

THE CURRENT PICTURE

9. Barriers, challenges and needs

How do barriers make you feel?



The trainers led the participants in the seminar on a reflection on barriers - how barriers make them feel, barriers in relation to youth work and young people, barriers in societies shaped by migration.

For many participants, emotions are at the heart of reactions to barriers. There are a lot of difficult emotions in relation to barriers, a lot of anger, frustration, disempowerment, feeling insulted, sad or alone. It feels quite explosive, with some kind of energy coming from those emotions - either inwardly inside the person, or outward towards others.

It's interesting to note which of these barriers connects more, or less to your reality, to the reality of your projects. We would like to see at which points we can take a step back, to look at things differently, and perhaps make a small change.

We grouped some of the barriers that came up from the discussions:

Personal barriers

Personal barriers, which are identified within yourself, something that holds you back. These include elements such as language, knowledge (understanding how something works), lack of initiative or motivation. It can also be something emotional or psychological.

Barriers from others

Stereotypes and discrimination by others, or others putting pressure on you, a lack of understanding, competition and a lack of empathy or solidarity.

Structural barriers

These include things such as resources and how they are distributed; cultural, that things are done differently; age; family; parents; a polarised society. socio-economic background.

System as barriers

Elements such as governments, laws, regulations, educational systems, patriarchy, or no representation within structures.

Challenges and difficulties of youth work

Looking at youth work in different European countries today, there are many challenges. Here are some of them.

Not enough money

There is lack of capacity and resources to implement the great ideas. There is competition between NGOs, and elitism, fighting for resources. Youth workers are not paid enough to make a living out of the profession - they also have to pay their rent and support families etc.

Lack of cooperation cross-sectorially

Not enough cooperation with other services and organisations that provide assistance to refugees; absence of cooperation from families, schools, government (perhaps also power dynamics at play?); refusal of cooperation from parents.

It's not always needs based

Who pays the bills owns the narrative; there's no flexibility in planning, everything is fixed; projects are dictated by the funders, not built bottom up by the needs of the participants; the format (structure) of youth work doesn't correspond to the needs of young people.

Mental health of youth workers

It's a hard, challenging, relentless job, often involving trauma or difficult emotional stories; it's difficult to control your emotions in front of the young people; sometimes the work makes you feel helpless, because you feel that you have to save the whole world.

Lack of representation

There's no place at the table for young people in decision-making.

The challenging reality of young people these days

Social realities are blocking individual growth; there are many frustrations felt by young people (legal, status etc); discrimination against young people by older people, media etc; copying the behaviour of drill rappers; 'retreating parents', where children have too much responsibility; How to deal with violence & drugs, when they earn €500 for being on the watch for 15 mins, what can youth work do?

Short-termism

There's no sustainability in projects; lack of consistent attendance for non-formal programme and activities; retention of individuals for a whole process is a challenge; balancing free-time with educational activities can be a challenge; when you offer free activities, you don't know how many people will come or what their needs are.

Lack of recognition

Youth work is not considered important by many stakeholders; a lack of respect from other actors; teachers don't recognise the role and approach of non-formal education; a lack of understanding from the wider community; social work and youth work are often stereotyped; other people set the scale of 'what is success'?

Lack of right outreach

youth work is not reaching all young people, and is not diverse enough; communication takes time and resource, and needs to be attractive to that audience; how to reach young people without stalking them?

Challenges and difficulties of youth work with migrant youth

Admin and legal framework

Those without status have fewer opportunities, less consideration of their needs, uncertainties about their next steps. There is not enough help in the asylum system for them, and not a clear structure. There is a big difference between asylum seekers and those with permission to stay (two different groups). Young people might not know the youth work organisations exist, or don't recognise they have a need for it. There are too many unessential services that divert the valuable resources (with high level of bureaucracy, admin etc).

Stereotypes and prejudices

There is a negative migration narrative, especially in the media, as well as racism from many quarters. There is stigmatisation of the muslim community through the media and the politics: because of past terrorist attacks, there is a fear of people and fear of specific locations (where one terrorist event happened). The youth worker, not being a representative of that culture or community can cause distance and lack of connection (white, privileged, youth worker).

Language / culture

It is hard to build a relationship with a young person without the same language. Some employees might refuse the young person because of the language barriers, or the 'unfamiliar' culture.

Mental health of youth workers

it's a hard, challenging, relentless job, often involving trauma or difficult emotional stories; it's difficult to control your emotions in front of the young people; sometimes the work makes you feel helpless, because you feel that you have to save the whole world.

Mental health

Young people sometimes face problems that the parents fail to deal with (because of their own problems). Young people arrive with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS) and different psychoses. There is a lack of psychological support for youth workers who deal with young people's trauma.

Safe space

It takes time to build relationships and trust with young people. It's a challenge to open the space for dialogue; to value the different identities and values of the youngster. You have to intentionally create a safe(r) and brave(r) space to speak about trauma, and that takes time/capacity/resources - it doesn't always happen.

Lack of resources / Quality of work

Young people have financial challenges, and can often choose a certain path that is not 'legally framed' (eg drugs, criminality, prostitution etc). It's a challenge to develop knowledge and understanding about the context we are working in, and the best ways to approach and get along with different culture and groups. The social realities need to be recognised, and they sometimes aren't. On the other hand, our own previous knowledge and experiences aren't always taken into account - sometimes we are 'othered' by colleagues. It takes time and resources to define individual needs. Avoiding an 'assistentialist' approach. There is a lack of preparation to deal with this target group by other support services.

Overview of challenges in youth work with migrants

What do participants see and feel on a daily basis, in their youth work projects and activities with migrants? What challenges are there that need to be faced and dealt with? Here are a selection of them:



10. EU Youth Programmes

European programmes supporting youth work shaped by migration

The Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes provide grant funding to do educational and social community projects. They have specific strands of funding for the youth field (as well as for schools, universities, vocational training, sport etc).

Some projects are international, working together with partner organisations from other countries, where young people get to travel abroad. Others are in-country, where young people can travel to another city or region in their own country to have an educational experience. Others are local, where groups of young people can work on something that they are passionate about to make a change in their community.

Some projects are short term (just a week or two), others are long term (up to one year abroad volunteering, for example).

The different funded project formats

The European Programmes for youth can fund different types of projects. There are National Agencies in each country that help promote the Programmes, and process the grant funding. **Erasmus+** supports these options for the youth field:

Professional development

Professional development of youth leaders (age 18+ including volunteers). Improve skills and competences through training, seminars, study visits, networking, community building. Project duration 3-24 months. Organise your own, or participate in other people's, listed on the [SALTO-YOUTH - European Training Calendar](#).

Known as: KA1 Youth Workers mobility

Go abroad with a group of young people

Group exchanges for young people to be together, discussions, activities, workshops around a chosen topic. 5-21 days. Age 13-30, plus youth leaders age 18+.

Known as: KA1 Youth Exchanges

Local Action projects

Group dialogue and discussion to make change on the local level – civic action and youth activism in parallel with other youth groups making a change in their community in other countries. Age 13-30. Duration 3-24 months.

Known as: KA1 Youth Participation projects

Connect online with young people in other countries

Virtual exchanges – no physical mobility, online intercultural discussions and interaction with other young people. Duration 36 months.

Known as: KA1 Virtual Exchanges in Higher Education and youth

Strategic long term networking projects

Capacity building, policy dialogue, international collaboration projects, on a topic that can help support youth work in Europe. Has outputs that can be used practically by others. Duration: 12, 24, 36 months.

Known as: KA2 Capacity building in Youth

Erasmus+ isn't the only European Programme that funds youth projects. The European Solidarity Corps funds volunteering projects for age 18+. The projects can be national or international, short term or long term, in groups or for individuals. It also funds local Solidarity projects for groups of young people to make a difference in their community. And there are other funding streams for Humanitarian Aid in case of crises and for Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas.



The [European Solidarity Corps](#) helps young people grow, learn and travel through volunteering, supporting communities round Europe. There is grant funding for these kinds of projects:

Individuals can volunteer

Individuals can volunteer, helping with social/community activity in another community. They travel elsewhere, are hosted by an organisation, and help deliver the activities of that organisation, having an impact on that other community. They receive a grant towards their accommodation, travel and subsistence costs. It can be short term (2 weeks to 2 months) or long term (2 - 12 months). It can be abroad in another country, or it can be another town in their own country.

Groups of young people volunteer together

Groups of young people volunteer together, as a team. They work together on a shared project. This is 2 weeks - 2 months, 10-40 participants. It can be in another town in their country, or abroad in another country. They receive a grant towards their accommodation, travel and subsistence costs.

Young people with ideas

Young people with a good idea, their own [solidarity initiative](#) can run their own project in their home country. At least 5 young people, between 2-12 months, full time or part-time. up to €500 per month towards the costs of developing / delivering / following up a project. Costs of a mentor/coach can be covered too.

Volunteering teams in high-priority area

Volunteering teams in high-priority areas, following EU thematic priorities defined each year. And Humanitarian Aid Volunteering, usually related to disaster situations (earthquakes, war etc).

Opportunities in EU Youth Programmes for asylum seekers and refugee participants

During the seminar, the National Agencies gave some advice and insights for using European Programme funding when working specifically with young people with migrant background.

Projects funded by these European Programmes usually involve travelling abroad, although some don't. If someone is legally registered, they can participate in any of the projects. If the young people are in a different legal position, or don't have their papers, or can't travel for other reasons (caring duties or disability, for example) then consider connecting them to incoming projects. Consider funding for national projects for your group of young people, or hosting an international group in your town. These types of projects still have a lot of potential. Young people can benefit from developing a project around their own needs and interests, developing participation skills, understanding more about their local opportunities, feeling the 'host' in a situation, enjoying the grant-funded activities, fun and learning content of the project etc. Here are some EU Youth Programme opportunities you could consider for incoming projects:

Volunteer in your own country

Individual or team, short term or long term. This means the organisation applies, as part of the European Solidarity corps, to support the young person to have an experience in another town or region of the same country. They can do it on their own, or together in a team. It can be from 2 weeks+.

Host a youth exchange (Erasmus+ KA1)

This is where your group of young people host a group from another country around a common theme / interest (e.g. music, sport, environment etc).

Do local initiative projects

Try **Solidarity Projects**: this is where young people run their own project, around their own interests and initiative. They don't need to travel. It can be done in several weekly sessions, and the cost of a coach can be part of the grant.

Host a volunteer through the Solidarity Corps

A young person from another country volunteers with you to support your organisation in the activities that you do with the community, while developing their own individual competences. To host a volunteer, you need to find a Coordinating Organisation from your country that already has a Quality Label, and then you could have that incoming volunteering project through them.

Attend events, training or seminars

Attend national or international **training courses**, seminars, partnership-building opportunities run by your **National Agency**.

Remember the Lump sums for inclusion support

Get extra money for your projects. In Volunteering projects, for example, you can get more money for better/closer mentoring of the young people.

'Funding of Real costs' extra grant

For costs directly linked to the needs of the participants and their accompanying persons.



To be aware of...

- The grants from European Programmes are co-funding. They are not supposed to cover all the costs.
- Each country has a National Agency that promotes the programmes, and provides step-by-step onboarding path for newcomers.
- National Agency staff are human, please remember that you can approach them through email, phone or even have a chat over coffee - although this varies from country to country.
- Short term project experiences, or smaller local projects, can help lead to other opportunities. Understanding the learning potential and experiences available through the grant-funded opportunities can often lead to return participation in EU Youth Programmes.
- There are some funding rules in some EU countries about receiving grants combined with other state funding. It is worth checking about any limits in place.
- There are [training opportunities](#) to attend to learn more about how to create an international project, what is expected for a good quality application, how the funding works etc. This ranges from short online webinars, to information days, to weeks away in another country, with the accommodation and travel costs covered. If you are looking to build partnerships with other organisations from other countries, the residential activities are particularly beneficial for this. Contact your National Agency for more information.
- The Programmes change every year a little bit, so it's good to keep up with changes. Remember that if your project is funded in 2024, then it's the Programme Guide for 2024 that you have to follow for your project (application, grant funding, reporting etc).
- Be aware that for some young people, leaving their own private accommodation for a long time can cause challenges when they return. Think about how much time away is beneficial for them, and any impact on their local situation when they return.

Quality Mobility Projects

If you are starting an international project for the first time, have a look at this [Quality Mobility website](#). It gives you step by step tips on how to build a quality project, and things to be aware of. If you're not sure how to do something in your project, you can search for the topic and see many resources, ideas and suggestions that is built from the experience of others.

[Click here for the Quality-Mobility Web App](#)

SALTO ID Roadmap

European Programmes provide grant funding for many opportunities. These opportunities should be available for all young people in Programme countries. But unfortunately they aren't (yet). The organisations involved in delivering the programme have been working on the needs and barriers of people to get involved in the European Youth Programmes. Here's a summary of the barriers that should be reduced to allow more and different young people to get involved. It comes from a larger document, called the [ID Roadmap](#), that looks at how to implement the European Inclusion strategy for Erasmus+ in a practical way.

11. Study visits

Case Study projects can bring inspiration, and show the reality of organisations working today. Including connection to the local community adds understanding and context to an international project, as well as wider impact. Here are two example projects from Vienna, one working with girls & women, the other working with young men, all with migration background.

Bandari

Bandari means ‘safe haven’. It’s a physical meeting place in Vienna, a community, for young boys* and men* with migration background aged between 15 and 25. They can choose to just ‘be’ there, to play table-football, to use the internet, to eat a sandwich or to have a coffee. Young people don’t get asked questions. When they want to connect they can. When they decide to talk, they can.

Target group

Boys* and young men* with a history of asylum and migration aged between 15 and 25. No restrictions according to residence status. Services are provided in English, German, Arabic, Kurdish.

Migrant worker role models

The ones leading this work at Bandari have migration history themselves. They understand what the young men have been through. It makes it easier for the young people to open up and engage, and then pursue what they want to do. There is a challenge though - it’s not possible to cover all languages and cultures. For example: the Afghan group come for sports and activities, but they don’t join the workshops - maybe because there isn’t an Afghan youth worker?

Long-term support?

One of the challenges for Bandari is sustainability. There is a real need for this programme. But funding is dependent on government policy, which might change after the elections in October 2024. Workers have to spend time on core funding, which takes them away from the advice and workshop role.



“In this role, you have to think how to support people. You have to build a bridge, to find step by step how to support them. If they need specialised support, they will be referred. The staff here are not experts in all topics.” **Participant**

What we do

Bandari offers advice, workshops and discussions, combining joint activities in the fields of sport, art and culture with reflection. If the young people have a problem, Bandari can help them. The workshops are related to masculinity, mental health, violence, insults to their dignity etc. The workshops are delivered to groups of young men, organised by language. There is a funded translator that helps the workshops be bilingual. The workshops give them tools to make them feel better and to handle situations better. Bandari uses these different formats to promote social interaction and create low-threshold access to information about health, Violence, the body, relationships and sexuality.

*Peppa



Target group

The *peppa girls' centre offers a safe space for girls and young women (girls, transgirls and non-binary persons). The target group is very diverse but most of the girls have a migration or flight background. Most of the girls' mother tongues are either Turkish, Arabic or Afghan. Many of the girls are in NEET (Not in education, employment or training) situations and looking for new perspectives.

The staff are all women or identify as women.

What *peppa offers

*peppa supports girls and young women in their participation in society and contributes to promoting self-determination and equal opportunities. They promote mental and physical wellbeing, equal opportunities and participation in society. *peppa supports the development of a positive gender and cultural identity, an appreciation of various cultures, nationalities and life projects and an understanding of social structural possibilities and boundaries. *peppa encourages and strengthens self-determination and emancipation; creative potential and self-reflexivity as well as autonomy and participation. It offers a space to do homework, prepare for presentations and to use WiFi. Girls and young women with concerns will find a hearing and support at *peppa. There are dance and creative workshops, self-defense classes, cooking together and much more.

Key elements of the *peppa project

The topics/issues addressed are often related to identity, sexuality and education.

There are several key elements to be named in the project:

- The importance of female role models is fundamental to the project. This may be the staff or external experts or guests (e.g. students from the «Technische Universität Wien» who give tuition in mathematics)
- Counselling function: *peppa often takes on the bridging role to other entities such as schools, specialised organisations and authorities (e.g. child protection services). They refer the girls onwards to other services.
- *peppa tries to open the perspective on different ways of living together. Many discussions with the girls are about children's/women's/human rights (e.g. that violence is not ok in families or relationships)
- Participation of the girls is key: the girls coming to *peppa are actively involved in expressing their needs in deciding which topics should be addressed. The rules of the centre have been defined together with a group of 'regulars' during a sort of General Assembly meeting and are presented to newcomers once they arrive.

International volunteering

The *peppa Girls' Centre is participating in the European Solidarity Corps as a host project.

