POLICY PAPER

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PROMOTION OF DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH DIGITAL YOUTH WORK IN CYPRUS, FINLAND, AND IRELAND

Project Name: Supporting Youth to manage their digital & social media presence

Acronym: TRACES

Project Number: 2019-1-CY02-KA205-001476

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The digital media are changing every day. The moment we master one, a new one more advanced appears. This fact is valid in all kinds of digital media, and for the media we use in Youth Work.

The consortium of the TRACES Project has detected a gap in the Continuous Professional Development programs for youth workers and youth trainers/ facilitators in the use of Digital Media in Youth Work. Additionally, the TRACES partners have identified a lack of infrastructure, stating that governmental and organisational guidelines are often lacking and that youth workers have requested more frameworks and strategic direction in how to use technology to support the young people, especially those with fewer opportunities.

Considering the above, a change of mindsets amongst some of the policymakers and managers in the youth field is needed, to truly embrace the technological world young people are growing up in. The project partners wish to do their part to facilitate the "Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy" in their countries; Cyprus, Finland, and Ireland.

The purpose of this Policy Paper is to provide a series of policy recommendations based on the experiences of partners in the TRACES consortium, the impact achieved by the project in what is a relatively short time, the potential for further development of the TRACES model, and potential resource implications. The Policy Paper considers all implicated parties' role in ensuring that the maximum benefits can be extracted from ubiquitous technologies through responsible digital citizenship based on digital and social media literacy. Simultaneously, it addresses the essential role of in-service training for youth professionals in achieving quality learning outcomes, especially when working in technology-enhanced environments. Finally, the Policy Paper has assessed the experience of the project partners in 3 different countries and represents recommendations for policy change on the basis of that experience. It takes into consideration why a change of policy approach might be relevant, and the cost benefits to be derived from the new model developed.

The Policy Paper will be used to provide decision-makers with an overview of youth work development in Cyprus, Finland, and Ireland, a targeted analysis, and actionable recommendations. The partners will use the Policy Paper to stimulate action at the levels of policy-making and youth service management and approach policymakers and managers of youth services to bring more quality to youth work.

INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have revolutionised young people's lives in many ways, and policies need to consider both opportunities and challenges, by tapping social media's potential, equipping Youth with digital skills and fostering critical thinking and media literacy.

The TRACES project partners have identified a lack of infrastructure, stating that governmental and organisational guidelines are often lacking and that youth workers have requested more frameworks and strategic direction in how to use technology to support the young people, especially those with fewer opportunities. A change of mindsets amongst some of the policymakers and managers in the youth field is needed, to truly embrace the technological world young people are growing up in.

The project partners wish to do their part to facilitate the "Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy" in their countries; Cyprus, Finland, and Ireland. "Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy" covers the period 2019 – 2027 and sets out fundamental principles to ensure the inclusion of young people in decision making within the EU. The Strategy commits countries to promote dialogue and participatory mechanisms at all decision-making levels while stressing the importance of reaching young people with diverse backgrounds. Additionally, it promotes voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding, and supports youth empowerment through quality, innovation, and youth work recognition.

EU youth cooperation can foster youth participation in democratic life, in line with Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It can also support social engagement and civic and socio-educational activities (youth work) that give young people life skills and act as a bridge to society, especially for young people with fewer opportunities. The Erasmus+ Programme Guide defines «Young people with fewer opportunities» as the young people who are disadvantaged compared to their peers, due to one or more of the seven exclusion factors: disability, health problems, educational difficulties, cultural differences, economic obstacles, social obstacles or geographic obstacles. The barriers imposed on young people by the factors mentioned above affect many aspects, such as education, labour market, housing, health, and community. However, it is essential to note that any form of disability does not automatically limit a young person's opportunities.

The purpose of this Policy Paper is to provide a series of policy recommendations based on the experiences of partners in the TRACES consortium, the impact achieved by the project in what is a relatively short time, the potential for further development of the TRACES model, and potential resource implications.

The Policy Paper considers the role of all implicated parties in ensuring that the maximum benefits can be extracted from ubiquitous technologies through responsible digital citizenship based on digital and social media literacy. Furthermore, it addresses the essential role of in-service training for youth professionals in achieving quality learning outcomes, especially when working in technology-enhanced environments.

Finally, the Policy Paper has assessed the experience of the project partners in 3 different countries and represents recommendations for policy change on the basis of that experience. It takes into consideration why a change of policy approach might be relevant, and the cost benefits to be derived from the new model developed.

Right now, there is no Policy Paper on the specific issue in Cyprus and Finland. Only Ireland has been represented in the Policy recommendations "Developing digital youth work" published by the EU Commission. That report, however, focused on training needs.

The Policy Paper will be used to provide decision-makers with an overview of youth work development in Cyprus, Finland, and Ireland, a targeted analysis, and actionable recommendations. The partners will use the Policy Paper to stimulate action at policy-making and youth service management levels. They will use it to approach policymakers and managers of youth services to bring more quality to youth work.

The Policy Paper has been produced both as hard copy and online publication on the project website. The link has been circulated to the partners' networks and their social media. It has also been uploaded as an online publication on ISSUU platform. The publication on ISSUU means that anyone who will search with related terms will be able to find the Recommendations for a long time after the project end. The Policy Paper will be presented during the dissemination events of the project in the partner countries and during events, conferences and where the partners are participating in relation to Digital

Citizenship and Digital Youth Work. It will be handed out as a hard-copy to all the youth workers and managers of youth organisations and the policymakers who will attend the aforementioned dissemination opportunities and young people with fewer opportunities themselves. The international partners will receive printed copies to distribute to their networks in their countries to expand the impact of the policy paper and motivate other countries to create their own policy papers. The policy paper's methodology is based on academic and political standards that can be followed by other players in youth work who wish to repeat the procedure in favour of their target groups.

Methodology

Each partner completed a template containing semi-structured interview questions in conjunction with their local youth workers during local consultations in the form of focus groups. The focus groups interviews were selected as a qualitative research method of finding out the target group's opinion on the topic of digital citizenship of young people with fewer opportunities. The focus groups consisted of 5-8 youth workers and one facilitator who moderated the talk in an unstructured way.

Contrary to quantitative research methods like questionnaires, focus groups provide data and insight into the target group's reasoning and reality.

The interviews mentioned above were built around three areas of action:

ENGAGE: Fostering the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in democratic life.

CONNECT: Bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding.

EMPOWER: Supporting the empowerment of young people with fewer opportunities through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The provision of digital technologies leads to the improvement of learning outcomes, as suggested by experimental evidence. McEwan and colleagues (2015), after conducting a meta-analysis of 77 randomised experiments, concluded that the provision of ICT is a more effective educational intervention, than other methods such as teacher training or smaller groups of learners in the context of a classroom. A similar and consistent effect of utilising digital technologies for the improvement of pedagogy, accountability and management has been identified by Kremer & Holla (2009), in the meta-analysis of 32 randomised control trials they conducted. The positive impact of digital tools on educational outcomes has also been proven via the systematic reviews of recent technologies, such as Hassler and peers' (2015) of tablet interventions. Among the findings, the review indicates that 16 out of 23 tablet programmes identified led to significant gains in learning gains, a fact confirmed by rigorous systematic review and meta-analysis.

The consistency of digital learning technologies is evident across a wide range of educational outcomes. Grgurović and colleagues' meta-analysis (2013) demonstrates the positive impacts of ICT on language learning outcomes, while Schmid and colleagues' meta-analysis (2014) illustrates the positive effects of ICT on student attainment and attitude. The effectiveness of using digital and technological tools in education was examined by Archer and colleagues (2014), via a tertiary meta-analysis (i.e., a meta-analysis of meta-analyses). The findings highlight further the link between digital technology use and the achievement of educational outcomes.

ENGAGE

The need for youth engagement for the future of Europe is more significant than ever. In order to achieve this goal, it is of great importance to listen to young people and empower them.

The Youth, as a social group, demonstrate a lower engagement rate in a variety of issues such as voting or political parties when they feel their opinion is not taken into consideration. However, their interest in politics and their positive feelings for the EU are declared when their voices are heard. Since youth engagement is crucial in all facets of society, it is dire to build bridges of communication that stretch beyond youth organisations active in EU matters and embrace a more diverse audience.

In line with the recommendations of the Youth Strategy, we propose an approach that targets more efficiently disadvantaged groups within societies, while also utilising the expertise of young experts and researchers. To further support youth engagement, new and alternative forms of participation need to be utilised. Some examples to promote youth dialogue at all levels are online campaigns, consultations via e-platforms that are connected to the European Youth Portal. In order for Youth to form their opinions based on accurate facts, quality information should be readily available, the dialogue should be monitored, and its impact should be transparent and visible.

CONNECT

The Youth Strategy promotes opportunities for Youth to connect in a European context in a variety of ways, by utilising successful instruments such as Erasmus+, which helps young people expand their horizons and build bridges across the continent and beyond in innovative ways. While more than 500,000 young people participated in exchanges and volunteering in six years (2014-2020), the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges is an instrument that allows dialogue between Youth in the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries.

Within the context of the EU and a new status quo emerging through the COVID-19 pandemic era, the expansion of innovative ways of connecting young people, whilst simultaneously capitalising on well-tested formats such as youth exchanges and cooperation amongst youth organisations, is more relevant than ever. Therefore, the need for provision of a supportive policy, administrative and legal environment is undeniable.

EMPOWER

Through a young person's journey towards adulthood, youth work is an essential tool that provides a safe environment, self-confidence, and non-formal learning. Evidently, youth work equips young people with key competences and useful skills such as intercultural communication skills, leadership, problem-solving and critical thinking, and many more. A unique attribute of youth work is that it eliminates exclusion since it is often a bridge into education, training or work.

In order to be able to reap the abovementioned benefits, the recognition of non-formal learning through youth work is important. This is a crucial way for people with limited formal qualifications to improve their employability and entrepreneurial skills.

The youth worker's role is of great importance for the successful empowerment of young people, as they need to continuously adapt to the changing needs and habits of their target group and technology. In this regard, continuous professional development for youth workers is essential to understand young people and their needs better and utilise opportunities offered by digital learning and digital tools.

Policy Options or Policy Context

Policy options are rather limited in scope for the participating countries. This statement is understandable, as Youth Work in general - although gaining much traction - has yet to standardise its practices and implementation throughout the EU and the member states.

However, significant steps have been made to facilitate this - especially in regards to Digital Youth York. This fact is welcomed as it serves to the recognition of both its importance and the effect it could have in reaching vulnerable and socioeconomically weak groups, but also non-vulnerable youths that see the digital world as part of their everyday lives.

Overall Policy Context

For **Ireland,** several relevant policies exist. The implementation of those policies comes in the form of private training on using social media in general. However, there is nothing specifically made for safely integrating social media into youth work. The National Youth Council of Ireland sets the standards for the use of digital and social media between Youth Organisations and Young People. They are the umbrella organisation for a majority of initiatives in the Republic of Ireland. Beyond policies, there is a rather significant body of national laws and practices advocated by the National Youth Council of Ireland, thus providing online youth work parameters. Some EU policies also exist to fill in any gaps. However, it was reported that digital skills concerning social media are acquired mostly through practice and experience, as opposed to education or training on the subject.

For **Cyprus,** Youth Work, in general, is beginning to be taken up by an increasing number of youth workers and relevant stakeholders. Youth-related issues generally fall under the scope of the Youth Board of Cyprus which is linked to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth. However, Cyprus has no legislation regulating aspects of Youth Work or Digital Youth Work, which is a specialised form. However, the issue is addressed by impending legislation on Life-long Learning that will include the provisions of a framework for non-formal learning. It should be noted that Youth related activities and Youth Work are sometimes blurred together. Though the number of Youth Policies that exist is rather large, Youth Work is underrepresented - with Digital Youth Work even more so. However, a lot of effort is being put to address this issue, and the Cyprus Digital Agenda includes such provisions.

For **Finland,** online digital youth work is still at its early stages. Unlike Ireland and much like Cyprus, the system is less centralised. However, although some central policies exist for Cyprus, the Youth services in Finland do not have their own guidelines, at least concerning Digital Youth Work. They follow instead the instructions set by the city of Joensuu and the national netiquette for communicating online. This is understandable, as Social media is mostly used to inform Youth about events and the specific information they wish to give. Interacting with Youth is mostly based on face-to-face contact and group sessions. The body responsible is the national Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work in Finland, Verke, which is also a good source of training and best practices. The Regional State Administrative Agencies (AVI) funds digital youth work all over the country.

Engage, Connect, Empower

Engage

Engaging, fostering the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in democratic life, in **Ireland,** is well served. Beyond some private initiatives and EU funded programmes, the National Youth Council of Ireland also offers online and training courses for youth workers concerning practices and approaches to engage these groups. Examples include 'diversity in youth work' and 'working with LGBTQI+ groups'. Furthermore, national Child Protection and Safeguarding policies help maintain and improve youth work quality, especially regarding vulnerable young people.

In **Finland**, Policy Makers are actively seeking to increase the engagement of this group. For example, the national web-based service administered by Finland's department of Justice nuortenideat.fi allows

a safe forum where young people can connect with the government and influence decision making by posting their opinions.

In **Cyprus,** great effort is being put forth to address this. Most of it is delivered through the educational system in schools and by other means, such as providing subsidies to purchase computers. As to the provision of subsidies, this year Cyprus approved the granting of 200-euro vouchers to students for the purchasing of a personal computer. The importance Cyprus attaches to this can be seen in the 2018 Cyprus Education and Training Monitor which states: "Citizenship education is a point of focus in digital education. Each year, as part of the national digital strategy, 15-20 schools participate in several programmes with a specific citizenship focus. For example (i) the EU-funded' EduWeb-programme' where children educate digitally illiterate adults on safe and creative internet use; (ii) 'eSafe Schools' which helps schools develop strategies for safe and creative internet use; and (iii) 'Young Coaches for the Internet' which trains students to develop and apply an annual action plan and educate their peers on creative and safe internet use". Some other examples can be cited but go beyond this paper's scope, which aims to give a general idea.

Connect

Much like Ireland and Cyprus, in Finland those interviewed stated that they were not aware of any initiatives linked to **Connecting**, that is bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding. The scarce initiatives that do exist could be helped by more publicising and an enhanced dissemination effort. This is a crucial endeavour, as vulnerable groups are by nature more at risk of exclusion and more often than not harder to reach.

Empower

In regards to **Empowering**, that is supporting the empowerment of young people with fewer opportunities through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work, in **Ireland** is very much active. A rather significant body of national awards and incentive schemes exist. These are aimed at helping promote youth work visibility and overall quality. The Gaisce ('great achievement') award can be offered as an example. This is a self-development programme for young people between the ages of 15-25. More than 300,000 young people have participated in it thus far. The programme focuses on such areas as respect, empowerment, inclusion and excellence.

In **Finland,** this area is of utmost importance. The example above of nuortenideat.fi is still valid here. However, this is especially so concerning the Digital form of Youth work. In fact, a specialised body has been created named Verke, which is the national Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work. The institution's goal is to provide support in this area to enable all Youth Work stakeholders to utilise digital media and technology in their work life. Beyond this, several chat-based sites exist where digital youth workers assist young people by providing information and answers while engaging in Youth Work-related activities.

In **Cyprus,** this element is also considered of great importance. Most of this area falls with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute that participates in several initiatives and coalitions. For example, it participates in the Cyprus Safer Internet Centre (SIC) which forms part of a greater coalition of many countries and includes a number of key Cyprus Stakeholders. This organisation runs many relevant programmes such as the Young Coaches for the Internet Project. The specific project per se aims to train teachers and students in the creative and safe use of the internet. The programme involves teacher mentors and student coaches trained to support their school and act as trainers-coaches of their classmates, parents and families. Naturally, it is open to all.

Analysis of Findings / Evidence

Use of tools

Youth workers in **Ireland** use various tools including computers, laptops, game consoles, tablets and smartphones when digitally engaging youth work. As to social media, most popular platforms and applications used are Zoom, House-party, Tik-Tok, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook.

In **Finland,** the most popular platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Discord, Snapchat and Tiktok. However, it should be noted that digital youth work is still in early stages in the country, and Social Media is mostly used in an informative capacity.

Much like Finland, **Cyprus** has not significantly moved Youth Work to a digital environment. The tools and platforms used are largely the same and involve Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Skype and

Snapchat. Infrastructure and devices are not a problem, however, and most efforts relate to a cultural shift.

Challenges

The main challenges concerning the Digital form of Youth work In **Ireland** include limited or no access to education digital media, heavy use and reliance of social media at the expense or real work social skills, tackling fake news and misleading stories accompanied by the underdevelopment of digital critical thinking skills, and malicious stories and self-harm inducements.

For **Finland,** the same is true for some of the issues raised. Some of the issues raised include time availability, given the large interactions that need to be made physically and an overall preference in this, lack of skills, being unaccustomed to digital interactions on the part of the trainers, preferences, and lack of equipment.

Cyprus shares most of Finland's and Ireland's concerns. In general, challenges include the lack of a cohesive framework, preferences and being unaccustomed to online environments when it comes to digital youth work, lack of training, tools to tackling fake news and malicious stories.

Recommendations

All partners agree that education and an effort for change of culture is key to tackling most challenges. It is essential for additional training and support to be given to Youth Workers, especially regarding Digital youth work as it is a very new field for most.

This training needs to be given in an ongoing fashion. This is because platforms and websites keep changing and ever-evolving. As such more than learning a specific platform, the etiquette and internet of things should be transferred to Youth Workers along with learning how to learn techniques. The same is true for potential dangers that exist in the Cyberspace as well as methods and techniques to seek recourse and take proper actions in the digital world in a way that coincides with the physical one.

Moreover, better and specialised policies need to be made. This ought to cover areas such as appropriate boundaries, ethic mentors, and proper evaluations suited to online environments.

Additionally, a combined methodology is needed for assessing the elements mentioned above on a one-by-one base. Finally, greater dissemination efforts need to be made regarding the training offered by governmental and non-governmental bodies, focusing on specialised topics designed.

Case Studies and Best Practices

Each partner provided a best practice they highly believe in.

Ireland cited the "Good Practices for Online Youth Work" published by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). These good practices' essential aim is to streamline the quality and overall Youth Work provision in Ireland to maintain minimum standards. Simultaneously, they include guidance on Digital Youth Work issues and approaches that ought to be taken to reach and empower vulnerable groups. The guidelines are being developed with relevant stakeholders' help and can be therefore directly linked to best practices from front line professionals.

Finland referred to Media Literacy lessons for Youth around the Joensuu area. They involve youth workers delivering to adolescents 13 different Media Literacy lessons. They are free of charge and provided to children indiscriminately while focusing on Media Literacy, advertisement in media, use of digital tools, empathy skills and group-working skills. Much like the case in Ireland, Digital Youth Work training is provided, like National youth work seminars, but personal experience seems to be the preference, at least as far as social media use is concerned.

Cyprus referred to the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The main aspects of the strategy related to digital education are: to integrate basic digital competences in the primary school curriculum; to provide certification (ECDL) of secondary school students' digital competences; to improve schools' Information and Communication Technology of (hardware, software, networking) to support both education and administration; to provide support to teachers to assess and improve their digital competences; to enhance the use of ICT educational tools in the classroom; to provide a better internet for all children, with emphasis on internet safety. The plan is essential as it represents a centralised effort to address most of the concerns raised through this paper concerning Digital Youth Work, even if it is mixed into the more general area of Youth Work and Youth-related activities.

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Developing Quality

Quality tools and systems should be developed in line with the ever-changing needs and circumstances of young people, and subsequently embedded in a broader approach regarding quality and the empowerment of organisations. Quality in this context relies heavily on the ability to adapt to the digital world its opportunities on a variety of levels, including structure, methodology and communication means and channels. The use of pedagogical and technological tools and practices benefit the Youth in terms of accessing and coping with digital means.

Moreover, digital youth work should be an integrated and extensive part of the youth workers' training and should be incorporated into youth work occupational and competence standards. Further to this, the development of quality recognition tools should correspond with the validation of non-formal and informal learning and the agenda on skills development. The unique attribute to this broad approach is that it reaches all groups of young people, including the most vulnerable ones, while simultaneously addressing their individual needs.

Working across sectors

The diversity that characterises EU youth and the challenges they face suggests the need to address policies in various areas. Despite the general rise in higher education participation and the decreased numbers of early school leavers, youth unemployment - one of the biggest issues amongst young people – remains; along with the challenges it entails: youth poverty, precarious employment, health challenges and unequal access to quality education.

In this context, tackling the issue of youth unemployment and the high rates of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) observed, has to be an EU priority. This can be achieved by creating pathways between unemployed Youth and different employment sectors and developing quality mechanisms to effectively approach NEETs, young migrants, and refugees who face multiple barriers.

In order to reinforce cross-sectoral cooperation at all facets of decision-making synergies while maintaining youth involvement, EU Member States should support young people and other stakeholders to implement joint initiatives different fields such as education, employment, digital learning, international cooperation, sustainability and others.

Increase Effectiveness

In order to increase the effectiveness of the abovementioned methodologies, several considerations should be taken into account. To strengthen the youth perspective across policy areas at the EU level, it is important to make young people feel included and heard while involving them in the policy-making process. In this light, supporting the Member States in the policy-making process is also crucial, which can be achieved by collecting evidence, sharing good practices, implementing mutual learning and incorporating innovative tools such as peer counselling and peer reviews.

Conclusion and Recommendations

More and more professions move to blended environments. The digital and the physical become mixed, and one cannot be fully operational and effective unless well versed in both. So much more so when it comes to Youth Work as young people are traditionally at the forefront of change and technological evolution. Youth Workers are faced with moving more and more into a sometimes-unfamiliar environment that exhibits a number of drawbacks, despite offering a number of benefits. However, with the scale tipped in favour of the benefits Digital Youth Work can bring, a blended form of Youth Work quickly becomes the profession's norm.

Youth Workers must not be left to fend for themselves in this new reality. Governmental and non-governmental stakeholders must pool together an adequate response to smoothen the transition. To this, the partners have identified and confirmed several constraints. These constraints are not equally shared, nor does any one partner faces them all. Rather what is presented here is the collation of restraints that would bar an operational blended digital environment for Youth Work, along with the parameters mentioned earlier of Engage, Connect, Empower.

These constraints are both technical and non-technical. The most crucial are: lack of infrastructure; insufficient guidelines and policies in place; lack of coherent methodology in finding the right combination of digital and not digital intervention; lack of specialised institutions dedicated to promoting and guiding digital Youth Work; and lack of initiatives linked to Connecting, referring to bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding. Additionally, further constraints detected include: non-efficient dissemination and outreach in a centralised manner; the connection of a strategy towards Digital Youth Work and Digital Agendas by governments in supporting Youth, especially vulnerable groups; lack of proper equipment including gaming consoles, iPads and so on; the hesitant attitude of the prevailing culture towards the digital form of Youth Work and learning and, finally, lack of operational policies on how to conduct digital youth wok by professionals.

The partners propose a set of minimum considerations for any policy to be effective. Based on these considerations, any policy should:

1. Be Youth-focused placing the real needs of the young persons at the forefront;
2. Strive to bring about a change of mindsets amongst stakeholders, especially policymakers and managers in the youth field, to embrace the technological world;
3. Include more specialised education initiatives and refer to the dangers and proper courses of action one should take and instruct others to take;
4. Focus on Engaging, Connecting, and Empowering Youth;
5. Provide for methods and tools of Youth Work Recognition;
6. Provide for continuous training on Social Media and Digital Literacy;
7. Promote digital Democracy as with online forums directed towards policymakers;
8. Assign a centralised body of government to Digital Youth Work;
9. Form part of a coherent Digital Youth and Youth Work Strategy to inform relevant policies such as this;
10. Make and take into consideration the different types of stakeholders involved including Youth, Youth Workers as well as volunteers;
11. Provide the means of acquiring the technological equipment necessary;
12. Provide Guidelines and set etiquette standards for online and social media presence;
13. Use problem-solving tools and promote relevant skills to online challenges;

14. Provide innovative and additional training for youth workers and young people;

15. Call upon Youth Workers to 'lead by example' and to act responsibly online;

16. Provide for Digital Youth workers;

17. Strike a balance between physical and Digital Youth work;

18. Provide online help to Youth Workers;

19. Stress the importance of Digital youth work to alter the time availability of Youth Workers that prefer Physical Youth work;

20. Provide updated guidelines on the use of the most popular platforms and applications;

21. Cater to the expanding Digital Youth Workers network.

The above are the minimum provisions any policy must follow to be successful. Of course, more things can be added and said to go here, and it is the wish of the partners that the policy will evolve alongside the environment and the specifics related to Digital Youth Work. It is true to say that, given the ever-changing parameters of the digital world, professionals of the field must also continue to adapt. The topic of Youth Work is perhaps one of the most highly influenced by the change. Therefore, the TRACES partners strongly encourage Policymakers to consult these standards.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Project Name: Supporting youth to manage their digital & social media presence

Acronym: TRACES

Project Number: 2019-1-CY02-KA205-001476

CYPRUS

POLICY PAPER POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PROMOTION OF DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH DIGITAL YOUTH WORK IN CYPRUS FINLAND AND IRELAND

INTRODUCTION

The current template has been created to gather feedback from **SEAL CYPRUS**, in order to draft a Policy Paper on how the youth sector can encourage young people to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change for communities across Europe, inspired by EU values and a European identity.

METHODOLOGY

The below semi-structured interview questions can be completed by each partner in conjunction with their local youth workers during local consultations in the form of focus groups. The focus groups interviews have been selected as a qualitative research method of finding out the opinion of our target group on the topic of digital citizenship of young people with fewer opportunities. The focus groups consist of 5-8 youth workers and 1 facilitator who moderate the talk in an unstructured way. Contrary to quantitative research methods like questionnaires, focus groups provide not only data but also insight to the reasoning and the reality of the target group.

QUESTIONS

Types of digital and social media used in youth work in Cyprus.
What types of digital and social media are used in youth work and which purposes do they serve?

In Cyprus, most of the Youth Work and related aspects are delivered face to face. Of course, to this there are exceptions but given that Youth Work and Youth Related activities are intertwined, the vast majority of participants do make more use of physical meetings over digital. The tools and platforms include Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Skype, and Snapchat.

Policy Context. Governmental and organizational guidelines for the use of digital and social media in youth work in (your country).

In Cyprus, Youth Work is beginning to evolve as a field separated from Youth related activities. A number of budding Youth workers and related organizations are beginning to emerge at an increasing rate. Still, Youth work undistinguished for Youth related activities and policies falls with the Youth Board of Cyprus under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth. There is no legislation regulating aspects of Youth Work or its distinct forms such as Digital Youth Work and a number of policies exist on various issues by a plethora of departments though not in a centralized form. As such there are no single coherent specialized policies dealing with digital and social media in Youth work. However, a fair effort is been put forth to address this through impending legislation on Life-long Learning that that covers also aspects of non-formal learning. Furthermore, the Cyprus Digital Agenda includes a loose framework for the creation of such provisions.

Initiatives to use digital and social media to support young people with fewer opportunities in (your country). Please, provide us with some insights in relation to the following three topics:

ENGAGE: Fostering the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in democratic life.

In **Cyprus,** the topic is considered very important. This provision for this comes in the form of the public and private education system in schools. A number of initiatives exist such as the granting of

subsidies for the purchasing of personal computers with the government recently announcing a 200-euro coupon for this purpose to students in schools. As the Cyprus Education and training Monitor 2018 that states: "Citizenship education is a point of focus in digital education. As part of the national digital strategy, each year 15-20 schools participate in a number of programmes with a specific citizenship focus. For example: (i) the EU-funded 'EduWeb-programme' where children educate digitally illiterate adults on safe and creative internet use; (ii) 'eSafe Schools' which helps schools develop strategies for safe and creative internet use; and (iii) 'Young Coaches for the Internet' which trains students to develop and apply an annual action plan and educate their peers on creative and safe internet use".   Beyond this, a number of examples exist for example special arrangements made for disadvantage pupils such as language lessons for the children of migrants and exceptions at request for special topics. Student body elections are open to all of course while a number of activation programmes currently are in operation.

CONNECT: Bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity, and intercultural understanding.

The research conducted revealed no initiatives linked to **Connecting** at least not public ones. A number of Private initiatives do exist in the form of EU funded projects.

EMPOWER: Supporting the empowerment of young people with fewer opportunities through quality, innovation, and recognition of youth work.

This aspect too is considered of great importance. The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute is the main forum for delivering this. The Institute participates in a number of programmes and partnerships. For example, the Cyprus Safer Internet Centre (SIC) is a partnership of a majority of Cyprus' most influential stakeholders while as a network it expands to many other countries. Through this partnership and network, those involved carry forth a number of important initiatives and programmes. For example, the Young coaches for the internet project provides training in a number of topics from Social media to safe use of the internet and the digital world. The project pairs up learners with mentors as well as coaches. In turn, students that pass through the training can act as trainers-coaches.

Case studies and best practices in the use of digital and social media in youth work to Engage, Connect, and Empower young people with fewer opportunities in (your country). Please, use the table as many times as needed.

Name/ title of the case study/ best practice	Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture
Link or identifica tion data (where the case of practice can be accessed)	http://www.moec.gov.cy/download/monada_politikis_stratigikou_schediasmou/moe c_strategicplan_2018_2020.pdf
Brief descripti on of the best practice	The main aspects of the strategy related to digital education are: to integrate basic digital competences in the primary school curriculum; to provide certification (ECDL) of secondary school students' digital competences; to improve schools' Information and Communication Technology (hardware, software, networking) in order to support both education and administration; to provide support to teachers to assess and improve their digital competences; to enhance the use of ICT educational tools in the classroom; to provide a better internet for all children, with emphasis on internet safety

Why do you think this is a best practice? Please justify your opinion.	One of the most important efforts of the government to address digital related issues in education including digital citizenship and safety. It does provide for some aspects of digital Youth work in the broader sense.
Lessons learned	The need for more centralised policy making.
List of stakeholders involved in the best practice	Ministry of Education, Formal and Nonformal learning organizations

Are there any opportunities for Continuous Professional Development of youth workers in relation to the use of digital and social media in daily youth work in your country? If yes, could you provide us with some examples?

There are no public initiatives on this topic. There are very few private and EU funded programmes offered. Once more those offered are in the more General form of Youth related activities. For example, we can refer to the Young coaches for the internet project as described before. Another is the Human Rights Education versus Cyber-hate. The training course "Human Rights Education against Cyber-hate", will bring together youth workers, youth trainers, facilitators, and youth leaders from European organizations with the main aim to incorporate the Human Rights approach in Youth Work to combat online hate speech.

Main challenges/ issues in relation to the use of digital and social media in youth work in (your country).

A number of constraints exist. Major challenges include the lack of a cohesive framework, preferences to physical over digital environments, unfamiliarity with online environments, luck of Digital Youth Work-related training, lack of proper guidelines and recommendations when it comes to digital youth work, insufficient tools and programmes as well as mentoring to mentors with respect to tackling fake news and malicious stories.

Solutions to challenges/ issues in relation to the use of digital and social media in youth work in (your country). Which solutions would your organization propose in relation to the above challenges/ issues?

A number of initiatives must come forth. This includes training on the general aspect as is internet navigation to specific ones such as the use of modern platforms in conducting Youth Work and other related activities. Policies must be centralized into one body dedicated to this and made available at least as guidelines in specific issues which may include the contacting of Young people by Youth workers online and vice versa while the form of Digital Youth workers ought to be developed. A fair balance must be guided to be struck between choosing if an issue is better to be met physically or not.

Policy recommendations on the promotion of digital citizenship for all young people through digital youth work in (your country). Please, provide us with recommendation on how to achieve the following three objectives:

ENGAGE: Fostering the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in democratic life.

Provide for methods and tools of Youth Work Recognition which is greatly lacking. Provide specialized training to stakeholders so as to be able to support such young people. Ensure technical requirements are available to them such as equipment. Implement inclusion porgrammes and provide incentives.

CONNECT: Bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity, and intercultural understanding.

Create a Youth Work government body. This body could work as an umbrella association of various governmental and non-governmental organisations connecting horizontally to other such bodies and organisations across Europe and utilize thus such programmes as ERASMUS+ and others.

EMPOWER: Supporting the empowerment of young people with fewer opportunities through quality, innovation, and recognition of youth work.

Provide for Digital Youth workers that can perform Digital Youth Work online. Provide for an ombudsperson to handle digital communications that include recommendations for policymaking to relevant stakeholders. Implement programmes that offer incentives and awards to participants and trainers alike relevant to the issue. Ensure that continuous education is provided and a policy set for the ongoing updating of relevant skills by all those involved. Implement vulnerability assessments and best

Plans for the promotion of the Policy Paper. What are your plans for promoting the policy paper in (your countries)? Which stakeholders are you planning to approach and in which way?

The policy paper will be available on the organisations website. It will also be included in tits mailing li9st. The Cyprus pedagogical institute will be approached and through it the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport as the main policy-making body of the Cyprus government.

References (APA style)

Education and Training Monitor 2019 Cyprus

FINLAND

Policy Paper Policy recommendations on the promotion of digital citizenship for all young people through digital youth work in Cyprus, Finland, and Ireland

INTRODUCTION

The following report is a summary of responses collected by **Innoventum oy**, collected from interviews of 5 youth workers from the city of Joensuu. Since Joensuu has several youth centers all around the city area, the answers were collected in a phone interview due to Covid-19 situation. Each youth workers are qualified youth workers, and have worked with youth from 2 years to 20 years. They work with different kind of groups of youth from immigrants to youth with additional needs and youth from more wealthy families. The answers were gathered from the youth workers all around the city from rural areas to the city center.

QUESTIONS

Types of digital and social media used in youth work in (your country).
What types of digital and social media are used in youth work and which purposes do they serve?

In Finland communicating with the youth is mostly happening in real life, and digital youth work is still taking small steps to become a more popular way of youth work. Social media is mostly used to inform youth about events and specific information that is happening in each youth café.

Social media platforms used are:

- Facebook – Each youth center has their own Facebook-page, where they post information about events
- Instagram – Each youth center has their own Instagram-account, where they post information about events
- Youtube – Is used mostly to collect videos created by local Youth services in one place, where they are easy to share. There is no Youtube-based youthwork.

- Discord – Some of the youth centers are using Discord for game-based communication. Not commonly used.
- Snapchat – Some of the youth workers are using snapchat for communicating with youth. Not commonly used.
- Tiktok – Only one or two youth centers and their staff are using Tiktok.

Policy Context. Governmental and organizational guidelines for the use of digital and social media in youth work in (your country).

The Youth services do not have their own guidelines for the use of social media in youth work in Joensuu. They follow the instructions for communication set by city of Joensuu, and of course national netiquette for communicating online.

The youth workers are guided to be friendly, open-minded and polite when communicating online. They are asked to use common sense when posting on social media – there are no strict rules about what they can or can not post while working.
Youth workers usually have work-related accounts to different social media platforms, and they don't accept friend requests from youth to their personal accounts.

However, the youth workers are following the rules covering all of the employees of the city of Joensuu when using social media:

1. Be aware that you are representing the city of Joensuu when using social media, even if you're using your personal account on your free time.
2. You are personally responsible for what you publish on social media sites.

Initiatives to use digital and social media to support young people with fewer opportunities in Finland. Please, provide us with some insights in relation to the following three topics:

ENGAGE: Fostering the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in democratic life.

The youth workers mentioned there is a national web-based service called nuortenideat.fi where youth around the country can post their ideas and take part of democratic decisions in Finland. Nuortenideat.fi is powered by Finnish department of justice, and it's purpose is to offer the youth a platform where they can share their opinions, discuss about their ideas and share them to the government.

CONNECT: Bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding.

The youth workers were not aware of any initiatives linked to bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU.

EMPOWER: Supporting the empowerment of young people with fewer opportunities through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.

The youth workers told about Verke,. On Verke's own website the Verke-centre is described like this: "Verke is the national Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work in Finland. Verke's vision is to provide everyone who works with young people with the opportunity to use digital media and technology as part of their work. Verke aims to promote welfare, inclusion and equality among young people by means of digital youth work" ¨.
Verke is operated by City of Helsinki, but it offers education and help all around the country.

Case studies and best practices in the use of digital and social media in youth work to Engage, Connect, and Empower young people with fewer opportunities in (your country). Please, use the table as many times as needed.

Name/ title of the case study/ best practice	Media literacy lessons for youth around the Joensuu
Link or identification data *(where the case of practice can be accessed)*	https://www.joensuu.fi/joensuun-lastenkulttuurikeskus Only in Finnish
Brief description of the best practice	All of the youth around 13 years will get media literacy lessons during their school days. The media literacy teacher is a qualified youth worker, and the lessons are created in co-operation with local youth workers and library.

	Schools can choose between two or three subjects, which all are addressing media literacy in a different point of view. The lessons are provided by local children's culture centre and they are a part of the cultural path offered to all the youth in schools.
Why do you think this is a best practice? Please justify your opinion.	The youth will get a fresh point of view to the media literacy in a interactive way. Lessons are provided to every single student in local schools regardless their socioeconomic status or interest of attending. Feedback about the addressed topics has been great.
Lessons learned	Media literacy, advertisement in media, use of digital tools, empathy skills, group working skills
List of stakeholders involved in the best practice	Children's cultural centre of Joensuu, Youth services in Joensuu, main library of Joensuu.

Are there any opportunities for Continuous Professional Development of youth workers in relation to the use of digital and social media in daily youth work in Finland? If yes, could you provide us with some examples?

There are trainings in youth work in social media, but not everyone has access to them. For example National youth work seminars have workshops about digital youthwork.

The youth workers in Joensuu have learned to use social media in their work by themselves. They share best practices with each other and have trained each other to use social media tools and platforms. The Youth services does not have specific training for digital youth work, but they recognize the need for that.

Main challenges/ issues in relation to the use of digital and social media in youth work in Finland.

The youth workers named a few challenges to the use of digital and social media in their work:

- There is no time. If you're working at the Youth center, most of your work is based on real life interaction with the youth. Interacting online takes time and engagement from both; the youth and the youth worker.

- Lack of skills. Some of the youth workers lack skills working on social media platforms. Some of them also choose not to learn social media at all and do not use the new applications on their work.

- Different interests. Some of the youth workers enjoy more real life communication than working on online environments.

- Lack of proper devices. Most of the youth workers have mobile devices themselves, but they might be old or have limited storage for applications. Meanwhile every young person might not have access to the mobile devices, or they can use them limited time only.

- Age limits of applications: how to communicate with younger children, who are not allowed to use Facebook or Instagram?

Solutions to challenges/ issues in relation to the use of digital and social media in youth work in Finland. Which solutions would your organisation propose in relation to the above challenges/ issues?

- Proper training & devices. Organisations should train their staff to use the newest applications the youth are using to keep on track with development.

- Make more time for online youth work. That might also need new staff members specialized to online youth work.

- Guidelines for using each platform properly and how to interact with youth there.

- More brave experiments in social media – if something does not work with the youth, it is okay.

Policy recommendations on the promotion of digital citizenship for all young people through digital youth work in Finland. Please, provide us with recommendation on how to achieve the following three objectives:

ENGAGE: Fostering the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in democratic life.
In the city of Joensuu each Youth centre has their own "house comission", where they make decisions about the activities and events happening in the centre. The commission practises democratic decisions together. However they could use social media more to engage all of the youth

to the activities and give more low-treshold opportunities to have affect to activities organised in their local youth centres.

CONNECT: Bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding.

The youth workers did not have any recommendations for bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU. They mentioned, that maybe some sort of co-operation project between different youth centres could be interesting in the future.

EMPOWER: Supporting the empowerment of young people with fewer opportunities through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.

The youth workers encouraged for more experimental youth work online. They also mentioned that opportunity to try out different devices and programs (for example video cameras or editing programs) at youth centres would be interesting to the youth.
Using same applications that the youth use and getting to know modern memes and online-communication tools does help discussing about online life with the youth.

References (APA style)

Verke, https://www.verke.org/verke/?lang=en reference 1.10.2020

IRELAND

POLICY PAPER – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PROMOTION OF DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH DIGITAL YOUTH WORK IN CYPRUS, FINLAND, AND IRELAND

INTRODUCTION

The following report presents a summary of the responses collected by **The Rural Hub**, during a focus group hosted with 5 youth workers from The Cavan Centre. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in place in Ireland, it is only possible to have an indoor meeting with 6 individuals in one location. As such, a researcher from The Rural Hub travelled to The Cavan Centre, in Kilnacrott, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan on Friday, 18th September, and conducted the focus group session with 5 youth workers who were all working on a full-time or part-time basis in The Cavan Centre. The experience of these youth workers ranged from 18 months to 27 years working in a youth work setting. Each of the youth workers present had at least an EQF Level 4 qualification in youth work, and each facilitates groups of young people who come from socially disadvantaged areas of Dublin. These young people travel to Cavan to The Cavan Centre, where they spend a period of time from 3-days to 4-weeks, participating in teambuilding, personal development and leadership programmes. These are marginalized young people, who present with a series of additional needs. The answers gathered from this focus group session are presented in the following report template; and they reflect the reality experienced by youth workers who engage with the most marginalized and hard-to-reach young people in our region.

QUESTIONS

Types of digital and social media used in youth work in Ireland. What types of digital and social media are used in youth work and which purposes do they serve?

The focus group members provided the following answers:

- In terms of the digital media equipment that they have access to in The Cavan Centre, youth workers use desktop computers, laptops, Play-station and X-box consoles, iPads, Tablets and smartphones in their work with young people.

- In relation to social media, youth workers mentioned that they use the following platforms in their work to engage young people: Zoom and House-party – these platforms became particularly important to continue to engage young people in youth work activities due to the lockdown restrictions imposed on the Centre between March and June 2020. In addition, they also use e-mail, WhatsApp, Tic-Toc, Twitter, Snapshot, Instagram, Facebook Messenger, Facebook Groups and YouTube to engage with young people.

The above-listed platforms are used for social interaction, entertainment, communications and information gathering.

Policy Context. Governmental and organisational guidelines for the use of digital and social media in youth work in Ireland.

For this question, the youth workers provided The Rural Hub with a copy of their policy that they use in The Cavan Centre (referred to as TCC in the policy). This policy was developed by the management of the Centre and is in line with national policy guidelines and standards. The relevant excerpt from the policy is as follows:

> This policy on social media applies to all employees. Social media is the collective term referring to social and professional networking sites (for example Facebook, LinkedIn, My-Space, Instagram, Snapchat, TIK Tok), micro blogs (such as Twitter), blogs, wikis, boards and other similar online forums and the policy extends to all such sites and incorporates any future developments of such media. Breaches of this policy will be investigated and TCC retains the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

> Should you use social networking as part of your work or outside of work on behalf of TCC or personally, the rules below apply:

> TCC recognises that employees use social media tools as part of their daily lives. Employees should always be mindful of what they are posting, who can see it, and how it can be linked back to TCC and work colleagues.

> All employees should be aware that TCC regularly monitors the internet and social media in reference to its work and to keep abreast of general internet commentary, brand presence and sector/service users' perceptions. TCC does not specifically monitor social media sites for employee content on an on-going basis; however, employees should not expect privacy in this regard. TCC reserves the right to utilise for disciplinary purposes any information that could have a negative effect on TCC or its employees, which management comes across in regular

internet monitoring, or is brought to TCC attention by employees, guests, members of the public, etc.

All employees are prohibited from using or publishing information on any social media sites, where such use has the potential to negatively affect TCC or its team. Examples of such behaviour include, but are not limited to:

publishing material that is defamatory, abusive or offensive in relation to any stakeholder of TCC;

publishing any confidential or business-sensitive information about TCC; publishing material that might reasonably be expected to have the effect of damaging the reputation or professional standing of TCC

All employees must adhere to the following when engaging in social media: -

1. Be aware of your association with TCC when using online social networks. You must always identify yourself and your role if you mention or comment on behalf of TCC. Where you identify yourself as an employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you would present yourself with colleagues and clients. You must write in the first person and state clearly that the views expressed are your own and not those of TCC. Wherever practical, you must use a disclaimer saying that while you work for TCC, anything you publish is your personal opinion, and not necessarily the opinions of TCC.

2. You are personally responsible for what you post or publish on social media sites. Where it is found that any information breaches any policy, such as breaching confidentiality or bringing TCC into disrepute, you may face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

3. Be aware of data protection rules – you must not post colleagues' details or pictures without their individual permission. Photographs of TCC events should not be posted online without relevant consent being obtained. Employees must not provide or use their TCC password in response to any internet request for a password.

4. Material in which TCC has a proprietary interest – such as software, products, documentation or other internal information – must not be transmitted, sold or otherwise divulged, unless TCC has already released the information into the public domain. Any departure from this policy requires the prior written authorization of your Line Manager.

5. Be respectful at all times, in both the content and tone of what you say. Show respect to your audience, your colleagues, service users and suppliers. Do not post or publish

any comments or content relating to TCC or its employees, which would be seen as unacceptable in the workplace or in conflict with TCC website. Make sure it is clear that the views and opinions you express are your own.

6. Recommendations, references or comments relating to professional attributes, are not permitted to be made about employees, former employees, service users or suppliers on social media and networking sites. Such recommendations can give the impression that the recommendation is a reference on behalf of TCC, even when a disclaimer is placed on such a comment. Any request for such a recommendation should be dealt with by stating that this is not permitted in line with TCC policy and that a formal reference can be sought through the senior management, in line with the normal reference policy.

7. Once in the public domain, content cannot be retracted, therefore always take time to review your content in an objective manner before uploading. If in doubt, ask someone to review it for you. Think through the consequences of what you say and what could happen if one of your colleagues had to defend your comments to a service user.

8. If you make a mistake, be the first to point it out and correct it quickly. You may factually point out misrepresentations, but do not create an argument.

9. It is very important that employees immediately report any inappropriate activity or behaviour regarding TCC, its employees or third parties. Inform your line manager or another member of management. All allegations made in good faith will be fully and confidentially investigated. You are required to cooperate with all investigations of alleged policy violations.

Initiatives to use digital and social media to support young people with fewer opportunities in Ireland. Please, provide us with some insights in relation to the following three topics:

The youth workers provided the following information in relation to national initiatives that they were aware of under each of the three categories below:

- *ENGAGE: Fostering the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in democratic life.*

The National Youth Council of Ireland drive the standards for use of digital and social media between Youth Organisations and Young People. They are the umbrella organization for a majority of initiatives in the Republic of Ireland.

- *CONNECT: Bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding.*

Youth workers were not aware of any initiatives linked to bringing young people with fewer opportunities together across the EU. They are members of the National Youth Council of Ireland and other professional networks and stated that they had never been made aware of such an initiative as part of their professional practice, despite being members of professional and national bodies.

- *EMPOWER: Supporting the empowerment of young people with fewer opportunities through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.*

The youth workers present did mention that to the best of their knowledge the National Youth Council of Ireland did offer some online courses and training for youth workers, so that they could learn new practices and approaches to engage marginalized and hard-to-reach young people in their youth work activities. These programmes relate to issues including 'diversity in youth work' and 'working with LGBTQI+ groups'. In addition, there are national Child Protection and Safeguarding policies in place to protect vulnerable young people in a youth worker setting. This helps to uphold the quality of youth work when working with vulnerable young people, and to guarantee their protection. Lastly, youth workers mentioned that there are certain national awards that recognise the effort of young people with fewer opportunities, who engage in youth work activities. Such activities include:

- **Gaisce (meaning 'great achievement' in Irish):** Is a self-development programme for young people between the ages of 15-25. To date over 300,000 young people have participated in the Gaisce programme. Their main aim is to ensure we have a programme which fits the needs of every young person who wishes to participate in the Gaisce programme and to give each participant the best possible opportunity to do so. They believe in the ability and resilience of young people and through the programmes run by Gaisce, they will cultivate that capacity and develop their full potential. Gaisce focuses young people on respect, empowerment, inclusion and equality and excellence.

Case studies and best practices in the use of digital and social media in youth work to Engage, Connect, and Empower young people with fewer opportunities in Ireland. Please, use the table as many times as needed.

During the focus group session, youth workers were unable to identify any such example of best practice. Following the focus group session, researchers from The Rural Hub undertook some desk research and identified the following case study; however, it is worth noting that this example is not well known among youth workers in practice.

Name/ title of the case study/ best practice	Good Practices for Online Youth Work – published by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
Link or identification data (where the case of practice can be accessed)	https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/web-safety-in-youth-work/good-practice-for-online-youth-work/#safety-tools
Brief description of the best practice	This best practice includes advice and guidance that the National Youth Council of Ireland has put together for young people and those who work with them to assist in creating safe online spaces for digital youth work. The advice and guidance for youth workers to follow, includes: Supervision • The online safety of young people at the youth service is your responsibility so you need to supervise their online activity in accordance with your organisation's AUP. • Know what level of monitoring you can utilise and inform the young people and their parents/guardians how you are monitoring their usage. • It is not advisable to use personal social networking profiles to connect with the young people online or as a way of supervising their activity. Agree how this should be managed as a youth organisation. Empowering • Involve young people in writing a code for the acceptable use of the internet. • Get to know how the internet works and explore its possibilities with the young people in accordance with your AUP. Boundaries • The use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) and in particular personal profiles can breach the boundaries between a youth worker's personal and professional life. Accepting young

	people into a personal network can lead to various problems such as allegations of inappropriate behaviour or young people misunderstanding the nature of the working relationship with them. • It is advisable to create an organisation page that uses the name of the service rather than a personal profile. This is a good learning opportunity for the young people regarding safe boundaries they can create while online. • Young people are accessing the internet via handheld devices so agree with them when and how they use them while at the youth service. This needs to be agreed with their parents/guardians.
Why do you think this is a best practice? Please justify your opinion.	These guidelines were selected as an example of best practice because they are standards that govern how young people and youth workers should use online and social media platforms safely and responsibly in their youth work practice. In addition, these guidelines have been published by the National Youth Council of Ireland**.** The National Youth Council of Ireland is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland, building solidarity in the youth sector. Advocating for issues that affect young people, their member organisations and the youth work sector; and carry out a variety of programmes, projects, training and initiatives for young people. They also use the collective experience of their member organisations to advocate and try to influence policies that impact on the lives of young people. As such, as the representative body for youth work in Ireland, they are a reliable source to provide such guidance to youth professionals and volunteers working in a youth work setting nationwide.
Lessons learned	Not applicable to this best practice example.
List of stakeholders involved in the best practice	These guidelines are published by the National Youth Council of Ireland.

Are there any opportunities for Continuous Professional Development of youth workers in relation to the use of digital and social media in daily youth work in your country? If yes, could you provide us with some examples?

The youth workers who participated in this focus group session were not aware of any CPD opportunities available to them to allow them to develop their competence in the use of digital and social media into their youth work practice. The youth workers expressed that they follow The Cavan Centre's policies and procedures that govern online communication with young people; but that many

of their digital skills and their use of social media platforms have been developed through practice, not through any type of formal or informal training.

Main challenges/ issues in relation to the use of digital and social media in youth work in Ireland.

The main challenges faced by youth workers engaged in this focus group session in relation to using digital and social media in their youth work practice are as follows:

- Limited or no access to digital media for educational purposes.
- At the same time, young people have too much access to digital and social media for entertainment and personal use, so when they come to the Centre, we prefer them to turn their phones off and learn life skills instead.
- Young people have a lot of access to fake, depressing and bad information on social media and then they lack an understanding of the true meaning of information. They don't have the critical thinking skills they need to recognise misinformation online.
- A lot of online content that is accessed by the young people we work with is heavily influenced by criminals and organised crime; hence why we are trying to limit the young people's access to this information when they come to The Centre.
- There are also very worrying trends that take off on social media that can lead to young people becoming even more vulnerable – these include instances of copying and replicating damaging events or information e.g. self-harm and suicide.

Solutions to challenges/ issues in relation to the use of digital and social media in youth work in Ireland. Which solutions would your organisation propose in relation to the above challenges/ issues?

- The youth workers listed the following possible solution to the problems they face:
- More education – both for young people and for youth workers and volunteers working with young people.
- Guidelines and standards to govern the appropriate use of online and social media.
- The creation and use of charters and contacts to govern online communication in a youth work setting.
- Use of problem-solving tools and skills when faced with challenges online – this could also take the form of additional training for youth workers and young people.

- Further focus on experiential learning as an alternative to the world of social media – especially in a youth work setting.

Policy recommendations on the promotion of digital citizenship for all young people through digital youth work in Ireland. Please, provide us with recommendation on how to achieve the following three objectives:

When asked to make policy recommendations, the youth workers engaged in the focus group wanted to share some of the policies that they developed as part of their work in the Cavan Centre, as they feel that these policies are robust and fit-for-purpose, and therefore could be transferred to other youth providers in other European countries.

The excerpt that the youth workers from The Cavan Centre wanted to share is as follows:

"The welfare of the child is paramount"

"We in TCC are committed to practice which protects children from harm"

Staff and volunteers in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm."

Currently TCC operates the following social media accounts and have primarily been used to communicate with young people: -

1. Zoom
2. Tik Tok
3. Youtube Channel
4. Facebook
5. Twitter

When using social media, TCC have adopted the following policy in order to protect staff and young people engaging with this method of communication:

o The page/profile must be password protected and the password will be held by a designated person.

o The nominated persons & senior management will act as supervisors for social media sites and will monitor its content on a regular basis.

o Any inappropriate comments by young people (or others) should be removed by the nominated person or senior management. Reasons for its removal should then be

explained to the person who posted the content, if they are participants in TCC. Please write this up as an incident report **(Appendix C)** and pass on to senior management.

o   Where possible the settings on the profiles should be set so that posts can be reviewed before being made public.

o   The use of personal email addresses should be avoided at all times.

o   The identity of the young people should not be disclosed (i.e.no tagging photos, no use of handles/profile names to be used in social media posts.)

o   Content of all postings should be consistent with the aims of the organisation. In cases of doubt, staff should seek advice from senior management.

o   Staff should only communicate to young people in public/open forums (for example group messages, conversation threads on public profiles.). 2 staff must be included in any group messages. In the event of sending an email, another leader should be cc'd into the conversation.

o   Staff should avoid communicating with young people late at night/ early in the morning. Unless it is an emergency, communication should only happen between the hours of 10am and 10pm.

o   In signing off posts/emails staff should not do so in a way that could be misconstrued or misinterpreted by the recipient e.g.: "xoxo". Simply sign your name.

o   If you are using emojis, they should reflect the information you are communicating. For example, music notes can be used if you are communicating about music. Never use emojis which could be mis-interpreted (hearts, lips etc). If in doubt- do not use.

o   Parental permission is required before pictures or videos of children or young people are posted online. This is given when parents fill out our on line parental consent form. Parents will be sent a direct link for this. Young people aged 18 and above will be sent a direct link for permission. Regardless of age, before posting on social media the photo should be shown to the young people to gain their permission for their photo to be on the site.

o   Photos should not disclose personal information about the child/young people (i.e.-school uniforms, address/location or names etc.)

Additional notes when using Instagram/Facebook.

o   When posting "Stories" on Instagram/Facebook, always highlight the story and bookmark it in the relevant section. This is so that all information that has been posted can be accessed at any time (not just for 24 hours).

The following apps will be used to help us communicate with the young people we regularly work with:

•   WhatsApp▢

- Messenger
- Zoom
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Online Gaming
- TikTok
- Live Streaming (Facebook and Instagram)

Contacting young people in group chats will be to:

1.   Communicate information about what is happening online which they can connect with. For example: Dates, times of YouTube videos, weekly challenges etc.

2.   2 staff must be included in any group messages (Appendix A).

3.   Rules for engagement in groups should be sent in to the group once it is setup.

4.   Texts by means of encouragement to young people (as a group). For example: "Hope you aren't worrying too much" or "We know it's hard to get motivated for home school, but we have Instagram content going live at 4pm which will cheer you up!" When texting messages like these, keep them general, light-hearted and within a group chat context.

> **Where possible if a female staff member messages a male young person, a male staff member should be included in the message and vice-versa.**

5.   Staff working with young people should only have a young person's number in the following circumstances:

a.   Parental consent has been given online and the young person has consented to being part of the group

b.   If a staff member has a young person's phone number, it should only be used for the purposes given. (Staff members should not share young people's phone numbers even with other staff without asking the young person first – staff should not give out another staff member phone number without asking for consent.)

c.   We should only be including young people who are regular attenders at programmes in these group chats.

1.   – WhatsApp

WhatsApp shares phone numbers of all those who are involved in the group chat. understands that WhatsApp terms of service place an age limit of use for those aged 13 and above. During this time, we will avoid where possible using WhatsApp groups with those in the 10 to 14's programmes. There may be particular instances and smaller groups where this is permitted with parental consent.

Contacting young people in group chats will be to:

1.   Communicate information about what is happening online which they can connect with. For example: Dates, times of YouTube videos, weekly challenges etc.

2.   2 staff must be included in any group messages.

3.   Rules for engagement in groups should be sent in to the group once it is setup (Appendix A).

4.   Texts by means of encouragement to young people (as a group). For example: "Hope you aren't worrying too much" or "We know it's hard to get motivated for home school, but we have Instagram content going live at 4pm which will cheer you up!" When texting messages like these, keep them general, light-hearted and within a group chat context.

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When using WhatsApp, phone numbers are required / disclosed when communicating with others. You need to get the expressed consent of young people/ parents / guardians before adding them into any group chat. This consent will be given via the online permission slip at: h ttps://form.jotform.com/200945296415054

2.   – Messenger

Messenger is a direct messaging app designed by Facebook. To have a messenger account, individuals need to have a Facebook account. Staff should as much as possible use a TCC Staff account for this and not their own personal Facebook profile. The password for this account should be shared with the senior management team.

3.   – Zoom

During self-Isolation, we will be using Zoom as one of the social media platforms to connect with and check-in with young people.

Zoom is a free video chat app which is widely used by children and adults throughout Ireland. For information on how to set up and use Zoom please check out their website https://zoom.us/signup. You can also download the Zoom App from your App Store.

The following policy when using zoom will be adhered to:

1.   Zoom calls should be carried out with more than one young person and more than one staff member. The call should be pre-arranged and setup in advance. There should be a log kept of this communication (Appendix D).

2.   When this is not possible for more than one young person and more than one staff member to be involved, or when it is for the purpose of a 1-2-1 mentoring conversation, this should take place as a phone call and TCC's usual guidelines for Mentoring should be followed. You should also inform one of the senior management team regarding the time and date of the call and contact them when the call is complete.

3.   When scheduling a zoom send the link to young people and your team leader and let everyone know the date and time.

4.   Inform parents of young people who will be present on the call

5.   Recommend young people to keep the door open of the room they are in whilst on the call

6.   Audio and video should be switched on by both staff and young person/ people

7.   Appropriate clothing should be worn by both staff and young people (no pyjamas, vest tops or revealing clothing).

8.   Plan questions for young people (where possible) ahead of time and place these in the chat section. Any follow-up to these questions should be placed within the chat.

9.   Contact log to be completed at end of call and uploaded to staff team folder (Senior Management should have access to this)

10. All staff are required to fill out a contact log after each chat and pass on any concerns to a designated officer as soon after the call as possible **(Appendix D)**

Security Settings for Zoom

1.   Links to Zoom meetings will be sent as private messages and not posted on public forums

2.   Meeting room option will be selected and participants will be admitted once staff verify each individual account

3.   Only the host of the meeting will be able to share screen, unless they allow others to share screen to play a game such as Pictionary etc.

4.   Breakout rooms may be used by meeting host. If this is the case at least one staff member must be part of that breakout room and they will record the breakout meeting

5.   Zoom youth work sessions will be recorded by the meeting host (TCC Staff Member), once the meeting is finished the recording will be stored.

6.   Zoom chats will also be saved and stored. We will disable to feature that would allow participants to 'private chat'.

7.   Recording disclaimer will ask participants to consent before proceeding with the group work session.

8.   We will review the security features of Zoom throughout the duration of CovID-19 and make changes as and where necessary

4.   – Instagram and Facebook

Facebook and Instagram will be a useful means of communicating information to young people and parents during COVID-19. However, it needs to be used safely and carefully.

Staff member will communicate information via Facebook and Instagram and will use these platforms as "Notice-boards" to sign post and communicate the support available as well as for running competitions and interactive games among other fun things.

The following policy will be adhered to:

1.   Staff of TCC will not be 'friends/followers' with anyone under the age of 18 who attends TCC Programmes. It is also our policy that volunteers will not be friends/ followers on social networking sites with any of the young people in the group that they lead, in particular with 10-14's.

2.   We do not allow young people to follow staff on social media as this allows them to see how we live our lives and we believe in healthy boundaries and staff privacy. Please ensure these are the settings you have on your personal account.

3.   If young people want to engage with staff via social media, they will be encouraged to follow our community hub profiles to stay up to date with information about individual programmes.

5.   – Online Gaming

(From ISPCC h ttps://www.ispcc.ie/index.php/parent-hub/helping-to-keep-safe-online)

Gaming is a great way for young people to relax, socialise with their friends and have fun. Young people can play on games consoles, apps or websites, mobiles, tablets, PCs, or through smart speakers and virtual reality headsets.

They can also chat to other players using messaging platforms for gamers, or watch [livestreams](#) of well-known gamers.

Some of these reasons young people like to play games online include:
- socialising with friends. When gaming young people can play together on the same team, or play against each other.
- games based on location, such as Pokémon Go and Wizards Unite, encourage players to go outside and explore.

- watching videos and livestreams of other people playing, or share tips with other players to develop their own gaming skills.
- games are designed to be entertaining and can be fun and engaging for young people.
- watching their favourite gamers on YouTube or livestreaming on Twitch. They may also want to livestream themselves playing games.

What are the risks of online gaming?
Bullying
Children may be deliberately excluded from a game by their friends, or criticised for how well they play. Other players may swear or use abusive language over voice chat, and this can be upsetting for your child.

Trolling, Griefing, Scammers

Griefers are gamers who deliberately try to ruin the game for other players. This can be called trolling. Players may also try to trick or scam young people into giving up 'skins' or other in-game items by offering them money or by hacking their account. Skins are a cosmetic feature that let players personalise their character and in-game items. Some skins are extremely rare and valuable so losing them can be as upsetting for a child as losing a favorite toy or possession.

In-game Purchasing

Some games cost money to download, or ask players to buy credits or items so they can keep playing. Many free games are designed to make the player want to continue but need payments to make this possible, which can be very frustrating.

Talking to people they don't know

Some games are designed to be played in teams or against other people, and sometimes players can be based in different locations. This means young people can easily play with people they don't know and haven't met. They can communicate using voice, video or text chat. Some gamers use voice chat to discuss tactics and many games have a chat room.

Young people can also use other platforms, like Discord and Reddit, to learn tips about the games they play and speak to other players with similar interests. Many popular games have official
channels with thousands of members. There's a risk of young people being groomed on these platforms.

During our time in self-isolation we want to be able to connect with young people in a healthy way. Online gaming is an opportunity to connect with particular groups of young people. Online Gaming allows for contact between players either through VOIP or chat groups with those playing the game.

For a TCC Staff member to engage in online gaming the following must be adhered to

1.   Staff member will phone the parent of a young person for over and under 18's to explain the approach to online gaming TCC will take and get their expressed consent for their child/ young person to take part.

2.   Group of young people contacted through a messaging app with at least 2 staff included

•   watching videos and livestreams of other people playing, or share tips with other players to develop their own gaming skills.
•   games are designed to be entertaining and can be fun and engaging for young people.
•   watching their favourite gamers on YouTube or livestreaming on Twitch. They may also want to livestream themselves playing games.

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2.   Group of young people contacted through a messaging app with at least 2 staff included

TCC will use TikTok as a platform to post videos only and not as a direct messaging app. There will be one TikTok account for the whole organisation.

a.   Senior management will be given the login details for the app

b.   Any audio or music used should not contain explicit lyrics

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The nature of live streaming on Facebook Live, Instagram IGTV, YouTube etc is not directed at one person or one group and therefore does not need to

be tracked on a contact log. If young people comment or message during these live streams where possible those comments should be recorded.

L ive streams should also be saved and not deleted.

Section 3– Communicating with Young People via Post (Snail Mail)

During COVID-19 it may be appropriate to write to a young person to encourage them or to send them resources specific to their needs, for example, study packs, mindfulness resources, cheer-up gifts, books etc. When writing to a young person who is under 18 the following policy should be followed.

1.   Where possible, write your message on a postcard, so that the message is not perceived as private.

2.   On occasions when you need to send something in a sealed envelope; For Example, "back to school packs" or mentoring information, please use the TCC Stamp (or another indicator) to clearly mark the envelope before posting. It is also our strong recommendation that you send an email to the parents letting them know that you have posted something to their child so that they know to expect it.

Section 4– Communicating with Young People via Phone Calls

During COVID-19 it may be appropriate for a staff member to call a young person on the telephone/ mobile phone. TCC staff want to keep relationships going with young people and be part of the support system during this social distancing time. Some young people may contact staff directly and request a phone conversation also. Staff will use their personal mobile phones for these calls.

1.   Staff will connect with young people via text to arrange a time to call. In some case a young person may instigate through text to request a call.

2.   The time will be agreed between both parties

3.   A contact log will be complete at the end of the call and keep on file

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