

FINAL DOCUMENT OF YOUTH WORK ACTIVITIES IN THE PROJECT PAL4YOUTH

1 Youth work principles and elements	3
Youth work principles	3
Elements of process curricula.....	7
Envisaged outcomes of youth work	9
Factors of success and elements of good practice	10
How to start the process?	10
2 Work process in youth groups and results.....	14
2.1 Work process in youth groups and results in Czech Republic.....	14
2. 2. Work process in youth groups and results in Slovenia	15
3 What have we learnt.....	18
3.1 What have we learnt in Czech Republic	18
3. 2. What have we learnt in Slovenia.....	19
4 Needs of youth	21
4.1 Needs of youth in Czech Republic.....	21
4. 2. Needs of youth in Slovenia	21
5 Conclusion	23

1 Youth work principles and elements

Author: Sašo Kronegger

Outline of youth work principles, factors of success and elements of good practice that could support Youth work with youth with intellectual disability.

This document is created as a collection of youth work principles, factors of success and elements of good practice in order to support the development of youth work among the groups of young people with intellectual disabilities involved in the PAL4Youth project. It was developed as a tool to share the ideas between the organisations involved as a result of the agreement made in the project meeting in Prague in december 2018.

Youth work principles¹

The purpose of youth work is to “Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential.”²

There are four key elements:

1. The Central Theme:

- Personal and Social Development of Young People

2. Supported by Three Core Principles:

- Preparing Young People for Participation
- Promoting Acceptance and Understanding of Others
- Testing Values and Beliefs

3. Underpinned by Core Principles:

- Equity
- Diversity
- Interdependence

4. Planned and delivered using the Curriculum and Programme Development Cycle.

¹ This whole chapter is taken from Youth work: a model of effective practice, 3 core principles
[http://credni.open.wp-dev.web.tibus.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Core_Principles_full_colour_doc .pdf](http://credni.open.wp-dev.web.tibus.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Core_Principles_full_colour_doc.pdf)

² National Occupational Standards of UK.

Preparing Young People for Participation

Shown by:

- Recognising and nurturing the strengths, abilities and interests of young people
- Young people expecting to have a say and to be involved
- Young people working in partnership with adults in decision-making
- Meaningful participation
- Young people having a range of opportunities to get involved in decision-making in a way they choose (voluntary participation)
- Adults believing in and willing to engage with young people
- Young people having the opportunity to progress in their decision-making in and beyond their youth work setting

Role of the youth worker:

- To build positive relationships with young people
- To be an advocate for young people's participation
- To value the role and contribution that young people make to the design, delivery and evaluation of youth work
- To support young people to participate in decision-making
- To challenge views and behaviours which undermine young people's participation
- To respect young people's right to participate in decisions that affect their lives
- To be a positive role model for young people

Practical examples:

- Young people getting involved in the design and delivery of programmes, events and other opportunities in their youth work setting
- Young people involved in choosing, planning and delivering activities, programmes etc.
- Young people engaged as members of committees and/or the management structure
- Young people in leadership roles
- Young people involved in organising and running day-to-day activities, programmes etc in their own youth work setting
- Young people getting involved in decision-making in and beyond their local community

Potential benefits to young people:

- Young people grow more confident
- Young people gain the skills and experience to express their views and opinions
- Young people become more involved in their local community and wider society
- Young people have opportunities to make decisions and shape current and future services that are important to them
- Young people are taken seriously, have responsibility and are listened to
- Young people learn new skills
- Young people make a difference

Promoting Acceptance and Understanding of Others

Shown by:

- Creating a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for young people, staff and the wider community
- Communicating clear messages e.g. signs and leaflets that encourage a wide range of people to get involved
- An outreach service to those not involved
- Being proactive - don't wait for young people who find it difficult to get involved/are excluded to come to you
- Staff and young people using respectful language, demonstrating positive attitudes and behaviour
- Staff and young people demonstrating ease with difference and difficult conversations
- Providing training and support for staff and young people
- Young people gaining an understanding of difference and the importance of rights, fairness and equality

Role of the youth worker:

- To have a range of resources that reflects the diversity of identities and needs in our society
- To create an environment which is accessible and inclusive
- To take into account different abilities and needs when planning
- To challenge stereotypes, prejudice, discriminatory language, behaviour and attitudes
- To support young people and staff who are marginalised or excluded
- To encourage young people to be positive about and make connections within the community
- To reflect on their practice and be aware of their own values, attitudes etc
- To be a positive role-model

Practical examples:

- Young people help to design and deliver programmes that examine and explore diversity e.g. through creative activities, sports, music and group work
- Provide diversity training for staff and young people
- Hold roadshows/open nights for the community to encourage new people and break down barriers
- Young people help to celebrate difference acknowledging diversity in your setting both on an on-going basis and through special events, e.g. cultural evenings
- Publishing programmes/opportunities in formats that meet the needs of young people in the community e.g. put information into schools, local papers etc

Potential benefits to young people:

- Young people gain confidence with their own identity
- Young people have a better understanding of difference
- Young people have an increased ability to deal with difference in themselves and others

- Young people experience a richer, more diverse learning environment
- Young people have increased awareness of the world around them
- Young people have increased ability to communicate within and beyond their own community

Testing Values and Beliefs

Shown by:

- Young people having the opportunity to explore their own values and beliefs
- Young people making informed choices
- Young people's attitudes, opinions and beliefs being valued
- An open and welcoming environment
- Young people's values and beliefs being explored and challenged in a non-threatening way
- Young people having an awareness of their personal feelings and the consequences of their behaviour and actions
- Young people being able to change their values and beliefs as a result of exploration

Role of the youth worker:

- To promote opportunities for young people to explore and reflect on their values and beliefs in a safe and supportive environment
- To have and share an understanding of the underpinning ethos and principles of their organisation
- To be sensitive and support young people in exploring and at times changing their viewpoint
- To reflect on their practice and to be aware of their own values and beliefs
- To show a commitment to exploring values and beliefs with young people
- To be a positive role model for young people

Practical examples:

- Design and deliver group-work sessions that test and explore values and beliefs
- Provide creative opportunities supporting young people to experience different environments
- Deliver community relations programmes
- Create opportunities for young people to participate in experiences on international work
- Facilitate the sharing of personal stories around values and beliefs
- Take advantage of informal interaction – listening and having conversations with young people

Potential benefits to young people:

- Young people have increased self-esteem, confidence and ability to make their own decisions
- Young people have a greater sense of self and others
- Young people have an increased awareness of community, locally and globally

- Young people have an increased awareness of how values and beliefs affect behaviour
- Young people have an increased awareness of personal responsibility
- Young people develop critical and reflective thinking

Elements of process curricula

Youth work happens through process curricula. Young people are invited and supported to develop their competences through their own activity within the framework that is designed by the youth workers. The process curricula contains limitations (in line with the values of the organisation and the safety and security of participants) while the youth workers provide the challenges, confirmations and criticism when needed in order to support the individual to develop their own potential. The following text outlines the elements of the process curricula.

Symbolic framework

Symbolic framework represents all the symbolic elements that represent the identification of the group but also the symbols that connect the elements of work or cooperation on the symbolic level.

Symbolic elements that support identification could be elements of uniform (t-shirts of the group, badges of the group / organisation, a group mascot) or elements that bring group cohesion (the group's song, stories of past successes, internal jokes, ...). The other element could be the elements that represent the level of experience, knowledge, seniority ... these can also add the gamification element to the recognition of the learning and experience gathered both on individual and group level.

Small group (3 to 8)

The size of the group matters. If the group is too big the interaction between the members is dispersed, the subgroups start to form and the decision-making process gets very complex. Small groups enable the members to go deeper developing meaningful relationships with the other members. Smaller groups also provide higher levels of psychological safety when the group reaches the levels of maturity. In this way these groups become the primary socialisation and support network of the individuals involved.

Levels of challenge appropriate to competence

Learning comes from challenges. The challenges individuals receive vary in line with their competences and grow through time. Challenges are based on the individual's current knowledge, skills, attitudes, relevance in their lives and also on the needs of the group.

In practice it means that when for example we plan a budget of an event we are organising (as a group) a person that has less capacity counts how many markers do we need for the event, while the person that has more experience and is interested in computers finds the price of the markers in a shop and orders them in cooperation with the group leader.

At the next planning the person that was in charge of counting now takes a more complex role in the process and builds on the previous experience and the person that took care of online research and the process of purchase now does it by themselves.

Service to others

Service to others supports the group in creating a meaning of their time together. The others can be very concrete others, like people, animals or plants, or imaginary ones like environment or community.

Service to others helps the group to focus on the needs of somebody else not only their own. In this way the process empathy development is supported and at the same time the process of learning about others (their needs, wishes, life choices, fears, competences ...) is happening. The process of learning about others gives the youth involved the chance to compare their experience in life with the experience of others and learn about possibilities they haven't encountered yet in their environments.

Service to others also gives members of the group the value in the community. Youth (and especially youth with disabilities) are often seen as the receiving end of the society (the ones that need help and give nothing to the community). With the service they contribute to the common good and involve in the roles that have the potential to change the status quo in the community instead of passively taking on the "prescribed" roles of "people in need".

Support of older, more experienced people

Young people have a lot of will to do the tasks that provide an appropriate level of challenge. The lack of experience (and often also knowledge and skills) gives them the edge in trying new ways in approaching the challenges on one hand but can also lead them to approach the challenges in a way that is dangerous, might have adverse side-effects and create harmful situations to both the active youth and the community receiving their help.

Peer support, mentorship and support of the more experienced are the key elements in the development of the potential of an individual.

Environment

Since one of the core principles of youth work is preparing young people for participation in the community the group needs to be connected with other groups and individuals in the environment around them. The work of the group needs to be in line with the needs they see in the environment. This balancing of the needs of the members of the group on one hand and the needs of the environment on the other is one of the key processes of learning for an individual in order to live well integrated and meaningful life in the community.

Connection with the environment also highlights another important component of youth work: transparency and accountability. Communities will support the youth work activities only if the work of the groups is transparent and public. At the same time we teach the members of the

group about their accountability towards the individuals that trusted them and the community that gave them resources needed for their development.

Responsibility for own development

Taking care of one's own development is one of the cornerstones of living in an ever-changing society. We see it also on the political level since the competence of "Learning to learn" is highlighted in competence frameworks promoted by the EU.

Support to young people in order to build their inner urge to develop and learn is one of the crucial elements of support for active citizenship. Only people who are actively involved in the society and follow the developments can actively participate in the society and steer the development of the communities in the direction of better-future-for-all.

The support to the development of inner capacities to learn, reflect on experience and change is even more important in work with people with intellectual disabilities. Due to the condition they face their capacity to self-motivate is often lower therefore the impulses to do something for themselves are less frequent and weaker. The need to support the seeds of curiosity and willingness to learn is therefore more present.

Non-formal learning

Youth work is a setting of non-formal learning. The learning process stands on the learner's decision to master a skill, activity or body of knowledge and is in this way steered by the learner himself. Active participation of young people in the selection of the topics they will learn about is paramount. The role of youth workers is to design the situations where youth can learn and improve their competences.

Envisaged outcomes of youth work

On the individual level:

- Improved tolerance to ambiguity
- Improved leadership competencies
- Improved teamwork competencies
- Active advocating for values of inclusion and non-discrimination
- Trust in democratic process
- Active citizenship
- Competencies related to work
- Wider social network
- Improved sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Improved empathy
- Improved critical thinking

On the level of community and society:

- Bigger number of active citizens
- Active participation of different subgroups of society in the development of the society
- Better employability
- Better social cohesion in community.

Factors of success and elements of good practice

- advocating for the needs of others shifts focus from learning and self-advocacy to elements outside of the group and therefore gives more meaning to the process
- ownership (of the mission, process, ideas,...) and involvement in all phases of the process
- long term involvement (group and leader)
- clear rhythm of meetings
- reflection as a regular part of the process
- way of council (circle)
- support to group development
- participatory methods
- group rituals

How to start the process?

The following are some tips on how to approach the group building and definition of the mission with a newly established group.

In order for the groups to be successful the balance between individuals, task and group process needs to be established. This means we have to take care of all 3 levels in all meetings.

We suggest that all the meetings follow a similar pattern that gives all the group members additional sense of security. The flow of the meetings should go:

- check-in (for example: What is an important thing that has happened to you since our last meeting?),
- the main topic of the meeting,
- themes on the group process (reflection of what is happening in the group, creation of additional agreements ...),
- agreements on work that needs to be done until the next meeting,
- short reflection of the meeting (How was the meeting for you? What surprised you the most in our discussion today? ...) and check-out (What do you take with you from this meeting? ...)

The **mission of the groups** in line with the PAL4Youth project is to explore the needs of young (15 - 30 years old) PID in the communities young people live in. Of course the mission has to be translated into the language of the members of the group.

So already the **invitation to the process** could be done with some kind of wording around the **needs of young people in the local environment**.

The main topics of the meetings

1. Who are you?

One of the key questions is "How come I came here?"

Method: Coat of arms

We all remember the stories about knights. The knights were always recognized by the shields they were carrying. We will create shields that will represent us.

We give members of the group the form and give them guidelines what to draw or write where.

The parts of the shield should contain the answers to the following questions:

- Where do I live? How do I live? (with my parents, share a flat, in institution...)
- Where am I from? (What is the community I live in? Did I move? ...)
- What do I like? What am I interested in?
- If I was an animal I would be ... because ...
- The sport that I like the most...

2. What are our experience?

The method that could be used is the reflection of important things that happened in the lives of individual so far and shaped them so they are in this group now.

Suggested method: Life timeline

We need small pieces of paper (3*4 cm, 7 pieces per participant) and a piece of string per participant (1,5m, can be wool or a thin rope), stapler, markers/pens ...

The process: we invite participants to think about the important things that happened in their lives ... (going to school, moving to a different town, success in sports, death of a family member, going to the mountains with a group for the first time ...) They write the important events to the pieces of paper. When they are done they are invited to staple the papers to the string from the beginning of their lives till now...

3. We as a group?

The third meeting is focused on the group as a whole.

First part should be done as one of the team-building exercises together with a good debriefing about who was good at what.

The second part could be structured around recognition of group members: What have we learnt about each other? How do we see each other?

This part is important because it strengthens the group cohesion.

4. How do we listen?

The main theme of the meeting is active listening. How can we listen, to really hear what the person in front of us is saying?

We practice attentive listening:

Exercise 1:

We all sit in a circle with eyes closed. We have to count (by the steps of 1) to the number as big as the number of our group (15 participants count to 15, 30 to 30 ...). Each time two people count at the same time we start from 1. Each person can say only one number. The count has to happen randomly, we can not agree in advance who will follow whom. We finish when we successfully count to the desired number.

Exercise 2:

We ask the participants to form couples. We try to encourage them to speak to people they talk to the least...

The leading question for the conversation is "What was a big turning point in your life?". Person no.1 starts to talk to answer the question. They have 3 minutes to explain. Person no.2 listens and after 3 minutes makes a 30 second summary of what they heard from the other person. After the summary the roles are reversed.

Discussion in the group about exercise leads towards reflection of listening. It is very hard to listen, be present and not to intervene in the story of the person in front of you. Very often the things we hear trigger our memories and then we stop listening to what the person is saying.

The other element we have to open is that when we really listen to a person talking our body gets relaxed. When this is perceived by the person that talks, they relax too and the story can go deeper (in meaning, relationship, opening themes that we don't tell the perfect stranger ...)

Homework for the next meeting: Go out and talk to young people, those aged between 15 and 30. Ask them what is bothering them in the community where they live. What are the small, concrete things they would like to change. With the cameras on your phones take pictures of the things people express.

5. What are the needs I see?

The main theme of the meeting is the presentation of the results of conversations with people and the pictures we took.

6. Collage

Main theme: We make a collage of all the pictures and statements of people. We try to find common themes that were expressed and try to organize them in a shortlist.

Homework: How do others see our key points? - Present the topics we identified to other young people and ask them what they think and what are the key things we missed.

7. How do others see our key points?

Main theme: What were the results of our conversations with others? How did they see our lists? How do we adapt our lists to the topics expressed by the people we talked to?

8. Final picture

What is the final picture of our research?

How are we going to present our results to other groups?

9. Preparation for the meeting with the other group

How are we going to travel? How do we prepare? What is going to happen? ...

2 Work process in youth groups and results

2.1 Work process in youth groups and results in Czech Republic

In SPMP we have two groups of people with intellectual disability. Both were created few years back and take place in Prague.

First group are self-advocates and they have as an assistant SPMP social worker Veronika Juříčková. The group was formed many years ago although the members altered also many times. Current members are together about 2 years. There are about 7 members in the group and in average 5 of them turn up in the meetings. The meetings are every week in SPMP in a special meeting room. Each meeting is one and half hour long. Members are managing the course of the meeting. This group started as self-advocates but it turned more into a support group.

The second group is assisted by SPMP psychologist Xenie Dočkálková and it was created 4 years back. The original reason for organising this group was to talk about relationships and give each other some support. The attendance of members is more stable than in the other group and the core is still the same people. The group meets once in a fortnight. They have about 10 members and usually 6 people come to the meeting. Structure of the meetings is very similar to the other group. It has 90 minutes and takes place in SPMP.

Most of the members live at home with their parents or they are supported by parents and families. None of the members lives in a big institution. It is fairly specific and it shapes their lives and the world around them. It has a huge impact of what they are interested in and how active they are. Also the dynamic of the groups is influenced by the group history and the relationships between members.

Both of the groups talk about the same issues and topics. All of them are brought in to the group by members themselves. The assistants are trying to help them to figure out what they want to talk about if the members do not bring anything by themselves. It works most of the time. If the members are not active by themselves the assistants try to bring up something new. If the topic is accepted it depends on the group. The topics differ a lot. It goes through legal capacity to living to ecology, animal rights, friends, worldwide news etc. With self-advocates we are trying to concentrate to something more „self-advocating“ and what we could do for ourselves and for others. The other group is more concentrated on their personal life and what they can change and do for themselves. Relationships are repeatedly discussed topic. Lately legal capacity or independent living occurs.

The needs are mostly showing thanks to the activity of members, what they bring. It is basically the topics which we talk about. From outside we can see they need some secure space to meet. In current stage they also need someone to help them out with leading the group. The members are not always active, they are rather passive. Although they know each other long time we would not say they have a close relationship. The reason behind that might be that a lot of them are people on spectrum and that brings some limitations for the group work.

In the years we have learned that people coming to us to become members of these groups really need some place and people around to meet. They are people from the families and some of them do not have too many activities and opportunities where to go.

For both, Veronika and Xenie, it is challenging to work with the group of such a different people, with such a different limitation. Problematic is also to work with the group where members are changing in time and also every time the attendance of different people. It is very hard to follow last meetings and continue with some work.

We can see our members have learnt to think and decide for themselves more, they became more interested in stuff going on around them. They are slowly becoming more active. Also some of our members knew what they wanted but did not try to go for it nor to take responsibility for their decisions. In present they are more capable of this.

2. 2. Work process in youth groups and results in Slovenia

Author: Nataša Zupan Cvetežar

In the youth group are 6 members, from 19 to 24 years old, 3 women and 3 men. Youth leader is Nataša Zupan Cvetežar.

We were meeting every Friday at 13.00 for 1 hour, from September 2019 to February 2020. Place of meetings is Primary school Litija. The reason for place and time is that the group members are all members of this school, meetings later in the day wouldn't be possible, since most of them live in villages around Litija and could not get a transport back to town.

At every meeting a member L. starts the meeting asking everyone how are they feeling and how was their day - *He uses a communicator. Member S. prepares hot drinks for everyone who wants it. It is followed by the main topic of the meeting and concludes with evaluation of each meeting.

Topics of the meeting were different, getting to know each other, »Who are you«, »What are our experience«, »We as a group«, »We as a group & How do we listen«, »How do we listen«, »What

are the needs I see«, »What is positive in my life, what I like and would not change”, “What would I like to change, what do I want in the future”.

Rules of the group were:

- only one person speaks at a time,
- we listen
- the rule of silence outside the group
- we can say what we want
- we all do our best to have a good time

TOPICS

WHO ARE YOU?

Method: Coat of arms

The parts of the shield contained the answers to the following questions:

Where do I live? How do I live? (with my parents, share a flat, in institution...)

What do I like? What am I interested in? If I was an animal I would be ... because ...

The sport that I like the most... Favorite color.

What are our experience?

Method: Life timeline

The method was used as the **reflection of important things that happened in the lives of individual so far.**

Participants thought about the important things that happened in their lives ... They wrote it on pieces of paper and chronologically tied to a string. They introduced their lifetime line to the rest of the group. They spoke only about the event they wanted to present. Most presented everything they wrote down, and some presented only individual events.

We found that most of the members repeatedly exposed **important people for them, the people they love.**

We as a group?

Getting to know each other through the M&M game –

each member picked up a candy and depending on the color, the leader asked them a question, for example: yellow – describe yourself in three words, orange - what makes you happy, red - what would you like to learn...

The game Truth and lie: the members split into two smaller groups, during the conversation they tried to find three things that are common to them, they made three statements that are true and one statement that is a lie. Members of the second group found out which of the claims was not true. They found the game fun, they split into groups by gender.

Talking and finding common ground made them more connected.

We as a group & How do we listen?

In pairs, the two members talked about their hobbies, habits... one talked about themselves for 3 minutes and the other listened intently. The roles were then reversed. Each introduced the other person, told what they heard.

Together, we analyzed how we felt as a speaker and listener, and how good a listener our person in the pair was.

The members had difficulty listening to each other.

Nataša also warned them about **non-verbal communication** (turn to the other person, look them in the eye, give him a nod...)

How do we listen

Exercise: We all sit in a circle and we have to count (by the steps of 1) to the number 20, each member tells a number, the other goes on and so on, without previous agreement, communication proceeds non-verbally. Game 1,2,3: We count up to three in pairs, each number gradually being replaced by an agreed movement/motion.

Exercise: An important event in my life: in pairs, everyone talks for 3 minutes about an important event in their life, the couple summarizes and tells the others what they heard.

The members worked well together, having had experience since the previous meeting.

Most listened better, also showed non-verbally, and summed it up well.

What are the needs I see?

1. What is positive in my life, what I like and would not change?

2. What would I like to change, what do I want in the future?

It was difficult for members to think and say what they were not happy about and what they would change, since they are somehow satisfied and do not think about other options.

They needed a lot of encouragement.

Through a guided interview we were able to answer the question of what we would change.

RESULTS

- positive mood in the group
- better relationships
- more compassion
- mature conversations
- all member have opportunity to express
- strengthen communication skills

3 What have we learnt

3.1 What have we learnt in Czech Republic

Prague

Although both of the groups in Prague got together many years ago, we have been confronted with few difficulties. First of all we got into a situation where the past of the members affects the dynamics of the group. That could be divided into two segments – relationships within the group and running the meetings.

In the group of self-advocates there were some partnerships which did not end well and it created bad blood between some members. We could have seen that the members are not connected, they do not have same goals as the members of the group and they are not interested or even willing to talk to some of the other members.

The second segment is the way how the group works. They have certain rules and roles within the group which were created years back. Neither the rules nor the roles work anymore. But the group sticks to talking about them or using them as an excuse to not change anything. In view of that fact it is complicated to do something new, to try new methods of work or new activities. The members are in their comfort zone and not willing to move the line. For the assistants is very challenging to find a way to change that.

Another challenge is to work with so many personalities – some being very active, some being passive, some needing more support and everyone needing different support. We can see that the support and the work with limitations could be different and more individual. Next time we should focus on having less people in the group or more assistants should be required. There is a big difference between a newly formed group and joining a well-established group. The approach needs to be very specific. Currently we are rethinking our group work and the whole concept.

Brno

As there was no formed group of young people with intellectual disability within SPMP Brno (as members are rather older than Pal4youth target group) the main challenge was how to find and attract young people who would join the group.

This turned out to be very hard. We approached SPMP members, schools and people we knew via our counselling centre, either directly or through their parents or teachers. Unfortunately, we got no response.

What we think the reasons were

Some of the young people with intellectual disability are not used to being active, being asked for their opinion, to join discussions. Even though some of the parents and teachers were supportive and encouraged the young adults to get engaged, it was still difficult for them to make the decision and come. They did not seem to be interested enough in this activity, lacking inner motivation. On

the other hand, some people who are supported towards independence – or their parents - prefer to join other activities rather than being a part of a group of people with disabilities.

What to focus on next time

As getting used to a new activity can be a difficult and long process we think the key things to focus on could be the following when establishing a new group.

- Attractiveness - to introduce the activities more appealing, so each individual could make a connection, find an interest that would drive them to come. E.g. as an opportunity for meeting new friends and going together to the cinema.
- Accessibility – to look for members within existing social groups like schools and social services. It might be easier for the individuals to join as a couple of friends and they could encourage each other to attend regularly. It might be also advantageous when organising assistance (if needed) to get to and from the place of meeting. Or the meetings could be held in the places where members already are to avoid any transport issues.
- Supporting leadership – ideally to find one or two passionate members who would speak to potential members themselves as peers and can pass on their excitement for the group. They could also keep this excitement alive and encourage and support their peers who struggle to be active or forget the benefits of the group work.

3. 2. What have we learnt in Slovenia

Author: Nataša Zupan Cvetežar

Challenges were:

- how to connect
- how to listen with intent (2nd time went much better)
- young people don't know what to answer because they are not asked often about their needs and views
- they don't think about other options

At start the group members were not connected, they had their own problems to face and it affected the group dynamic, we had big mood swings in the group and there were many conflicts and disagreements between members.

Working on relationships, improving communication, encouraging respect for one another has produced results. The mood in the group changed to positive, better relationships between members, more compassion and understanding.

The members in the group now point out things that bother them and want to resolve conflicts. Team members are now capable of more "mature" conversations, follow the rules of the group and like to cooperate. Working in a group where each member is heard, where everyone has the opportunity to say and express their thoughts, desires, emotions, has a positive impact on the individual. It is important that young people have this opportunity to encourage them to participate actively and to allow them space and time to be heard. Strengthening good communication skills is essential for better integration into society.

Members of the youth group are thinking about their future, want more independence, inclusive employment, they also care about the environment.

4 Needs of youth

4.1 Needs of youth in Czech Republic

The members of both our groups expressed some needs that are not so different from the needs of young people without intellectual disability. For some it was a long process with a lot of individual support to get to realising what they actually want. On the other hand there are some members who can say straight away what they want and do that in quite an overpowering way so they put others off. They are self-confident but lacking the skills. In general the groups needed a lot of support in order for everyone to get the time and space to express themselves and share with others. What was said:

- to have a place where they could meet people
- to have friends, a boyfriend or a girlfriend
- to live with a partner or friend/s or alone
- to have a job
- parents not to tell them what they should or should not do
- to protect the planet – animal rights, to deal with global warming
- to protect human rights – discussions about abuse, discrimination, the role of police

What we see as the most stepping out is to have a safe informal space where to meet – as an opportunity where they could meet up with friends, meet new people, meet a potential partner or just spend their free time. As anybody else they want to build meaningful relationships, have people to share their life with, have activities together. But because of their disability it is something they need help with.

We can see our members want to be a part of major society, respected and valued. All the things they mentioned resonate with it – having friends, partners, living the way they want to, having a job, protecting the planet.

Some members' struggle begins with parents who cannot see they are grown up adults therefore do not support them getting these ordinary things. Some members do not even think about their possibilities and things they might want change because their parents have told them once something about their limitations and they have accepted it as an unwavering truth. Our members need to be encouraged to believe in themselves and to be more independent, supported to learn to make their own decisions and take over the responsibility for their lives. It is necessary to work with their parents as well, otherwise there is too much tension and very little results.

4. 2. Needs of youth in Slovenia

Author: Nataša Zupan Cvetežar

It was difficult for members to think and say what they were not happy about and what they would change, since they are somehow satisfied and do not think about other options. They

needed a lot of encouragement. Through a guided interview we were able to answer the question of what we would change.

What is positive in my life, what I like and would not change?

Answers:

- Family
- Friends
- Teacher and guardian
- Home
- School,
- Classmates

What would I like to change, what do I want in the future?

- work at the company where my brother is employed
- live on my own
- go out more, go to Ljubljana, to the shops
- live alone with my girlfriend
- work at OAC (VDC)
- have a different teacher
- protect nature, not to pollute so much and to separate waste
- help someone/somewhere, perhaps at a farm
- help/work in kindergarten
- live in a residential community in Litija
- to pay the bills by myself

5 Conclusion

Authors: Project members from both partnering countries made a conclusion and recommendations together at the last project meeting M5 in Ljubljana, March 12 2020

Both partnering organizations Zveza Sožitje & SPMP ČR started with youth groups during the implementation of the project PAL4youth. Zveza Sožitje held 1 group in Litija, and SPMP ČR held 2 groups in Prague. SPMP ČR wanted to start a new group in Brno, but had difficulties to attract new members, so they decided to change the ongoing groups already held in Prague with principles and elements of youth work and with that attract new members.

Both organizations at the end of the work for Youth Activity for PAL4youth can report about common findings.

Challenges we faced were that youth work is new for both organizations, we needed to explore it and get knowledge about it. We tried to find ideas how to approach it and get it started. We found out it is harder to start from zero, than to start from something. In Czech Republic we decided to introduce youth work elements and principles in already existing groups. In Slovenia we decided to start a new group, but the leader of the group knew all the members from before, so it wasn't a problem to gather a new group.

It was difficult for members of both groups to think and say what they were not happy about and what they would change, since they are somehow satisfied and do not think about other options. They needed a lot of encouragement.

Both organizations have a lot of "clubs", self-help groups, but there is no turning outside to the community! The groups are self-contained. Both organizations will in the future try to expand more groups in different places around the countries to expand youth work activities.

WHAT WE SEE THE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES NEED

- secure space for meetings/schedule
- support of each other to be active
- they need leading – what to do in the meetings, how to listen with specific advices...
- people in the autistic spectrum need support to work in a group
- young people decide the themes they want to work on and group leaders are responsible to have specific topics and material prepared for that theme...

RESULTS OF THE YOUTH IN THE YOUTH GROUPS

- young people are more interested
- young people are more involved
- group works by itself through time (less leader involvement)
- young people are taking more responsibilities for their actions
- young people are able to stand up for themselves
- young people are able to express needs (what bothers them)
- relationships in the group get better, the group is more connected

Questions we will be focused on in our future youth work:

- How to make new youth work groups appealing to new members?
- How to support the change?
- How to support people not to be afraid of changes?
- How to connect with the community?