

A GUIDE FOR YOUTH WORKERS

**Supporting Young Women
as Leaders, Workers
and Citizens in Europe**



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WHAT IS RED:GLOW?



Red:GLOW is a network that explores the interactions between Gender, Leadership, Citizenship and young women's agency, through developing youth work good practice.

Red:GLOW brings together 7 partner organisations from 6 European countries, each with a strong track record in empowering young women, including many from migrant, minority and disadvantaged backgrounds. Red:GLOW stands for Gender, Leadership, Outreach and Work, with Red meaning 'network' in Spanish.

Our research has shown that there is no similar European network where organisations and youth workers working with young women can share ideas, learning and best practice. The EU Erasmus+ funding that we have received for the delivery of this project is allowing us to explore how the network could be most effective in empowering young women as leaders and active citizens.

We hear so much conflicting evidence about the situation, hopes, dreams and opportunities for young women in Europe. They are often doing better than young men in education but are quickly overtaken in the workplace, and leadership opportunities as citizens, for example as politicians. Some migrant groups thrive, whilst others face multiple barriers to mainstream employment and having their voices heard by decision-makers.

We are exploring, through our network, what the challenges are, and how they can be overcome. Opportunity is not just about good pay and promotions. It is about creating environments where everybody can thrive. Opportunity is not just about the workplace, it's also about people being engaged in agenda-setting and knowing how to have their voices heard as citizens. What does citizenship mean to young women and how do they express this? How do these ideas interact and intersect?

Red:GLOW is a network that will explore the interactions between Gender, Leadership in all areas of life, Outreach to often overlooked young women, and the workplace. How can we make sure that every young woman in Europe has the opportunity to find fulfilment? This is a hugely ambitious goal and one that we will be addressing a little at a time.



HOW WE PREPARED THIS GUIDE

Over 100 female youth workers have been involved in the Red:GLOW project activities across Europe and their learning is reflected in this report. Report preparation started in 2019, when the initial successes and challenges were discussed. This provided a springboard for the collection of experiences, case studies and recommendations from six European countries. Following the consultation process, the draft report was written up and circulated for the Red:GLOW consortium feedback. Quotes used in this report are from the questionnaires, meetings and project discussions, both from youth workers and young participants. Names have been changed.

The additional value of the report are the insights, best practice, reflections and case studies from the following European non-governmental organizations:

1. Porta Nevia- Fondazione Rui – Italy
2. Fundacija Sursum – Slovenia
3. Stowarzyszenie Krzewienia Edukacji i Kultury Dziesiątką – Poland (Leading this report)
4. Kultūras un Izglītības Biedrība – Latvia
5. The Baytree Centre – UK
6. Fundacion Canfranc – Spain
7. WONDER Foundation – UK

INTRODUCTION

Youth workers are people who work to support young people. They can be paid or volunteers. As youth workers supporting young women, we are always thinking of how to empower them and help them to overcome their challenges, so that they can thrive in their personal and professional lives, and have agency as citizens. The youth workers who contributed to this report have experience working with young women and girls from a range of social backgrounds, including migrant, religious and ethnic minority groups. Some of the youth workers are also from migrant or minority backgrounds themselves.

As youth workers involved in the Red:GLOW network we provide opportunities for gaining knowledge, leadership and citizenship skills by young women. We try to inspire a whole-person and intersectional approach to leadership at school, in the workplace and activities that young women undertake during their free-time. The informal and non-formal learning had special value in all the activities run by the Red:GLOW consortium, as we found it the most effective type of learning when it comes to soft skills development, especially leadership and citizenship skills.

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide aims to inspire other youth workers, and organisations supporting young women, we are sharing ideas and experiences¹, not instructions. Throughout the guide you will find questions to reflect upon. They don't need to be answered all at once, or in a particular order. We hope you can take our experience and relate it to yours. You can reflect alone, but we have found, in preparing this, that spending time discussing these issues with other youth workers with a cup of tea is a great way to learn from each other and make your work more impactful. We hope that this reflection becomes part of your personal practice – supporting you to see the skills that you are developing yourself, appreciate your ongoing achievements, and learning from the challenges. Youth work can be equal parts uplifting, frustrating, exhausting and joyous. Reflecting helps us to appreciate why it's worth the effort, so that we can inspire the next generation of young women.

LEARNING THROUGH YOUTH WORK

Learning through Youth Work

Most youth work is formally known as informal and non-formal learning.

Non-formal learning:

- Is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time, or learning support);
- is intentional from the learner's point of view;
- may be validated and lead to certification;
- is sometimes described as semi-structured learning (Source: Cedefop, 2008)².

This could be activities such as structured mentoring programmes, craft or sports sessions, or structured volunteering and leadership programmes like those that have been developed through Red:GLOW. **What sort of non-formal learning activities do you include in your projects?**

1. Please note that we have changed the names of youth workers and young women
2. Terminology of European education and training policy, 2008 <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/13125.aspx>

Informal learning is learning that results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organized or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. This is the type of experience from which we typically forget that we have learned something important. For this reason, informal learning is also referred to as experiential or incidental/random learning (Source: Cedefop, 2008).

Examples of informal learning include informal mentoring, preparing meals together, outdoor or indoor play (for example, football in the park, or board games), and could include older girls helping younger girls to learn something over a coffee. These activities teach us a lot about ourselves – our strengths and weaknesses. These activities also teach us soft skills. Often, we take this learning for granted, and this means that we aren't supporting young women to see that they aren't just learning to cook, or sharing a coffee, but building skills in planning, communications or leadership. What non-formal activities do you facilitate in your youth work?

Many of the young women we work with will end up in jobs that don't yet exist. We can't predict the future, but we can help young women to develop the crucial soft skills they need to adapt. Whenever we deliver activities with and for young women, we give them the opportunity to develop their soft skills. Why does this matter? In fast-changing workplaces, employers are looking for young people with soft skills. Soft skills are important for young women in both the workplace and in the citizenship sphere, in order to be able to adjust to changes in the labour market and society.

Youth work can help young people to develop soft skills including:

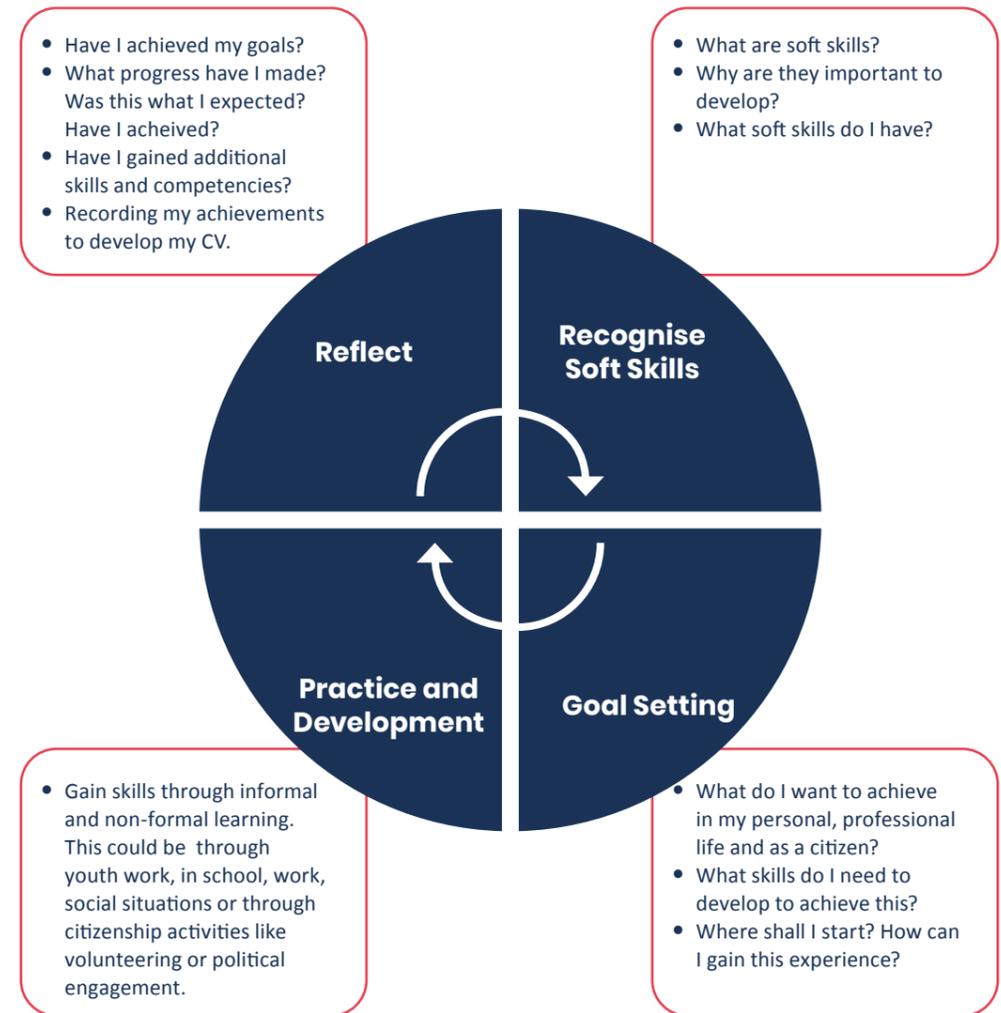
- Time management
- Stress management
- Communication skills
- Emotional Intelligence
- Decision-making
- Integrity and self-knowledge
- Ability to introduce new habits

Unlike hard skills, such as coding, plumbing, or hairdressing, soft skills aren't limited to being useful only in certain roles or situations. They are useful in every job and sector, in our lives as citizens, professionals, as friends and family members. They relate to both personal competences, such as confidence, discipline, self-management, and social competences like teamwork, communication, emotional intelligence. Our work shows that developing soft skills is a continuous process that makes young women more confident in their abilities. Youth workers have an important role in facilitating each stage of this process, although this will look different according to the age of your participants and context of your youth work.

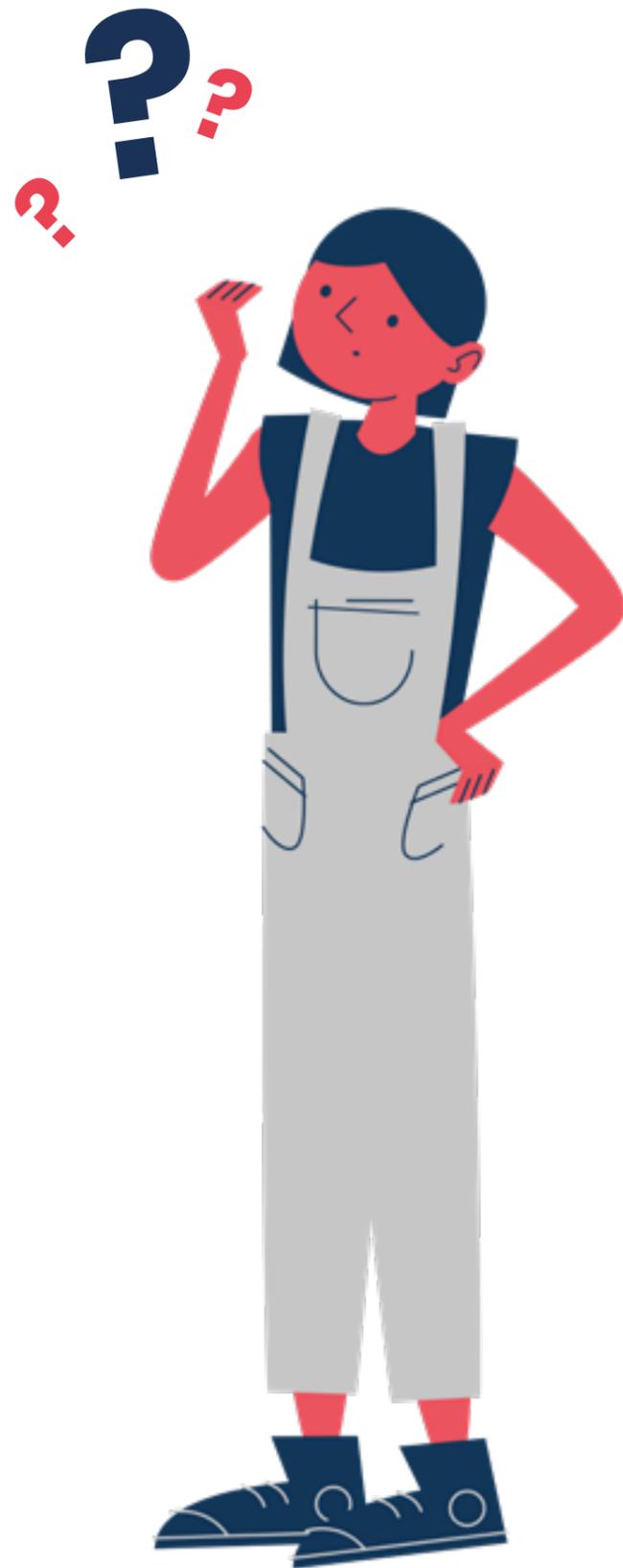
We have also seen that young women learn these skills from seeing them modelled by us as youth workers. We can be inspiring role models and through our example and encouragement, we can play an important role in the soft skills development process.

**PREPARING
YOUNG WOMEN
FOR THE FUTURE**

“Young women have so many interests and ambitions that at the beginning they even do not know what to start with. Many of the young women revealed that goal setting and self-reflection have helped them to ask the right questions to themselves and focus on a certain aim.”
Latvia



Look at the diagram above. How do you support young women in each of these four areas? What have you found to be most effective? How do you embed this process in your own skills development or that of your team?



PREPARING YOUNG WOMEN FOR THE WORLD OF WORK

“We have encouraged young women to break down their career aspirations into tangible, specific and achievable goals. We have also helped them realize that our careers can be a journey to our dream job and that finding your dream job straight out of education might not be instantly achievable. We have helped them map out their paths and supported them to see the bigger picture – to understand that working in a low-skilled or low-paid job might be one of the stepping stones towards their ultimate job. The ‘SMARTer’ goals are the more likely it is that they will be achieved, which in turn, builds confidence and self-esteem, vital to their long-term achievement.” – UK

Delivering the Red:GLOW project activities, we found out that there are several factors that influence young women on their journey to getting a good job and developing their careers.

These are the main labour market barriers we found that young women had:

- Not knowing what sort of career options exist and low aspirations
- Few examples of professional success in their own circles (family or community)
- Lack of access to personal and professional support, career guidance and mentoring in their families, social circles, and lack of access to networks. This could relate to gender and socioeconomic factors
- Poor recognition of their own skills, especially soft skills, and aptitudes
- Low confidence
- Lack of goal setting ability, ability to make choices, and to take concrete steps towards achieving goals
- Lack of commitment to professional development
- Low awareness of the job search and application process, and potential recruiters’ expectations

HOW YOUTH WORK ADDRESSES THESE BARRIERS

Supporting young women to access good jobs isn’t just about formal career advice, but about helping young women to think differently and see the links between their citizenship, skills development and the workplace, both before they get there and in the first stages of their careers. As youth workers, we enjoy helping young women to identify their aptitudes and strengths, and encourage them to discover new talents. We enjoy introducing them to new ideas and opportunities. We want to raise young women’s aspirations and help them to achieve success through setting achievable goals and planning how to achieve them.

“We decided to organize a show with the parents and let them know what we have done with their children. The result was moving when the parents asked us not to stop with the project: they were keen on project activities.” – Slovenia

Most young people are aware from school and their families that education and learning is important for their futures. It's important to recognise that most of their non-formal learning and soft-skills development isn't going to happen in your activities, but at home and school. You have an important role in helping them to recognise this. You also have a great opportunity to bring parents on their daughters' skills development journey, to understand their aspirations for her, and help them to support their daughters to achieve in each sphere of their lives.

Young people and parents are often unaware that their employers aren't only interested in their grades. Employers are looking for people with soft skills, who can learn, adapt, work with others, and take initiative. Employers are looking for people with the soft skills listed in the section above.

IDEAS FOR LINKING YOUR YOUTH WORK TO CAREERS DEVELOPMENT

"One of the barriers that our participants find it most difficult to overcome is stress management in times of more work, such as the times of quarterly exams, many of them are very pressured by the environment, for many of them their grades will be taken into account to access university and that generates a lot of tension. We try to do personalized time tracking in those seasons to prevent the girls from being overwhelmed. If they can learn to manage pressure and their workloads now, it can only help them as professionals." - Spain

Some of the young women we work with, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, may not be aware of the opportunities that exist. Many of these young women don't have role models of success around them. Neither do they necessarily have access to advice on what careers exist, whether it is a good match for their aptitudes, and the steps that they will need to take to achieve it. This may result in young women having fewer opportunities to gain work experience in the field of their choice.

"We see that what influences young most women is seeing committed people who really live what they do and not specialists who 'simply' comment on their knowledge." - Spain

You can develop activities to empower young women in their professional development. Here are some ideas that we have found helpful:

- Many successful women are delighted to have the opportunity to inspire young women and girls. Could you organise a session with HR senior manager or professional who can share personal and professional development stories and give tips? We found storytelling was important, as it allowed young women to relate better.
- Are you aware of the best online career resources in your country? Is your list up to date? There are some great resources – not just websites, but podcasts, apps and video channels – to help young women to make choices about their education and careers, as well as how to get involved in politics or community activities. Reflect upon whether you are focussing only on resources that you

would have liked at that age. There are lots of routes into work including summer programmes, apprenticeships, vocational training and university courses. Try to cover lots of bases. Maybe doing this research and compiling resources is a great opportunity for the young women you work with to familiarise themselves with the breadth of options available to them.

"Young women often do not know what to follow, how to find themselves, what is wrong or right. They need to get inspired. During the leadership program youth workers noticed that young women like to follow advice given by people that they consider authorities in some way." - Latvia

- We found mentoring to be a really useful tool to help the young women to better understand themselves, and have a safe space to discuss their options and ask for advice if they wanted it. There is no one model of mentoring, and just giving young women access to older young women who have recently gone through the situations that they are in now can help. Their slightly older peers can seem more relatable and make success seem more realistic than a very experienced professional who might seem intimidating.

"Even if some working environments are not friendly at the beginning it always can change, as it consists of people that can change because of our example – if we are not afraid to go against the tide. Another very important thing to teach young women is not to be worried when others have different styles of communication. They should not treat it as criticism but as variety and richness." - Poland

- Make sure that all of your mentors, volunteers and youth workers know that you want them to help the young women engaged in your programmes to understand that the skills they are learning can support them in becoming more employable. Embed discussion of skills and professional experiences in your activities. If you have volunteers in your team, they are likely to come from a range of professional backgrounds and can broaden the young women's professional horizons, as well as demonstrating the connection between work and citizenship, as these volunteers make the most of their professional skills to empower young women.
- Young people can be reluctant to commit to anything for a long period of time. We found emphasizing that the ability to commit and persevere was a trait desired by future employers helped young women to attend sessions regularly.

INSPIRING YOUNG WOMEN TO BECOME ACTIVE CITIZENS



“Working on a project of their choice is also a great motivator as the young women were able to take ownership over the project and choose a social issue they really felt passionately about. They really enjoyed and valued being able to run their own project as part of the leadership programme. Volunteering was a very positive experience for all of them and helped them put their leadership skills into practice but also increased their empathy. Even those who weren’t keen on volunteering at the start found the opportunity really rewarding and reported a shift in their own perspectives and life views.” – UK

Not everyone sees citizenship in the same way or shares a common definition. When we were discussing active citizenship, we agreed that:

- An active citizen promotes the quality of life in their community through political and non-political engagement, building a more equitable and just society.
- An active citizen works to develop her knowledge and skills to achieve this.
- Active citizens look for opportunities to create solidarity with others through formal and informal activities.
- Formal activities could include structured volunteering and engagement in campaigns.
- Informal activities could include creating supportive environments within organisations and encouraging people to be inclusive and generous to those in their immediate family and social circles.
- Undertaking paid work is an act of citizenship, and helps us to act to create a more equitable and just society within our workplaces.
- Policies to promote active citizenship should recognize gendered barriers to participation.

We believe that active citizenship is the ability to participate in the everyday life of society, wherever one lives. It is based on a sense of community and fellowship, co-responsibility for creating conditions for community life. It’s about having agency, wanting to make a positive difference, and knowing how to achieve this within the contexts that we operate.

MAGDA’S STORY

Magda started volunteering at the start of her studies. She is a very talented and sensitive girl. She likes to dance and write poems. However, a few years ago she was diagnosed with anorexia. It was difficult for her to make decisions and believe in herself. A friend invited her to join the volunteering programme she was a part of. She started visiting old people in care homes and read to those who could not read easily. She shared:

“Volunteering helped me to change my perspective and have a better vision of who I am and what I want. I loved this experience so much that I volunteered to coordinate volunteering activities in Red:GLOW for younger girls. I prepared posters, set dates of the meetings and led others. Volunteering helped me to grow internally and to be more responsible, as I used to change my mind quickly and I was looking for excuses not to do something. I can see that I am more self-confident and happier now.”

HOW YOUTH WORK FOSTERS CITIZENSHIP

Youth work can give young women the opportunity to grow as citizens. One important way is through fostering acts of service and volunteering. Youth work that incorporates volunteering programmes enables young women to gain practical experience, develop the skills and knowledge required of an active citizen while also contributing to their community

“Our past experiences in engaging young people in working with vulnerable immigrants showed us that we needed to prepare our young volunteers well. We knew that they wanted to help people, but also that they might struggle to manage their emotions in the face of others’ poverty and suffering that they would encounter during volunteering. It wasn’t only about preparing themselves, but also about being able to support each other.” – Italy

“We offered some workshops to help young women to prepare to volunteer. One thing that was helpful was arranging sessions with professionals in that field. We invited nurses and doctors to talk about how to take care of old or ill persons when our young people have chosen to volunteer with the elderly and disabled. This allowed the young people to see how their volunteering could provide work experience and develop skills for work as well.” – Poland

You can find a complete guide to developing structured volunteering programmes in your local context that we have developed as part of the Red:GLOW project here, but it is important to start by thinking about how you enable the young women involved in your programmes to volunteer in your own organisations. We have to start modelling active citizenship in our own organisations, allowing young people to explore both their rights and responsibilities.

EMBEDDING A SENSE OF JUSTICE

Citizenship is a lived practice, not an occasional activity. How do you embed a love for justice and solidarity in all of your activities? How do you try to remove barriers to access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds? For example, in cookery activities, you could help young people to think about who grew the food they are eating or who has access to food. In activities involving fashion, they could think about the social and environmental impacts of fast fashion and what alternatives there are for people with limited budgets. In arts, drama and crafts activities,

they can explore techniques and histories beyond the obvious. Could you invite a migrant community group to share something from their culture, demonstrating that migrants and minorities have skills and cultures worth exploring?

MARYAM’S STORY

Maryam is a 23-year-old girl from Morocco who came to Italy to complete her studies. She came from a wealthy family and would’ve preferred to live in an apartment but her parents wanted her to live in Porta Nevia with other university students. At first, she found it very difficult to live in a community, and understand that she had responsibilities, as well as rights. In the beginning she struggled to make friends and to connect with other students in her group at university. After a few months in Italy, she chose to participate in the Red:GLOW volunteering project, and went on to volunteer at a Refugee Reception.

“I became aware of the huge challenges that other people face and of the situations of war and poverty in other countries. Volunteering helped me to leave my comfort zone, my sort of protected world. It opened my horizons on how to be a more active and responsible citizen. I decided to celebrate my birthday in the Refugee Centre and have a party there with the children. It has changed how I see the world”.

BEING HEARD

An important part of citizenship is knowing that we each have a voice and the right to be heard, as well as how to put across our views in ways that engages people and lead to change. We can start this in our organisations, modelling this through encouraging young people to get engaged in developing, leading and evaluating activities for their peers, and in providing feedback to organisation leaders. We found that this helps them to gain confidence, and that they can then take these skills into lobbying for change, from those in positions of power – politicians, policy-makers and influential business and civic leaders – in the wider world.

Encouraging them to get involved in campaigning activities – identifying issues in their local communities, researching them, understanding who has the power to make a difference, and then planning a campaign – is also a great opportunity to gain many soft skills. These are the same skills that they can use to create change or to be heard in their professional lives, where so many women are passed over. Additionally, this helps young women to begin to understand the statutory agencies that touch their own lives, and to be empowered to advocate for themselves.

EXPANDING HORIZONS

Volunteering does more than allow young women to have a positive impact in their communities and learn skills. Volunteering can also expand a young woman’s horizons, her networks and social capital. Through volunteering we have the chance to meet people of different ages and social backgrounds, to learn from them and to create new relationships. These relationships could inform their future decisions and provide opportunities to achieve them.

FATIMA'S STORY

Fatima took part in Red:GLOW Leadership and Volunteering activities. She was 15 and doing well at school, but had overprotective parents, and hadn't done any citizenship activities before. She tells us:

"I volunteered with children at risk of exclusion. It was the first time that I had been to such a poor neighbourhood. We travelled by bus to get there and it was the first time that I had used public transport, because my parents had always taken me from one place to another. I was happy to have put my talents and abilities to good use and to help people in need. I was surprised by many of the things that I saw in my own city. I am now thinking about what to study at university, and I want to make sure that I can do something to help others in future".

The Volunteering Guide contains many ideas to develop a volunteering programme that suits the young people you are working with and contains more inspiration and ideas.

REFLECTION

- How do you embed citizenship into your programmes?
- Do you currently encourage young women to volunteer in your own activities, for example for their young peers?
- Do you support your young volunteers to get to know each other and to learn from each other, so that they broaden their horizons beyond their specific volunteer roles?
- How do we make sure that volunteering isn't focussed only on the young people we work with gaining skills, but also on ensuring that their actions are genuinely helpful to others?
- How do you support young volunteers to reflect on their volunteering and the skills they are gaining so that these can be applied in other situations?
- How do you share opportunities for young women to participate in citizenship activities that would give them the chance to gain skills and broaden their horizons? These could be:
 - Developing their own initiatives
 - Access to structured volunteering
 - Campaigning
 - Political activities
 - Debating programmes
 - Meeting people with influence
 - Professional ethics
 - Sharing information on social issues, such as modern slavery, environmental justice, inclusion of minorities, etc.
 - Inviting speakers from minority groups to showcase the importance of every person in your community
- How do you encourage everyone – volunteers and young women – to speak up and share their ideas for how things can be improved?
- Do you create systems where young people can see citizenship modelled in your organisation, and learn how it works, perhaps through youth councils or elected positions?
- How do you model citizenship so that young women see that it is worth making the effort to campaign for positive change, whether that is in their communities, workplaces, or at the (supra)national level?

- How do you enable participation of those with barriers to integration, for example those with disabilities, people who don't speak the local language well, or those who have less experience of having their voice listened to? How do you model equity so that young women see that active citizenship is not just the privilege of the few?
- How do you keep young people motivated as citizens when they see a situation that isn't fair or good, and there are no easy solutions?

**GOSIA'S STORY:
WHAT I'VE LEARNED
FROM MY YOUTH
WORK**

Gosia is 40, works in a bank full time but has been a volunteer youth worker at 'Dziesiątka' in Poland for several years. She is a mentor and a coach. Here she tells us about why supporting young women is important to her:

"I am conscious of the obstacles women face at work like glass ceilings, lack of confidence in their competences, and a different – more cooperative and not autocratic – style of work that often is considered as a sign of weakness. This has made me passionate about new trends in leadership – leadership based on trust, courage, involvement, that give long-term results and do not destroy human relations.

I try to question the stereotypes of leaders that many young women have, especially those studying economics or management. Working with them to prepare the programmes it became clear that it was really important not only to transmit ideas but give tips and tools and positive examples of women leaders. In our country this approach is still quite new. We gathered great speakers and participants who were able to create a network of women with great contacts and diverse experiences. Thanks to the project, some fantastic women contacted us asking about the workshops. While we contacted them back and shared our vision and a need to help young women to become more self-confident, they expressed their willingness to help. Many guests invited the young people to stay in touch and ask more questions. One, who talked about the recruitment process, offered to help those who would like to check or to prepare a CV. After one meeting one of the participants said: 'That's unbelievable that we are not being taught how to apply for a job at university', which confirms how important such practical knowledge is.

I also tried to encourage those in the leadership programme to volunteer, further developing their practical competencies and soft skills. Agnieszka became a young leader and was involved with the organizational part of events and their evaluation. She told me that: 'It helped me feel the sense of responsibility and appreciate the need for personal development in various fields. You never know what might be useful. In addition, the project is an opportunity for girls to make new, valuable friendships, which I noticed.

I would maintain a very interactive form of workshops while at the same time create a space where participants would feel safe and comfortable to share ideas. For young women, lectures without games or seeing samples of videos would be boring. After the workshops they can ask anything, share ideas or problems they are struggling with.

I have learnt so much myself from the other youth workers in Red:GLOW. It's really encouraged me to reflect and to see all we have achieved, as well as all the possibilities for the future".



TOP TIPS TO EMPOWER YOUNG WOMEN AS LEADERS, CITIZENS, AND PROFESSIONALS

We would like to share six ideas that we believe are fundamental to delivering youth work that empowers young women. Some of these may be familiar to you. As youth workers working with young women in north, south, east and west Europe, with different cultures, we found that all of these tips were important for all of us, applied to our own situations and cultural contexts.

FOSTER YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

"Young people think leading is delegating, being bossy. Only one type of person can be a leader. Discovering that everyone can be a leader was novel." – Poland

DEVELOPING YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Have you ever thought about how often leadership programmes are delivered in ways that prevent young people from leading? From the first moment when we start preparing leadership programmes for young women, we can involve them in their development and delivery. Giving them the opportunity to see that their leadership is valued by others, and giving them opportunities to practice leadership is essential to them developing these skills. Whilst this can make the preparation more time-consuming, this is when young people are actually learning soft skills. If you don't believe that they can contribute to making your project effective, how can we expect employers or others to value the soft skills that young women have?

ZOSIA'S STORY

ZOSIA, from Warsaw, is a bright and lively 16-year-old who loves talking and having people around. Her family faces economic hardship and she has not always had good opportunities. She tells us:

"If you had told me before this programme that I would have had the courage to do a presentation in front of others in English I wouldn't have believed you! I have learnt so many tools and tips on how to be a good leader. There are many situations that demonstrate that other girls do not believe in themselves.

When we did our presentations some people who did great presentations evaluated themselves poorly because they lacked self-confidence. There were also students who didn't do a great job but their evaluation didn't reflect it. This opportunity has been important for my own development, but also means that I can mentor others at schools. I've not only learned about leadership but had the chance to practice leading and support my friends."

Through delivering Red:GLOW's leadership and volunteering activities we saw that, in some countries, leadership was typically taught through lectures and activities where young women could feel anonymous and overlooked. They could complete a course in leadership without ever having the chance to develop those skills. Some young women have skills and confidence and are eager to try new things. Others

who sign up to develop their leadership skills do so because they know that this is a challenge for them. Through this we saw that leadership programmes must be interactive and give every participant the chance to take an active role and achieve their goals. We also saw that some people – for example migrants who weren't confident in the local language – faced additional challenges.

It is important to remember that there are different types of leadership and it is important to be attentive to various leadership talents that your project participants may have. Our leadership programme explores this further and is available here.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP

"It was very important to engage participants in practical activities not just to give a lecture." – Latvia

Volunteering can be an excellent opportunity to practice leadership skills, whether this is taking on a role within your organisation, or externally. However, young women in your context may not easily make the connection between service to others and leadership, and you may need to guide them in understanding this. Use examples to help them to see that there are many different forms of leadership and how this relates to the experience they could have as a volunteer. Our volunteer programme guide supports youth workers to do this. Can you think of a young leader who spent a significant amount of time in her youth volunteering? Can you invite her to share her experience with young women from your project?

CREATING ENVIRONMENTS THAT FOSTER YOUTH LEADERSHIP

We found that a number of things helped us to create a dynamic atmosphere to foster youth leadership:

"At the end of every session, we had a short feedback session where the participants briefly recapped the activity and shared their thoughts. Feedback sessions at the end of each lecture let us understand the value of the workshop, what was learnt or understood, and how it was received." – Latvia

"Youth workers noticed that participants are more engaged in the activity when a person that is their age leads the session. Young women liked this method very much. They worked with their mentors to prepare their presentations. They had a huge need to share their doubts and concerns and ask for advice in relation to their leadership skills. It was a great opportunity to get back to what they have learned from other activities and to help them to set individual goals." – Latvia

"The leadership programme was delivered through structured, yet very participatory sessions which allowed the young women to learn about and discuss female leadership and active citizenship in depth." – UK

- Get young women involved in every aspect of the project, from development to delivery and evaluation. Make sure they have the support they need to do this.
- Make sure that the activities are tailor-made and interactive – not formal or school-like.
- Involve women of different ages with different experiences of leadership so that the young women can ask them questions.
- Make sure young people can feedback. This allows them to practice voicing their thoughts in a constructive way and well as building their confidence.

REFLECTION

- **How do you involve young people in designing and delivering your projects?**
 - How do you give young women the chance to choose the activities that would help them best to learn and grow?
 - What are the challenges that you face in doing this?
 - How do you give young women the chance to lead sessions themselves and develop their leadership skills in this way?
 - How do you give them the chance to teach each other and lead activities for their peers and younger girls?
 - Are there young people on your leadership team, or board?
- **How do you ensure that every participant in your activities is heard and has the chance to actively participate?**
 - How do you listen to young people and take on board their views?
 - How do you give young people the chance to share their feedback on your activities?
 - How do you make sure that every voice is heard, even those who have little confidence or have poor language skills?
 - How do you give young women the chance to share their doubts and concerns in an environment where they feel that they can speak freely and without judgment?
 - How do you make them see that they have something useful to contribute and that their knowledge and experience are valuable?
 - How do you use their feedback? Do you make sure that you follow it up so that your activities improve?

CREATE EMPOWERING SPACES WHERE GIRLS FEEL CONFIDENT

“First create an atmosphere where all participants feel safe and supported. Do not forget about feedback sessions as often as it is needed: all young women need to be heard and want to share their ideas, fears, doubts and dreams.” – Latvia

One of the things our youth workers realised was that young women learn as much when ‘wasting time’ as they do in programmed activities. This ‘non-formal’ learning is where they can naturally discuss. It is worthwhile budgeting time and money for things that in your culture make people feel welcomed. Sometimes it will be a bowl of biscuits and a cup of tea, sometimes going out to a cafe.

“Young women themselves admitted that ice-breaking activities had helped them to feel more comfortable during the leadership programme to focus more on the tasks and goals than the idea, how will I look in the eyes of other young women.” – Latvia

Often young women joining your programmes will not be well known to you or to each other. Make sure that there is enough time for ice-breaking activities. What would help each of them (given their background and life circumstances) to feel part of the project? Even better, can you get young people to develop and lead these games, or to choose the biscuits and manage the refreshment budget?

In your evaluation (both formal and those chance chats in corridors) check whether the young people actually feel included. Has everyone spoken in this session? Are there inclusive dynamics or are cliques forming? How can you address this?

ANALIA'S STORY

Analia is 24 and from Angola. She was awarded a scholarship and came to study in Rome. When we met her, she was in her final year of studies, and chose to live in Porta Nevia student residence, where she participated in the Red:GLOW leadership and volunteering programmes. She tells us:

“When I arrived in Italy I struggled to relate to people. Although I learnt Italian quite quickly, I found it hard to make friends both at university and in the residence. I was lucky because I met some other Africans in Rome who I found it easier to connect with. However, because I didn't have friends on my course I struggled to prepare for my exams.

I decided to try out the leadership activities at Porta Nevia. They made me see

that if I needed help, I needed to ask for it. I gained confidence and started to share my opinions a little more. I hadn't really heard of soft skills before. I realised that I needed to develop my teamwork and communication skills with my Italian peers and took responsibility for coordinating some group activities as well.

I feel more motivated to finish university and look for a job, I have a clearer idea of my strengths and also the gaps in my skills that I need to fix. Growing in confidence has helped me to connect with people who don't understand my culture and may have a negative view of Africans. I know that their prejudices are because of their lack of exposure, not because there is something wrong with me. I am proud of my culture and who I am, but I am also coming to understand the beautiful things about Italian culture as well.”

REFLECTION

- Do you know what a ‘safe space’ means for your project participants?
- How do you make sure that the ‘time-wasting’ activities that make young people feel welcome are included in your budget and session plans?
- How do you help young people to overcome their biases against minorities and other marginalised groups?
- Cliques and bullying are common in groups of young women but are the enemies of empowering spaces. What do you do to prevent them and to address them if they occur?

RECOGNISE THAT EVERYONE THRIVES IN A DIFFERENT WAY

“When young women gained more confidence about themselves, they were able to set their goals more easily and aim higher. I would suggest that other youth workers use methodologies and techniques in their work that improve a person’s self-esteem, confidence. Give positive feedback and encouragement to young women as often as possible.” – Latvia

Our youth workers found that spending time with each young woman at the beginning of a project was important. Understanding their levels of self-confidence was important, because their ability to develop their skills and talents and their understanding of their strengths and achievements, rested on it. A lack of self-confidence can completely blind a young woman from seeing her own potential. We always try to remember that young women look up also to us as youth workers in order to find acceptance and encouragement.

“I realise that me and my friends are all so self-critical. We always think of our weaknesses and not our strengths. At the Red:GLOW workshop in Rome I realised that we each have to remind each other of when we succeed, because we only remember the times when we fail. I am going to try to remind my friends that they have many talents. Sometimes we are so aware of what we don’t have that we don’t even think about applying for jobs and programmes. If we are even too scared to apply for something at university how are we going to make the world a better place?” – Ana, Spain

We know, as youth workers, that it is natural to connect more to some young people than others. It is particularly easy to connect with young people from similar backgrounds, and therefore to exclude girls with different backgrounds. Other young people may command our attention in other ways. If we don’t reflect upon this regularly, we may unconsciously put more effort into supporting our ‘favourites’, or those who are loudest and neglect the needs of others.

ABI’S STORY

At the start of the volunteering project Abi was reluctant to volunteer. She had a lot going on at school, and was studying towards her A-Levels. At home, she was also a carer for her disabled sister. Consequently, she found it hard to understand the value of volunteering.

Baytree organised a group volunteering day at a care home for elderly

people. Abi came, as her friends were attending and they were all interested in the free lunch offered. She didn’t think she’d have anything to say or would be able to connect with the elderly people. However as soon as she arrived at the care home her whole demeanour changed. She loved chatting with the people, playing games, serving meals and asking questions about their lives. At the end of the day, she didn’t want to leave and now volunteers on a weekly basis.

REFLECTION

- How do you help young women understand better their weaknesses and strengths? How do you encourage young women to reflect upon their own character and talents? Which techniques do you promote to empower young women to understand themselves better and boost their confidence?
- How do you evaluate their self-confidence and self-esteem, and whether they are improving this in your programmes?
- How do you reflect upon whether you invest equal amounts of time with all participants, or invest time according to need, rather than investing in ‘favourites’?
- How do you give positive feedback and affirm young women?
- How do you encourage young women to give positive feedback to each other?
- Do you encourage mentoring and, if so, ensure that mentors are well-trained?

SEE FAILURE AS AN IMPORTANT LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

“Next time I would give the girls more work to do and more responsibility. Don’t spoon feed them. Get them to try and give them support when they need it.” – Poland

Does this reflection of our Polish colleague, a youth worker, sound familiar to you? We know that, just like us, you realise that some of your activities could have empowered young women more and could have been done better. This reflection also shows that programmes designed to prevent young women from failing deny them opportunities to learn.

“Sometimes I am so scared of failing that I just don’t try. I missed out on a promotion at work because I didn’t apply. One of my friends is always trying new things. She recently applied for a graduate programme and didn’t get it. She was so upset, but after talking with her mentor she realised that she had actually learnt a lot through the process. She’d got through three rounds, she had gained interview experience. She’d learned a lot about the industry. She’s now more informed about what to apply for in future. I was really impressed by her bravery. I need to remember that.” – Tolu, UK

“When girls don’t succeed at something, we talk about what happened and reflect on why. Together we think about what was the real reason that things went wrong so that they learn from it. It helps them because they get to know themselves and each other much better and to help each other to recognise their strengths as well as make suggestions for how to succeed next time.” – Spain

Allowing young women to make mistakes is smarter than spoon feeding them. Experience of making mistakes, talking about it openly with a mentor or project coordinator and understanding that mistakes aren’t the end of the world is truly valuable for young women’s further professional development and chances to have the career of her dreams. It’s also important to remember that we can model this. When things go wrong, (and a constant of youth work is things not going to plan!) how do they see us react?

It’s easy to get frustrated, or even despondent. But we can use this as an opportunity to engage them in the process of starting again, overcoming, or mitigating risk. That lesson might be much more valuable than anything they could

have learnt in your planned activity. When their own plans don’t work, it can seem easier to move to another activity, but it could be better to give them the chance to understand what went wrong, and to re-plan. Any attempts to succeed in life require staying power, courage, perseverance, and problem solving. Failing and overcoming develop all of these.

REFLECTION

- How do you help young people to reflect on failure? Is it by seeing what they have learnt, rather than where they didn’t succeed?
- How do you encourage them to try again?
- How do you create an environment where the other young people are encouraging and supportive and see the value in trying new things, rather than condemning failure?
- How do you model this yourself when you fail? And how do ensure that your activities allow young people opportunities to fail and overcome?



PUT PEOPLE BEFORE PROCESSES

“As a tip for youth workers, I would say that it is important to be very human in our relationships with participants. Humanizing relationships are key for these types of projects to have a real impact, even though many times it may seem that with a call, or an encounter, time is lost and that it is more efficient sending an email.” – Spain

Good management is essential to good youth work. It’s crucial that we have good procedures in place to keep young people and youth workers safe. Good management and financial responsibility are needed. However, youth work is not primarily about being the most efficient project manager. Youth workers need to be able to build relationships and understand young women’s needs, specific situations, doubts, fears and dreams, all of which are all important factors for unlocking the potential for personal development. Youth workers need to be good listeners. How do we make sure that we make sure that what we are doing meets the needs of the young women we are working with?

DACE’S STORY

Eighteen-year-old Dace is studying in the high school and is also focussing on learning the violin.

“During the leadership programme the first thing I discovered is that I can be friends with people that are very different from me. When I saw that all participants had completely different backgrounds, I was shocked at first, but later became very close friends with the other girls.

I realized that I struggle when there is no obvious solution to a conflict. In the leadership programme I learnt a lot about working in a team and how to be good friends with team-mates. I overcame my shyness during the voluntary project because I had to talk with many people. I also learnt more about my emotions and how to work with them during hard situations.

Continuing with my challenge to discover different abilities (other than music), I have decided to work as a volunteer in one of KIB projects during next semester. The leadership programme has encouraged me to engage with different people and ask myself the right questions, to understand myself better. I have found a part-time job parallel to my studies in high school – I am working in marketing – gathering information related to climate change. I gained confidence to start something new that is not related with music.”

REFLECTION

- How do we listen to young people so that we understand their needs and ensure that our youth work meets them?
- Do we repeat the same activities each time, or adapt them for each group?
- How do we evaluate our work to ensure that we are having a people-focussed approach?
- How do we make sure that youth workers in our organisations feel valued?
- How do we divide our time so that we set aside enough time to listen to other youth workers or young people?
- When time is short, which activities do I cut out?
- Are there ways of making people feel appreciated and listened to that I can use when I have less time or no budget for this type of activity?

BUILDING REFLECTION AS A HABIT

“We recommend time for personal and group reflection. We share and analyzed what we had done together. So, we discuss what went well, what went wrong and what should be better. In that way we can see what we have achieved through our work and at the same time be aware because there is plenty of room to improve.” - Slovenia

Referring back to the diagram on page 11, reflection is an important part of helping young women to identify the skills that they have, the skills they want to learn, and to set goals. It’s essential to help them to see the soft and hard skills they learn – whether that it is in your youth programmes or elsewhere.

Helping young women to know themselves better and recognise their talents, rather than only being self-critical, can boost their confidence. We found that incorporating reflection moments in our activities increased young women’s learning and understanding, as they could relate what they were learning to their wider contexts. Mentors can also play an important role in helping young women to build this habit.

“The greatest help for volunteers came from their own motivation and interest. When things have been tough, mentors have helped and activity leaders and other team members have encouraged. The most need for help was during the periods when there was a loss of motivation. It was important to reflect on why they had started, what they had originally wanted to achieve, and their progress towards their goals.” – Latvia

Like every good habit, we found that it was equally essential to us as youth workers and organisations. Reflecting on our own learning, successes and failures informed this guide, but also helped us to increase the impact of our work. It helped us to see where what we were saying wasn’t matching with what we were doing. It also sets an example when young women can see their mentors and activity leaders also learning, trying new things, and starting again when things don’t work.

Evaluation is an essential part of improving youth work and project delivery, but reflection is about more than providing a snapshot – it helps us to build sustainable projects. Reflection allows us to see how our organisations could be more effective. It allows us to recognise our colleagues’ skills and successes, and to offer support where they need it. It allows us to identify gaps in resources and to start planning to address them.

REFLECTION

- How do you make sure young women are empowered to reflect on what they learn in your programmes?
- How do you get feedback and evaluation from young women (and their parents) and youth workers involved with your projects?
- When you evaluate your activities, how do you reflect on the feedback you receive?
- How do you encourage youth workers to reflect on their own personal skills developments?
- How do you celebrate youth workers’ achievements and affirm them?
- Is there a cultural practice or trend that you can build upon to facilitate reflection in your organisation? For example, it could be keeping a journal, sharing ideas over a cup of tea after an activity, or an art project.



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