



WORKSHOP REPORT OF WORKSHOP SERIES 1

How to keep young people busy, engaged and interested smartly? (1/5.)



Contract No AGRI-2019-409 supported by the European Union contributed to the results presented in this document. The opinions expressed are those of the contractor only and do not represent the Contracting Authority's official position

TITLE OF WORKSHOP: How to keep young people busy, engaged and interested smartly? (1/5.)

Facilitator: Anna Parizán (E40)

Rapporteur: Veronika Zemenova (Youth Animator, Mukarov)

Notetaker: Zsófia Vidák (E40)

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The aim of this session is to demonstrate smart approaches to engage young people offering new opportunities and perspectives for rural areas & communities. Keeping young people is one of the main concerns of rural areas and communities. There are several reasons why young people leave including the lack of relevant job opportunities, lack of services and youth activities. Engagement of youth in rural life and making young people interested and engaged, demonstrating that rural areas can be an exciting place to live, should start from an early age. At the workshop we were focusing on the main challenges and the smart solutions addressing those challenges.

PRESENTATIONS

Veronika Zemenova (Youth Animator, Mukarov): [Youth engagement through the newly emerging Hangout4Teens Club \(Mukarov, Czechia\)](#)

Veronika presented how they initiated and ran the Hangout4Teens Youth Club with the support of the Smart Rural 21 project, what activities they have organised to keep local young people engaged. While the population of Mukarov has doubled in 20 years, this increase has not been accompanied by a conscious development of services and opportunities, especially for youngsters. They didn't have a proper community space, nor organised programmes. Teens have been hanging out on the street without purpose. The Teen Club was meant to catch teens' problems at the roots



and provide them meaningful and inclusive programmes, like cinema, Christmas celebration, Halloween, birthdays, food tasting, beach etc. She also talked about the SR21-supported study visit to Ireland, Southeast Cork, where they have met young people and learned about local youth actions. The trip took one week and several best practices have been integrated into the village life of Mukarov.

Elisabetta Percivati (Multimedia Tourism Designer): [Creative work with children \(Ostana – Italy\)](#)

Elisabetta, one of the best authors of Italian comics, has been an artist in residence in Ostana during the summer of 2021. In the course of her stay, she has conducted a naturalistic drawing workshop for the local children of the place where she was born. Based on the drawings of the children, combined with those of the illustrator, a (fashion) collection has been created.



The point of the programme was to make youngsters feel listened to and important, and to try bring out the best of each of them. They made simple actions, while noticing and appreciating their efforts and help transform it into creative work that bring them value. It has been important to encourage them: when the children said “I can’t do it”, they explained that they just don’t know how to do it and helped them to overcome this feeling by teaching them with care, love and attention.

Video commented by Daiga Kalnina (Alsunga): [Programming a small ‘weather station’ with youth \(Alsunga, Latvia\)](#)

Daiga presented and commented a video from Alsunga, where – with SR21 support - young people participated in training on smart solutions and programming. The children did not only familiarise themselves with the various smart solutions and learned the fundamentals of programming, but also became aware of the village's problems, sought solutions and developed and implemented a smart solution. Daiga explained that they experience a huge migration of youngsters to the cities, but - with the help of the SR21 project - they managed to find ways to involve them better, especially through trainings and IT programmes. They chose together one project to carry out (building a sensor station), where teens have been involved also in the planning phase of the process, contributing with their ideas. The youngsters interviewed in the video mostly appreciated the value of teamwork, collaboration, co-creation and the creation of something useful.



FINDINGS ON CHALLENGES

The main challenges identified during the session include:

- Lack of common spaces
- Lack of meaningful programmes
- Lack of perspectives (jobs, carrier, economic opportunities)
- Feeling abandoned and excluded
- Intergenerational cultural gap
- Not enough education/ awareness-raising about the values of rural life
- Agriculture is not “sexy”
- Lack of services (from basic to leisure)
- Lack of interest to be engaged



FINDINGS ON SOLUTIONS

Make rural attractive again by raising awareness about rural values

- Involve youngsters into planning and decision-making
- Listen to their needs, teach them and empower them so they feel their importance
- Build bridges between generations by bringing them together
- The problem is not that young people leave the village (to study or explore), the problem is that they are not coming back.



Solutions to make the young generation interested to be engaged:

- Go step by step
- Building trust
- Give them responsibility
- Gamification
- Meaningful activities
- Positive memories

- Observe firstly their behaviour and plan the activity accordingly
- Snowball effect (i.e. if the activity is interesting, they will bring their friends)
- Give them dopamine! (i.e. if an activity provides dopamine, human beings want to repeat it, thus involve young people in a way that provides dopamine)

“ We need to build networks with other villages, exchange skills, co-create youth programmes, so that young people feel less alone and more confident.”

Workshop participant

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, NEXT STEPS

- The real issue is not that young people leave the village (to study or explore), but that they are not coming back. We need to make rural life attractive to them, enable them to get involved and have meaningful memories, so they have a reason to return.
- Dopamine is a key issue in creating positive memories in the subconscious level. Without it, it is difficult to compete with the dopamine producer smart phone applications.
- It is important to collaborate with other villages and co-create youth programmes

HOW TO KEEP YOUNG PEOPLE BUSY, ENGAGED AND INTERESTED SMARTLY?



Youngs leave but we have to create such an environment that they go back to their villages.



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Supported by the  European Commission