



# YOUTH ADVOCATING FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICIES

*guidelines for developing accessible youth policies*  
- for youth workers, youth organisations and policy makers -



**OUT OF THE BOX INTERNATIONAL** is a Network which brings together different actors working on social innovation and advocating for a more creative Europe with a main mission to provide fresh ideas and solutions acting as a catalyst for positive changes across Europe and worldwide. Our main goal is to design innovative social projects to respond to the persistent social and economic challenges in order to empower people's potential and facilitate their active engagement in society.

The Members of the Network are Expert Non-Governmental Organisations, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), Municipalities and Universities ensuring a variety of expertise and experience in building different kind of innovative social projects.

'Out of the Box International' has three main policy areas: Education, Internet, and Social Entrepreneurship. In the educational chapter, we aim at creating tools and policies in formal education & non-formal learning for a knowledge-based society. We also believe that introduction of Internet technologies in learning processes is an important aspect in the 21st century.

Our activities in the youth sector are related to the following topics:

- 1. Advocacy initiatives and Non-formal education courses on Cross-sector youth policies at the national and European level;*
- 2. Building expertise of the youth sector to advocate for the recognition of youth work and youth workers as a profession;*
- 3. Building curricula for the studies of youth work and NGO studies by building connections and collaboration amongst youth NGOs, Universities, Authorities and Business;*
- 4. Implementation of the training programmes to empower youth workers for quality community work;*
- 5. Creating a bridges between youth sector and EU policy makers by providing space and opportunities for Study Visits at EU institutions;*

All of our projects have a few things in common: they are emerging; involve diverse social actors, and aim at making a real difference in the communities that they target. We don't create change by doing the same things we've always done. By introducing diversity we provoke discovery. We are experts in different areas such as youth, education, culture, business, research, public policy, and believe that innovation, fresh ideas and active involvement of citizens in the political process together represent the sine qua non of making our societies better, fairer, more sustainable and just. The Headquarters of our organisation are situated in Brussels.



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## ABOUT THE 'YOUTH ADVOCATING FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICIES'

In our efforts to create tools to empower non-formal learning and advocacy work of youth organisations, we realized the lack of guidelines and practices to assist in these processes. Therefore 'Out of the Box' initiated a transnational project within the 'Erasmus plus' programme, to support youth workers and youth organisations in Europe to develop their capacity to lead inclusive advocacy and policies processes.

This publication is developed as part of the project 'Youth Advocating for Social Inclusion Policies', which undertook a training course and an exchange of youth workers, aiming to develop their competences in advocacy and social inclusion.

The project trained 22 participants how to implement effective advocacy actions and foster social cohesion in their local communities and field of work. The project training course was organized in Brussels, Belgium from the 4th to 11th of November, gathering youth workers and youth leaders from 16 European countries.

'Out of the Box International' in cooperation with the partner organizations has developed this project aiming to promote bigger social inclusion in the processes of development of youth policies. The training raised the capacity of partner organizations in the field of advocacy and lobbying by helping them to understand social transformation and advocacy principles better in order to plan and deliver effective advocacy initiatives.

In 7 days of training, through the methodology of non formal education, the participants explored topics such as Inclusion and Accessibility, Policy Development, Planning of Advocacy Campaign, shared their local realities and developed follow up projects and campaigns.

The participants also developed concrete recommendations and guidelines for different stakeholders in youth policy on how to create more effective inclusion tools in decision making processes. The guidelines are included in this booklet and are intended for youth organizations, as well as policy makers, to help them to develop more accessible processes and policies when working with young people.

This booklet is composed of practical tips, exercises and guidelines that can help one with working on a community project or an advocacy campaign and on how to be inclusive and assessable in the approach, enabling bigger inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

### HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET?

The recommendations are developed based on a cycle of an advocacy project, with tips for each step of a policy or advocacy project you run. These are very practical and hands-on pieces of advice that help the youth worker in need. The booklet, following the advocacy project cycle is divided in the following headings:

- I. Identifying and Mapping the issue
- II. Setting up objectives and initial plan
- III. Creation of Action Plan
- IV. Implementation and Evaluation

## I. IDENTIFYING AND MAPPING THE ISSUE

The purpose of this stage is to:

- IDENTIFY AN ISSUE and MAP IT (explore its CAUSES, MECHANISMS, AND CONSEQUENCES)
- MAP THE CONTEXT in which the issue occurs (which programs have already tried to deal with it, what groups are still struggling with the problem and why) At the end of this stage, you will have identified most of the pressing needs and problems related to your chosen issue and group, which in later stages can serve as the basis for defining your objectives.

### 1. Explore the issue inclusively

**AFTER GETTING A SENSE OF A PROBLEM, CONSULT WITH THOSE WHO ARE DIRECTLY INVOLVED:**

a. Beneficiaries (those you want to help)

- Talk to different members of the group: different places in their hierarchy, different ages, different background (e.g. race, class, age, education, etc.)

b. People who work with them

c. Others

- Who are identified by the beneficiaries as important (policymakers, family members, school directors, etc.)

### **MAKE SURE YOU:**

- go where these people are
- bring translators if necessary
- adjust to cultural norms of the group (e.g. only women talking to women)
- are flexible with timing - don't expect this to go fast!
- ALWAYS explain why you are asking and obtain consent
- approach these groups both formally and informally (you can use non-formal education tools and games to solicit info from youngsters, for example)

### 2. Define the issue within its context

**BASED ON CONSULTATIONS, OUTLINE THE FOLLOWING:**

a. key stakeholders

b. mechanisms involved (how the problem works)

c. Impact of the issue on ALL members of the group

You can use the problem tree exercise to help you summarize your findings and identify root causes.

Ask: What is the issue?

What are the consequences of this issue?

Why is this happening? < Why? < Why?

What are the roots of the problem?

THE ISSUE	(give it a name)
KEY STAKEHOLDERS	(who)
MECHANISMS OF THE PROBLEM	(what's happening) (what causes the problem, what sustains the problem)
IMPACT OF ISSUE	(result of the problem) (don't forget to mention how the issue differently affects different people in the community)

### 3. RESEARCH EXISTING INTERVENTIONS

The purpose of the next few steps is to identify gaps in programs that already address the issue you want to tackle. It is important to analyse existing interventions before you set your objectives in order not to repeat someone else's mistakes and serve the real needs of the community, as well as the individuals who might have been forgotten before.

Combine information from initial consultations with your own research (online etc.) to answer the following question: Are there programs in your community which already address the same issue or a related issue? Find out as much as you can about these programs. If you have the time, you can connect with people who lead them.

Create a list of existing interventions. (A, B, C, etc.)

### 4. IDENTIFY GAPS IN EXISTING INTERVENTIONS

Return to your stakeholders once again to consult them about the impact of existing interventions. You will collect information on areas and issues not addressed by existing programs. Remember to think inclusively - refer back to points in point 1.

You will want to:

- ask whether these programs have been effective,
- ask whether all root causes of the problem have been addressed.
- ask whether there are members of the community who haven't been helped and why
- pay attention to the concerns of marginal individuals, especially those who weren't helped by the previous programs (!!!)

### 5. PROBLEM STATEMENTS AND PRESSING NEEDS

Following the second consultations, identify the most pressing needs in the community that are related to your issue, but not yet addressed by other existing interventions and programs. Similarly, write down the reasons why have all members of the community not been able to benefit the existing programs.

<b>Intervention A:</b> (name, organization, duration)	
<b>Impact:</b> (What problems does it address? Is it effective? Is there more to do regarding this aspect of the problem?)	<b>Who is excluded - not helped by this program?</b> (What groups are NOT helped? Why?)
<b>Intervention B</b>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<b>Who is excluded - not helped by this program?</b>
<b>Intervention C</b>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<b>Who is excluded - not helped by this program?</b>
<b>SUMMARIZE</b> Problem statements:	<b>SUMMARIZE:</b>
What are the areas of the problem which remain unaddressed?	Who are the people and groups who weren't helped by existing programs? What are the most significant causes of their exclusion from these programs?
1. 2. 3. 4. ...	

This summary should then serve as a starting point for your objectives. Your objectives should address issues not yet addressed by other programs, and include people and groups previously not included.

## II. SETTING UP THE OBJECTIVES AND INITIAL PLAN

The aim of this stage is based on the identified needs to set up WHAT you want to ACHIEVE and draw out your INITIAL PLAN for action. Take the planning and implementation of your project as a whole. This means that each stage should be built on the previous one. Therefore, when setting up your objectives, make sure you take into consideration the findings in the mapping and identifying the issues and needs. At the end of this stage it should be clear to you and everyone in the team, where you are heading with the project.

## 1. MAKE SURE THAT THE OBJECTIVES MEET THE REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS OF BENEFICIARIES AND ARE **SMART**

The acronym SMART has a number of slightly different variations, which can be used to provide a more comprehensive definition for the objective setting:

**S** - specific, significant, stretching

**M** - measurable, meaningful, motivational

**A** - achievable, agreed upon, attainable, acceptable, action-oriented

**R** - realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, result-oriented

**T** - time-based, time-bound, timely, tangible, trackable

<b>Specific</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Well defined</li><li>• Clear to anyone that has a basic knowledge of the project.</li></ul>
<b>Measurable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each objective you set. How will I know when it is achieved?</li></ul>
<b>Achievable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can this objective come true with the capacities, time frame and resources which are at your disposal or is it too enthusiastic?</li><li>• You can mostly attain any objective you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps.</li></ul>
<b>Realistic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be achieved within the availability of resources, knowledge and time.</li><li>• An objective toward which you are both willing and able to work.</li></ul>
<b>Time-Based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enough time to achieve the Objective.</li><li>• Not too much time, which can affect project performance.</li></ul>

## 2. CONSULT CONSULT CONSULT...

Make sure that all interest groups are consulted accordingly through meetings, surveys, interviews, discussions, forums, etc. Keep in mind that consultations should involve young people with fewer opportunities and other key actors in the field. It is crucial to maintain a good contact between youth organizations and policy makers. Establish efficient mechanisms of communication and discussion such as forums, panels, conferences, newsletters, websites, social media pages, etc. through which you include potential allies such as other relevant youth organizations, experts, policy makers, media, other local, national, international actors relevant to your particular topic etc. in order to create a sense of common ownership of your cause among all the stakeholders involved. You can start by setting up a meeting in the community where you will work and talk to your target about what you want to achieve. Describe the action to be implemented: the aims, action plan(s) and stages. Include the key items developed above such as timetable, division of roles and tasks, resources, coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

### SOME TIPS TO CONSIDER:

- Be precise enough when presenting the working proposals to the decision level(s) but avoid getting into too much detail. Even though the partnership agreement should be precise, it should also build in some flexibility in case there is a need for changes.
- Find out what your hierarchy's concerns are and develop the partnership (or at least the partnership agreement) accordingly. For example, show the foreseen multiplying effect if this is important for one of the partners, or if gender balance is paramount in working with the target group, show how you deal with it during your co-operation.
- Aim to maximise support from your and your partner's colleagues. Be transparent and communicative about the progress you make in the partnership.
- Make sure you commit adequate resources to the partnership. Once the agreement is made, it might be difficult to change this if not specified at the beginning. It is always better to ask for more in the beginning and cut down the human and financial contributions if objections arise (of course you should then also adapt the scope of the partnership to the new amount of resources).

### 3.EVERYONE IS IMPORTANT

Make sure that your team is open to and welcoming of all members of the community and that it is as diverse as possible; including experts and young people with fewer opportunities.

### 4.THINK OUT OF THE BOX

Keep in mind that sometimes you have to be creative (think out of the box, such as using youth friendly innovative tools). Be flexible and adjust your work to the changing conditions. Make sure you use all the available resources (financial and human resources, previous study case's, reports, networks, etc.). Aim as high as needed.

## III. ACTION PLAN

Defining WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? HOW? you will make your policy initiative. Practically putting together a plan, a calendar with assignments, activities to place, etc.

1. Define basic negotiation methodologies including the choice of proper COMMUNICATION CHANNELS to enable young people from all levels to participate in active dialogue.

- Written and non-written forms of media, personal consultations and exploiting networks connected to the issue.

E.g. local consultancy events where beneficiaries get the chance to exchange opinions with experts and add their input to the solution finding process, or online platform for collecting feedbacks (which can also empower them for anonymous commenting).

Set up your communication plan which will give you a clear framework for your communication activities and allocate roles, tasks and goals to individual members of the team. It will serve to you as a guiding document throughout the project and it will help you in communicating your message.

<b>Target groups</b>	<p>Who do you want to inform about your project/policy?</p> <p>The target audience is the primary group of people that your communication activities are aimed at. A target audience can consist of people of a certain age group, profession, gender, marital status, educational background, geographic area and so forth. Without knowing your target group, your communication activities will remain diffuse and with little effect.</p>
<b>Messages</b>	<p>What are your main messages? A message is not the same concept as an advertising slogan or a marketing line, but a simple and clear idea that summarises the essence of your project.</p> <p>Define a specific message for certain target groups so that they can understand why their participation is a crucial element of the issue.</p> <p>It should be comprehensible not just for you, but for your target. Try not to use complex project phrases but simple words, even jargons that can make the message closer to your target.</p> <p>Your message should function as a guiding principle for all kinds of communication, from the contents of leaflets, brochures and websites, but also for media interviews or conversations with your stakeholders</p>
<b>Tools</b>	<p>Which tools would you like to use, which activities have you foreseen in your communication plan?</p> <p>Not every tool fits all targets. Think about whether an online communication or facebook campaign will fit your target age, accessibility to internet, etc.</p>

## **2.PERFORM AN ON SITE RESEARCH WITH THE BENEFICIARIES TO PREPARE A DETAILED ACTION PLAN AND CREATE A FRAME FOR CONSTANTLY MONITORING THE PROGRESS.**

- This research shall not overlap with the research made when identifying the issue: this investigation shall be rather focused on the legal, economic, social, etc. environment, to understand all the conditions which influence our activity. Therefore it is possible to take into account all the given resources.

## **3.LISTEN TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES TO POINT OUT POSSIBLE RISKS AND BE PREPARED TO FACE OBSTACLES THAT MIGHT APPEAR.**

- Upon the possible changes in the environment, the preparation for the worst case/real case/best case scenarios is necessary, so that the action plan can easily be adapted to the unexpected situations.

## **4.SET ACHIEVABLE MILESTONES CONSIDERING ALL SIDES TO REACH THE GOALS ACCORDING TO THE TIME SCHEDULE.**

- The progress shall be visible for all stakeholders, therefore their long term engagement is granted – for this goal, the established communication channels shall be used.

## **5.ALLOCATING RESOURCES BASED ON THE NEEDS OF THE PROJECT IN REGARD TO OUR TARGET GROUP.**

- Depending on the results of the ongoing evaluation, these volumes shall be amended.

## **6.PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE BENEFICIARIES TO REPRESENT THEMSELVES IN THE MEDIA.**

- The beneficiaries shall be informed about potential opportunities of representation of themselves and the project in the public media, to outline their comments in a direct way.

## **IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION**

After the planning, it is time to start working on your initiative/project. Be aware of the needed management, monitoring and evaluation, of the project implementation. In the end, there should also be some time to assess whether the problem or issue you have identified has been completely solved or if other aspects need to be considered.

### **1.IMPLEMENTATION**

- While implementing, be focused on the objectives, frames, resources that you are willing to achieve (don't lose it from your sight in order not to make the steps of the campaign only to fulfill the agenda.)
- Meanwhile, try to give visibility to your campaign/project and inform the media about the collaboration with local and national government and the authorities. Make the message more inclusive to its beneficiaries for example making the language simple, understandable and attractive to your target group.
- Be flexible in order to adapt to the needs of your target group and always have a backup plan.

## 2.EVALUATE!

Evaluation is not a step in itself, but it should be part of all of the previous steps. It is an ongoing and continuous process. You should consider the monitoring of the quality and achievements throughout the whole process. While evaluating, know the aim of the evaluation and set the frames of it. Have a comprehensive approach with evaluation; use different methodologies, involve participants, beneficiaries, organizers, allies, the situation of the local reality, etc. Make an evaluation of the results at the end of each phase with quantitative and qualitative indicators determined in the planning phase. Make the evaluation during the different stages of the implementation by the means of inside/outside group evaluators. Start the evaluation from the very beginning. Before you start take some time to check your objectives, approaches, plan. Ask yourself if the objectives fit the needs you identified in the mapping? Do the messages you choose serve the fulfillment of the objectives? Does our team have the necessary expertise and capacity to run this project or do we need to call in some support? You can also check how things are going as the project is being implemented. This is a chance to identify your shortcomings and possible problems, and to adapt. Final evaluation should be also foreseen, involving all stakeholders (the target group, the partners, local authorities, institutions, etc.)





