

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROJECT

DKN – THINK, MOVE, DON'T BE AFRAID

NĪCAS YOUTH CENTER



Co-funded by
the European Union



Agency for International
Programs for Youth
Republic of Latvia

TROMSØ, 2026

HOW DID EVERYTHING START?



- THE **BIGGEST** REGION IN LATVIA
- ONLY **2** YOUTH CENTERS
- **FEWER OPPORTUNITIES** THAN IN CITIES

PROJECT PRIORITIES

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

VIRTUAL COMPONENTS AND/OR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

EU YOUTH GOALS

PROJECT TOPICS

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH, WELL-BEING

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPMENT OF DISADVANTAGED RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

CHALLENGES THAT YOUNG PEOPLE FACE AND THE NEED TO WRITE THIS PROJECT

CHALLENGE 1:

- ANXIETY
- STRESS
- LACK OF MOTIVATION

ESPECIALLY AFTER COVID AND
RECENT GLOBAL CRISES.

CHALLENGE 2

- ISOLATION

THE LARGEST
MUNICIPALITY IN LATVIA
HAS ONLY TWO YOUTH
CENTRES.

CHALLENGE 3

- LACK OF
OPPORTUNITIES

CREATIVE, EDUCATIONAL,
AND PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT
OPPORTUNITIES MOSTLY
OCCUR IN CITIES.

THE METHODS WE USED TO WRITE THIS PROJECT

THINK

MOVE

DON'T BE AFRAID

AIM OF THIS PROJECT:

- YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME MORE **CONFIDENT**, MORE **OPEN**, AND MORE **MOTIVATED** ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.
- DISCOVER NEW **INTERESTS, TALENTS**, AND **SKILLS**
- CREATE A **SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

ONE MORE AIM OF THIS PROJECT WAS COOPERATION



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Dienvidkurzemes
novads

THE SECRET INGREDIENT

WHAT MAKES DKN DIFFERENT?

FIVE YOUNG WOMEN FROM RURAL AREAS
THEMSELVES DESIGNED THE PROJECT.

NOT BY EXPERTS.

NOT BY MUNICIPALITY.

NOT BY ADULTS.

BY YOUTH.

ACTIVITIES **BASED ON REAL NEEDS.** THE
PROJECT WAS BUILT FROM:

- PREVIOUS ESC PROJECTS
- PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK
- SURVEYS/OBSERVATIONS
- CONVERSATIONS IN SCHOOLS

GOOD PRACTICE FORMULA

NEED → CO-CREATE → LOCAL DELIVERY →
REFLECTION → VISIBILITY

WHAT WORKS WELL?

THE REGULARITY OF ACTIVITIES

DIVERSITY OF ACTIVITIES

COOPERATION

WHAT REMAINS CHALLENGING?

REACHING THE "HARDEST TO REACH" YOUNG PEOPLE

THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WOULD BENEFIT MOST ARE OFTEN THE LEAST LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE.

THEY MAY:

- LACK CONFIDENCE,
- HAVE SOCIAL ANXIETY,
- NOT BELIEVE THE ACTIVITY IS FOR THEM,
- AVOID NEW ENVIRONMENTS.

EVEN WITH GOOD PROMOTION, SOME YOUNG PEOPLE REMAIN DIFFICULT TO ENGAGE.

LONG-TERM PROJECTS ARE POWERFUL, BUT ATTENTION SPANS ARE GETTING SHORTER.

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE:

- SCHOOL,
- EXAMS,
- HOBBIES,
- FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES.

KEEPING PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED

THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PROJECT REQUIRES CONTINUOUS ADAPTATION AND FRESH IDEAS.

WHAT REMAINS CHALLENGING?

TRANSPORT AND GEOGRAPHY

THIS REMAINS ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN RURAL YOUTH WORK. EVEN WHEN ACTIVITIES ARE FREE, TRANSPORTATION CAN STILL PREVENT PARTICIPATION.

THE SIZE OF THE MUNICIPALITY AND LIMITED PUBLIC TRANSPORT CREATE PRACTICAL OBSTACLES.

MEASURING LONG-TERM IMPACT

IT IS EASY TO COUNT PARTICIPANTS. IT IS MUCH HARDER TO MEASURE:

- INCREASED SELF-CONFIDENCE,
- REDUCED ANXIETY,
- STRONGER SENSE OF BELONGING,
- PERSONAL GROWTH.

MANY OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OUTCOMES APPEAR MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS LATER.

RECOMMENDATIONS

START WITH NEEDS, NOT ACTIVITIES

DON'T BEGIN WITH: "WE WANT TO ORGANIZE WORKSHOPS."

BEGIN WITH: "WHAT PROBLEM ARE YOUNG PEOPLE TRYING TO SOLVE?"

ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE THE ANSWER, NOT THE STARTING POINT.

USE INTERESTS AS AN ENTRY POINT

NOT EVERYONE WILL ATTEND A "MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOP."

MANY WILL ATTEND:

- ART WORKSHOPS,
- SPORTS ACTIVITIES,
- COOKING SESSIONS,
- DIGITAL MEDIA WORKSHOPS.

THESE CAN BECOME NATURAL GATEWAYS TO DEEPER CONVERSATIONS

CO-CREATE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

YOUNG PEOPLE KNOW:

- WHAT INTERESTS THEM,
- WHAT LANGUAGE WORKS,
- WHAT BARRIERS EXIST.

INCLUDE THEM IN PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION.

CREATE SAFE SPACES BEFORE CREATING LEARNING SPACES

BEFORE YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN, THEY NEED TO FEEL:

- ACCEPTED,
- RESPECTED,
- COMFORTABLE.

INVEST TIME IN RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING AND TRUST.



THINK

MOVE

DON'T BE AFRAID

THANK YOU!

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