DIGGILOO
Digital Cultural Production from Youth to Youth

IO4 - Diggiloo Policy Recommendations

Preface and acknowledgements

In front of you is IO4 – Diggiloo Policy recommendations. The creating process of this document started in the month of August 2023. However, the information gathered in the making of this output is based on experiences from the last couple of years, where various partners from Finland, Estonia and the Netherlands participated in the Diggiloo project. During this project each individual partner has worked hard these past few years, making it possible to create different outputs, including IO4 Diggiloo Policy Recommendations. During Diggiloo's project span multiple events have been organized in line with digital youth work, where each of the events have contributed by giving new insights regarding the subject digital youth work. Due to the partners dedication a lot of new perspectives, enlightenment, and insights have come forward regarding digital youth work. Appreciation is given to these individuals - in no particular order (organized by participating country):

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Enjoy reading IO4 – Diggiloo Policy Recommendations.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Description of the project and its goals

The overall aim of the project was to strengthen cross-sectoral organization and policy level collaboration between Youth Work and Creativity and Culture, in order to increase inclusion of young people and to find new innovative methodologies/practices that serve both sectors, in the end resulting in an increase of professionalism, quality and methodologies of inclusion in Youth Work. As a horizontal impact, Youth Work will have increased its readiness to embrace digitality in its versatility.

Project Diggiloo was originally planned to start in 2021, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic the project was rescheduled to start effectively in spring 2022. Preparations were made in online steering group meetings and by mutually organizing 3 online workshops in the autumn of 2021. Due to the uncertainty regarding COVID-19 travelling restrictions the kick-off could solely be hosted online for all partners, which was organized by Humak in February 2022. The first face-to-face meeting of all steering group members was postponed and eventually held in Tartu in September 2022. Regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic, throughout the project partners from Estonia, Finland and the Netherlands embarked on several different activities concerning this project.

More precise the objectives included:
1. To increase the quality and sustainability of Youth Work and to influence future youth policies;
2. To develop through piloting a concept of collaboration between Youth Work and Creativity and Culture;
3. To increase digital skills of youth workers, cultural managers and the youth;
4. To increase the youth's inclusion as producers of Creativity and Culture;
5. To make European culture more accessible with the help of digital technologies.

During the project there were three different types of participants:
1. Youth workers;
2. Cultural managers from the Partner and Associated Partner organizations;
3. Young people selected to the pilots in the initial phase of the project.

The project equipped, encouraged and empowered young people to engage themselves as active citizens in the Creativity and Culture sector. The participating young people connected with each other in order to collaborate, share ideas and thoughts, and walked together through a learning process.

The experiences of the project provided new tools for youth workers and cultural managers alike to help young people gain positive experiences with the online world. These have been documented in both Learning Diaries (IO2) and Diggiloo's publication (IO3 and IO5). The different activities of the project involved both Youth Work and creativity and cultural sector. The cross-sectoral innovations are based on grass root level case examples that are conducted in Estonia, Finland and the Netherlands.

All partners learned from each other's cross-sectoral solutions. The impact of the project is seen on individual, organizational and policy level, both nationally and transnationally. Youth workers and cultural managers gained new skills in regard of working in a cross-sectoral settings, thus increasing the overall quality of youth work. The youth have increased accessibility to engage in the creativity and cultural sector and learned digital, entrepreneurial and soft skills. The creativity and cultural sector gained new users, producers and audiences.

1.2. Description of the questions that formed the starting point of the research

In 2023 the project is nearing to its end. In the beginning of the Diggiloo project the following questions were drafted:

- How can youth workers connect to the interests of young people in the online world?;
- How can youth workers motivate young people to participate in online cultural productions and what skills do they need to develop? - to persuade young people to step out of their comfort zone and start something new and creative;
- What are the barriers they experience before participating?;
- What kind of input do young people deliver and do they get enough space to articulate this?;
- In what way can online cultural productions help young people improve their lives and find connection with the community?;
- What kind of training should be offered to youth workers in order to improve their skills in inspiring and guiding young people in the online world? - technological and pedagogical;
- In what way can the results be implemented in local youth policy to ensure a sustainable impact of the actions?

The answers to these questions were sought through the experiences of the various partners whereby activities were carried out in the context of Diggiloo. The goal of this document (IO4 - Policy recommendations for Youth Work: cross-sectoral organization-level collaboration between Youth Work and the Creativity and Cultural sector) is to give policy recommendations for Youth Work on cross-sectoral organization level in collaboration between Youth Work and the Creativity and Culture sector, based on the pilots' experiences, which answers the questions mentioned above. This document is targeted to policy level professionals and decisionmakers of youth work.

1.3. Description of the delimitation of the recommendations and target groups

The project contained six main partners from three different nations:

- **Municipality of Amstelveen (The Netherlands)**
  - The municipality of Amstelveen is responsible for providing services to its citizens, social services, urban development and maintenance, and environmental legislation. The organization contains 900 employees. They do not only work for the council of Amstelveen, but also for the council of the neighboring municipality of Aalsmeer. The team of youth workers is part of the department of 'Youth and Society' of the municipality of Amstelveen. They help vulnerable youngsters between the age of 10 and 23 years old in Amstelveen with problems at home, school, with the police or with friends.

- **P60 (The Netherlands)**
  - P60, a citizen's initiative, is the independent venue for pop culture and visual arts in Amstelveen. P60 measures 2090 m2 with a concert hall, a foyer, a café/restaurant and rehearsal rooms for bands/deejays. Visual/digital and graphic art is shown everywhere in the building which is mostly made by young adults. The café/restaurant hosts expositions from young artists on a regular basis. P60 is deeply rooted in the local community. The target group of P60 is young adults (age 12-30) but there are also activities for example seniors (age 60-80).

- **Humak University (Finland)**
  - Humak (Humak University of Applied Sciences) provides Higher Level Education for over 1500 undergraduates and post graduate students with its staff consisting of 130 experts. Humak participates as a strategic partner and contributor in the development of an equal civic society, together with regions, municipalities, organizations, companies and private operators. Humak is an active developer of youth work and its methodologies and, as the educator of future youth workers, effectively impacts the practices of youth work in Finland. Humak is taking part of the center of excellence Kentauri which focuses on the effectiveness of youth work associations. Kentauri is responsible for developing and promoting youth work on a national level. In this project Humak was responsible of the overall lead for project management. In addition, Humak and Finnish Institute in Estonia jointly produced the 120-page project publication: Inspiration and Ideas for Digital Cultural Youth Work- Experiences from Estonia, Finland and the Netherlands through the Diggiloo project. This combined the efforts of Intellectual Output 3 and 5. Over 60 Humak University students took part in the project either as project workers, trainees, conducting digital cultural pilots, making videos, conducting and participating in webinars, organizing and producing content to multiplier events, writing articles and blogs as well as collecting learning diaries often with their local communities and youth. Several Humak lecturers took part in supporting and teaching the students.

- **The Finnish Institute in Estonia (Estonia)**
  - The Finnish Institute in Estonia is an independent, non-profit organization managed by a private foundation. The institute strengthens existing networks between countries and creates new ones. The institute organizes cultural projects, artist visits, exhibitions, other activities, and collaborates with Finnish language teachers in Estonia. The institute is a significant expert on the Finnish-Estonian collaboration, constantly looking for new ways of working. The institute aims to identify the topical phenomena and signals of change in Estonia, and to create cultural programs reflecting and resonating with those themes.

- **Youth Center Tartu (Estonia)**
  - Tartu Youth Work Center (TNTK) is a subordinate unit of the department of culture in Tartu City Government, which is established in May 2018. TNTK is aimed to create an innovative and creative youth work environment for youngsters in Tartu to support their crowing to be active, creative and happy persons. TNTK centers offer different leisure time activities for youngsters in Tartu. Every center has their youth workers with whom youngsters can discuss different topics, play boardgames, write and implement projects and events. Besides the beforehand mentioned activities also different hobby classes and clubs are taking place in centers. All activities, events and services are free for young people and open for everybody. Outside of the open youth centers youth workers also support youngsters with their initiatives, organize trainings and initiate city-wide events for the youth.

- **Future Face (The Netherlands, as associated partner)**
  - Future Face is an organization located in the city of Amstelveen. Future Face is a young organization whereby young people help to organize different projects and activities in the cultural youth work realm. The main value of the organization is bringing people together, regardless of their sexuality, gender, age, race and other social differences. Future Face organizes projects as 'Innerworld' and 'Cultureshock'.

2. Context

2.1. Definitions youth work, digital youth work and cultural youth work

Youth work is a multifaceted practice, which alongside differs in operation among various countries. This makes youth work a difficult principle to identify as countries have their own characteristics regarding this discipline (later in the document further construed per participating nation). In the following part a framework was created which defines the context of youth work and the definitions surrounding it. A broad generalization was made regarding definitions to fit the different European nations.

The target group of youth work seems to vary between the ages, at the youngest, 1 and, at the oldest, 29 years old, depending on the country and organization offering the youth work. Youth work contains a broad scope of activities for, with and by young people. These activities are social, cultural, educational and political by nature in which youth can voluntarily participate, for the most part, in their leisure time. These activities are managed by professional youth workers in Finland and Estonia or outsourced to foundations or lead by social youth workers as in The Netherlands. The aim is to improve the conditions in which young people grow up and live in and to enhance interaction between the generations through intersectoral cooperation. The objective of youth work is to support young people in growing and transitioning into independent life and to promote their participation in society. The guiding principles of the activities offered are participation, multiculturalism, creativity and inclusion. One of the main goals of development to adulthood is that an individual can participate and include themself within society. This connects with the principle of inclusion, meaning a sense of belonging whereby people have the experience of being part of a group or society in which they can (freely) express themselves. This value guides all youth work in which youth workers support youth to find ways to express themselves, to feel members of the wider society and to pursue active citizenship. This can be achieved through the means of Cultural Youth Work. Cultural Youth work is a concept which is defined as "activities which support young people's self-expression and the realization of young people's initiatives and ideas". Creativity and Culture can be viewed as tools for individual growth, social growth and change, and as such they are a perfect match for Youth Work. Youth Work and Creativity and Culture work have shared values, one of them being the objective to promote non-discrimination, participation and accessibility. Creativity and Culture has the potential and power to bring communities together, feed creativity, offer ways to express one's emotions and enhance self-growth. Considering the mutual goals, values and interfaces, a stronger collaboration between Youth Work and Creativity and Culture would undoubtedly bring benefits and innovations to both parties. Breakthroughs in creativity and in the adaptation of new practices often occur at novel intersections.

It is important to mention that a new discourse has taken a part in youth work and cultural youth work. In the last decade digitality has taken big steps creating new possibilities for (cultural) Youth Work. Online youth work or digital youth work means proactively using or addressing digital media and technology in youth work. It has the same goals, ethics, values and principles as regular youth work, but also incorporates digital tools and skills in helping to achieve the goals of (regular) youth work. Online youth work does not have to be entirely in the digital world but can be used in a hybrid matter.

2.2. Structure and policy youth work in Finland, Estonia, The Netherlands

As mentioned before: how Youth Work operates varies per nation. Practices, definitions and responsibilities differed between the participating countries, not only on national level, but also on municipal level. Below is described how each partner country operates youth work in their respective nation and on local level.

2.2.1. Finland

Finland has since the 1970s a separate legislation for Youth Work where you can study to become a 'professional youth worker' or 'community educator'. The Finnish Youth Act (Nuorisolaki) significantly contributed to the way youth work is organized and budgeted in Finland. The latest Youth Act (2017) establishes a comprehensive legal framework aimed at promoting the wellbeing, active citizenship, and social inclusion of individuals aged under 29. The structure of Youth Work is nation wide the same and all aims, and the strategy are implemented by the 311 local municipalities. In Finland, youth work holds a prominent position, evident in numerous municipal youth services, youth centers, and diverse youth organizations. Professionals in the field, such as youth workers, collaborate with various local stakeholders (schools, cultural hobby clubs, sports clubs, youth police and child welfare) to create a safe and supportive environment for young people. There are over 8000 professional and trained youth workers in Finland.

Finnish youth work is deeply rooted in promoting the overall well-being, education, and societal engagement of young individuals. Implemented by various entities such as youth centers, organizations, churches, and municipal youth services, its primary goal is to support the growth, social development, and education of young people. The priorities of youth work encompass a wide range of activities, including recreational opportunities, peer support, education, employment assistance, and the promotion of a substance-free lifestyle. A crucial aspect is fostering the active participation of young people in society, positioning youth work as a supporter of engaged citizenship. The several National Youth Work Centers of Expertise develop practices and do research in the field.

Central to the Youth Act is the recognition of the significance of youth work in fostering the holistic development of young individuals. It broadly defines youth work to include various activities, services, and interventions supporting personal growth, education, and social engagement. The Act emphasizes the creation of safe spaces for young people to express themselves and participate in constructive activities. Both cultural youth work and digital youth work are promoted nationally as methods to reach the targets. A fundamental principle of the Youth Act is the notion of youth participation, acknowledging the right of young people to have a say in matters affecting them at both local and national levels. This commitment to participation is reflected in decision -making structures within youth organizations, municipalities, and other relevant bodies.

The Act mandates the inclusion of young people in planning, implementing, and evaluating policies impacting them directly. It is mandatory to elect young persons and form a local Youth Council.

The Youth Act places a strong emphasis on equality and non-discrimination, emphasizing equal opportunities for all young people regardless of background. This commitment is evident in the design and delivery of youth work programs and services, addressing the diverse needs of the youth population. For the years 2020-2023 the aim of the National youth work and youth policy program is to ensure a meaningful life and social inclusion for young people. Not only municipalities need to oblige to the program, but also the central government administrations.

2.2.2. Estonia

The initial proposition for the Youth Work law in Estonia was approved of in 2010. Besides defining the establishment and the comprehensive framework of youth work, as well as some terms, the law emphasizes the importance of consultation with youth councils, quality standards for youth camps, and financial support for youth-related initiatives (Ibid.). Furthermore, it highlights the government's role in overseeing and funding youth programs and projects (Ibid.). In practice, the overseeing is mainly done by the local governments.

The national law is more of a requisition for the activities and doings in a municipality, as the populations and social issues vary vastly all over the nation. In this sense, the structure of youth work in Estonia is similar to the "decentralized" structure in the Netherlands, as explained in the respective article below (see paragraph 2.2.3).

However, municipalities in Estonia focus more on writing and changing short-term policies, rather than longterm ones, as trends in issues can be resolved (or the issues have changed) quickly and efficiently. The leading organization, which resolves and unifies different youth centers, usually tending to gather and provide a safe space for the youth, is the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centers (AEYC). AEYC issues the youth workers professional qualifications and supervises the compliance of ethical youth work. As for participatory youth work, the leading organization for youth councils and such representative organizations, is The Estonian National Youth Council (ENYC), which falls under AEYC as well. It is most common that the open youth work is done by the youth centers, which fall under the local government. Participatory youth work tends to fall under the local elected council. Participatory youth work is also commonly done by civil society or non-profit organizations, but the horizon is very wide in that area, as lobbying or relevant projects can be done by dance clubs, student organizations, political youth parties etc. All of this is also overseen by the local elected council.

It is uncommon to have age divisions in youth centers, especially in rural areas, due to a smaller population. An exception to this is the Tartu city youth centers Anne and Lille, where the youth are divided into ages 7-11 and 12-19. Mobile/street youth work is practiced by the youth centers themselves in a handful of municipalities, but it is still an evolving practice.

The Social Insurance Board (SIB) provides services for the NEET-youth, but local youth workers can be involved in the process as well, as it is expected that they are aware of all the possibilities for work, education and voluntary work. The SIB is also responsible for the Closed Children's Institution Service for children with behavioral issues, Children's Help line to report of a child in need (for a child in immediate danger, people shall contact emergency services), Children's House for children who have experienced or are suspected of having experienced sexual abuse, and the family reconciliation service. The SIB is overseen by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Youth workers are rarely involved in cases regarding young people with criminal backgrounds, as those cases are dealt with by the youth police and other specialists, but as Estonia is focusing more on providing a good social network of specialists for such youngsters, it is common to guide such youngsters towards youth centers.

2.2.3. The Netherlands
In 2015 the new Jeugdwet (The Dutch 2015 Child and Youth Act) led to the Netherlands decentralizing youth services from provincial level to municipal level. This reformation is called the decentralization, where from 2015 on municipalities were obligated to supply qualitative youth services to the citizens. The argument for the decentralization had to do with the distance between the municipality and residents. Municipalities are physically closer to the citizen, which results in them being able to adapt more appropriately to the needs of citizens, making youth work more preventative and efficient.

Another proposition behind the decentralization had to do with the paradigm's medicalization and normalization. The amount of youth in formal youth care was increasing in a quick matter. Medicalization had a part in these as atypical behaviors increasingly were classified as ''problems''. The aim of the decentralization was to normalize certain behaviors, in which not all issues need formal youth care and/or medicine. Normalization includes the involvement of the social network around the family in solving issues that are being experiences. Empowerment is a common term within this topic: families should have the power and confidence in finding a solution to the problems that they are experiencing, if needed with assistance of a professional. The aim is to offer coherent help for families: 1 family gets 1 plan with 1 director.

Municipalities, due to the decentralization, can decide themselves how to divide youth work within their borders, but they have to comply with the transformation: municipalities have to create coherent youth policies which is implemented together with civil society organizations. Many municipalities decided to 'buy in' youth work, meaning that they let an external organization do the youth work in the area, however these organizations need to meet the guidelines that the municipality sets.

Amstelveen deviates from the standard seen in other municipalities and decided to offer youth care directly from the municipality: the youth workers are employed by the municipality of Amstelveen. In 2022, the policy of youth work was recalibrated, and youth work took a new direction. Previously, the focus of youth work was mainly on individual counseling programs; this shifted in the recalibration. The individual counseling programs have been scaled down and outreach has been increased by placing youth workers structurally in schools. Youth workers spend 40% of their time at one of the four secondary schools. Youth workers are visibly present, are a point of contact for young people and organize activities. The goal is to assist young people with agespecific issues. Besides the work at schools, there is also room for visibility on the street, presence at youth parties, individual guidance programs (limited) and organizing youth work activities.

3. Lessons learned during the Diggiloo project

3.1. Finland

The Finnish associated partners which Humak engaged in the project where the City of Helsinki, Verke (Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work in Finland) and Young Culture / Nuori Kulttuuri. There where several topics that came up during the evaluation discussions with these partners. Young people use digital means fluently in communication, networking, hobbies, schoolwork and youth activities as well as creating content. Digital devices are an increasingly a big part of everyday life even when meeting face to face as youngsters do.

The city of Helsinki Youth Work coordinator noted that for young people the online world and the offline world are not separate entities but are intertwined with each other. For youth workers this is less the case. This is why it is important for youth workers to figure out how to utilize the digital tools and to be aware of the spectrum of digital youth work. The first step is the attitude of the youth worker, where curiosity is an important mindset: take time to understand the digital world and its tools. Skills and lack of time are one of the biggest obstacles of not participating in the digital discourse. Nevertheless, it is inevitable to avoid this, as young people more and more are using digital tools in their daily lives. The youth is constantly changing, but this concept has always been around. To adapt to the living world of the youth it is necessary for youth workers to be kept in dialogue with young people: ask what young people are doing, where you have an open and curious attitude. Interaction and dialogue are a key factor in adapting to the needs of the young.

Humak representatives and students noticed that networking and planning activities internationally online with youth through the digital world was not easy. Through the project it was noticed that language barriers, age gap between participants, cultural differences, different interests and skills brought barriers to implementing the planned activities. Thus, the experiments, pilots and activities of Intellectual Output 1 stayed local, and a true international youth cooperation was not achieved. It is recommended that in the planning of future international online youth cooperation these issues should first be resolved before a network of youth groups is gathered who commit to work together with a sufficiently common aim.

Young Culture Finland offered nationally a cultural youth work network, platforms, concepts like Talks, Roots, Digi stage and On Air and participated actively in the Diggiloo project to share these. What nationally was learned is that the network of cultural youth workers was really well established and had many interesting experiments, working methods, case examples and productions already ongoing. Since these met the criteria of digital cultural youth work many of these are now introduced and spread as examples in the Diggiloo publication produced.

Young Culture also arranged the opportunity for Diggiloo partners to take part streaming online in a big Young Culture Festival event. Partners could provide their cultural program online and also take part in a panel discussion. Finland learned that the technique was easy enough for such a multisite streaming. Young Culture did not get the internationalization concept it was searching and piloting for the festival quite fulfilled, but they were satisfied with the participation of Humak and its students to the festival arrangements and content. The festival provided Humak a great platform to arrange the multiplier events and reach out to the over 1000 participants interested in digital cultural youth work.

The partners from Finland all agree that since they are a scarcely populated and a vast country with limited resources, the key to success in youth work is networking. This was found as a great asset in this project nationally. The concept of the online Cultural Café network Finish partners all take part on a regular basis can now freely be copied and is introduced in the Diggiloo publication which was the Intellectual Output 03.

Verke (Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work in Finland) has been engaged as a consultant in this project since they have an in depth, long experience and an overall view in both national and international levels of digital youth work. Verke also offers free online courses in many aspects of digital youth work. Humak students were encouraged to study these online courses as a part of their involvement in the Diggiloo project. As a lesson learned Finland found out that the main concepts like youth work, cultural youth work and digital youth work of the project meant very different things in every country. Humak arranged online workshops for discussing the topics and invited partners to present their work and national youth work. Finish partners also provided case studies of concepts and working methods about digital cultural youth work from Finland.

Those that have been most actively involved in the international cooperation of Diggiloo project like online webinars, steering group discussions, workshops, f2f meetings and trainings and participated in interviews have learned very much on many aspects of the cultural differences, national policies and youth work of each others country. The lesson learned is that when you start with previously unknown partners and as strangers to each other then the building of trust and common ways of working takes time. It would be more ideal if the main partners would already have known each other previously.

The search for a common platform to engage youth did not succeed since every participant used something different with their youth. Humak initiated that webinar platforms like Teams and Zoom where tested and a Discord server was put in place to enhance participation. Another solution found was when a music evening between Porvoo Youth House, Finland and The Netherlands was held. Music is a universal language, where spoken words do not necessarily need to be understood. This event also showed other factors that are needed for a successful international collaboration:
- Youth being around the same age.
- Good preparation of the event
- Digital literacy of adults and the young
- Common interests between participants

3.2. Tartu, Estonia

Numerous activities were organized in Estonia during the Diggiloo project, but various factors influenced whether or not an activity would be well received among the youth. A crucial aspect which influenced youth attendance is whether an activity occurred in the digital or physical world. During the project multiple webinars were arranged, which were offered entirely online. However, these activities were unsuccessful. After the COVID-19 lockdowns young people's urge to meet up physically emerged. Young people were forced to fully transfer their lives from physical to online during the COVID-19 lockdowns, which led to a distaste for online activities and a desire to go outside again. To motivate young people, it was important to hold personal meetings, face-to-face in the physical sphere.

Try to conform to the aspiration of young people. During Diggiloo a street mural activity was organized, where young people from Estonia and Finland could spray graffiti on a wall, supervised by a graffiti artist. Past experiences made aware that young people enjoy these types of activities. Success should be repeated, and past experiences should be evaluated. In the case of new activities, it is essential to involve youth in the planning stage. However, it is important to note that the number of participants is not the only success factor of an activity, what youth take away from it is also important. There was a workshop augmented reality which had a moderate number of participants. Nevertheless, one participant gained a fair amount of inspiration for their future during this activity. An endeavor is a success when a young individual learns a valuable lesson from it. This specific individual learned a new hobby or even profession due to their participation.

Regardless, the question remained: how do you keep young people involved and interested? Youth workers should adapt to young people, in which youth workers connect with the wants and needs of the young. The step to participate in activities is higher when young people have to participate on a voluntarily basis. The message of the activity should be clear: what do people get from participating and why is it interesting for them? Important to note is that youth work is a field that constantly is evolving, meaning that as youth worker it is important to be aware that changes happen quickly and to be able to adapt to these changes.

Moreover, various lessons were learned working internationally on a project like Diggiloo. Just like young people, adults also need physical meetups. Within the project there was not an in real life kick-off. Looking back, this could have helped in the startup phase. It took some time to figure out what needed to be done during the project, and to understand what the goals were. In the initial project document, the theory was well explained, but actions that needed to be done were left open. Another influence had to do with working together with various countries. During the projects span the different ways of (youth) work and cultures came forward. It should not be assumed that everyone does things the same way. Some advice for the future would have been to take the time from the beginning explaining how each country works and how the youth system operates. This could have prevented confusion.

In the end, the international young cooperation was not the biggest success. It is speculated that this would have gone better if young people initially met in the physical sphere and continued online. Different cultures mean different youth. This does not mean that they fully differentiate from each other, as there are a lot of similarities due to the developmental stage that they are in.

3.3. Amstelveen, The Netherlands

During the Diggiloo project multiple activities were organized for young people in the city of Amstelveen. Video vlogs were made, pictures of youth regarding different sensitive topics were taken and much more. These activities revealed that youth participation is an essential part for engagement. Young people should feel that they are heard and have ownership, but they also should be facilitated to and be given perspective: what and why are they doing a certain activity? A skill that is fundamental for a (youth) worker is to be present and available for young people and listen to their personal stories. A part of the activities that have been proven as successful are activities that were previously well liked in the past. When an activity has come to an end it is essential to endeavor in an evaluation/reflection: what went well and what can we do better in the future? Enhance and expand on the lessons learned, this will make future pursuits successful.

During the Diggiloo project it came forward that digital tools can be used within activities, but physical contact between youth should not be underestimated. This especially manifested during the COVID-19 lockdowns, where digital tools were used to meetup in real life, even when this was not permitted. Youth workers tried to facilitate to the physical needs of the youth, for example by offering a bootcamp, but this came with a great deal of criticism. Physical contact is part of the development of a young individual and cannot be replaced by digital tools. The digital world should be an add-on to the world of a young individual; however, it should not be a replacement for real life.

It is important to note that Amstelveen is a multicultural city, which brings its own challenges. In 2022 the war in Ukraine commenced and refugees were offered stay in the city of Amstelveen. Refugees from Ukraine and other countries differed from each other. Ukrainian youth had education in their own language and were convinced that the war would be over in a soon matter, making them yearn for their return home. This in the end resulted in that they adapted less to the Dutch circumstances. The longer the war was taking, the more they were adapting to Dutch culture. However, within schools there was tension between different refugee groups. Syrian youngsters were from the beginning aware that they needed to stay in the Netherlands due to the longevity of the war back home, but unlike the Ukrainians they were less welcomed in The Netherlands. An example that remarks this is that Ukrainians were immediately allowed to work, while other refugees were not. In The Netherlands it is not on every occasion the "foreigners" versus the Dutch, but "foreigners" versus "foreigners". It is not only this group, but also other minority groups tend to have tensions with each other.

Various setbacks were met regarding working in an international matter. The physical aspects mentioned before do not only apply to young people, but also adults. An initial kick-off was missed, where the international partners would first meet each other and then start off the project. This kick-off was required to increase connection and enthusiasm between participants. The project plan was not concrete enough and it was uncertain what concrete actions had to be taken. Another aspect which was missed from the beginning was discussing each other's cultures and youth work. The various countries operate in different matters, wherein the cultures differ from each other. Especially the Netherlands differs from the partners, where youth work is decentralized from the state and is offered on municipal level. A more transparent way of working together might have been achieved if the partners from the beginning engaged in an open dialogue about culture and mannerism. However, different solutions were found to go around this issue, where the use of Discord was one of them. Discord offered a solution: it has an extension where you can type a message in your mother tongue and the receiver on their end receives the message in their own language.

4.Benchmark research questions

A benchmark was carried out towards the end of the Diggiloo project, where partners from Estonia, Finland and Netherland answered the following questions:

- How can youth workers connect with the interests of young people in the online world?
- How can youth workers motivate young people to participate in online cultural productions and what skills do they need to develop?
- What are the barriers youth workers experience before young people participate?
- What kind of input do young people provide and are they given enough space to express it?
- In what ways can online cultural productions help young people improve their lives and ensure they connect with society?
- What kind of training should youth workers have in order to properly guide young people in the online world?

4.1. How can youth workers connect with the interests of young people in the online world?

All three partners agree that online youth work can reach the designated youth. All three partners emphasize the fact to follow the needs and demands of the youth, in the online and the offline world. It is of utmost importance to keep the conversations with youth 'flowing' and to try to connect with them. Amstelveen emphasizes the traits that the youth workers need to have been visible in the online world, being aware of their role and having an inviting and open-minded spirit. Helsinki affirms to keep listening to what the youth had to say and to keep asking where/in which way they want to receive certain information. Some youth workers in Finland are working exclusively online in various social media which youth use. e.g., one youth worker has listed her current presence and professional accounts in TikTok, Discord, Jodel, BeReal, Instagram, Switch, Snapchat, Telegram, Signal and Whatsapp. In addition, youth workers participate in various national chat channels to support youth who e.g., experience mental health issues, teasing or sexual abuse. Tartu has seen a shift within the youth in where they do not anymore wish to be fully emersed in the online world, where they seem less involved in the online sphere. The youth workers from Tartu see the online world as a tool to reach the youth for activities.

4.2. How can youth workers motivate young people to participate in online cultural productions and what skills do youth workers need to develop?

All three of the partners mentioned that it is essential to connect with the youth, their interests and to meet the requirements of the young. Tartu and Amstelveen explicitly mention that the production of these online cultural productions should be of high quality where time should be sufficiently spent, either by the youth getting something useful from the activity (Tartu) or by the activity being safe and fun (Amstelveen). Tartu and Amstelveen both mention the term knowledge, whereas Amstelveen mentions knowledge in terms of the online world and Tartu mentions the knowledge of online productions. In Finland there is a growing understanding that the online and physical world are totally interconnected, and youth move flexibly between these as they feel appropriate. This means that they use the devices and the web to plan, make, produce and share cultural productions fluently. Most cultural hobbies in Finland can be practiced online, and some ways of working remained in established use after the COVID-19. Choirs and bands can rehearse, exhibitions can be produced, feedback and guidance are given, and events streamed. Young Culture network in Finland has created a unique Digi stage concept for sharing online cultural productions.

The skills that youth workers try to help youth to gain while participating in online productions are both general and specific ones. Skills are needed of the art form and media in question, but also how to generate trust in a group, establishing common rules and working methods, what to share and what to not share, copyright issues, licenses, age limits, project work, differences of different photographic styles, no tolerance to bullying, identifying fake identities, identifying reliable sources, where to connect in case or trouble etc.

4.3. What are the barriers youth workers experience before young people participate?

Involving youth is a common dilemma/barrier specified by all three partners. Helsinki brought up to focus on the youth and their ideas. Tartu mentions there might be an overload of activities and that reaching young people participate in these activities can be a dilemma. Amstelveen mentions trust as an important factor to connect with youth, however: the problem with thrust is that it can create an ethical dilemma with safety: do you always follow the wishes of the youth, which makes you earn their trust, or do you prioritize their safety?

Recent research (2020 and 2022) from Finland shows that a majority of young people have at least one hobby group where they take part regularly. Depending on age, school level and municipality they live in the participation is from 60% to even 90%. In Finland, the hobby group is most often organized by an NGO as the youth houses serve more as a free time gathering place. The finding was that especially the participation to cultural activities and hobbies correlates to the family socioeconomical background.

The question from Finland is how to reach the minority of the youth who do not participate. These young people are the target group of outreach youth workers. Walker's project, social youth work, church youth workers who walk the streets, drive a mobile youth house, find youth online and offer an adult to talk to. This might lead to a connection to participate in the local youth house activities and find new friends. Workshops can offer a meaningful place for the young people reached by outreach youth work. Especially the teenage dropouts are offered a place in the workshops as an attempt to socialize again to regular participation to activities.

4.4. What kind of input do young people provide and are they given enough space to express it?

All three partners acknowledge that young people should have the freedom to express their input, however each partner gives different perspectives regarding this matter. Tartu mentions that young people have creative ways of expressing themselves and both Helsinki and Tartu affirm that they should be given the space to express that. Amstelveen agrees with this, but additionally raises the way on how this should be done. Amstelveen has noticed that being 'too' open in giving options can work against youth. The ideal solution for this issue is to give youth multiple options in which they have the freedom to decide the outcome.

Participation is a key target and value of the whole Finnish society. In Finland most of the activities young people are involved in their views should be taken into consideration in various ways. According to Finnish law there is a youth council in each municipality and these young people represent the youth in local matters. In educational institutions there are also pupils' representatives in governance. Most municipalities set aside a part of their budget which finances initiatives raised and voted by youth. Youth work and cultural activities aim to engage the youth into everything they do. Roger Harts and Sherry Arnstein's (1992, 1969) ladders of participation are widely acknowledged and used as models. The level of the participation can be different in different contexts.

4.5. In what ways can online cultural productions help young people improve their lives and ensure they connect with society?

Helsinki as Amstelveen explicitly remark that online cultural productions can help young people feel a part of society. Helsinki mentions that it is essential that the youth can express themselves in these cultural production, whereas Amstelveen emphasizes that cultural productions need to be fun and youth to youth.
Tartu has come forward to say that they have difficulties reaching the target group 'youth with fewer possibilities' and that they need to develop more competence to reach this target group, so that this marginalized group can be more included in wider society.

When young people in Finland were asked about the perceived effects of cultural hobbies in 2022 - according to the survey, among respondents under 30 years of age, up to 92% of respondents say that they have found new friends through their hobby, and 97% feel that they get joy from learning in their hobby. Based on the survey, hobbies have significant effects on the structure of young people's social relationships, the experience of belonging to a community, and learning. In addition to this effect one can argue that online possibilities can in some case be the only way to participate since Finland is geographically a big country with long distances as well as scarcely populated out side of capitol region.

4.6. What kind of training should youth workers have in order to properly guide young people in the online world?

A common theme mentioned by all three partners is associated with the negative side of social media. Youth workers should be aware of digital safety. This brings the question of how you deal with its dark side (criminal activity, bullying, harassment, etc.).

Helsinki and Tartu emphasize that it is important for a youth worker to have basic digital skills.

The Finnish partner Verke has produced "Criteria for Professional Digital Competence in Youth Work". The criteria are based on the European Digital Competence Frame-work (DigComp) produced by the European Commission.

The criteria have six main competence areas:
1. Using and maintaining devices and applications
2. Organizing my own work
3. Digital Safety
4. Media and information literary
5. Digital Creativity
6. Digital communication and interaction

This criteria with the accompanying "Professional digital competence self-assessment tool" is widely used in Finnish youth work and training to youth workers is offered in these competence areas.

Negative experiences and actions in real life or social media are taken seriously in Finland. Schools, police, parents and youth workers have all a part to play in tackling the problems. But most of all the owners of social platforms and moderators are responsible of tracking false identities, using AI to cut off and prevent inappropriate discussion and comments, false pictures etc. The platforms must be made safer to use and age limits respected. Because Discord can be fully moderated by the one who sets it up, it has become a useful and frequently used platform for young people in Finland.

5. Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1. Universal aspects vs local context

The Diggiloo project has given insight in how digital youth work can be incorporated in the daily practices of a youth worker. Different policy recommendations can be released following the lessons learned from each cooperating partner within the Diggiloo project. However, it should be remarked that the applicability of the policy recommendations might differ per nations context, as culture, (youth) practices and local laws influence in how policies are shaped. This is seen by how youth work is more on a national level in Finland, whereas in the Netherlands this is a local affair. Nevertheless, Diggiloo gave impressions to how certain affairs can be viewed from a policy standpoint.

5.2. Generally applicable recommendations

Based on the lessons learned and the benchmarks a draft of the first policy recommendations were created. These policy recommendations were discussed among partners from their respective nation in two separate steering group meetings, where the aim was to reflect on the policy recommendations and to reach consensus. The following policy recommendations are the result of the consensus between partners.

- **Youth work is continuously evolving, previous to the digitalization discourse. Changing policies takes time, meaning you need to adapt quickly as youth worker.**
    - Society is continuously going through transformations and young people are malleable to adapt to changes and new technologies. Youth work is a field that is continuously changing. Digitalization is not the exclusive factor of why youth work is changing. Big megatrends e.g., internationalization and globalization, digitalization and AI, climate change, battle for democracy, crisis of wellbeing and economy, declining natural diversity etc. affect the future of young people. Policies are responsive and cannot always react in a timely matter; youth workers need to be professionals and adapt in creative ways, before policies are able to catch on.

- **Cultural youth work should be a part of all youth work.**
    - Cultural youth work is in the core of growing as a person, a means of self expression and creativity as well as a way to reflect your views and values. It is an activity where the growth, independence and inclusion of young people in society is supported with the power of art and culture. Cultural youth work should be offered and organized jointly by cultural institutions and organizations, schools and youth work.

- **Digitality has many meanings, also within youth work. Be aware of this spectrum and incorporate this in youth work.**
  - Young people do not really experience a division between the online and offline world. Digital youth work does not imply that everything needs to be done in the online world. Digitality is a scale, which extends from having contact through forums/chatrooms to using a VR-headset in a youth center. Digital applications can be used completely online or digital tools can be used in the physical world. When making decisions about digital youth work, it is important to see it as a hybrid tool which can be used in various ways.

- **Create safety for young people regarding the use of digital tools within youth work by communicating and setting goals together with the youth.**
  - Using digital tools can be a danger for a young person without a youth worker or others in their surrounding being aware of it. Digital recordings, for example a podcast, videos or photos can be perceived as unwanted from a young individual, either during the process or afterwards. It is important to keep communicating with the youth about what they perceive as tolerable and to be aware that the standards of a certain individual can shift. Set goals together with the youth for the use of digital tools, especially regarding visual or sound recordings: is the aim to publish or to use it as an outlet to share feelings/ experiences? For this to be carried out it is utmost important that youth workers have good interaction skills, whereby respect is a norm for creating a safe space for youth: stay close to the youth and keep respecting their wishes.

- **Set boundaries for the digital world in the physical world.**
  - Young people are spending increasingly more time in the online sphere, where they are not supervised by their surroundings. In the physical world young people learn how to behave by observing and being positively and negatively reinforced by others. However, this is not applicable in the online world. In the digital sphere young people experiment more with evasive behavior, which is difficult to monitor. As a youth worker it is important to discuss boundaries for the online world, in the physical world.
  - Furthermore, it is important to note that adults should show a proper example in how they handle the online world.

- **Do not underestimate the importance of contact in the physical world. Incorporate the physical world in the use of digital tools.**
  - During the COVID-19 pandemic people were mandated to stay home and not to meet or come in contact with others. This has shown its difficulties for adults, but especially the youth suffered from this. After COVID-19 individuals desire to meet in the physical world instead of within the digital sphere. When policies are being created regarding digital youth work, it is essential to be aware of the needs and development of an adolescence, where meeting up in the physical world is an essential part of their growth.
  - It is important to note that not only young people crave for physical meetups, but adults as well, however in a less frequent matter. Be aware that physical meetups make individuals more connected than online.
  - However, it is a reality, as the studies for example in Finland show (2022), that young people aged 13-29 spend 30-40 hours on internet each week. This means that the young people are online 3-4 hours daily. It is appropriate to offer safe spaces, interesting activities and youth work digitally and physically.

- **Discuss (cultural) differences and how youth work is operated in each country, but also discuss what the** common ground and similarities are.
  - While working in an international project matter (also in the digital sphere) it is important to note that differences between individuals influence partnership. Cooperating cross-country brings (cultural) differences ways of working, (country-wide) systems and more. When starting a partnership, it is important to discuss how different aspects work in your designated country and/or culture. What seems like a daily practice for one, might be peculiar for the other. However, do not only focus on the differences when initiating a dialogue, but also discuss commonalities to reach a mutual understanding. Be willing to learn from each other, listen and share while throwing yourself to experiment and bearing the uncertainty.

- **Not understanding another language can be a barrier for contact and connection. Find creative ways to go around this barrier.**
  - Not understanding each other's language can perceived as a barrier for young people to connect with others across borders. A factor that should not be taken for granted is English language skills. English is mostly used for international contact, especially in the online world, however not every teen feels comfortable or has a proper level of English skills to communicate with others. Try to come up with creative solutions to go around the language barrier, whereby one of the preconditions is that there is a match between the young people (hobbies, age, e.g.) as young people wish to identify with others. Examples of solutions are:
    - » The use of an automatic translation tool, which makes communicating in different languages possible. E.g., Discord has an extension which automatically translates a received message in another language.
    - » Endeavor activities were communicating verbally is non-essential. E.g., a music event does not require participants to understand each other, where connection between individuals is established through the sound of music.