

# Youth Ambassadors Of Non-formal Learning Manual

A compendium of competences, tips and tricks to become the ultimate ambassador of Non-Formal Learning









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#### "Youth Ambassadors of Non Formal Learning" project

The project "Youth Ambassadors of Non Formal Learning" is a Capacity Building activity involving 11 partners from program countries and WB countries, aiming at promoting participation in Non Formal Education activities and the power of validation and recognition of competences acquired outside the formal education environment through an innovative methodology.

On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2012 the Council of the European Union issued a **recommendation** (2012/C 398/01) urging the member states to develop and empower ways of **recognition and validation of Non Formal Learning**. Since then, a lot has been made in the different member states, but such work has not followed the same path when it comes to the neighboring countries of the Western Balkans.

With our project, we want to take into consideration what has been done so far



within this area, research for best practices and successful stories, and get ready to go on the field to reinforce the importance of Non Formal Learning.

Within this actions, we want to **involve** youth NGOs (responsible for developing NFL activities), public institutions (responsible to design dedicated policies), private business companies (aiming at increasing the knowledge and recognition by employers of NFL competences) and, most important, young people.

The participants took on a journey lasting for **2 years** to get to know already existing **best practices** to be transferred in their local realities, to know all the important features of Non Formal Learning and their **practical applications**, to collect inspiring **success stories**, to develop dedicated **tools and methods**, and to get trained to directly work on the field.

Following the recommendations developed in the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of Structured Dialogue, this journey leads them to become "Youth Ambassadors of Non Formal Learning", acting in their local realities but also able to work transnationally through the creation of a specific network of youth ambassadors working in synergy in a sustainable way.









#### The Erasmus + Youth Programme

**Erasmus+** is the EU Programme for **education**, **training**, **youth and sport**, key areas that support citizens in their personal and professional development.

High quality, inclusive education and training, as well as informal and non-formal



learning, ultimately equip young people and participants of all ages with the qualifications and skills needed for their meaningful participation in democratic society, intercultural understanding and successful transition in the labour market. programme is managed by the European Commission through its Education, **Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency** 

**(Executive Agency)**, which is responsible for the implementation of the centralised Actions of Erasmus +, such as the Capacity Building under which this project is financed.

The programme is dedicated to several priorities, such as the **Recognition and Validation of Skills and Qualifications**, spreading of Project Results to be multiplied keeping an Open Access approach, International Dimension of its actions, keeping as important assets Multilingualism, Inclusion and Equity, and Protection and Safety of participants.

The Erasmus + programme, as main actions, supports Mobility of Individuals, Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices, and Support for Policy Reform, and is dedicated to a large number of individuals and entities in different countries not only in the EU, but also in its neighbouring areas and the rest of the world.

The **Youth chapter** of Erasmus + is pursuing the following objectives, which our project also strives for:

- improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those
  with fewer opportunities, in particular through increased learning mobility
  opportunities and through strengthened links between the youth field and the
  labour market;
- **foster** quality improvements in youth work, in particular through enhanced cooperation between organisations in the youth field and/or other stakeholders;
- **complement** policy reforms at local, regional and national level;
- **enhance** the international dimension of youth activities and the capacity of youth workers and organisations in their support for young people, in particular through









the promotion of mobility and cooperation between stakeholders from Programme and Partner Countries and international organisations.

#### The partnership of YAMNFL

The consortium of "Youth Ambassadors of Non Formal Learning" is constituted by 11 partners, NGOs working in the fields of youth work, education and employability, set in 11 different countries in EU, pre-accession countries and Western Balkans.



#### **Coordinator:**

LDA Mostar – Bosnia & Herzegovina

#### Partners:

- The Future Now Association Bulgaria
- Youth 4 Society Albania
- Associazione TDM 2000 ODV Italy
- Turk Girisim ve Is Dunyasi Konfederasyonu Turkey
- NGO luventa Serbia
- Asocijacija za demokratski prosperitet (ZID) Montenegro
- Center for Intercultural Dialogue North Macedonia
- Kosovo Center of Diplomacy Kosovo
- United Society of Balkans Greece
- Društvo za razvijanje prostovoljnega dela Novo mesto Slovenia









#### The Manual for Youth Ambassadors

This publication wants to provide tips, ideas, and practical tools for youngsters willing to take and act in the role of Youth Ambassadors of Non Formal Learning.

The Manual is one of the main outputs of the project, as it represents the way to get prepared to act directly with young people to inspire them quide them the and in participation Non Formal Learning based activities. providing them information on their actual impact and how they can get benefits from them, including social and formal recognition of the competences they can gain.



The manual contains different

sections that can be useful, in various ways, to prepare a young, motivated person to be ready to take the lead of dedicated activities for peer-to-peer education using Non Formal Education methodology.

#### This includes:

- Details about Non Formal Education, its meaning and concepts
- Ideas, examples and updates about recognition of NFL in different countries and contexts
- Assets, values and competences needed to be a good Youth Ambassador
- Ideas on how to attract young people and what target groups to direct activities to
- Ideas on possible activities to pass on concepts related with NFL and its recognition and validation

This manual is to be considered as complementary to the information contained in the package of publications developed within the project "Youth Ambassadors of Non Formal Learning", which includes:









- The <u>"Research on Validation and Recognition of Non Formal Learning in European Union, Western Balkans and Turkey"</u>, presenting the situation connected with this topic in the 11 countries where the partners of the project are based;
- The <u>"Catalogue of inspiring stories about Non Formal Education"</u>, collecting 55 stories of young people that managed to find new directions for their personal and professional life and career through participation in Non Formal Education activities;
- <u>"From recognition and validation to resolution of Non Formal Education"</u>, a gathering
  of suggestions to implement new policies for NFE in different countries.

### Non Formal Learning: What is it?

The two concepts of Education and Learning are deeply connected: while the first one represents the process of passing knowledge, skills and values through different tools and means, the second one represents the acquiring of such competences for an individual or group. With this in mind, we need to make a distinction:

- Formal education is a structured and standardized system to provide learning to different individuals and groups, generally through the system created by a government/institution;
- Informal learning is a process through which a person builds up own knowledge, skills and values from the educational influences and resources in their own environment and from daily experience.

Non Formal Education, instead, refers to planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of knowledge, skills, competences, and attitudes, outside the formal educational curriculum.



Non-formal education is what happens in places such as youth organisations, sports clubs community or groups where young people meet, for example, to undertake projects together, play discuss, games, go camping, make music and drama, and other undertake dynamic, creative actions under structured educational programme.









#### Important features of Non-formal education:

- voluntary
- accessible to everyone (ideally)
- an organised process with educational objectives
- participatory
- learner-centred (organised on the basis of the needs of the participants)
- about learning life skills and active citizenship
- guaranteeing a safe space for learning and expressing
- based on involving both individual and group learning with a collective approach
- holistic and process-oriented
- based on experience and action
- non hierarchical
- stimulating a dynamic and creative approach
- based on self-assessment

Some thoughts of the Youth Ambassadors and materials about the topic can be found

here https://padlet.com/fgaviano/dp98t90f2nvysp45

#### What can Non Formal Education be useful for?

Non-formal education expresses the core principles that should be at the heart of all good education:

- ✓ It offers a safe space for learning new skills or information.
- ✓ It improves individual skills and the quality of life by inspiring and motivating.
- ✓ It Stimulates **Creativity and Participation** by being inclusive and participatory
- ✓ It offers **liberation from** the usual **competition** of the formal education









- ✓ It is relevant to the learner's life and the needs of society
- ✓ It is appropriate to the level of the learner's development, with new content and experiences being introduced when the learner is ready. It is learnercentred and life-long oriented
- ✓ It is flexible in what is taught and how it is taught, and to the needs of the different learners and flexible to different learning styles.



Non-formal education programs have the potential to be of exceptionally high quality, because they can respond more easily to the needs of individuals and specific groups in the community.

Achievements that can be reached through Non Formal Learning acquired competences:

- Additional employability opportunities in different fields, considering the variety
  of experiences collected, the capacity to adapt and think out of the box which are
  usual skills acquired through NFL, and the add-on of a diverse set of educational
  activities in which the potential employee took part
- More motivation to follow additional studies on a topic: often NFL offers food for thoughts which make us reflect and want to know more on given topics, stimulating the will to proceed to look for more information and use other methodologies to increase our specific knowledge and skills
- Career options that we did not think about before, both in terms of employment, building up of own business or organization, social enterprises, different for profit or non for profit activities









- Acquiring of **skills that are important for life and for personal development**, such as self-esteem, intercultural communication, capacity to adapt, empathy, inclusive and sustainable mindset, time management and more.

All in all, Non Formal Education and Non Formal Learning represent a great asset if used in a complementary way with our Informal Experiences and a well structured Formal Education path.

#### About Recognition of Non Formal Education

One of the main issues which is hindering participation of young people (and not only) in Non Formal Learning activities, it's the difficulty in getting their progress and achievements recognized.

For some people it's immediately clear how taking part in Non Formal Education can be a boost for their personal and professional life, but some others still can't see how a methodology where tracking of goals reached is based on self-assessment can be used for augmenting own employability, empower their knowledge on certain topics, or increasing own personal satisfaction.

For this reason, they need their improved competences (meaning both theoretic knowledge, practical skills, and values and attitudes) to get a **proper recognition**.

In 2012, the Council of European Union emitted a **recommendation to all member states** to establish a national system of validation of Non formal and Informal learning based on the European guidelines for recognition. It moreover underlined that member countries shall improve the interrelationship between education, training and employment, and build bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning. Information on the guidelines of EU in terms of validation and recognition of Non formal and Informal learning can be found here <a href="https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/3073">https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/3073</a>.

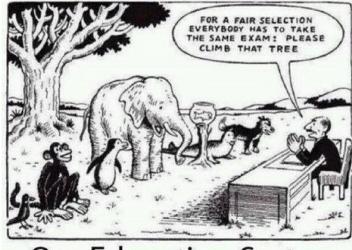
Today, **lifelong learning policies** and practices are becoming progressively more developed in many countries, and it became more and more clear that skills, knowledge and/or competences can be also acquired outside formal educational contexts. For this, there is a growing urge and an ongoing process to consider skills, knowledge and/or competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning as a potential source of untapped human capital, and to find ways to give them proper value.











# **Our Education System**

Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

This process does not need to be too formalized indeed: some light approaches to recognition of nonformal and informal learning are often considered in different countries' systems, such as self-assessment and/or portfolios of competences.

The recognition of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning has triggered a **shift of focus from learning to assessment, from inputs to outcomes**. In addition, there has been some significant progress made in the assessment of skills, knowledge and/or competences. In short, it is not the number of years, nor where and when, that people have learnt that matters but what they know or can do.

It is likely that this will soon have an impact on assessment procedures and methodologies in the context of recognition of formal learning as well.

However, it is also important to underline that recognition goes not only in the **political** level, meaning having a clear law defining how Non Formal Education works, how its learning achievements are validated and what kind of paths these competences can open. It also means getting a **social** recognition, with majority of people understanding its clear added value, employers taking it into account when evaluating a potential new employee, and peers generally evaluating its role in a positive and useful way rather than considering a waste of time taken away from "more serious stuff".

Moreover, the relevance of NFL is not restricted to the context of lifelong learning. "Its current success has probably to do with the fact that it is also presented as a way of improving the efficiency of the labo r market through increasing the mobility of workers; the visibility of skills, knowledge and competences; the opportunities for immigrants etc." (Werquin 2008, 143).

A complete view of the current situation regarding rules, processes, laws and recognition and validation of Non Formal Education and competences acquired in Non Formal and Informal Learning settings can be found in the Youth Ambassadors publication of the dedicated research "Research on Validation and Recognition of Non Formal Learning in European Union, Western Balkans and Turkey".

You can find it here

https://www.ldamostar.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/YAMNFL-RESEARCH.pdf











# Being a Youth Ambassador of NFL: what does it mean?

Youth Ambassadors of Non Formal Education are trained youngsters (age 18-30) which can use a peer-to-peer approach to provide their experience to inspire other young people and relevant stakeholders in giving a higher credit and a better use to NFL experiences.

Their ultimate aim is to promote the role of NFL in the development of competences starting from their real experiences on the field, successful stories and dedicated methods, being agents of change in their local reality and in their area of Europe.

Being Youth Ambassadors means:

- Being aged between 18 and 30 years old in order to be closer to the young people to which they should refer
- Having collected previous experience in participating in Non Formal Learning activities, at local and/or international level
- Being ready and motivated to explain and share own personal stories and how NFL changed their life, career, opportunities
- Willing to represent an inspirational role model for young people taking part in their activities
- Possessing the set of skills and competences described in next chapter of this manual, or being ready to work on their development
- Networking with other Youth Ambassadors in local and international level











Moreover, the process to get prepared to become a Youth Ambassador of NFL consisted of different steps:

- **Selection** process checking out requirements and motivation
- **Preparation** by expert NGO in own country of residence
- Attendance to specific **Training Course** about NFL, its recognition, and skills and competences for being a Youth Ambassador
- **Job Shadowing** abroad of 3 weeks in another youth NGO using Non Formal Education
- Participation in **Seminar** to exchange good practices and experiences connected with the Job Shadowings and different findings
- Checking out of existing publications related to the project, including this manual, the Catalogue of inspiring stories, the Research on the state of art of NFL validation, and the Inspiration paper for policy making
- Providing information to youth in local community through local virtual and physical info points
- Preparation and delivering of 4 local workshops in 4 different communities with the participation of youngsters and relevant stakeholders
- Working as a **group leader** for local youngsters in an international youth exchange

#### Competences of the Youth Ambassador

The common understanding is that it's impossible to achieve the variety of knowledge, skills and values that a perfect Youth Ambassador of NFL should possess and master in order to deliver his/her mission in a superb way. Also, it is difficult to agree on a short list of competence which should be developed by a Youth Ambassador and leave out others.

Therefore we decided not to make a choice but to underline the different possible competences that our own Youth Ambassadors listed during the different events that we held.

Here you can find it:









- ✓ Time Management
- ✓ Strong Brain
- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Good Heart
- ✓ Sustainability
- ✓ Healthy Lifestyle
- √ Flexibility
- ✓ Humour
- ✓ Reliability
- ✓ Multitasking
- ✓ Resourcefulness
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Digital Skills
- ✓ Media Literacy
- ✓ Honesty
- ✓ Straight-Forwardness
- ✓ Patience
- ✓ Open Mind

- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Motivation
- ✓ Self-Confidence
- √ Responsibility
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Stress Management
- ✓ Team Management
- ✓ Vision
- ✓ Inclusive Mindset
- ✓ Creativity
- ✓ Conflict Resolution
- ✓ Knowledge about NFL (also in terms of regulations, laws, etc.)
- √ Assertiveness
- ✓ Entrepreneurial competence
- ✓ Inspiration
- ✓ Planning
- ✓ Practical Mindset



In order to get some inspiration on how to develop or build up these skills, you can check the following websites:

https://www.elearning.tdm2000international.org/









https://www.coursera.org/

https://www.linkedin.com/learning/

https://www.mindtools.com/

#### Ideas for action - How to attract young people?

One discussion that took a long time throughout our preparation was exactly that: how to make NFL attractive for young people and how to make youth take part in it and understand the power of Non Formal Learning?

Some have pointed that it is important to work with the ones that don't find it attractive at all in order to include them in this activity and realize its potential on their own. On the other hand, the issue stays, how can we get this first contact in order to have more people participating in our activities?

## 1) Pointing out important aspects of projects and activities in Non formal education is fundamental:

- Sharing personal experience;
- Learning by doing;
- Improving personal skills;
- Working in multicultural environment;
- Safe space which we have while working in NFE;
- Acceptance;
- Tolerance:
- Inclusive environment;
- No one is left behind;
- Mutual respect and understanding;
- Adapting to individual needs and ways of learning;
- Open minded people;
- Opportunity to be yourself without judgement.

# 2) Using interesting methods and activities during projects/local actions, also following already created and done projects and tools

- Creating board games covering different topics presented through NFE, such
  as the interreligious board games created during the capacity building project
  "Developing of New-inter religious tools" <a href="http://inter-religious-tools.com">http://inter-religious-tools.com</a>
- Quizzes such as ones made through <a href="http://kahoot.it">http://kahoot.it</a>, polls presented through <a href="http://mentimeter.com">http://mentimeter.com</a> and other online websites and platforms which allows you to digitally interact with participants and develop their digital competences. Many examples can be found here <a href="http://y-o-l-o.org/tools/">http://y-o-l-o.org/tools/</a>









- Different tests and types of personality quizzes in order to involve and engage youngsters. For example a test that shows what kind of a volunteer are you which as the ending result shows them which project is for them (Youth Exchanges, Training Courses, Seminars, Job shadowing, European Solidarity Corps)
- Online campaigns, creation of different websites, from the project, Flashmob, street performances, theatre on the streets, dancing, sport, other creative, interesting and dynamic activities.



#### 3) Keeping an engaging promotion and communication with youth

- Promotion on social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat);
- Creating different video and photo materials because texts are not so interesting and engaging, only short descriptions no longer than two sentences can be used;
- YouTube videos, live broadcasting and info sessions;
- Erasmus+ projects movies. Movie nights where people who previously
  participated in Erasmus + events and projects talk about their experience and
  showcase the videos created during their exchange or training course.
- Open days in formal education places to promote NFE activities; through direct communication with students in schools and universities, work with them to create public events for promotions of Non Formal Learning activities;
- Less use of leaflets and more useful promotional materials and gadgets such as key chains, books, bags, caps, beanies, reusable cups, etc;
- Living library with people who previously experienced Youth Exchange,
   Training Course, ESC, or local NFE activities;
- Joining local initiatives and bigger festivals such as: Thessaloniki International Festival (Helexpo), TIFF (Thessaloniki International Film Festival), EXIT (Music festival in Novi Sad), Castle Kolpa Music Festival (Slovenian music festival),







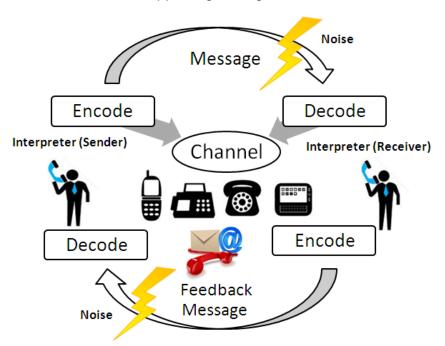


International Summer Week (Sardinian Intercultural Festival), Pivofest Prilep (North Macedonian music festival) and all other music, sport or cultural festivals. Also, it can be worth creating promotional stalls nearby stadiums when a sports event is taking place, or during other big events such as PRIDE parades or Eurovision Viewing Parties to share promotional materials.

#### <u>Ideas for action – How to tell your story?</u>

In order to better understand what is storytelling and how to be effective with it, it's first of all important to understand what is **communication**.

It is defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary as **a process by which information is exchanged** between individuals or groups through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour. It involves at least two people or groups of people, and can be either verbal, non verbal and/or happening through the use of different means and tools.



Through communication, a sender delivering certain message, might be clear in his/her mind, using a given channel to encode it and direct it towards a receiver which has to decode it and send feedback back to the original sender about how this message was received. Different "noise" can disturb the process of communication, and the choice of tools, channels and ways used to

communicate can either facilitate it or make it more complicated to encode and decode it.

#### 10 Do's for public presentations

- 1) Be short and to the point, don't waste time on pointless concepts
- 2) Connect with the audience
- 3) Engage the audience with questions, exercises or other methods
- 4) Use graphics, images, videos and other interesting visual contents
- 5) Face the audience and look at everyone present
- 6) Use a simple, understandable, yet good and correct language









- 7) Beware your body language and use it productively
- 8) Have a clear structure in mind and use it in your speech
- 9) Write down a trace for your presentation and try it in advance, possibly with someone else and ask for feedback
- 10) Go with the flow and get ready to improvise.

Youth Ambassadors will have to be ready to deliver Non Formal Education workshops to involve young people, but also, and most important, to share with them their personal story related with NFL and how it affected their lives and careers.

In that regard, we have to make clear what we intend by **storytelling**. Storytelling is the art



to tell stories in order to engage audience. an The storyteller conveys message. information and knowledge, an entertaining Literary way. techniques and non verbal language are some of his tools.

Joe Lambert, a leader in digital storytelling from the States,

identifies the following 7 golden rules for storytelling:

- Use a personal point of view: talking in first person reduces distance of audience
- Propose engaging contents: a surprising structure, stimulating reflection and giving answers that are not too simple
- Make emotions arise: it helps fixing the memory and transferring the message you want to give
- Make economy: with few words you can transfer a lot of contents
- Use a rhythm that is adequate for the narration
- Make a good use of voice: tone and such help the narration
- Use an adequate soundtrack: as per voice, music is enforcing the narrative.









#### **Conclusions**

Being a Youth Ambassador is not an easy task at all.

Whoever decides to take onto this journey has to keep in mind that the road is full of challenges, that it needs a lot of preparation and development of skills and knowledge of self in order to transfer competences, and, most important, motivation, to other youngsters through peer to peer learning.

On the other hand, it is a great responsibility but also a great reward to be able to make youth passionate about Non Formal Learning activities, involving them in something that can definitely be life-changing for them, as well as a solid base to build up their career.

This is actually the reason why this whole project's concept was created: to make other young people fall in love with these concepts that already has changed for good the life of so many of us making us become the persons and the professionals we are today.

In other words, the most important thing to have as a Youth Ambassador is just one: **Passion.** 

Be passionate about what you talk about, about your story, about what you can share with others, about tips you can give, about Non Formal Education, and about the incredible possibility you have to spread the word, share and transfer this passion to another human being changing his/her life in the process.

The rest will come on its own: **plant the seed and watch it grow**, and it will be the best recognition you can get.











Thanks to everyone that contributed to the development of this project and this manual in particular, to all the partners, to all the participants of the different parts of it, to all the Youth Ambassadors, the young people attending our events and the other stakeholders involved!

See you somewhere along the way



"YOUTH AMBASSADORS OF NON FORMAL LEARNING"

KA2 CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT