionals and more coordinated, equitable, and politically aware responses to youth displacement.

UKRAINE

Background

To complement the survey findings, a focus group discussion was conducted with youth workers and youth leaders from different regions of Ukraine. The discussion aimed to explore the lived experiences behind the quantitative data, deepen understanding of barriers to participation, identify effective youth work practices, and examine the support needs of youth workers working with young people affected by war.

The focus group brought together **eight youth work practitioners** representing civil society organisations, youth centres and educational institutions from different parts of Ukraine:

- Kharkiv region (2 participants)
- Sumy city (2 participants)
- Mykolaivka community, Sumy region (1 participant)
- Kremenchuk (1 participant)
- Oleksandriia (1 participant)
- Ivano-Frankivsk (1 participant)

Participants had between 6 and more than 20 years of experience in youth work and represented both frontline and relatively safer regions. Most participants worked daily with young people affected by war, including internally displaced young people, youth living in border communities, young people who lost relatives due to the war, and young people experiencing isolation, anxiety and uncertainty about the future.

1. The Reality of Youth Work in Wartime

Participants described youth work as a field requiring constant adaptation, flexibility and emotional resilience. When asked to describe their current work in one word, participants used expressions such as:

“Flexibility.”

“Acceptance.”

“Important.”

“Development.”

“Relevant.”

These responses reflect the dynamic and unpredictable nature of youth work in Ukraine's wartime context.

Many participants emphasised that virtually all young people in their communities have been affected by war in one way or another.

As one participant from Sumy noted:

“All young people in Sumy have been affected by the war.”

For practitioners working in border communities, insecurity is a daily reality. One participant described working in a community located only four kilometres from the Russian border, where public transport has not operated for months and many families have been evacuated. Despite these challenges, youth workers continue organising activities through mobile youth work and partnerships with local actors.

2. Challenges Faced by Youth Workers

Working with Trauma and Loss

Participants frequently encountered situations involving grief, trauma and psychological distress among young people.

One youth worker described organising camps for young people who had lost parents during the war:

“One participant had lost her father only two months earlier. The challenge was having people in the team who had the competencies to work with this group.”

Several participants highlighted difficulties in recognising when young people require specialised psychological support and when referral to professionals is necessary.

A youth worker from Kharkiv region reflected:

“Sometimes I referred young people too early, and sometimes too late. I need stronger skills in identifying when crisis intervention is needed.”

Inclusion and Diversity

Participants also discussed challenges related to creating inclusive learning environments.

One facilitator described working with a group that included young people with visual and intellectual disabilities:

“It was stressful because we needed to constantly adapt the programme and at the same time maintain learning outcomes for everyone.”

The discussion revealed a strong need for greater competencies in inclusive facilitation and accessible programme design.

Emotional Burden on Youth Workers

Many participants spoke openly about emotional exhaustion and the difficulty of balancing professional commitment with personal wellbeing.

One participant reflected:

“In our field, work often becomes life. I immerse myself deeply in it and at the same time I am afraid of losing my resources.”

Another participant explained:

“Once every few months I need to leave Sumy and spend time with people who understand me. If I am burning out, I need to go.”

These reflections highlight the importance of supervision, peer support and self-care mechanisms for youth workers operating in prolonged crisis conditions.

3. Barriers to Participation for Young People

Participants identified a wide range of barriers affecting young people's participation.

Security and Mobility

Security concerns emerged as the most significant barrier.

A participant from Kharkiv region explained:

“Many young people do not go anywhere alone. Ninety percent come in pairs because they do not feel safe.”

Participants reported that fears related to shelling, air raids and insecurity limit young people's willingness to travel, participate in activities and engage with new groups.

Loss of Social Connections

Several youth workers observed that years of COVID-19 restrictions followed by war have significantly reduced opportunities for face-to-face interaction.

One participant stated:

“Some young people have forgotten how to communicate. They are afraid to speak with unfamiliar people.”

Displacement was also identified as a major contributor to the loss of social networks and community belonging.

Economic Barriers

Financial hardship affects participation at multiple levels.

Participants noted that young people often cannot afford travel costs for educational programmes, exchanges or community activities.

As one participant explained:

“Many young people simply cannot pay for transport in advance, even if the costs will be reimbursed later.”

Hidden Barriers

The focus group highlighted several less visible barriers:

- fear of rejection;
- depression and emotional exhaustion;
- lack of confidence;
- inability to express opinions;
- distrust of institutions;
- stigma related to disability;
- caring responsibilities;
- fear of mobilisation among young men.

One participant observed:

“Young men of conscription age often do not even want to say their names publicly.”

4. Effective Youth Work Practices

Despite difficult circumstances, participants shared numerous examples of successful youth work initiatives.

Youth-Led Initiatives

Several participants emphasised the importance of giving young people real responsibility and ownership.

One youth worker described a volunteer team that eventually initiated its own mental health project:

“Young people felt that someone believed in them. Later they wrote a project proposal themselves and continued the initiative.”

Exchanges and Mobility Programmes

Youth exchanges were identified as highly transformative experiences.

A participant from Sumy described a youth exchange that resulted in long-term engagement:

“Several participants later joined the youth space, started organising activities and even developed their own projects.”

Creative and Informal Learning

Creative approaches were repeatedly highlighted as particularly effective.

One participant explained:

“Young people love everything creative. We found a balance between learning and creating an atmosphere of rest and enjoyment.”

Activities such as photography walks, arts workshops and creative reflection helped young people engage with difficult topics in a non-threatening way.

Inclusion and Safe Spaces

A particularly powerful example involved creating genuinely inclusive environments.

One participant shared:

“A young person with disabilities told us that for the first time in 25 years they felt truly heard.”

This example demonstrates the transformative potential of inclusive youth work and safe spaces.

5. What Strengthens Young People's Resilience?

Across the discussion, participants identified several factors that contribute to resilience:

Belonging and Community

Youth workers consistently emphasised the importance of social connection.

“Young people need a community where they can find opportunities, friends and reasons to believe there is a future in Ukraine.”

Trust and Recognition

Participants stressed that resilience grows when young people feel seen, heard and trusted.

“The secret ingredient is believing in young people and giving them opportunities to do things independently.”

Participation and Agency

Young people become more resilient when they are actively involved in shaping activities rather than being passive recipients.

As one participant summarised:

“We only do what young people want. Flexibility and adapting to their needs is the key.”

6. Future Priorities

Participants identified several priorities for future youth work initiatives:

1. Mental health support and psychosocial wellbeing.
2. Resilience-building programmes.
3. Career guidance and employment opportunities.
4. Inclusion and accessibility.
5. Civic participation and democratic engagement.
6. Non-formal education.
7. Social cohesion and community building.
8. Capacity building for youth workers.

There was particular concern about helping young people imagine a future in Ukraine.

As one participant observed:

“Young people increasingly think not about who they want to become, but how far away from the border they can go.”

Conclusions

The focus group confirms and deepens the findings of the quantitative survey. Youth workers in Ukraine operate in an environment characterised by insecurity, displacement, emotional exhaustion and limited resources. At the same time, the discussion revealed remarkable commitment, creativity and adaptability among practitioners.

The findings suggest that effective youth work in wartime requires:

- trauma-informed and psychologically safe approaches;
- stronger competencies in crisis response and referral;
- inclusive and accessible methodologies;
- meaningful youth participation;
- opportunities for peer connection and community building;
- structured support systems for youth workers themselves.

The discussion also highlighted that resilience is not built solely through psychological support. It emerges through relationships, participation, trust, agency and opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities and shape their own futures.

GERMANY

Introduction

The report presents the findings of the focus group discussion that was conducted with persons representing organisations that work in the field of youth work. They were professionals or volunteers. In total six organisations operating in Brandenburg, Germany were represented. The participating organisations work in different areas of practice, including municipal youth work, youth associations, psychosocial support services, art initiatives, integration-focused organisations, and providers of international youth exchanges and holiday camps for children and young people. All attendees were able to reflect on their experiences of working with young people affected by war, with a special focus on the war in Ukraine, and related relocation to Germany.

Opening Reflections and Professional Context

At the beginning of the discussion, participants described their current work using words such as “responsibility,” “flexibility,” “changing,” “hope,” and “overload.” These responses reflected the following discussion about how complex the work is for organisations in our region to support young people who are affected by war.

The participants of the focus group represented a diverse range of professional and voluntary backgrounds. Some worked in municipal organized youth programmes that provided short term recovery opportunities for young people from war-affected regions. Others were involved in youth associations supporting integration and participation of refugee youth. Additional participants worked in psychosocial counselling, art projects, and international exchange programmes bringing together young people from Germany, Poland, and Ukraine. All stated that the topic of mental health is broadly integrated in all programmes, however it is not only directed at youth affected by war. Since Corona there is an increase in mental health challenges in young people and there is a general need to include the topic in all regular activities. Even with very different organisational settings, the agreement was that youth work has increasingly taken on psychosocial functions. Many felt that supporting emotional wellbeing and resilience has become a central part of their daily work, even when this was not originally the primary focus of their organisations.

Experiences and Challenges

When the participants were invited to describe challenging situations from their practice, they shared numerous examples which showcased the complexity and also diversity of working with young people affected by war.

One participant described a creative workshop during which a discussion about anxiety and uncertainty triggered strong emotional reactions among several young people. While some participants wanted to share personal experiences, others withdrew from the discussion entirely. The facilitator explained that balancing emotional safety with the planned activities required considerable sensitivity and flexibility.

A participant involved in an international youth exchange programme described situations in which young people from Ukraine responded very differently to discussions about the war. Some wished to talk openly about their experiences, while others preferred to avoid the topic completely. Facilitating a space where both approaches were respected was described as one of the most difficult aspects of the programme.

Participants who were working in integration-focused youth organisations spoke about challenges related to language barriers and social inclusion. They observed that all refugee youth often participated less actively in mixed groups and sometimes remained isolated even when physically present. There is also the danger of just communicating and sticking to youth from the country of origin. All participants agreed that inclusion does not occur automatically and requires active facilitation.

The participants working in psychosocial support services highlighted another challenge. They explained that some young people experience high levels of distress that make participation in youth activities difficult without prior stabilisation. In such cases, traditional youth work methods alone may not be sufficient.

Across all organisations, the participants identified a lack of specialised competencies as a regular challenge. Many felt insufficiently prepared to respond to trauma-related reactions and expressed a need for greater knowledge of trauma-informed approaches, psychological first aid, intercultural communication, and crisis management. The participants also emphasised the importance of supervision, peer exchange, and access to professional psychological support for youth workers themselves.

The Perspective of Young People: Barriers to Participation

When moving on to the perspective of young people the group spent a bigger part of the discussion on understanding barriers that prevent war-affected young people from fully participating in youth work activities.

The participants agreed that psychological distress might be one of the most significant barriers. Young people experiencing anxiety, grief, trauma symptoms, or emotional exhaustion often find it difficult to engage consistently in group activities. These challenges are frequently related to ongoing uncertainty regarding family members remaining in conflict zones, concerns about the future, split families and disruptions to education.

Language barriers were also identified as another major obstacle, particularly during the first months after arrival. This applies mainly to the young people directly. However, especially parents, in our cases mostly mothers, take longer to learn the language and are therefore not well equipped to direct their children to the various options of participation. Some youth work offers are not accessible as the parents don't receive and understand the information. The group agreed that limited language skills can affect confidence, hinder social interaction, and reduce opportunities for active participation, especially also considering the older generation.

The group also discussed less visible barriers. Several participants referred to what they described as "silent trauma," where young people appear well-adjusted but internally struggle with distress. Others mentioned feelings of guilt experienced by some Ukrainian participants when engaging in enjoyable activities while family members remained in dangerous situations. Hidden forms of exclusion within youth groups were also mentioned, particularly when refugee youth lacked established peer networks. Due to disrupted education and the language barrier many young people are now in different social circles than they would have been in their home country. The general observation is that they don't necessarily fit in and also the families don't always know how to deal with that difference.

The participants agreed that some barriers can be addressed through youth work practices. Creating safe and welcoming environments, facilitating peer relationships, providing opportunities for creative expression, and ensuring access to appropriate support services were all considered areas where youth work can make a significant difference. Further there was a discussion about the role and obligation of youth work in relation to the communication with parents. The group agreed that some materials they create should probably still be translated to make sure the parents can understand the offers as well. It was mentioned that this happened naturally at the beginning of the war in 2022, but also back in 2015 when there was another wave of refugees. But with time this practice was somehow fading.

The groups most excluded are usually the ones arriving last as well as young people with severe trauma-related symptoms, and those who lack strong social support networks. These groups were considered most at risk of exclusion.

Effective Practices and Factors Contributing to Resilience

When discussing successful practices, the participants provided numerous examples from their organisations.

One participant described a creative project in which young people explored mental health topics through animation and storytelling. According to the participant, creative methods allowed young people to express emotions indirectly and safely. Young people who rarely spoke during discussions became highly engaged when communicating through artistic media.

Another participant highlighted the value of residential youth exchanges. Living together for several days, participating in shared activities, and engaging in intercultural dialogue helped young people build trust and establish meaningful relationships across national and cultural backgrounds. Such experiences helped especially the young people to relax and experience some free days without concern about the ongoing war.

Other participants also mentioned the effectiveness of holiday camps and long-term group activities. These formats provided continuity, opportunities for friendship-building, and a sense of belonging. Several participants noted that resilience develops not through isolated interventions but through ongoing relationships and repeated positive experiences.

The participants working in psychosocial support stressed the importance of combining emotional stabilisation with social participation. Small group settings, trust-based relationships, and creative therapeutic approaches were viewed as particularly effective for supporting recovery and reintegration.

When asked about the “secret ingredient” that strengthens resilience among war-affected youth, the participants repeatedly referred to trust, belonging, and meaningful relationships. They argued that young people need environments where they feel safe, valued, and connected to others. Creative expression, peer support, and opportunities to experience normality were also identified as important resilience factors. All those need stable adults who have the right youth work methods on hand.

When they were asked to identify priority areas for future development, they identified interconnected fields. It would be important to integrate more psychosocial support into youth work organisations. Currently those services are mostly seen separately. One approach would be for youth workers to gain more competencies in trauma-informed approaches. Also there should be more creative and art-based methodologies as they are used well in psychological settings. At the same time there should be more strengthening of the direct participation and engagement of the young people. The conclusion is that empowered youth is more resilient. However in the end all comes back to securing good funding structures for the ongoing work. Some programmes are coming to an end as the topic is not on the top of the agenda anymore, therefore all agree, there needs to be continued funding, which could be achieved if the focus becomes more integrated in regular youth work structures.

Needs and System Gaps

The discussion revealed several concerns regarding the current youth work system in Germany, and notably Brandenburg.

The participants noticed that youth work, schools, mental health services, and local authorities in many cases operate separately, making it difficult for young people to access

coordinated support. Several participants argued that stronger cooperation between sectors is needed.

Funding structures were another major concern. Most of the participants reported that many of their successful initiatives rely on short-term project funding, creating uncertainty and limiting long-term planning. They stressed that resilience-building requires continuity and that short-term interventions alone are insufficient. At the same time a lot of work is put into administrative work that could be better used with the young people directly.

The relationship between youth work and mental health services was pointed out as a particularly important issue. Participants described situations in which young people needed both psychosocial support and opportunities for participation, yet these services were often poorly connected. Several participants advocated for integrated models where psychologists and youth workers collaborate more closely.

International exchange programmes were also discussed as an underutilised resource. Participants argued that cross-border encounters provide unique opportunities for solidarity, intercultural learning, and future-oriented thinking. However, financial and administrative barriers of organisations often limit access to such programmes.

When asked what single change would most improve support for war-affected youth, participants conclude that more integrated and sustainable support systems would be the best option. They emphasised the need for long-term structures that combine youth work, education, psychosocial support, and community engagement.

Closing Reflections and Conclusions

In the final reflection, participants agreed that youth work has become an increasingly important component of the support system for young people affected by war. While youth work cannot replace professional mental health services, it provides unique opportunities for connection, participation, and resilience-building.

Several key insights were given through the discussion. First, resilience is strongly linked to relationships, belonging, and opportunities for meaningful participation. Second, creative and non-formal educational approaches appear particularly effective in enabling young people to process difficult experiences. Third, successful support requires continuity rather than isolated interventions. Finally, greater coordination between youth work, education, psychosocial services, and local authorities is essential.

Overall, the discussion concluded that resilience among war-affected youth is best understood as a collective and relational process. Effective support depends not on a single intervention but on a network of complementary actors and services that together create opportunities for safety, participation, recovery, and future development.

GERMANY

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Experiences and Challenges

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One participant described a creative workshop during which a discussion about anxiety and uncertainty triggered strong emotional reactions among several young people. While some participants wanted to share personal experiences, others withdrew from the discussion entirely. The facilitator explained that balancing emotional safety with the planned activities required considerable sensitivity and flexibility.

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The participants working in psychosocial support services highlighted another challenge. They explained that some young people experience high levels of distress that make participation in youth activities difficult without prior stabilisation. In such cases, traditional youth work methods alone may not be sufficient.

Across all organisations, the participants identified a lack of specialised competencies as a regular challenge. Many felt insufficiently prepared to respond to trauma-related reactions and expressed a need for greater knowledge of trauma-informed approaches, psychological first aid, intercultural communication, and crisis management. The participants also

emphasised the importance of supervision, peer exchange, and access to professional psychological support for youth workers themselves.

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Language was identified as one of the most significant barriers both for young people and youth workers. It affects access to information, participation in activities, communication with institutions and relationship-building with peers.

For young people, limited language skills can increase isolation and make it difficult to participate confidently in educational, cultural or youth work activities. For youth workers, language barriers limit the possibility of understanding young people's needs in depth and providing appropriate support.

Language should therefore not be seen only as a technical communication issue. It is also a barrier to trust, belonging and social inclusion.

1.2 Psychological and Emotional Challenges

Participants highlighted psychological difficulties among young people affected by war, particularly emotional withdrawal, depression, uncertainty about the future and reduced sense of safety.

Young people may not always express distress directly. Instead, emotional difficulties can appear as withdrawal, silence, low participation, lack of motivation or difficulty establishing contact with peers and adults.

The focus group identified emotional withdrawal and uncertainty about the future as among the most hidden barriers affecting young people's participation. These barriers are difficult to recognise and require sensitivity, time and professional support.

1.3 Need for Appropriate Methodology and Procedures

Participants stressed that youth workers need stronger knowledge of appropriate methodologies and procedures when working with young people affected by war. This includes knowing how to respond to trauma-related behaviours, how to support young people without causing harm and how to create safe and inclusive spaces.

The discussion suggested that youth workers often face situations that require more than general educational or facilitation skills. They need practical tools for working with young people who may be experiencing trauma, displacement, cultural adaptation and social exclusion.

2. Barriers to Participation for Young People

The focus group identified several barriers that prevent young people affected by war from fully participating in youth activities and community life.

2.1 Most Critical Barriers

The most critical barriers identified were:

- language barriers;
- emotional withdrawal due to experienced trauma;
- lack of a sense of safety;
- difficulties adapting to a new environment;
- isolation or discrimination;
- communication difficulties.

These barriers often reinforce one another. For example, a young person who does not feel confident in the local language may avoid activities, which then deepens isolation and reduces opportunities to build peer relationships.

2.2 Hidden Barriers

Participants identified several barriers that are less visible but highly significant:

- emotional withdrawal;
- uncertainty about the future;
- depression;
- fear of not belonging;
- internalised trauma;
- lack of parental support due to the difficulties experienced by adults.

The hidden nature of these barriers means that young people may appear formally included while remaining emotionally disconnected. They may attend school or activities but not feel safe, understood or socially integrated.

2.3 Barriers Within the Influence of Youth Work

Participants noted that youth work can realistically influence some barriers, especially those linked to social adaptation, communication and peer inclusion.

Youth work can support young people by:

- helping them adjust to a new environment;
- creating safe and welcoming spaces;
- reducing isolation;
- supporting communication;
- addressing discrimination;
- building trust between young people and local communities.

At the same time, youth work alone cannot resolve all structural barriers, especially those related to legal status, housing, poverty or wider institutional support systems.

2.4 Most Excluded Young People

The focus group identified young people without adequate parental support as particularly excluded. Parents may be preoccupied with earning a living, managing their own trauma, navigating institutions or adapting to life in a new country. As a result, young people may lack the adult guidance and emotional support needed to access opportunities.

This finding is important because it shows that youth exclusion is not only an individual issue. It is often linked to family stress, economic insecurity and the emotional burden carried by displaced households.

3. Support Needs of Youth Workers

The Polish focus group clearly showed that youth workers themselves require stronger support systems in order to work effectively and sustainably with young people affected by war.

3.1 Professional Competencies Needed

Participants identified three key areas where additional competencies are needed:

- 1. Language and intercultural communication**

Youth workers need stronger tools for communicating across language and cultural differences and for making activities more accessible to young people with limited language confidence.

- 2. Psychological skills**

Participants stressed the need for greater psychological knowledge, especially in relation to trauma, emotional withdrawal, depression and war-related stress.

- 3. Appropriate methodology and procedures**

Youth workers need practical methods and clear procedures for responding to complex situations, including when and how to refer young people to specialised support.

3.2 Personal and Professional Support

Participants emphasised the need for:

- supervision from professional psychologists;
- access to specialists in war trauma;
- peer exchange with other professionals facing similar challenges;
- networking spaces to discuss both difficulties and solutions.

These findings suggest that youth workers need more than one-off training. They require ongoing professional support, reflective spaces and access to specialist expertise.

4. Effective Youth Work and Resilience

The Polish focus group notes did not provide detailed descriptions of individual practices, but the discussion indicates several elements that participants consider important for effective youth work with young people affected by war.

Effective practice should include:

- safe and welcoming spaces;
- language-sensitive communication;
- support for adaptation to a new environment;
- opportunities for peer connection;
- anti-discrimination approaches;
- access to psychological expertise;
- continuity of support;
- cooperation between organisations and specialists.

The focus group suggests that resilience is strengthened when young people feel safe, understood and connected to others. In the Polish context, resilience-building is closely linked to integration, communication and emotional stabilisation.

5. System Gaps

The strongest system-level finding from the Polish focus group concerns the lack of stable, long-term and coordinated support for migrants and refugees with war experience.

Participants noted that although there are foundations, organisations and professionals willing to provide effective support, their work is often limited by short-term project funding. Many activities are implemented only for a limited period and there is no guarantee that they will continue once a project ends.

This creates uncertainty both for organisations and for young people who need continuity, trust and stable relationships.

The focus group identified the following key system gaps:

- lack of system-wide support for migrants and refugees with war experience;
- insufficient long-term funding;
- limited continuity of services;
- insufficient access to psychologists specialising in war trauma;
- lack of specialists fluent in the languages needed by young people and families;
- insufficient coordination between support actors;
- reliance on temporary project-based interventions.

These gaps are particularly problematic because young people affected by war often need sustained support over time rather than short-term activities.

6. Conclusions

The Polish focus group highlights the transition from emergency support towards the need for long-term integration and psychosocial assistance for young people affected by war.

The main findings are:

1. **Language remains one of the most important barriers to participation.**
It affects access to information, confidence, peer relationships and inclusion.
2. **Emotional withdrawal is a major hidden barrier.**
Young people may not openly express distress, but trauma, depression and uncertainty can significantly reduce participation.
3. **Youth workers need stronger psychological and methodological competencies.**
Trauma-informed approaches, psychological first aid, referral skills and intercultural communication are essential.
4. **Professional support for youth workers is insufficient.**
Supervision, peer exchange and access to specialists in war trauma are needed to sustain quality youth work.
5. **Support systems are too fragmented and short-term.**
Project-based funding limits continuity and makes it difficult to build stable support pathways for young people.
6. **The most excluded young people are often those without strong family support.**
Parents may be affected by economic pressure, migration stress and trauma, which reduces their capacity to support young people's participation.

Overall, the Polish focus group confirms that effective youth work with young people affected by war requires more than integration activities. It requires stable, language-sensitive, trauma-informed and well-coordinated support systems that combine youth work, psychological expertise, intercultural mediation and long-term community-based inclusion.

Implications for the Erasmus+ Training Seminar

Based on the Polish focus group findings, the training seminar should include the following components:

- trauma-informed youth work;
- psychological first aid and referral pathways;
- intercultural and language-sensitive communication;
- methods for working with emotional withdrawal and low motivation;
- anti-discrimination and inclusion approaches;
- cooperation with psychologists and specialised services;
- supervision and peer-support models for youth workers;
- design of long-term integration activities beyond short project cycles.

The Polish findings show that youth workers need both practical tools and structural support to accompany young people affected by war through long-term processes of adaptation, inclusion and resilience-building.

Annex 5. Catalogue of collected youth work practices.

ITALY

Practice 1

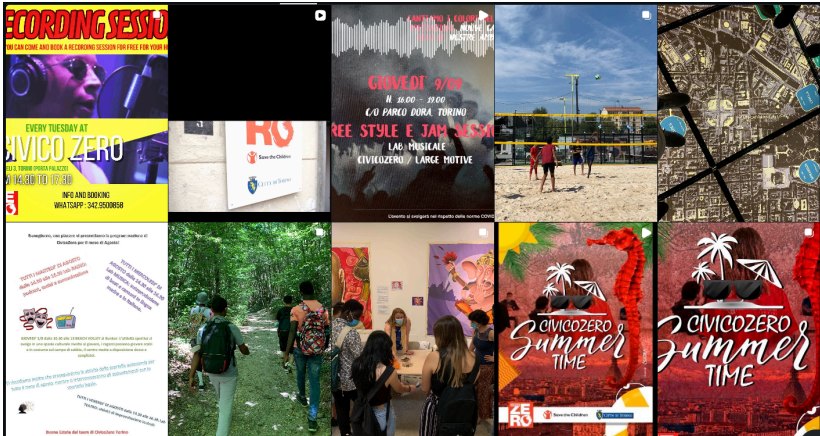
1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	Civico Zero
Country / Region	Turin, Piedmont, Italy
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	Civico Zero https://civicozero.eu/
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	NGO - Social cooperative Affiliates: Save the Children Cooperative Atypica Ufficio minori stranieri non accompagnati Comune di Torino (Office for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors, City of Turin)
Year(s) of implementation	2011-Present Torino Branch - 2015 onwards
Duration of the practice	15 Years
Link to the web-page with the information	https://civicozero.eu/chi-siamo/

about the practices (optional)	https://civicozero.eu/cosa-facciamo/
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	alice.rossi@savethechildren.org
2. Context and Background	
2.1 Context of the practice	
<i>Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed. Suggested aspects:</i> • <i>Impact of war on the young people involved</i> • <i>Community or regional context</i> • <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	Asylum seekers impacted by war Migrants impacted indirectly by war Those undergoing economic hardship The practice was starting with the influx of Minors migrating to Italy alone, who came from different contexts and backgrounds. They were Asylum seekers/minors searching for a better life and to escape their home, some of which were at war. Many of them have PTSD from before the travel, during the travel and the subsequent arrival. Leaving your home country, your family and friends, long travel times and unsafe travel conditions, arriving in a new place with no knowledge of the local language or a lingua franca- all of these factors made it traumatic. One specific challenge faced by young people is those just over the age of 18, it is harder for those above the age of 18 to find a place to sleep in the current system. For those under 18, certain local systems make it easier to provide a place to sleep, however after 18 the law changes and treats them as an adult Civico Zero is the middle-man, so to speak, acting as an intermediate between local institutions and the street
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee	• Aged: 14-21 • No discrimination based on Gender • Participants are unaccompanied Foreign Minors and young people with a migrant background, including but not limited to those displaced from their home by war • The centre offers a unique card-based system allowing participants to mark their attendance when they arrive at the centre for an activity etc • 684 beneficiaries recorded in 2024 • Furthermore: ○ 166 people were enrolled in the Italian language courses

youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	○ 161 received legal support ○ 50 received individual psychosocial support
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	1. Material support: Food, tickets to have a shower for participants, to provide a washing machine and dryer - basic 'primary needs' 2. Secondary support (but still a main goal): Legal help (documents, visas, etc), psychological help, education, language support, info about rights 3. Tertiary support (still a main goal): Participation in social activities such as group work, street art labs, music labs, or other activities Through these main goals, which were very important for even beginning participation in public life, it then leads to supporting identity and belonging and preventing radicalisation or marginalisation
4. Description of the Practice	
Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: ● main activities ● structure of the programme ● duration and frequency ● how young people participate ● role of youth workers / facilitators	The center offers numerous free services: - Italian language courses - legal and psychosocial support - basic amenities (washing machines, showers, clean clothes) - intercultural mediation - artistic and expressive workshops - orientation and support for employment and housing inclusion. - In addition to the services provided within the center, the project also includes a street unit , aimed at intercepting and "engaging" minors and young adults most exposed to various situations of marginalization and deviance. The street unit therefore monitors the main gathering places for these young people, such as Valentino Park, the Porta Nuova area, and the San Salvatio and Aurora neighborhoods. The center operates from Monday-Friday morning to evening (10:00-17:30), allowing those in need the chance to take rest off the street, participate in various activities and socialise. It is a place of no violence, no drugs, no documents needed, no attendance recorded if not necessary. As discussed before, participants may record their attendance for workshops with a

	personalised card with a given number, allowing the center to better ask for funding from local councils and organisations.
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	The Civico Zero Torino project also aims to facilitate minors' access to institutional services and protection, support, and integration opportunities. Within this framework, the overall intervention also aims to strengthen the capacity of public and private entities to understand the situation of the minors involved in the program and to intervene effectively on their behalf. An important goal is the integration for the affected migrants into the new location. Through community building and integration with various activities, alongside the psychological support and language-learning and education, the resilience of the migrants involved is improved.
6. Participation of Young People	
How were young people involved in the process?	In all the activities listed above, Civico Zero Torino staff adopt a multidisciplinary approach that places the child at the center of the intervention, always considering them as active participants capable of fully participating in decisions that affect them, if adequately supported.
7. Impact on Young People	
Describe observed or measured outcomes. <i>Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement</i> If available, include: - feedback from participants - evaluation results - testimonies or quotes	In 2024, Civico Zero Torino supported a total of 684 beneficiaries. Furthermore: • 166 people were enrolled in the Italian language courses • 161 received legal support • 50 received individual psychosocial support Testimony is available from the project manager interview
8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	1. Project Multidisciplinary - They may provide an answer to a lot of problems these young people have, all needs - not only for law, work, home, for everything. As a whole, a person can move inside the project to get the help they need

	2. Collaboration with other NGOs and other organisations and services, for legal documents, for finding a house and job, for health. Civico Zero may not have the capacity to sort everything themselves, but these connections with other organisations are vital to provide fully inclusive help. 3. Bisogni di base (basic needs), inclusion, place to dream, live music, artistic lab, other activities, not only material problems are covered. This range makes the practice particularly approachable (rather than only doing official documents and music). Through this, more people can join through different activities
9. Transferability and Scalability	
Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required, - skills needed by youth workers	Civico Zero has been a successful project in multiple different locations. Currently there are 4 locations: Rome, Milan, Catania, and also a partnership office in Turin. The existence of multiple locations, as well as new and continuing partnerships with other organisations and local governmental services, indicates with certainty that this practice can indeed be replicated in other contexts, at least in Italy so far. The existence and success of other similar organisations worldwide also indicates replicability. Civico Zero has pointed out the following necessities for continuing this practice in other locations: 1. Funding: A very basic but highly important resource, funding allows the acquisition of a space that is open to all and available more often. It also allows the purchasing of various other artistic materials for art labs, food for the children, interactive games for connecting and teambuilding, etc 2. Motivation: The project only functions as expected when others are able to volunteer their own time and experience. Those who work with this particular target group need specific skills in order to fully help the children effectively. a. Political motivation: In order to support the project, ties with local governments are necessary and must be supported, for instance in obtaining legal documents for migrants. b. Social motivation: The team involved must also be able to be socially motivated, to talk to the children 3. Professionalism: At the same time as being socially motivated and making the children involved feel welcome, a certain level of professionalism is necessary from the workers involved. 4. Various roles and skills: The functioning of Civico Zero is multidisciplinary, therefore there must be workers who have experience in various roles, such as those with experience in law, educators, Italian teachers (or local language teachers), psychologists (both for the children and also for the workers), artists who can help organise workshops and labs

	5. Space: Perhaps one of the most important is the space and location of the building. Accessibility and ease of access to the space, as well as the fully participatory aspect of it is vital. An open place to organise activities or allow a safer space for the target group to do activities together. Also, a space that allows no drugs is important for the work 6. Connections: Connections with other organisations, services, local/regional/national governments, 7. Knowledge about phenomena experienced by migrants in general in the city, not only practice but knowledge. It is important that the workers involved understand the situations that many of the migrants come from.
10. Supporting Materials (Optional)	
Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/progetti/civico-zero-torino https://civicozero.eu/ https://www.instagram.com/civicozerotorino/ 
11. Key Words / Tags	
Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	Asylum-seekers Psychosocial support Resilience Migrant-background War-affected Youth Primary needs Social integration Language classes Youth

Practice 2

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	WISE – Supporting Ukrainian (UA) Refugee Women’s Socio-Economic Integration and Wellbeing
Country / Region	Italy (Milan, Rome, Turin) Bulgaria (Sofia) Dissemination in Europe
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	Coordinator: Fondazione International Rescue Committee Italia ETS https://www.rescue.org/eu/country/italia Beneficiaries: ITALY Centro Penc Antropologia e Psicologia Geoclinica Laboratorio di Gruppoanalisi - Società Cooperativa Sociale NETHERLANDS SkillLab B.V BELGIUM Association Européenne des Régions et autorités locales pour la formation toute au long de la vie BULGARIA - Animus Association Foundation
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	NGO/Nonprofit
Year(s) of implementation	2025-2026
Duration of the practice	18 months
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	https://www.earlall.eu/project/wise/
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	olga.chizhevskaya@earlall.eu
2. Context and Background	

2.1 Context of the practice	
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	Gender: Women Age: Employable (usually over 18, however secondary effects apply to the family of the employable women and dependents) Background: Women displaced from Ukraine after February 2022 Approx No. Participants: The WISE program aims to reach 200 women in the four holistic support centers (Sofia, Milan, Rome, Turin)
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	The overall goal of the WISE project is to improve the socio-economic inclusion of employable refugee women from Ukraine in Italy and Bulgaria. The project pursues four specific objectives: 1. Empowering women by providing agency, skills, and knowledge to access and progress within the host countries' labour markets, as well as supporting potential reintegration into Ukraine's labour market upon voluntary return 2. Facilitating better navigation and access to social and public services, including childcare, while overcoming legal and bureaucratic barriers 3. Enhancing mental health, psychosocial well-being, social connectedness, and the empowerment of women to make informed decisions about their future 4. Raising awareness among key stakeholders at local and EU levels, promoting the adoption of the Holistic Support Centre model to further socio-economic inclusion for refugee women.
4. Description of the Practice	
Provide a clear description of the activity or programme.	Main activities: - Creation of Holistic Support Centres (HSCs) in Milan, Rome, Turin, and Sofia, offering integrated employment

Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	and psychosocial support services for Ukrainian refugee women. - Delivery of individual support: personalised skills assessments using an AI-powered tool, individual career counselling and job readiness support, mental health and psychosocial support sessions. - Delivery of group activities: job readiness and soft skills workshops, cultural orientation sessions to help women navigate host countries' systems, speaking clubs to strengthen language and social integration skills, group psychosocial support activities. - Development of the Holistic Support Centre Model Toolkit, a final resource that documents the methodology, to be shared across Europe to encourage replication. - Awareness-raising and dissemination: outreach to at least 2,000 stakeholders across Europe, a final conference in Brussels and four local stakeholder workshops, webinars with policymakers and other stakeholders.
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9. Transferability and Scalability

Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required, - skills needed by youth workers	The development of the Holistic Support Centre Model Toolkit, a final resource that documents the methodology, is the first step to replication. As said by WISE, it is to be "shared across Europe to encourage replication". The outcome of this project and achievement of its goals will only serve to encourage others to replicate this practice in other contexts, perhaps with a different target group alongside a continuation of this existing target group's project. The main resources needed will be funding: the WISE project is funded by the European Social Fund Agency (ESF-A). The total donor contribution amounts to €538,928, with an overall project budget of €673,677 including co-financing from project partners. Although this amount may be lowered in subsequent replications, it does highlight a significant need for monetary resources. Additionally, the workers and academics implementing the HSC model will need sufficient training in this model. For context: this can be replicated in sites preferably with low to no violence against women, since it takes a gender-centred approach, using the 'Women and Girls Safe space methodology. Additionally, places with more equal job opportunities would be more effective, although it could be argued that it is more needed for implementation in areas with low equal job opportunities
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10. Supporting Materials (Optional)

Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	1st Webinar:https://youtu.be/8FduyE4ORMQ 2nd Webinar:https://youtu.be/xEUqKUVIBgU 3rd Webinar:https://youtu.be/O1SDG7nXEWs 4th Webinar:https://youtu.be/m3kyb6pBSJc 1st newsletter: https://www.earlall.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/WISE_First_Newsletter_December_2025.pdf 2nd newsletter: https://www.earlall.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/WISE_Second_Newsletter_April_2026.pdf  The image is a project factsheet for WISE (Supporting Ukrainian EUV Refugee Women's Socio-Economic Integration and Wellbeing). It includes a title, duration (April 2025 - October 2026), target population (employable refugee women), implementation sites (Sofia, Milan, Rome, Turin), and sections for project overview, key objectives, approach & methodology, and core components. Logos for partners like 3i, EARL, RESCUE, and SkillLab are at the top.
11. Key Words / Tags	
Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	

Practice 3

1. Basic Information:

Title of the Practice	LABORATORIO SULLA PUPAZZA/ PUPPET-MAKING WORKSHOP
Country / Region	Italy
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	CIR RIFUGIATI (Italian Council for Refugees) https://cir-rifugiati.org/chi-siamo/ https://cir-rifugiati.org/aree-di-intervento/
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	NGO The Roviano Puppeteers' Group – master craftsmen of the pupazza tradition – in collaboration with the Valle dell'Aniene Museum of Rural Life and the Immagina Pupazza workshop, together with the Italian Council for Refugees
Year(s) of implementation	2014-2020
Duration of the practice	3 months
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	https://cir-rifugiati.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PROG-3232-Del All9 Buone-pratiche def.pdf
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	https://cir-rifugiati.org/contatti-staff/
2. Context and Background	
2.1 Context of the practice	
<i>Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed. Suggested aspects:</i> • <i>Impact of war on the young people involved</i> • <i>Community or regional context</i>	The workshop aims to promote the socio-cultural integration of beneficiaries of international protection through participatory cultural practices and activities. The basic idea is to introduce participants to the tradition of the 'pupazza' – a cultural element of rural communities in central Italy – both in theory and in practice (by making a 'pupazza') – whilst at the same time encouraging them to reconnect with their own cultural heritage, thereby fostering cultural exchange.

• <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	Families receiving international protection (mothers and children)
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	• To facilitate access for beneficiaries of international protection to the culture and tradition of the Pupazza and to our town's agricultural heritage. • To bring the people of Roviano closer to the culture of foreign nationals living in the area. The municipality of Roviano has for years been home to a SAI reception centre for people in need of protection, and some refugee families have remained to live in the town. • To help beneficiaries of international protection reconnect with their culture of origin through a process of rediscovery that unfolds through engagement with the Italian cultural tradition of the Pupazza.
4. Description of the Practice	

Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	The activities took place both via online meetings and during in-person sessions at the Museo della Valle dell'Aniene. The online meetings included: • A theoretical exploration of the 'pupazza' phenomenon and a comparison with the cultural traditions of the beneficiaries. • A theoretical exploration of the culture of the region; a theoretical exploration of the traditional music that accompanies the pupazza dance. • Creating stories and illustrations about the puppet. During the face-to-face meetings, the following took place: • Made two Pupazze using the traditional method: one based on a design by a child from the group and one symbolising peace. • At the same time, the 'Immagina Pupazza' workshop was also held, involving the creation of clay puppets and the drawing and painting of elaborate Pupazza designs.
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	Promotion of intercultural dialogue through: • Research and documentation carried out by the participants, followed by oral presentations with photos and videos on cultural traditions similar to the Pupazza tradition. • Highlighting similarities and differences between the Pupazza ritual, the music, the castle/history of Roviano, and the customs and traditions of the participants' countries of origin. • Collaborative creation of a story about a Pupazza by the whole group, using an existing story as a model and following a structured framework (name, characteristics, where it lives, etc.). Involvement of children through: • Designing a Pupazza through drawing. • Illustrating the story created by the group, allowing each child to choose their favorite scene. • Creating stories about imaginary Pupazze, building on their knowledge of the Pupazza tradition.

Practice 4

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	Laboratorio di storytelling / Storytelling workshop
Country / Region	Italy (Catania - Sicily)
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	CIR RIFUGIATI (Italian Council for Refugees) https://cir-rifugiati.org/chi-siamo/ https://cir-rifugiati.org/aree-di-intervento/
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	NGO Isola Quassùd Cultural Association, in collaboration with the Guiding Sicily Cooperative of Professional Guides
Year(s) of implementation	2020 - 2022
Duration of the practice	4 months
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	https://cir-rifugiati.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PROG-3232-Del_All9_Buone-pratiche_def.pdf https://www.isolaquassud.com/associazione/
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	https://cir-rifugiati.org/contatti-staff/
2. Context and Background	
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected	Beneficiaries of international protection aged between 20 and 30.

areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	• To discover lesser-known aspects of the city's heritage; to find points of connection with other cultures; to encourage the sharing of stories and legends from other countries. • To create an original narrative based on Catania's heritage. • Enable third-country nationals to gain a deeper understanding of the city in which they live, so that they can become better integrated into the social fabric, and likewise introduce the people of Catania to the stories and legends of the third-country nationals' countries of origin, fostering greater mutual understanding
4. Description of the Practice	
Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	Guided tours of the town centre led by professional tour guides; sessions dedicated to reviewing the route covered with the guides and exploring links with the tangible and intangible heritage of the TPI participants' countries of origin; simulated guided tours led by the TPI participants; a walk open to the public in which the TPI participants, supported by the guides, recount local monuments, stories and legends and their connections to their own cultures, with the aim of revealing previously unknown aspects of the city and of their own cultures of origin.
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	Brainstorming, storytelling techniques, simulations

8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	- The initiative focused on the exchange of experiences and knowledge between tutors and workshop participants – people from the Catania area and people from other countries. This made the TPI participants the true protagonists of the activity, rather than passive listeners. The beneficiaries were placed on an equal footing with the trainers, thereby recognising their key role in the integration process, which must not be imposed by others but must stem from constant dialogue. - Another strength was the collaboration between all those involved, who were genuinely committed to carrying out the project in the best possible way.
10. Supporting Materials (Optional)	
Please provide if available: - photos - links - toolkits - evaluation reports - publications	Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/p/CN-fXQkLgeS/ Youtube: https://youtu.be/taMNMry7L90?si=JL6fMJbo6tsf2IE

GERMANY

Practice 1

1. Basic Information	
Title of the Practice	Kriegstrauma-Bewältigung (War Trauma Recovery Project)
Country / Region	Germany, Frankfurt (Oder) and Ukraine, Shostka und Sumy
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	City of Frankfurt (Oder), Department of International Cooperation and the Frankfurt (Oder)–Słubice Cooperation Centre (Kooperationszentrum Frankfurt (Oder) - Słubice), in cooperation with the partner city Shostka and Sumy www.frankfurt-oder.de https://www.frankfurt-oder.de/Verwaltung-Stadtpolitik/Verwaltung/Frankfurt-Słubicer-Kooperationszentrum/

Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/Scho ol / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	Municipality
Year(s) of implementation	2024, 2025, 2026 in planning
Duration of the practice	2 weeks
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	https://www.frankfurt-oder.de/Verwaltung-Stadtpolitik/Verwaltung/Internationale-Zusammenarbeit/Aktuelles/Jugendliche-aus-der-Partnerstadt-Shostka-und-der-Stadt-Sumy-Ukraine-zu-Gast-in-der-Doppelstadt-im-Rahmen-des-Projektes-Kriegstrauma-Bew%C3%A4ltigung-.php?object=tx_2616.41653.1&NavID=2616.2433 https://www.frankfurt-oder.de/Verwaltung-Stadtpolitik/Verwaltung/Internationale-Zusammenarbeit/Aktuelles/Jugendliche-aus-Shostka-und-Sumy-im-Rahmen-des-Projektes-Kriegstrauma-Bew%C3%A4ltigung-zu-Gast-in-der-Doppelstadt.php?object=tx_4071.4904.1&NavID=2616.2433 And on facebook
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	Marta Rusek
2. Context and Background	
2.1 Context of the practice	
<i>Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed.</i> <i>Suggested aspects:</i> • <i>Impact of war on the young people involved</i> • <i>Community or regional context</i> • <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	The project was developed in response to the ongoing war in Ukraine and its impact on young people living in war-affected communities. The city of Frankfurt (Oder) established the cooperation as twin cities with Shostka in 2022. Together the project was developed. Additionally a youth work organisation from Sumy is involved. Therefore young people from both cities join the programme. The project is based on the needs of the young people from the cities, who are exposed to prolonged periods of insecurity, air raids, displacement risks, disruption of education, and psychosocial stress. The municipality of Frankfurt (Oder) created a temporary safe environment where young people could recover from daily war-related pressures, receive psychosocial support, and

	participate in educational and intercultural activities. During their stay they also interact with local young people. The initiative responded to increasing concerns about trauma, emotional wellbeing, social isolation, and limited opportunities for positive youth development in wartime conditions. The project is funded by the state of Brandenburg.
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	Age groups: Approximately 14–18 years old Gender considerations: Open to all genders Background of participants: Young people living in war-affected areas in Ukraine Youth exposed to war-related stress and trauma Young people from partner city Shostka and Sumy Approximate number of participants: 16 Ukrainian young people
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	The main objectives were: • To strengthen emotional resilience and psychological wellbeing. • To provide psychosocial support to young people affected by war. • To create a safe and supportive environment outside the war context. • To rebuild positive social connections and trust. • To encourage intercultural dialogue and solidarity. • To offer opportunities for recreation, self-expression, and personal development. • To support young people in coping with war-related experiences.

4. Description of the Practice

Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include:

- main activities
- structure of the programme
- duration and frequency
- how young people participate
- role of youth workers / facilitators

The programme consisted of a temporary stay in Frankfurt (Oder) for a group of Ukrainian young people.

Main activities included:

- Individual and group counselling sessions with a Ukrainian psychologist.
- Art-based and music-based therapeutic activities.
- Intercultural exchange activities.
- Meetings with local youth
- Educational visits and recreational activities.
- Participation in school and community life.

Young people participated actively in discussions, creative workshops, cultural exchange activities, and group reflection sessions.

Youth workers, municipal staff, and psychosocial professionals facilitated the programme and provided emotional support throughout the stay.

5. Youth Work Methods Used

Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.

The practice combined several youth work approaches:

- Safe space approach.
- Trauma-informed youth work.
- Non-formal education.
- Intercultural learning.
- Arts-based youth work.
- Group work and peer support.
- Experiential learning through exchange activities.

These methods supported resilience by creating opportunities for emotional expression, social support, positive experiences, relationship building, and restoration of a sense of safety and normality.

6. Participation of Young People

How were young people involved in the process?

Young people participated actively in workshops, discussions, cultural activities, and social events.

The programme encouraged young people to share experiences, express emotions through creative activities, and build peer relationships.

	The meetings of the young people with the local youth was planned together and the ideas and wishes of the young people were taken into consideration. After the first edition the young people were more involved in shaping the programme of the following year based on their reflection and comments.
7. Impact on Young People	
Describe observed or measured outcomes. <i>Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement</i> If available, include: - feedback from participants - evaluation results - testimonies or quotes	Observed outcomes included: • Improved emotional wellbeing during the programme period. • Increased sense of safety and stability. • Opportunities to process difficult experiences. • Strengthened social connections with peers. • Positive intercultural experiences. • Temporary relief from daily wartime stressors. • Increased optimism and motivation. The programme was publicly presented by the municipality as contributing to the psychosocial and emotional stabilisation of the participants.
8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	Several factors contributed to the effectiveness of the practice: • Strong municipal partnership with the Ukrainian city and partner organisations. • Access to professional psychological support. • Safe and supportive environment. • Combination of psychosocial support and youth work methods. • Small group size allowing individual attention. • Intercultural and peer-learning components. • Integration of creative and recreational activities.
9. Transferability and Scalability	
Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required,	The practice has high transferability potential. Conditions needed: • Partnership with war-affected communities.

- skills needed by youth workers	• Safe hosting environment. • Organisational capacity for international youth exchanges. • Access to qualified psychosocial professionals. Resources required: • Accommodation and travel funding. • Youth workers and facilitators. • Psychological support staff. • Programme coordination. Skills needed by youth workers: • Trauma-sensitive practice. • Intercultural competence. • Group facilitation. • Safeguarding and psychosocial support awareness. The model could be adapted by municipalities, youth centres, NGOs, and international youth organisations working with war-affected youth.
10. Supporting Materials (Optional)	
Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	
11. Key Words / Tags	
Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	Youth resilience; War-affected youth; Ukrainian youth; Psychosocial support; Trauma-informed youth work; Safe spaces; Non-formal education; Intercultural exchange; Mental health; Municipal partnership; Arts-based methods; Recovery and resilience

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	jrk:zusammen (Youth Red Cross: Together)
Country / Region	Brandenburg, Germany
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (DRK) Landesverband Brandenburg German Red Cross (DRK) Brandenburg State Association – Youth Red Cross (JRK) https://www.drk-brandenburg.de
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	NGO / Youth organisation
Year(s) of implementation	2022 - ongoing
Duration of the practice	Multi-year programme with recurring activities (holiday camps, workshops, group sessions, educational activities)
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	https://www.jrk-brandenburg.de/kampagnen/projekte-aktionen/jrkzusammen https://www.drk-brandenburg.de/jrkzusammen/
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	
2. Context and Background	
2.1 Context of the practice	
Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed. Suggested aspects: Impact of war on the young people involved	The project was developed in direct response to the displacement of children and young people caused by the war in Ukraine. Many refugee youth arriving in Brandenburg faced significant social, linguistic, and psychosocial challenges, including separation from family

• <i>Community or regional context</i> • <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	members, disrupted education, and uncertainty about the future. The Youth Red Cross Brandenburg responded by creating inclusive youth work structures that bring together refugee and local young people. The initiative also aims to strengthen the structural openness of youth organisations toward diversity and migration backgrounds. A focus is the inclusion of refugees in short-term activities like holiday camps. The project combines youth work, integration support, and organisational development within the youth association sector.
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2.2 Target group

Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	Age group: approximately 6–27 years (main focus: 10–18 years) Gender: all genders Background: • Refugee children and adolescents (especially from Ukraine) • Young people with migration backgrounds • Some are members of the Youth Red Cross Approximate number of participants: several hundred across different activities
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3. Objectives of the Practice

What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social	• Strengthening resilience and self-efficacy • Social inclusion of refugee youth • Building stable peer relationships • Psychosocial stabilization through shared activities • Promoting intercultural openness within youth organisations • Encouraging youth participation and engagement • Developing sustainable inclusive youth structures
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connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	
4. Description of the Practice	
Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	The project includes a variety of youth work activities: • Holiday camps (summer, winter, and Easter camps) • Group-based youth work sessions • Intercultural workshops and educational activities • Shared leisure and experiential learning activities • Educational inputs on diversity, identity, and children's rights • Training for youth leaders on intercultural and inclusive youth work • Development of inclusive youth work methods within the organisation Young people participate both as participants and increasingly as co-shapers of group activities. The project aims to strengthen meaningful participation over time.
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	• Non-formal education • Peer-to-peer learning • Intercultural youth work • Group pedagogy in residential camps • Experiential and activity-based learning • Inclusive association-based youth work • Diversity and anti-bias approaches • Emerging trauma-sensitive youth work elements These methods support resilience by fostering belonging, positive group experiences, self-efficacy, and social connection.
6. Participation of Young People	
How were young people involved in the process?	Young people actively participate in all activities and contribute to shaping parts of the programme (e.g. group activities, leisure planning, workshops).

	Full structural co-design is still evolving, as the project also aims to transform the organisational culture of the youth association toward greater inclusion.
7. Impact on Young People	
Describe observed or measured outcomes. <i>Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement</i> If available, include: - feedback from participants - evaluation results - testimonies or quotes	Observed outcomes include: • Reduced social isolation among refugee youth • Formation of new friendships and peer networks • Improved communication and language skills • Increased self-confidence and sense of belonging • Positive emotional experiences through group participation • Initial pathways into long-term youth association involvement
8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	• Low-threshold and free access to activities • Strong volunteer-based youth work structure • Combination of leisure, education, and integration • Focus on shared group experiences (especially camps) • Institutional support from DRK Brandenburg • Continuous development of inclusive youth work methods • Link between integration work and organisational change
9. Transferability and Scalability	
Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required, - skills needed by youth workers	The practice has high transferability potential. Required conditions: • Existing youth organisation or youth centre structure • Access to refugee or migrant youth groups • Funding for leisure and educational programmes • Trained youth workers and volunteers Required resources: • Safe spaces and camp facilities • Volunteer and staff coordination

	• Educational and recreational materials • Intercultural facilitation capacity Required skills: • Intercultural youth work • Group facilitation • Inclusive youth work approaches • Basic trauma-sensitive awareness
10. Supporting Materials (Optional)	
Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	https://www.jrk-brandenburg.de/kampagnen/projekte-aktionen/jrkzusammen https://www.taskcards.de/#/board/1459b92b-b282-4eed-9b0b-6e15b1d29c06/view?token=292db6b4-1255-4852-a7f9-18b23cd0b0b6
11. Key Words / Tags	
Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	Youth resilience; youth participation; non-formal education; intercultural youth work; safe spaces; inclusion; youth camps; trauma-sensitive approaches.

Practice 3

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	Teen Spirit/Inside the Croco/Mind Capture
Country / Region	Potsdam, Brandenburg, Germany
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the	Inwole e.V. (Projekthaus Potsdam) https://www.inwole.de https://www.projekthaus-potsdam.de/inwole-e-v

organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	NGO / Youth education centre / independent youth and cultural organisation
Year(s) of implementation	2022–ongoing
Duration of the practice	Multi-year programme with continuous workshops, project phases, and creative production cycles
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	https://www.inwole.de/teenspirit-jugendprojekt
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	
2. Context and Background	
2.1 Context of the practice	
<i>Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed. Suggested aspects:</i> • <i>Impact of war on the young people involved</i> • <i>Community or regional context</i> • <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	The project was developed in response to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Potsdam following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022. Many young people experienced war-related stress, displacement, loss of stability, and psychological strain. Inwole e.V. designed the Teen Spirit project as a low-threshold, creative, and psychosocial youth work format combining mental health education with artistic expression. The project aims to create a “safe space” where young people can reflect on emotional challenges, trauma-related experiences, and everyday mental health issues. The project Teen Spirit includes further projects called Inside the Croco and Mind Capture. All focus on mental health and use animation and film as the method.

	A key feature is the integration of Ukrainian refugee youth and local youth in shared creative and therapeutic learning environments.
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	Age group: approx. 13–19 years Gender: all genders Background: • Ukrainian refugee youth affected by war and displacement • Local youth from Potsdam and surrounding areas Approximate number of participants: several dozen across different project phases
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	• Strengthening psychosocial wellbeing and emotional resilience • Providing access to mental health awareness in a youth-friendly format • Supporting coping strategies for trauma-related stress • Encouraging self-expression through creative media • Promoting peer exchange between refugee and local youth • Reducing stigma around mental health topics • Strengthening social cohesion and belonging
4. Description of the Practice	
Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include:	Teen Spirit combines youth work, mental health education, and creative media production.

• main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	Main activities include: • Facilitated workshops on mental health topics (e.g. boundaries, anxiety, addiction, identity) • Group discussions guided by a professional psychologist • Creative production workshops (animation, photography, video, storytelling) • Development of animated short films and media products • Collaborative reflection and group learning processes • Public presentation of results (e.g. exhibitions, screenings) A central outcome of the project is the creation of animated films and media works developed by young participants, often in cooperation with creative professionals and students. Youth workers and facilitators support both emotional processes and artistic production.
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	• Trauma-informed youth work approach • Non-formal education • Arts-based youth work (creative media, animation, photography) • Group facilitation and peer learning • Mental health education in youth settings • Participatory and co-creative methods • Safe space approach These methods support resilience by enabling emotional expression, strengthening self-reflection, and building supportive peer relationships in a structured but informal environment.
6. Participation of Young People	
How were young people involved in the process?	Young people are actively involved in all phases of the project: • Selection and discussion of mental health topics • Development of scripts and narratives • Creation of visual and audiovisual content • Collaborative decision-making within workshop groups • Presentation of final products to the public Participation is highly practice-oriented and co-creative, although overall project structure is facilitated by professionals.

7. Impact on Young People

Describe observed or measured outcomes.

Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement

If available, include:

- feedback from participants
- evaluation results
- testimonies or quotes

Observed outcomes include:

- Improved awareness of mental health issues
- Increased emotional expression and communication skills
- Strengthened coping strategies for stress and trauma
- Reduced social isolation among refugee youth
- Development of trust and peer relationships
- Increased confidence through public presentation of creative work
- Positive intercultural interaction between Ukrainian and local youth

Available documentation suggests strong psychosocial and identity-building effects. The project also received several prizes and public recognition.

8. Factors of Success

What made the practice effective?

- Combination of psychological expertise and creative youth work
- Safe, non-formal learning environment
- High level of youth engagement in creative production
- Inclusion of both refugee and local youth
- Long-term project structure (multi-year process)
- Strong professional facilitation (youth work + psychology + media arts)
- Opportunity for public visibility of youth outcomes

9. Transferability and Scalability

Can this practice be replicated in other contexts?

Please describe:

- conditions needed,
- resources required,
- skills needed by youth workers

The practice has high transferability potential.

Required conditions:

- Access to youth with psychosocial needs (e.g. refugee or vulnerable youth groups)
- Cooperation between youth work professionals and mental health specialists
- Creative infrastructure (media tools, workshop space)
- Funding for long-term facilitation

Required resources:

- Psychologist or mental health professional involvement
- Trained youth workers
- Media/arts equipment (video, animation tools)
- Safe and stable workshop environment

	Required skills: • Trauma-informed facilitation • Media and arts-based youth work • Group moderation skills • Intercultural competence
10. Supporting Materials (Optional)	
Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	https://www.youtube.com/@InsideTheCroco https://www.potsdam.de/de/jip
11. Key Words / Tags	
Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	Youth resilience; mental health; trauma-informed youth work; creative youth work; animation; psychosocial support; safe spaces; non-formal education; arts-based methods; participation

POLAND

Practice 1

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	Poland/ Wroclaw
Country / Region	Secondary School Nr 15 in Wroclaw
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to	

the web-page of the organisation(s)	
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	Secondary school
Year(s) of implementation	Since September 2022
Duration of the practice	ongoing
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	https://loxv.wroclaw.pl/projekty/
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	Justyna Piech Bidermann, school counsellor
2. Context and Background	
2.1 Context of the practice	
<i>Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed.</i> <i>Suggested aspects:</i> • <i>Impact of war on the young people involved</i> • <i>Community or regional context</i> • <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	• The influx of refugees resulting from the hostilities in Ukraine • The need to provide young people with the space and conditions to continue their education and to ensure a safe environment for those who have experienced war • Difficulties in communication due to language barriers; differences in curricula and educational systems (different grading systems; curriculum and requirements); administrative difficulties (lack of all or some of the documents certifying previous education; lack of a permanent place of residence/frequent changes of address; lack of or limited contact with parents; lack of learning materials for the pupil due to parents' severe financial constraints; difficulties in adapting

2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	• Students aged 12–18 (for the first two years, LO XV ran preparatory classes for pupils at primary school level – Years 7 and 8 – and secondary school level) • Participant profile: young refugees and displaced persons; young people living in war-affected areas; young people who have experienced trauma • At least 1200
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	• Building mental and emotional resilience; • Integration activities in preparatory classes; individual support from psychologists; consultations for parents; the permanent introduction of intercultural assistants to the school; • the opportunity to study Ukrainian as a native language and Polish as a foreign language; the provision of additional lessons in subjects chosen by the pupil (up to 5 hours per week) to enable pupils to catch up on any gaps in the curriculum; • The school's participation in UNICEF projects: free summer Polish language courses; holiday classes to develop communication skills; free educational trips to various Polish cities (Kraków, Warsaw); provision of free educational materials and school supplies (tablets, textbooks and fully equipped rucksacks – school starter kits); free summer camps for refugee pupils in Poland • Team-building activities and workshops on tolerance – preventing the marginalisation of refugee pupils
4. Description of the Practice	

Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	• Supporting young people with war experience; providing teachers and educators with tools and skills necessary to assist migrants effectively. • Activities have been divided into different areas and aimed at different groups – pupils, form tutors, teachers and parents; teachers and form tutors – training sessions/workshops; Parents' Council – reviews and/or helps to develop initiatives to support pupils with experiences of war as part of the development of the School's Educational Programme • Comprehensive, long-term initiatives involving the entire school community (pupils, the Parents' Council, teachers and form tutors) • Pupils – both individually and in groups – make use of the support services provided specifically for them • The role of youth workers/ teachers is to monitor pupils' work and behaviour during lessons (AM), monitor attendance and academic progress (AM, the PPP Team, form tutors and teachers); maintain regular contact with the parents of refugee pupils; offer consultations, advice and cooperation with institutions supporting the school's activities (Pedagogical and psychological Counselling Centres, MOPS, Refugee Assistance Centre – Ukraine Centre)
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	1. Inclusive education programme 2. Teaching Polish as a second language 3. Psychological and social support 4. Integrating activities during various projects 5. Project method – long-term group tasks (teaching students practical skills as part of implementation of the national curriculum) 6. Cooperation with Intercultural Assistants 7. Creating safe space at school
6. Participation of Young People	
How were young people involved in the process?	Majority of students were keen to involve in the activities provided by school .
7. Impact on Young People	

Describe observed or measured outcomes. <i>Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement</i> If available, include: - feedback from participants - evaluation results - testimonies or quotes	(referring to the methods in the same order as listed above in the Youth Methods used) 1. Inclusive education – improved sense of safety and stability by restoration of a daily routine; better social integration; reducing social isolation; greater emotional resilience; re-engaging students in learning and improving access to future academical opportunities; support of positive cultural identity. 2. Teaching Polish as a second language- contributes to a faster and better adaptation process; supports educational inclusion; social integration and identity development. 3. Psychological and social support- reduces feeling of stress, anxiety and uncertainty; increases emotional stability and resilience; builds hope and optimism about future; greater connection to school and participation in school life; improved cooperation with peers; formation of friendships; increased confidence in using a new language; recognising own strengths and abilities; increase in self-regulation and improved classroom behaviour. 4. Integrating activities during various projects & 5) Project method – long-term group tasks (teaching students practical skills as part of implementation of the national curriculum) – improve communication skills and confidence in communication; develop trust in peers/ others; experience recognition and appreciation; contribute their talents and ideas; provide positive experience that counterbalances stress and tension; allow to experience success; teamwork and problem-solving activities often result in better adaptability and development of coping skills; allow participants to be seen as active contributors’ 5. Cooperation with Intercultural Assistants – students are less confused and feel greater confidence navigating school; there are fewer misunderstandings; having a trusted adult who can understand their language and cultural background is highly reassuring; better communication between school and students’ families/ sometimes increased parental engagement.; earlier access to support services 6. Creating safe space at school (For children and adolescents who have lived through armed conflict, displacement, loss, or uncertainty, a safe school environment often becomes a key protective factor supporting recovery, learning, and healthy development.) - gives students increased sense of
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	safety and security; improves ability to manage stress; after some time students seek support; improves students' well-being; helps build trusting relationships with teachers/ school psychologists/ youth workers/ peers; there is less discrimination and intercultural interactions improve; allows a better adaptation in new environment.
8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	• Teachers' openness to new challenges • Willingness to help • Greater availability of teachers to carry out various forms of work with migrant students • Providing teachers with access to various forms of training enabling them to improve/acquire skills necessary for working with migrant students (training courses, methodological conferences, seminars, workshops and self-study activities)
9. Transferability and Scalability	
Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required, - skills needed by youth workers	• Conditions Supporting the Transferability and Scalability of Inclusive Education, Integrating Activities, and Project-Based Methods: clear methodology; support from school authorities/ institutions or organisations that are co-partners in these activities; staff training; flexibility and adaptability • Resources: time; training materials/ learning resources; basic funding; monitoring and evaluation tools and coordination structures • Skills: intercultural competences; trauma-informed awareness; facilitation skills; communication and collaboration skills; reflective practice; conflict resolution and multicultural classroom management • Conditions Supporting Transferability and Scalability of Psychological and social support and cooperation with Intercultural Assistants: time and space at school; multilingual and culturally responsive resources; monitoring and evaluation tools; leadership commitment; networking and knowledge sharing. • Resources: qualified personnel; training materials and toolkits; coordination system; digital tools. • Skills: trauma-informed practice; intercultural competences; communication/ collaboration/ facilitation/observation and assessment skills; adaptability and problem-solving; conflict resolution skills and reflective skills

Practice 2

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	Information Point
Country / Region	Wroclaw, Poland
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	Wrocław Centre for Social Development (Wrocławskie Centrum Rozwoju Społecznego)
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	Municipality
Year(s) of implementation	2025 -2026
Duration of the practice	1 year
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	https://wcrs.wroclaw.pl/
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	-
2. Context and Background	
2.1 Context of the practice	
<i>Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed. Suggested aspects:</i> • <i>Impact of war on the young people involved</i>	The practice "From Adaptation to Integration " included the organization of Polish language courses for young people. It also involved city excursions designed to help participants become familiar with the local environment. Additionally, art therapy workshops are offered for women aged 18 and above to support their well-being and social integration. We also supported students by providing 'School Starter Packs', which help them navigate their first steps in the Polish school system.

• <i>Community or regional context</i> • <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	Every language course participant was also eligible to receive this publication.
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	- 14-20 years old - Refugees - Migrants - 45
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	The main goals of the initiative were to support the integration of children and young people into Polish society, facilitate language acquisition in the country of residence, and provide general support during the adaptation process
4. Description of the Practice	

Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	The main goals of the initiative were to support the integration of children, youth, and adults into Polish society and help participants adapt to their new social and cultural environment. A key objective was to facilitate Polish language learning and improve communication skills necessary for everyday life in the country of residence. The programme also aimed to provide emotional and social support, strengthen a sense of belonging, and reduce feelings of isolation among participants.
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	We applied a participant-centered approach, combining interactive, dialogue-based language classes with practical tools like our 'School Starter Pack.' We fostered resilience by using engaging methods—such as board games, popular youth literature, and slang—to help students master everyday language and feel confident interacting with their Polish peers. By providing clear guidance alongside a social, inclusive learning environment, we helped young people build the self-confidence and connections necessary to thrive in their new cultural surroundings.
6. Participation of Young People	
How were young people involved in the process?	We empowered youth to take an active role in the learning process by allowing them to propose topics and cultural texts of personal interest. Participants were encouraged to lead discussions and share their own ideas during sessions, which fostered a sense of agency and made the learning experience more relevant to their daily lives.
7. Impact on Young People	
Describe observed or measured outcomes. <i>Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement</i> If available, include:	Through our language programme, young people gained the confidence to use Polish not only in the classroom but also in informal social settings, such as school breaks, extracurricular activities, and daily interactions with their peers. This practical mastery of everyday language significantly bolstered their self-assurance and facilitated their successful integration into their new social environment.

- feedback from participants - evaluation results - testimonies or quotes	
8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	The effectiveness of the practice was mainly ensured by the selection of qualified educators, trainers, and experts with experience in working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Their ability to quickly establish trust and positive relationships with participants significantly contributed to engagement and participation. The facilitators used a supportive, inclusive, and practical approach, which helped create a safe and welcoming environment. As a result, participants felt comfortable, motivated, and open to learning and integration activities.
9. Transferability and Scalability	
Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required, - skills needed by youth workers	Conditions needed: Provision of a suitable, well-equipped, and accessible space that is available to all participants. Support from a local institution and access to target groups are also important. Resources required: Funding for staff and activities, a suitable venue, and basic materials for language, integration, and creative workshops. Skills needed by youth workers: Intercultural communication, empathy, ability to build trust quickly, and experience in working with diverse groups.
10. Supporting Materials (Optional)	
Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	School Starter Pack Informator Wsparcia
11. Key Words / Tags	

Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	youth integration, war-affected people, migration support, language learning, cultural adaptation, community support, psychosocial support, art therapy, intercultural dialogue, accessibility, Wrocław initiatives
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UKRAINE

Practice 1

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	ESTEAM+C
Country / Region	Ukraine
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	NGO "Space of Innovations", NGO "STEAM Maker" https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61557269370906 https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61564131417207
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	Public organization
Year(s) of implementation	2024 – 2025 programme Destination Imagination, 2025 – 2026 project M.A.K.E. IT STEM
Duration of the practice	6 month, 6 month
Link to the web-page with the information	

about the practices (optional)	
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	Victoria Drofa
2. Context and Background	
2.1 Context of the practice	
<i>Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed. Suggested aspects:</i> • <i>Impact of war on the young people involved</i> • <i>Community or regional context</i> • <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	Case 1. STEM Social Impact Project within the Destination Imagination Programme This practice was developed during the full-scale war in Ukraine, when young people have been continuously facing stress, anxiety, limited opportunities for personal development, and declining motivation to learn. Within the local community, there was a particular need for safe spaces where young people could engage in creativity, teamwork, and skills development that would strengthen their sense of agency and their ability to contribute to society. An additional challenge was the participants' lack of experience in international STEM programmes, limited access to technical resources, and the need to work under constant uncertainty caused by the security situation, air raid alerts, and disruptions to the educational process. At the same time, young people needed not only learning opportunities but also a chance to have their voices heard, work on issues that mattered to them, and experience the support of a team. In response, it was decided to introduce young people to the international Destination Imagination programme and support their participation. The project involved young people aged 14–17 from lyceums in the city of Konotop. The team chose to participate in the Engineering Challenge. The theme of the season was contemporary circus arts. Participants were required to design and build a robot capable of completing specific engineering tasks and integrate it into a theatrical performance. While working on the Engineering Challenge, the team went beyond the programme's technical requirements by addressing an important social issue—ethical treatment of animals in circus performances. This emerged through discussions on socially relevant issues and civic values held throughout the project. The participants explored ways of combining STEM, creativity and active citizenship by reimagining the circus as a space driven by technology and engineering solutions rather than the use of animals. The practice emerged as a response to young people's need to see purpose in learning, engage with real societal

	challenges, and feel that they could contribute to positive change within their community and beyond. The team was awarded second place in its age category. No first prize was awarded in that category. During the 2025–2026 season, young people who had previously participated in the programme were encouraged to complete a training course for youth trainers and prepare a new team of participants for the next cycle of the programme. This created a youth-to-youth learning approach, where young people assumed responsibility for supporting and mentoring their peers while further developing their own leadership, teamwork, communication and peer-support skills. This model of peer learning strengthens young people's participation in community life, fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for collective achievements, and creates a safe environment for exchanging ideas and experiences among peers. It also demonstrates the sustainability of the organisation's youth work and its long-term investment in youth participation and empowerment. Case 2. M.A.K.E IT STEM Project The M.A.K.E IT STEM project was developed as a continuation of the previous case with the aim of designing and piloting the ESTEAM+C approach, training young people, and establishing local learning hubs in communities characterised by limited access to innovative educational approaches, youth migration, emotional exhaustion caused by the war, and a lack of opportunities where young people could simultaneously develop technical competencies and civic engagement. The idea of integrating STEM education with citizenship education in the context of war emerged in response to young people's need not only for knowledge but also for practical tools to participate in community life, strengthen critical thinking, and regain a sense of agency over their future. To support this process, two complementary frameworks were developed: a project-oriented framework and a human-centred framework, through which participants addressed real challenges facing their communities. As part of the practice, young people analysed local community issues, designed STEM-based solutions, and simultaneously explored the principles of participation, responsibility, and democratic decision-making. The practice addressed challenges such as declining motivation, a lack of confidence in their ability to influence change, insufficient
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	teamwork skills, and limited opportunities for self-realisation in smaller communities. The ESTEAM+C approach and its author were recognised by the Kyiv School of Economics through the Talents for Ukraine grant programme. The M.A.K.E IT STEM project was shortlisted in the "Discovery of the Year" category of the Osvitoria Media Award 2026.
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	Age Group of Participants Case 1: Young people aged 14–17. Case 2: Young people aged 14–35. Participants aged 18–35 were involved as trainers and ambassadors of the ESTEAM+C approach, while participants aged 14–17 took part as learners working on social impact projects. Gender Perspective The practice was open and inclusive for all participants regardless of gender. Both girls and boys actively participated. Particular attention was paid to encouraging girls to engage in STEM-related activities and take on technical roles within the projects. Participant Profile The practice targeted: • young people living in war-affected areas; • young people with war-related traumatic experiences, including prolonged stress, frequent air raid alerts, and ongoing instability; • young people from small communities with limited access to modern STEM opportunities and innovative educational practices; • internally displaced young people, as well as young people whose family members had experienced forced displacement. Approximate Number of Participants • Destination Imagination case: 5 young people (2 girls and 3 boys). • M.A.K.E IT STEM project: 140 young people

	participated; 19 youth trainers were trained, 5 trainers continued their cooperation with the project, and 5 local learning hubs were established in the Chernihiv region. Throughout the project, gender balance was maintained, with a particular focus on increasing the participation of girls and women in STEM.
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	The main objectives of the initiatives were to: • strengthen young people's resilience by engaging them in teamwork, creativity, STEM projects, and solution-oriented approaches to addressing real community challenges; • provide psychosocial support by creating a safe environment for interaction, self-expression, trust-building, and restoring a sense of control over their lives in the context of war; • empower young people and promote their participation through involvement in decision-making, project-based activities, citizenship education, and work on socially relevant issues; • rebuild social connections and foster teamwork, communication, and a culture of collaboration among young people; • strengthen young people's sense of belonging to their communities and encourage active citizenship by engaging them in addressing local challenges and recognising their own capacity to contribute to positive change; • develop critical thinking, creativity, and skills for the responsible and ethical use of technology; • prevent the marginalisation of young people from small communities by providing access to modern STEM opportunities, international programmes, and environments that support personal development and self-realisation.
4. Description of the Practice	
Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency	Case 1 Preparation for participation in the international Destination Imagination programme lasted six months and was organised through regular team meetings, hands-on activities, and facilitated discussions. The team met once a week, while between sessions participants worked independently or collaboratively on specific tasks without the involvement of the facilitator.

• how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	The preparation followed the official methodological guidelines of the Destination Imagination programme (which cannot be disclosed due to programme regulations). In addition, the ESTEAM+C approach described in this document was integrated into the learning process. Case 2 The project consisted of three components: Training of Trainers (ToT) The Training of Trainers programme included two online training days and one face-to-face training day. Establishment of Local Hubs and Youth Engagement Five local hubs were established, engaging 140 young people. Learning within the hubs was organised through one facilitated session per week, complemented by independent or team-based work between sessions without the direct involvement of the trainer. Social Impact STEM Hackathon An online Social Impact STEM Hackathon brought together five teams, each of which developed a social impact initiative. Although the hackathon had originally been planned as an in-person event, the deteriorating security situation required the format to be adapted and delivered online. Overall Methodology The initiatives incorporated a wide range of educational methods and activities, including: • teamwork; • project-based learning; • research activities; • STEM and engineering tasks; • creative assignments; • facilitated discussions; • role-play activities; • mentoring sessions; • presentations and public speaking; • idea generation and brainstorming; • reflection activities; • psychosocial support and team-building exercises; • independent work between facilitated sessions; • planning and evaluation of project outcomes; • experience sharing and peer-to-peer learning. Each facilitated session lasted 2–2.5 hours.
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	The methodology also defined nine team roles, each reflecting a corresponding role found in real-life organisations or workplaces. Young people independently selected the role they wished to take on and assumed the responsibilities associated with it. The role of youth workers and facilitators was to support young people throughout the learning process while adhering to the principle of "do no harm", creating a safe, empowering and participant-centred learning environment.
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	Comprehensive Approach within the Initiatives Within the initiatives, a comprehensive approach was applied. Youth work was not built as a transmission of knowledge but rather as the creation of an environment for experience, interaction, and reflection. Key approaches and methods: 1. Project-based learning Young people worked on real challenges in their communities, developing prototypes, models, or product concepts. This enabled them to see tangible results of their work and experience their own effectiveness. 2. Human-centred approach Participants explored the needs of community members, developed empathy for users, generated solutions, tested ideas, and adapted them accordingly. This fostered skills in understanding others, responsibility, and awareness of the social impact of their decisions. 3. ESTEAM+C approach ESTEAM+C is an integrated approach to learning and designing social innovations in which young people work not with abstract tasks but with real needs of individuals and communities. At its core is the person (user), their experience, challenges, and the changes that the solution should create. The approach combines STEM disciplines, creativity, and civic impact, structuring youth work through a cycle: problem understanding → solution design → creation → testing → impact evaluation. 1. PROBLEM / IDEA (Human-centred start) The work always begins with the person.

	Who are the users/participants? These may include young people, community members, educators, or vulnerable groups facing specific social or educational challenges. What are their needs and experiences? Often these include needs for safety, support, development opportunities, self-realisation, access to education, or participation in community life. What challenges do they face in real life? Limited resources, stressful conditions (including war), lack of opportunities, low engagement, social isolation, or loss of motivation. 2. ESTEAM+C AS A SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM E – Entrepreneurship How will the solution benefit users in the long term? How can it be sustained, scaled, or integrated into the community? Result: The solution becomes sustainable and continues to create value beyond the project. S – Science What knowledge helps us better understand users and the problem? What data or research supports the solution? What did we learn through observation, interviews, or surveys? What patterns or recurring issues were identified? Result: Evidence-based solution grounded in real user needs. T – Technology Which technologies can improve users' lives or increase effectiveness? Which tools can be used for prototyping? Result: Technology is a tool for impact, not an end in itself. E – Engineering How do we design the solution for users? What prototype will we build? How will we test and collect feedback? Result: An iterative process from idea to prototype to testing and improvement. A – Arts (creativity and design) How can the solution be made understandable, attractive, and emotionally engaging? How does design influence user experience? Result: Improved accessibility and engagement through visual and communication design. M – Mathematics (logic and measurement) How do we measure the impact?
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	Which metrics show that the problem is being solved? Result: Clear indicators of effectiveness and impact. C – Civic Impact How does the solution support social values, inclusion, cooperation, and responsibility? What changes occur in the community? Result: Real community-level change and strengthened civic engagement. This dimension strengthens civic participation, social impact, responsibility, inclusivity, and reflection on ethical aspects of innovation. 3. OUTPUT / PRODUCT What product, service, prototype, or methodology is created? How does it help users? Result: A practical solution that directly addresses user needs and improves their experience. 4. REFLECTION / EVALUATION What did we learn about users and the process? What worked well and what can be improved? What is the impact on users and the community? Result: Deep understanding of impact and continuous improvement. ESTEAM+C is not just an educational approach but a cycle of social innovation where young people: ● start from real human needs; ● explore them through data and experience; ● create solutions through STEM and creativity; ● test impact in the community; ● develop responsibility, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement. It combines STEM, creativity, entrepreneurship, and civic impact, enabling young people to: ● work with real community challenges; ● create socially valuable solutions; ● develop agency and sense of impact; ● build resilience through action and participation. 4. Team-based learning Young people worked in teams, distributed roles, made joint decisions, and resolved conflicts, building communication, trust, and mutual support.
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	5. Facilitation and reflection methods Discussions, reflection circles, and debriefing sessions helped participants process experience, emotions, and outcomes. 6. Challenge-based learning Instead of theoretical lessons, young people worked on real engineering, social, and civic challenges requiring solutions under uncertainty. Overall impact The combination of these approaches builds psychological, social, and learning resilience: • project work increases agency and reduces helplessness; • teamwork restores social connections and support; • human-centred learning strengthens empathy and meaning; • real-world challenges build adaptability; • reflection supports emotional processing and stress reduction. As a result, young people not only gained skills but also restored their sense of agency, belonging, and belief in their ability to influence change in their communities.
6. Participation of Young People	
How were young people involved in the process?	Young people were not merely participants; they were active co-creators of the process at all stages, from problem identification to evaluation of results. Main forms of engagement: 1. Co-definition of the problem Young people analysed the challenges in their communities, shared their own experiences, observations, and reflections. They independently identified which problems were most relevant and meaningful to them. 2. Team-based project work Participants worked in teams, distributed roles (researchers, designers, engineers, presenters), jointly made decisions, and took responsibility for outcomes. 3. User and context research Young people conducted interviews, observations, and surveys, and analysed the needs of potential users of their

	solutions. This fostered a sense of involvement in real-world change. 4. Solution development Participants directly created prototypes, STEM solutions, models, or usage scenarios, integrating technical, creative, and social dimensions. 5. Decision-making throughout the process Young people chose their focus areas, implementation approaches, and presentation formats, strengthening autonomy and responsibility. 6. Testing and feedback They tested their solutions in practice, collected feedback from peers or community members, and made iterative improvements. 7. Reflection Young people discussed their experiences, emotions, challenges, and results, gaining awareness of their progress and impact. Overall, engagement was based on participatory learning and co-creation, where young people held real agency throughout the process rather than simply following instructions. This allowed them to feel responsible for outcomes and to see their own impact on the community.
7. Impact on Young People	
Describe observed or measured outcomes. <i>Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement</i> If available, include: - feedback from participants - evaluation results - testimonies or quotes	During the implementation of the initiatives, positive changes were observed in several key areas of youth development. These changes were identified through participants' behaviour, teamwork interactions, reflections, and feedback. Emotional resilience. Young people demonstrated better coping with uncertainty in tasks and were less likely to give up when facing difficulties in the project. Self-confidence. Even less active participants began to take on roles within their teams and assume responsibility for the tasks assigned to those roles. Sense of belonging to the community. Youth showed increased initiative, and some continued working on their initiatives beyond the scope of the project.

	Social connections and teamwork. Participants sometimes independently organised their work without constant intervention from the trainer. Problem-solving skills. Young people learned to treat mistakes as part of the process. Instead of avoiding challenging tasks, they were more willing to try again. Civic engagement. Participants began proposing their own ideas for change within their schools and communities. The results indicate that participation in the initiatives had a comprehensive impact, not only on the development of STEM skills but also on psychological resilience, social integration, and the formation of civic engagement among young people. Feedback: “Finally, I understood what STEM is. It is a tool that allows us to create sustainable solutions and do good for the community I live in.” “It was interesting not just to complete tasks, but to understand why I am doing them and who benefits from them.” “I never thought my ideas mattered or could improve someone's life.”
8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	The effectiveness of the practice was ensured by the combination of a human-centred approach, STEM education, and civic participation, where young people were not passive listeners but active creators of solutions. An environment was created in which young people could simultaneously develop skills, receive emotional support, feel a sense of belonging to a community, and recognise their own ability to influence change.
9. Transferability and Scalability	
Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required, - skills needed by youth workers	Yes, the practice can be adapted and replicated in other communities and contexts, particularly in crisis settings, post-war recovery environments, work with young people in small communities, or contexts with low levels of youth engagement. The ESTEAM+C approach is flexible and can be applied in both formal and non-formal education. Required conditions: • a safe physical or online space for youth interaction;

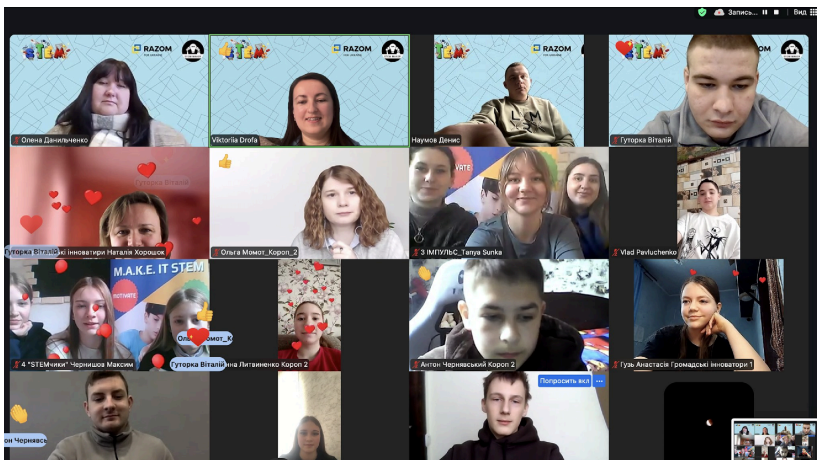
	• willingness of young people to participate in teamwork and project-based activities; • support from educational institutions, youth centres, or civil society organisations; • an environment where young people can freely express their opinions, test ideas, and make mistakes without fear of judgement; • focus on local community challenges and the real needs of young people. Required resources: • basic materials and tools for prototyping (not necessarily technical equipment; these can include everyday materials or even reused resources); • ESTEAM+C canvas template; • access to mentoring or expert support; • time for teamwork, research, testing, and reflection. Skills required of youth workers: • facilitation of group processes and teamwork; • understanding of the ESTEAM+C approach; • ability to create a safe and inclusive environment; • experience working with young people affected by stress or living in crisis contexts; • skills in reflection and non-violent communication; • ability to act as a trainer, mentor, facilitator, and learning partner. It is important to note that the practice does not require expensive equipment or high-tech laboratories. Its effectiveness depends primarily on the quality of interaction, the level of youth engagement, and the presence of an environment in which participants can feel safe, supported, and empowered to make an impact.
10. Supporting Materials (Optional)	
Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	Photos from the creativity Olympiad as part of the program Destination Imagination

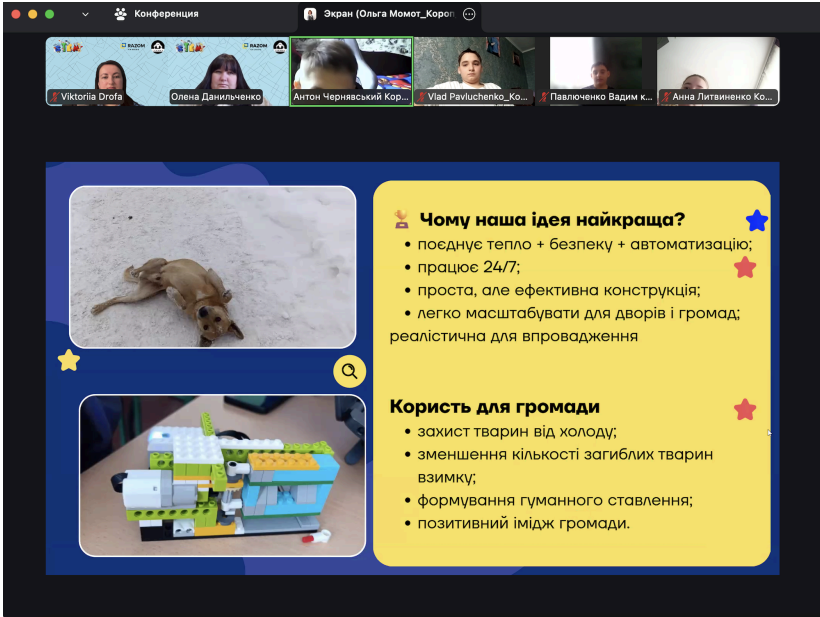


Photos from the project's training of trainers M.A.K.E. IT STEM



Photos from the online hackathon



	They made a prototype from a robotic constructor 
11. Key Words / Tags	
Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	youth resilience, Ukrainian youth, young people, war-affected young people, psychosocial support, non-formal education, STEM education, citizenship education, youth participation, youth work, human-centred approach, ESTEAM+C,, human-centred design, project-based learning, social impact. civic engagement, development of critical thinking, development of soft skills, soft skills, teamwork, safe space for young people, trauma-informed approach, conflict-sensitive approach, resilience, youth participation, civic impact, youth empowerment, community engagement

Practice 2

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	Conducting youth excursion and tourist activities for the study and popularization of the community. Local Impact: youth tours
Country / Region	Ukraine, Kharkiv region, Krasnokutsk village

Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	"Krasnokutsk Youth Center" of the Krasnokutsk Settlement Council, Bogodukhiv District, Kharkiv Region in cooperation with the public organization "KutOk" Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/share/1EZfJvcbb6/ Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/krasnokutsk.youth.center?igsh=eTFsbjFhcTd2ZnU5 Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/share/17acGeoGC4/ Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/ngokutok?igsh=MXFwNWZ4eXN4a2Vpeg==
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	Youth center and public organization (partner implementation)
Year(s) of implementation	June 30, 2024 - present
Duration of the practice	from May to September (5 months)
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/share/1EZfJvcbb6/ Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/krasnokutsk.youth.center?igsh=eTFsbjFhcTd2ZnU5 https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17iVvYPFTE/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14gcySvJ3iU/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BEQctL5Rz/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18ckTBUYFd/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18Pj6eWRWR/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EByguTzMj/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1D6vFzLkg2/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14oRTJgtc6t/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1b22YZ5GG6/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1M7rYRnDN7/
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	Masliy Olga – director of the youth center; Tsiluiko Kateryna – Head of the NGO
2. Context and Background	
2.1 Context of the practice	
Briefly describe the context in which the	The practice was developed in wartime conditions, when the level of youth social activity decreased, isolation increased,

<i>practice was developed.</i> <i>Suggested aspects:</i> • <i>Impact of war on the young people involved</i> • <i>Community or regional context</i> • <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	and opportunities for safe leisure became limited. In the community, there was a need to restore live communication among young people, develop local identity, and strengthen national consciousness through learning about the history, culture, and traditions of their native region. The introduction of youth excursion and tourism activities responded to the demand for active, meaningful leisure that combines learning, communication, and community exploration. Special attention was given to fostering national identity through familiarisation with historical landmarks, cultural heritage, and prominent figures of the community. Young people had insufficient knowledge about their own locality and weak social ties with peers, which made interaction and engagement in community life more difficult. The implementation of this practice helps address these challenges through non-formal education, the development of civic awareness, and the creation of spaces for communication and new social connections.
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	The target audience included young people aged 14–35, with no gender restrictions, ensuring equal participation of both young men and young women. Participants included young people living in the community, as well as those with experience of internal displacement or return migration from abroad. Some participants belonged to vulnerable groups affected by armed conflict and showed signs of social isolation or emotional/psychological strain. The estimated number of participants within the implementation of the practice is approximately 100 people, depending on the format of activities and their regularity.
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience	Main objectives of the practice: • strengthening youth resilience in wartime conditions and increasing their social engagement

- psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	• providing psychosocial support to young people through organised group excursions, tourism activities, and informal communication • expanding opportunities for youth participation in public life in the Krasnokutsk community and engaging them in local initiatives • restoring and developing social connections among young people living in the community • fostering a sense of belonging to the Krasnokutsk community and strengthening both local and national identity • increasing awareness of the history, cultural heritage, and landmarks of the Krasnokutsk community as a foundation for civic consciousness
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4. Description of the Practice

Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	The practice is implemented in the form of youth excursion and tourism activities that combine research, educational, and social components. The main types of activities include exploring the natural and historical-cultural heritage of the Krasnokutsk community, in particular studying local flora, visiting architecturally significant historical buildings, and discussing individuals who have contributed to the development of the community and its scientific activities. Each excursion is structured into several stages: a preparatory phase (including safety briefing and route planning), the excursion route itself with visits to designated locations, a rest stop combined with an informational and educational component, and a final reflection session followed by return to the starting point. Excursions are held once a week from May to September and last up to five hours, including travel time. Young people are actively involved in the planning process: they propose routes, identify places to visit, engage new participants, and assist with organisational tasks. Youth workers act as coordinators, organisers, and mentors, ensuring safety and structure of the activities, while facilitating participants' learning, discussion, and reflection processes.
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5. Youth Work Methods Used

Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these	Within the implementation of the practice, methods of non-formal education and youth work were applied, in particular: experiential learning, facilitation of group
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methods support resilience.	discussions, elements of inquiry-based learning, as well as methods of youth participation in decision-making. The key approach is learning through direct experience during excursions, where young people not only receive information but also independently explore the nature, history, and cultural heritage of the Krasnokutsk community. This contributes to better knowledge acquisition and the formation of a personal connection with the community. Facilitation of group discussions and reflections after each excursion allows young people to process their experiences, share their thoughts and emotions, and thus develop emotional resilience and communication skills. The method of youth participation in route planning and selection of locations strengthens their sense of responsibility, autonomy, and engagement. This fosters an active civic attitude and increases motivation to participate in community life. Together, the applied methods contribute to strengthening youth resilience by increasing self-confidence, expanding social connections, reducing isolation, and fostering a sense of belonging to the community.
6. Participation of Young People	
How were young people involved in the process?	Young people were involved in all stages of the practice implementation — from planning to conducting activities. Participants proposed ideas for routes and locations to visit, took part in the preparation of excursions, and supported organisational processes. During the activities, young people actively engaged in research, discussed the historical and natural features of the community, and participated in reflection sessions after each route. Participants also involved their friends and peers, which contributed to expanding the youth community and increasing the level of participation. This approach enabled young people to feel their own significance, influence on the process, and responsibility for the development of initiatives within the community.
7. Impact on Young People	
Describe observed or measured outcomes.	At the beginning of the implementation of the practice, the number of participants was small; however, an active youth

<i>Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement</i> If available, include: - feedback from participants - evaluation results - testimonies or quotes	community gradually emerged. Thanks to the “participant brings participant” principle, an average of 15–20 young people joined each excursion, which indicates growing interest in and trust toward the initiative. An increased sense of cohesion was observed, along with the creation of a safe space where young people could freely express their opinions, interact, and communicate. Participants began to find shared interests, expand their social connections, and engage more actively with one another beyond the activities themselves. An increase in self-confidence and awareness of the possibility to influence community development was also noted, particularly through volunteering and participation in local initiatives. Young people developed a more positive attitude toward their community and a stronger sense of its value. Participants’ feedback: Diana, 14 years old: “Informative and fun, we learned a lot of new things. Great organisation of the event, time flew by unnoticed. Unforgettable emotions and beautiful photos.” Vlada, 14 years old: “Interesting excursions, new impressions, friendly atmosphere.” Vika, 14 years old: “The excursion to the arboretum was very interesting and educational. We saw many beautiful trees and plants. We learned a lot of new things about the nature of our native region.”
8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	The effectiveness of the practice was ensured by the high level of youth engagement at all stages of implementation — from route planning to direct participation in excursions. A key factor was the participants’ motivation, their interest in exploring their local community, and their willingness to share this experience with others. A significant role was played by the support of the Krasnokutsk Settlement Council, which contributed to the organisational stability and development of the initiative. The effectiveness was further strengthened by media coverage of the activities,

	which increased the visibility of the community and attracted new participants and visitors. As a result, the practice not only brought together local young people but also contributed to promoting the Krasnokutsk community as a place with attractive natural and cultural sites, thereby stimulating the development of domestic tourism.
9. Transferability and Scalability	
Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required, - skills needed by youth workers	This practice can be replicated in other communities provided there is a local natural, historical, or cultural resource that can serve as the basis for excursion and tourism routes. An important condition is also youth interest and support from local authorities or partner organisations. Required conditions: The availability of safe routes and locations for excursions, support from the local community, engagement of active young people, and an organised space or coordinating base (such as a youth centre or a civil society organisation). Required resources: Basic equipment (first aid kit, water, safety supplies), informational materials about the community, transport if needed, and communication tools for informing participants. Skills required of youth workers: Facilitation and group work skills with young people, organisational abilities, basic knowledge of safety during off-site activities, experience working with youth in non-formal education settings, as well as competencies in engaging young people and motivating participation. It is also important to have communication skills for working with local partners and supporting youth-led initiatives.
10. Supporting Materials (Optional)	
Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17iVvYPFTE/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14gcySvJ3iU/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BEQctL5Rz/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18ckTBUYFd/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18Pj6eWRWR/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EBYguTzMj/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1D6vFzLkg2/

	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14oRTJgtc6t/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1b22YZ5GG6/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1M7rYRnDN7/
11. Key Words / Tags	
Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	youth, youth work, youth excursions, excursion and tourism practices, youth resilience, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, social cohesion, local identity, national identity, youth in war conditions, youth affected by war, civic activism, community development, safe space, youth participation, restoration of social ties, youth initiatives, Krasnokutsk community, community research, cultural heritage, inclusive approach, sensitivity to conflict

Practice 3

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	Happy Girls Club in Sad Village, Sad Community, Sumy District, Sumy Oblast
Country / Region	Sad Village, Sad Community, Sumy District, Sumy Oblast, Ukraine
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	The Happy Girls Club operates as part of the UNICEF project "Provision of Risk Mitigation, Prevention and Response Services for Gender-Based Violence in Kharkiv and Sumy Oblasts." The project aims to prevent gender-based violence and domestic violence, support girls in vulnerable situations, and create opportunities for their personal development, participation, and integration into community life. The project is implemented by the "Svitlo Nadiyi" Charitable Foundation in partnership with the Centre for Euroinitiatives NGO. The Happy Girls Club is part of a broader network of 47 girls' clubs operating across the Sumy and Kharkiv regions in schools, colleges, youth centres, and community spaces. During 2025–2026, 22 girls' clubs were active in Sumy Oblast, operating in cities, towns, and villages, including Sumy,

	Romny, Okhtyrka, Shostka, Trostianets, Konotop, Yampil, Nyzy, Mykhailivka, Velyka Chernechchyna, Andriashivka, Lebedyn, Krolevets, Buryn, and Sad Village.
Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/School / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	Public organisation
Year(s) of implementation	2024-2026
Duration of the practice	2 years
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYXRbuEMgLS/?igsh=MWN5YnlyNGd5eDh4
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	Fedirko Iryna

2. Context and Background

2.1 Context of the practice

Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed. Suggested aspects:

- *Impact of war on the young people involved*
- *Community or regional context*
- *Needs that led to the development of the practice*
- *Specific challenges faced by young people*

The Happy Girls Club was established as a safe and supportive space for adolescent girls in Sad Village, Sad Community, Sumy District. The community is located in a border area with heightened security risks. Due to continuous shelling, threats to the civilian population, and limited opportunities for in-person education, schooling is delivered primarily online. This has had a significant impact on adolescents' socialisation, emotional well-being, sense of safety, and access to supportive environments.

The war has profoundly affected the lives of girls in the community. Some participants have experienced displacement, lived under constant security threats, or endured prolonged stress. Girls face limited opportunities for face-to-face interaction, extracurricular activities, self-development, and access to reliable information about

	their rights, personal safety, health, personal boundaries, and future opportunities. In this context, the club has become an important space where adolescent girls can receive support, feel part of a community, learn to express and discuss their emotions, build self-confidence, develop leadership and life skills, and gain knowledge on the prevention of gender-based violence. The need for such a practice arose from several interconnected challenges: emotional exhaustion caused by the war, reduced social interaction, limited awareness of girls' rights and protection mechanisms, low self-esteem, difficulties in communicating with peers, and a lack of safe spaces for non-formal learning and psychosocial support.
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	The target group of the practice consists of girls aged 12–17 who live in the Sad Community and study at Sad Lyceum or have another connection to the community. The practice engaged: • girls living in war-affected areas; • internally displaced girls; • adolescent girls with experiences of prolonged stress, social isolation, or traumatic events; • girls in need of support related to emotional well-being, self-esteem, communication, personal safety, and future planning. During the operation of the Happy Girls Club, a total of 937 attendances were recorded, involving 131 unique participants across 108 club sessions. Overall, within the network of girls' clubs in Sumy Oblast, between September 2025 and May 2026, the initiative reached 2,147 unique participants and delivered 1,119 club sessions.
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience	The Happy Girls Club aims to promote the continuous development and well-being of girls aged 12–17 by creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive space for non-formal education, psychosocial support, life skills development, and the

- psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	prevention of gender-based violence. The key objectives of the practice are to: • strengthen the emotional resilience of girls living in wartime conditions; • promote psychosocial well-being and a sense of safety; • prevent gender-based and domestic violence; • develop skills in self-care, communication, non-violent interaction, and emotional regulation; • build knowledge about personal boundaries, consent, healthy relationships, and available support and referral mechanisms; • foster leadership skills, self-confidence, and a strong sense of self-worth; • encourage girls' active participation in school and community life; • enhance career awareness, digital skills, and the ability to plan for the future. The practice also aims to reduce the risks of marginalisation and social isolation among girls living in border communities, where the war has significantly limited opportunities for safe social interaction, learning, and personal development.
4. Description of the Practice	
Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	The Happy Girls Club operates as a regular safe space for adolescent girls, combining non-formal education, psychosocial support, group interaction, creativity, career guidance, and leadership development. The club's activities include: • interactive learning sessions; • life skills training; • group discussions; • creative workshops; • role-playing and simulation of real-life situations; • self-reflection and emotional regulation exercises; • psychosocial support activities; • sessions on the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV); • leadership and participation activities; • individual and group career counselling; • career and digital skills training; • participation in summer day camps;

	● involvement in the Girls' Leadership School and the implementation of local youth initiatives. The club programme is based on adapted UNICEF materials on girls' empowerment and the prevention of gender-based violence, as well as the Facilitator's Manual developed by the Centre for Euroinitiatives NGO. The manual includes theoretical guidance to support facilitators working with girls in crisis settings, together with step-by-step session plans. The programme covers the following thematic areas: ● creating a safe space and building group trust; ● emotions and emotional intelligence; ● self-esteem and self-worth; ● personal boundaries; ● consent; ● healthy relationships; ● gender equality and gender stereotypes; ● prevention of gender-based violence; ● health, hygiene, puberty, and body care; ● healthy nutrition; ● digital safety; ● leadership; ● career planning; ● participation in community life. Club meetings are held regularly, usually once or twice a week, and last approximately two hours. In a border community where schooling is primarily conducted online, the club has become one of the few spaces that enables girls to stay connected, communicate with one another, receive support, and continue their personal development despite security restrictions. The facilitator plays a key role in creating a trusting atmosphere, organising sessions, supporting participants, identifying the needs of the group, adapting activities to the local context, and referring girls to specialised services whenever risks of gender-based violence or other support needs are identified. Additional components of the practice Career counselling and digital development An important component of the clubs' work is the provision of individual and group career counselling, together with training in career planning and digital skills. This component helps girls better understand their strengths, career interests, educational opportunities, and future pathways for personal and professional development.
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	For girls living in border and war-affected communities, career counselling is an important resilience-building measure, as it helps restore a sense of hope for the future, supports goal setting, and enables them to identify practical steps towards achieving their aspirations. Summer day camps Each year, the clubs organise summer day camps for girls. The camps aim to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and emotional resilience of girls aged 12–17, enabling them to recognise, prevent, and respond to gender-based violence while supporting their psychosocial well-being in the context of war through human rights education, life skills development, and practical learning activities. The summer camps complement the clubs' regular activities by providing an intensive learning environment where girls can further develop their understanding of safety, self-care, teamwork, leadership, and active participation. Online Girls' Leadership School Each year, the programme also organises an Online Girls' Leadership School for active girls. The programme consists of a four-day online training course for girls aged 12–18 from communities across Kharkiv and Sumy Oblasts. The Leadership School serves as a platform for developing leadership competencies, increasing awareness of gender equality and the rights of women and girls, and designing practical initiatives aimed at preventing violence and supporting young people within their communities. Following the training, participants develop local initiatives that are implemented in partnership with the girls' clubs. These initiatives may involve both girls and boys aged 12–18, contributing to a broader community impact and fostering a culture of safety, respect, equality, and active participation.
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	The club's methodology is based on the principles of non-formal education, voluntary participation, equality, non-discrimination, confidentiality, the “do no harm” approach, and a girls' needs-oriented approach. Main methods: • interactive exercises; • pair and small group work; • group discussions; • role-playing activities;

	● analysis of real-life situations; ● case study method; ● creative tasks; ● self-reflection exercises; ● visualisation techniques; ● psychosocial stabilisation and recovery exercises; ● discussion of real-life adolescent experiences; ● peer-to-peer approach; ● group reflection after each session. These methods contribute to building resilience by helping girls not only acquire knowledge but also practically develop essential life skills, such as saying “no,” recognising unsafe situations, asking for help, supporting others, responding to conflicts without aggression, understanding their emotions, and building healthy relationships. It is particularly important that the sessions are not lecture-based. They are designed to allow girls to speak, try, make mistakes, reflect, ask questions, and jointly search for solutions. This approach strengthens their sense of agency and helps form practical behaviour patterns.
6. Participation of Young People	
How were young people involved in the process?	Active participation of girls is one of the key principles of the practice. Participants not only attend sessions but also influence the content of club activities, suggest topics for discussion, take part in planning activities, and generate their own ideas for the school and community environment. Within the club, girls have the opportunity to: ● freely express their opinions; ● share experiences without fear of judgment; ● participate in group decision-making; ● initiate mini-projects; ● support younger or new participants; ● try themselves in leadership roles; ● engage in creative and social initiatives; ● develop ideas for improving life at school and in the community. The safe atmosphere of the club helps girls move from passive participation to active engagement. According to the facilitator’s observations, the group gradually transformed from a cautious and low-communication group into a cohesive community characterized by trust, mutual respect, and support.

7. Impact on Young People

Describe observed or measured outcomes.

Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement

If available, include:

- feedback from participants
- evaluation results
- testimonies or quotes

The practice had a noticeable impact on girls' emotional resilience, self-confidence, communication skills, sense of safety, social connections, and civic engagement.

According to the group discussion results in the Happy Girls Club:

- about 75% of participants reported that they became more open in communication;
- girls began to participate more actively in discussions and express their opinions more freely;
- the fear of being judged decreased;
- listening, empathy, and mutual support skills improved;
- participants developed a better understanding of their own needs, emotions, and personal boundaries;
- the ability to say "no" without feelings of guilt emerged;
- responsibility, initiative, and willingness to engage in joint tasks increased;
- girls became more confident in both verbal and non-verbal communication.

The impact of the practice extended beyond the club. Girls began to participate more actively in school activities, support peers in difficult situations, demonstrate examples of non-violent communication, initiate mini-projects, and show interest in volunteering and socially useful activities. Parents and teachers also noted positive changes: greater openness, responsibility, confidence in communication, and a more conscious attitude toward their own decisions.

Personal stories of change are also important. One participant, Sofia, 13 years old, shared that before joining the club she was afraid to express her opinion, avoided answering questions, and did not understand her own emotions. Through participation in the club, she learned to speak more confidently, name her feelings, and calmly explain them to others.

Another participant, Diana, 17 years old, often compared herself to others before joining the club, did not recognise her own strengths, and had no clear plans for the future. After participating in the club, she began to accept herself, believe in her abilities, dream, set goals, and plan how to achieve them.

Participants' quotes:

"I realized that my dreams can come true if I take gradual steps."

— Diana, 17 years old

	“I understood that a leader is not only about leading, but also about supporting.” — Sofia, 13 years old “It was interesting to work in a team and come up with ideas for our community together.” — Anna, 12 years old “I learned a lot about my body, and now I am not afraid to talk about it.” — Liubov, 15 years old “I understood that all the changes in my body are normal, and there is no need to be ashamed of them.” — Valeriia, 13 years old For the community, the club has become a tool for supporting youth, preventing violence, strengthening social cohesion, and developing a culture of mutual respect.
8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	The effectiveness of the practice was ensured by several key factors. First, the club was established as a safe space where girls could talk about important and sensitive topics without fear of judgment. For adolescents living in a border community in wartime conditions and under remote learning, this opportunity was especially significant. Second, the programme combined educational, psychosocial, and practical components. Girls did not only receive information about rights, safety, health, or careers, but also practiced concrete skills: how to say “no,” how to respond to pressure, how to ask for help, how to support a friend, and how to plan for the future. Third, the facilitator played a crucial role by ensuring trust, consistency, support, and sensitivity to the group’s needs. It was the continuity of contact, attentiveness to the girls’ emotional states, and gradual development of group trust that enabled deeper changes. Fourth, the club was part of a broader network, which provided access to methodological materials, facilitator training, supervision support, career counselling, trainings, summer camps, and a leadership school. This made it possible not to

	limit the work to individual sessions, but to build a holistic system of support for girls. Fifth, the practice was flexible and adapted to the community context. Session topics reflected the real needs of the girls: emotional resilience, personal boundaries, health, gender stereotypes, safety, leadership, friendship, self-esteem, and the future.
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9. Transferability and Scalability

Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required, - skills needed by youth workers	The practice can be replicated in other communities, especially those affected by war, with limited access to youth infrastructure, or with a need to create safe spaces for adolescents. Required conditions for scaling: • availability of a safe physical or online space; • trained facilitators; • methodological materials for conducting sessions; • support from schools, youth centres, community structures, or local organisations; • clear principles of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and non-discrimination; • a referral mechanism in cases of gender-based violence (GBV) or other risks; • knowledge of the “do no harm” principle; • basic skills in psychological first aid; • consistency and regularity of meetings; • the ability to adapt topics to the needs of a specific group. Youth workers and facilitators implementing such a practice should have skills in group work, non-violent communication, facilitation of sensitive topics, working with adolescents, creating safe spaces, responding to disclosures of violence, and referring participants to specialised services. A particularly important condition is regular training for facilitators. Within the club network, training sessions are provided on using the methodological guide, working with adolescents affected by or at risk of gender-based violence (GBV), identifying needs, and ensuring safe referrals.
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10. Supporting Materials (Optional)

Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1BGc87z5dD/ https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1BPfH9xtoE/ https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWw6BTdjAev/?igsh=MWJvNWk2czVjand5ZQ== https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWw4bSnDGmj/?igsh=MWx4bWptNXJoanlhYQ== https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWhLE6vDER3/?igsh=OXRjdTUxanNwcG5i https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUtRgfODLhl/?igsh=d2RrZGc0eTN4bTJi https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1D2HUiSzPv/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1B74idYGVu/ https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18d4JMEMPf/ https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1Ee6gAtZ9H
11. Key Words / Tags	
Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	resilience of youth; young people affected by the war; teenage girls; safe space; space for girls; psychosocial support; non-formal education; youth participation; gender equality; prevention of acute respiratory infections; personal boundaries; voluntary consent; leadership; self-development; career development; digital development; emotional health; self-esteem; trust; support for girls; border community; a trauma-informed approach; principle "do no harm"; resilience; active participation of girls; girl power; respect; Discussion; Self-confidence; Trust

Pracice 4

1. Basic Information:	
Title of the Practice	Project "Healthy Minds" by the Youth NGO "Youth Development Centre", Zolotonosha (Ukraine)
Country / Region	Ukraine, Zolotonosha, Cherkasy Oblast
Organisation(s) implementing the practice: name of the organisation(s), link to the web-page of the organisation(s)	Youth NGO "Youth Development Centre"

Type of organisation: NGO/Youth centre/Municipality/Scho ol / educational institution/International organisation/Other (specify)	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
Year(s) of implementation	2024
Duration of the practice	6 months
Link to the web-page with the information about the practices (optional)	
Contact person from the organisation (optional)	
2. Context and Background	
<i>Briefly describe the context in which the practice was developed. Suggested aspects:</i> • <i>Impact of war on the young people involved</i> • <i>Community or regional context</i> • <i>Needs that led to the development of the practice</i> • <i>Specific challenges faced by young people</i>	Young people in the Zolotonosha community, especially those from rural areas, had limited access to non-formal education, psychological support and opportunities to implement their own initiatives. Decentralisation, combined with wartime conditions, created new challenges for integrating rural youth into community life. There was a lack of trust in existing services, including school psychologists, and no specialists able to systematically support young people's mental health.
2.2 Target group	
Please indicate the following information: - Age group(s) - Gender considerations (if relevant) - Background of	Young people aged 15–22 from rural areas. Youth professionals aged 23–30. Participants with volunteering or civic engagement experience, including representatives of vulnerable groups.

participants: refugees / displaced youth; youth living in war-affected areas; returnee youth; youth with trauma experiences; other vulnerable groups - Approximate number of participants.	
3. Objectives of the Practice	
What were the main goals of this initiative? Examples: - strengthening resilience - psychosocial support - empowerment and participation - rebuilding social connections - supporting identity and belonging - preventing radicalisation or marginalisation	Overall objective To strengthen the resilience, leadership, and active participation of young people from rural communities by improving their access to non-formal education, psychosocial support, and opportunities to design and implement community initiatives that contribute to individual well-being and community development. Specific objectives • To improve young people's knowledge and skills in mental health promotion, psychological first aid, conflict transformation, leadership, and civic participation through non-formal education. • To build a network of motivated young leaders capable of initiating and implementing local community-based activities. • To increase young people's resilience, self-confidence, and sense of belonging by creating safe spaces for learning, peer support, and personal development. • To strengthen the capacity of youth workers and local mentors to provide trauma-informed support and facilitate youth-led initiatives. • To encourage cooperation between young people, schools, local authorities, and community organisations in addressing the needs of rural youth. • To empower young people to become active contributors to their communities by designing and delivering initiatives that respond to local challenges and promote social cohesion.

4. Description of the Practice	
Provide a clear description of the activity or programme. Include: • main activities • structure of the programme • duration and frequency • how young people participate • role of youth workers / facilitators	The project was promoted through social media, schools, village leaders and the ArtSpace youth centre using a Google application form and a 'youth invites youth' approach. Activities included: • Needs assessment through focus groups, surveys and partnerships with local authorities and schools. • Open selection and interviews to build the Healthy Minds community. • Four-day educational camp (31 October–3 November 2024) with training on psychological first aid, art therapy, leadership, participation and conflict transformation. • Mentoring support and local initiatives: more than 20 events in five communities, including stand-up evenings, community gatherings, game clubs, financial literacy, sexuality education and wounded evacuation training. • Final networking, evaluation and presentation of results to local authorities and the community
5. Youth Work Methods Used	
Describe the youth work approaches and methods applied. Explain how these methods support resilience.	The project applied non-formal education methods, mentoring, peer-to-peer learning, art therapy, facilitation and trauma-informed youth work based on the 'Do No Harm' principle. The team included a project coordinator, youth trainers, psychologists, mentors from the Zolotonosha youth centre and a communications officer. Council of Europe youth policy, participation and human rights resources were integrated throughout the programme.
6. Participation of Young People	
How were young people involved in the process?	Young people participated at every stage of the project: planning through consultations, implementation as assistant trainers and organisers, and evaluation through anonymous surveys and interviews. Most facilitators and mentors were under the age of 30.
7. Impact on Young People	

Describe observed or measured outcomes. <i>Possible areas of impact: emotional resilience, sense of safety, self-confidence, community belonging, social connections, coping skills, civic engagement</i> If available, include: - feedback from participants - evaluation results - testimonies or quotes	Results: • 72% improved resilience, cooperation and conflict transformation skills. • 80% strengthened leadership, communication and first aid skills. • 70% expressed readiness to organise educational activities in their communities. • 210 young people participated in local events during November–December 2024. • 60% reported a positive shift in attitudes towards gender equality. Following the project, young people in Kropyvna began creating a youth space, renovated premises with additional funding and launched their first activities in February 2025.
8. Factors of Success	
What made the practice effective?	Key success factors: • Focus on underserved rural youth. • Transformational model: camp + mentoring + local initiatives. • Strong emphasis on mental well-being and safe communities. • Ongoing support through chats, resource boxes and continued links with the youth centre.
9. Transferability and Scalability	
Can this practice be replicated in other contexts? Please describe: - conditions needed, - resources required, - skills needed by youth workers	Key recommendations for youth workers who would like to replicate this practice: • Start with focus groups and actively involve young people in designing the activities and interventions. • Explore young people's needs through meaningful dialogue in spaces where they feel comfortable, rather than relying solely on formal assessment methods. • Engage mentors from the same community—they can serve as a vital bridge between the initiative and young people. • Do not overlook young people's emotional and resource-related needs. Genuine, responsive support is more important than formal procedures. • Foster horizontal connections between communities, as networking strengthens cooperation, peer learning, and the overall impact of the initiative.

10. Supporting Materials (Optional)	
Please provide if available: • photos • links • toolkits • evaluation reports • publications	
11. Key Words / Tags	
Examples: youth resilience, war-affected youth, Ukrainian youth, psychosocial support, non-formal education, youth participation, trauma-informed approach, conflict sensitivity	Strengthening resilience, psychosocial support, youth leadership, active participation, community engagement and mental well-being.