

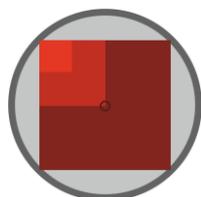


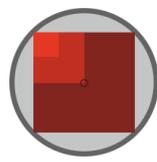
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INSPIRATION ELEVATOR

IO1 – Methodological Manual for introducing Design Thinking in Youth Work





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1.0 Not just another manual – About the vision of “Inspiration Elevator”

What youth workers aim for is to provide youngsters with a sense of belonging, an increased motivation that boosts their active participation and strengthens their self-determination. However, anyone who has worked with young people at risk knows, how challenging it can be at times to stir youngsters’ motivation and to have them engaged in the work process. While youth workers can’t change youths’ lives for them, they can however support them in becoming their own agents of change.



Source: pixabay.com

With the current manual, we therefore propose the design thinking methodology as an innovative approach that can substantially enhance youth work by creative perspective taking. We believe that the framework of design thinking is a recipe to not only increase the quality of youth work, but it also has the power to generate positive social impact altogether. The manual reflects this innovative approach, and includes creative, future-oriented and experiential elements for youth workers to apply in their daily work with different target groups at risk. To offer “not just another manual” to youth workers, it also has an interactive nature, enriched with links to inspiring videos, QR-codes and other valuable resources that were selected to introduce youth workers to the design thinking methodology.

Youth workers’ responsibilities are manifold, such as providing training, counselling or collaborating with other stakeholders. Moreover, youth work is also a driver of various labour market integration measures. According to the International Labour Organisation, the implementation of labour market integration measures is supported by activities, services and programmes offered by youth and social workers.¹ The essence of the current manual thus presents step-by-step instruction on how to apply the adapted design thinking

¹https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_544351.pdf

methodology to the context of youth work as part of the following labour market integration measures: Support for early school leavers to reenter education, employment skills training, support for apprenticeship and traineeship programmes, second change programmes and entrepreneurship trainings.

2.0 Design thinking as innovative mindset in education

"Design thinking" is currently among those terms, which everybody seems to be talking about. Over the past decades, it has become a very popular concept in many different industries and disciplines. However, what does the term actually refer to and what do *you* associate "design thinking" with? Do you first think of product design or does it designate a way of thinking, which only real "designers" employ? And what does design thinking actually have to do with education?

In the following chapter, you will find some answers to these questions. Especially education can benefit from design thinking as a new approach to learning and development, when adapted to the educational context and specific target groups' needs. Moreover, you will also learn why design thinking as a mindset can be a true enrichment when working with young people. That much can be said in advance: design thinking has the potential to empower young people and to foster learning and collaboration. Curious now? Then stay tuned to find out more about a truly future-oriented approach to learning!

2.1 Introducing design thinking

The term 'design thinking' originates in the USA and was coined by three professors at Stanford University in California: Terry Winograd, Larry Leifer and David Kelley, who are also known as the founders of the world-wide known Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, commonly referred to as d.school. In the 1990s, they had the idea of using an innovative method for creative processes that was originally developed for the design of products and services. The main idea underlying this concept is to approach complex questions and problems in an action- and solution-oriented way, by using creativity. Creativity is thus one of the core principles of design thinking, aiming at creating solutions that best suit the end users' needs.

“Newfound creative confidence changes how people think about themselves and their ability to have impact in the world.”

d.school

Scan the QR code or click on the link to learn more about the d.school:

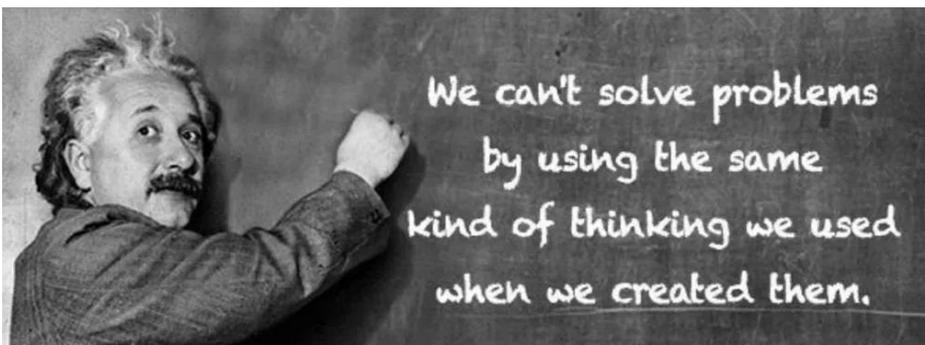


<https://dschool.stanford.edu/>

Arguably, one could ask: But isn't this the common way of approaching problem situations? Isn't being solution-oriented something that one would do anyway, when facing a problem or challenge? Contrary to conventional problem-solving approaches, which predominantly focus on the solution, design thinking is about exploring the problem first, before even thinking about a solution.

Essentially, design thinking is about tackling problems from a new direction. And this is what makes this approach so valuable: it can give us a completely new idea of how we are looking at a problem and therefore has the potential to alter how we define the problem in the first place. So design thinking actually has the potential to open doors that allow us to think about a problem in a very new way or to change the way we think about a problem.

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Source: <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/design-thinking-new-innovative-thinking-for-new-problems>

It is a method that can be applied in almost all areas of life, and according to this idea, all areas of life can be designed. If you look at the achievements from different sciences, disciplines and areas of life, it becomes obvious how many of these innovations – especially technological innovations that were created in the last decades – have used design thinking to generate innovative solutions, yielding social impact and causing transformational and societal change.

Therefore, it makes sense to ask in what ways this approach is useful in education, especially when working with young people. Young people at risk or vulnerable target groups in general can benefit from the design thinking approach, because it will support them in (re)gaining and unleashing their creative potential. More than that, the design thinking methodology has proven to positively impact team and group collaboration, because it has the potential to fundamentally change and positively influence the way trainers and youngsters at risk / vulnerable target groups work together. This is especially important, because when working with young people at risk, trainers are very often faced with challenging situations.

The range of problem situations youngsters at risk are facing nowadays is very varied, ranging from increased unemployment, discouragement and inactivity to early school leaving, family or social problems or lack of support, to mention just a few. Thus, with the design thinking methodology trainers can embrace challenging situations as an opportunity to grow. It enables trainers to take on a 'Can-Do' mindset and to also convey this mindset to youngsters at risk they are working with.

2.2 Design thinking - a powerful methodology

Design thinking can be described both as a mindset and an approach to learning and problem solving. Various industries and disciplines have come to recognise its intrinsic value, which is why it is applied in domains far beyond classic design disciplines. While the actual term "design thinking" has only been in use for a few decades now, the concept behind it is not actually referring to anything new and seems to be something that humans have always been doing.

“...There’s no word in the Tibetan language for ‘creativity’ or ‘being creative’. The closest translation is ‘natural’. In other words, if you want to be more creative, you just have to be more natural.”

Tom Kelley & David Kelley

Design thinking is creative and experiential. We can say the same about the human species - humans are by nature endowed with the ability to be creative and to learn from experience. Therefore, the logic behind design thinking has long been in use by mankind. More than that, it is central to human nature to create and to be creative. In fact, being creative is something inherently natural to the human species. It is something that we do on a day-to-day basis. The Tibetan language for example does not even have a word for creative or creativity – the closest translation would be “natural” (Kelley inspired by the Dalai Lama).

Therefore, taking the idea of being creative as equalling being natural means nothing other than to act more intuitively. Thus, design thinking is in fact an inherent ability of all human beings to construct ideas that are influenced by our ability to think intuitively, to make meaningful connections in the patterns we recognize in the world around us.

However, design thinking is not merely about creativity. It is about building up *creative confidence*, a core principle of the human-centred approach, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. For trainers working with youths at risk, this means to foster and encourage their learners, to guide youngsters in what they have set out to do; to support them in (re)gaining their creative confidence and enabling them to transform into the best version of themselves. In essence, this is how learning and development is viewed in design thinking.

Scan the QR code or click on the link below to watch this inspirational video by IDEO founder David Kelley, in which he presents his idea of attaining creative confidence:



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16p9YRF0l-g>

2.3 A human-centred approach

Design thinking is a human-centred problem solving approach or mindset. Following this approach, the solution to a problem already lies within the people who are confronted with the problem. Therefore, empathy and being able to empathise with the needs of the people we are working with is one of the main principles of design thinking. Identifying with and immersing oneself into the world of people's lives allows us to gain a deeper understanding of what those people actually need.

It starts with a reflective process, in which you could ask yourself the following questions: what does it actually feel like to be this particular person; to live in this environment or community; what priorities are arising for a person because of their interaction with their particular environment or social system they are finding themselves in; what matters to this person, what is it that this person needs? All these questions deeply express empathy.

“Empathy is the effort to see the world through the eyes of others.” Tim Brown

Design thinking thus focuses on observing and exploring people's individual needs, considering their behaviours and personalities as well. By observing and researching the needs of the people we are designing for, opportunities for innovation can arise. Design thinking is about creating opportunities and not generating standardised solutions. After all, being a designer, hence being innovative, means to stay open and to recognise the changing nature of problems, people and societies.

Tim Brown, CEO of the American design thinking firm IDEO and a leading proponent of design thinking, has described empathy and therefore design thinking as trying to understand how other people perceive the world.

He goes on to describe innovation in the design thinking process as consisting of three overlapping phases or core areas:

- **Inspiration:** It is the phase that explores the status quo and in which the problem, opportunity or challenge is framed. It is the phase that motivates design thinkers to

search for solutions and allows them to better understand their target group. This means to understand the end user's needs through empathy and by looking at the problem through their eyes. Clearly, innovation requires new insights, which is why design thinkers are observers of life. They approach the problem they seek to solve with an open mind. It is also the phase in which meaningful data is collected that is assumed to eventually generate ideas for testing and adapting them in the phase to follow, the ideation phase.

- **Ideation:** Based on all the information and observation you have collected in the Inspiration phase, assumptions and solutions towards a possible solution are tested and refined in Ideation. This is also when ambiguity may arise, however, it needs to be regarded as a source of development that allows us to explore various solutions and interpretations. Therefore, it is important to remain open to the contributions and ideas of all the people involved in the design thinking process. Usually, Ideation is conducted in brainstorming sessions where ideas may *flow*, while judgement is deferred until later. Thus, it enables design thinkers to share their ideas with confidence. The more ideas are collected and refined, the more opportunities will arise.
- **Implementation:** is the final phase in the design thinking cycle. The solution that strives to attain the positive change set out in the previous steps is brought to life. It is thus the phase in which prototyping takes place, the proposed solution is tested and prepared for implementation. This stage also serves to identify any issues that may lead to redefining the problem situation and reframing the solution.

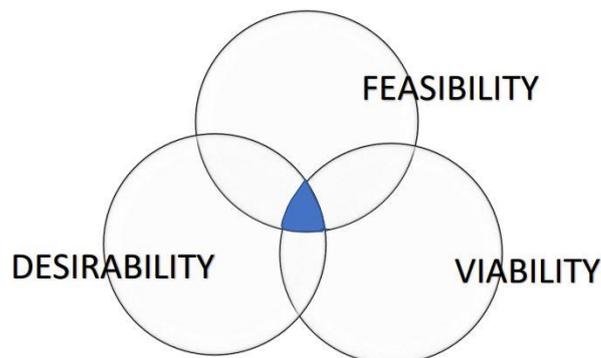
As you can see, the design thinking process is not necessarily linear. It provides flexibility and provides the opportunity to move back and forth between the three phases, from concrete to highly abstract ideas. This is called diverging and converging in design thinking. Diverging means to allow for dreaming up any ideas in the ideation phase, to think broadly and big. Converging means to identify those ideas that suggest to work best for the defined problem. So in the design thinking process it is natural to move from divergence to convergence several times until the desired solution is reached.

2.4 The design thinking spirit

Human-centred design thinking aspires to have a *real* impact on people's lives by providing them with innovative solutions. When a solution has been agreed upon, design thinkers look at the solution through the lenses of desirability, feasibility and viability and ask the following questions:

- 1) **Desirability**: How can a user-centred solution be designed that focuses on the needs of the target group?
- 2) **Feasibility**: What is needed to create a technological feasible and effective solution that considers what is desired by the target group?
- 3) **Viability**: How is the solution sustainable in the long-term and how can it be justified?

At the core is the pursuit of creating a user-oriented output as an end-result. User wishes and needs as well as user-oriented invention are therefore essential aspects of this process. The main idea behind this approach is that design thinkers are able to change perspectives, by looking at the problem through the eyes of the users, thus taking on their role, which makes it easier to find solutions for their context and environment. When you put on a design thinker's mind, you draw upon logic, imagination and intuition, you allow for exploring the possibilities of what could be, you allow for opportunities of what if.



Source: <https://www.ideo.com/blogs/inspiration/how-to-prototype-a-new-business>

2.5 How to develop a design thinking mindset

What lies at the heart of the design thinking process is creativity. Only a targeted creative process provides the necessary platform for different ways of thinking to come into existence. This is why the design thinking process is a fertile ground for creative ideas to merge, in various forms. And because of the synergies that arise by looking at problem situations from different angles, we are able to think big, to think and imagine without limitations. Suddenly, different ideas and approaches are taken into account, which one might not have even considered worthwhile looking at in the beginning. The story below (based on true events) illustrates very clearly what design thinking and thinking outside the box is about: It goes like this:

A truck driver got stuck with his vehicle, while passing under a bridge. The case was such that the driver was unable to get out underneath the bridge, neither by continuing driving nor by reversing the truck out. The incident caused immense traffic and congestion. Meanwhile, emergency personnel, engineers and firefighters met on site to ponder about a solution, of how to get the truck out. However, they did not come up with a useful scenario that would actually have left the truck in one piece.

Then, a boy walked by and witnessed the happenings. That was when the boy suggested "Why not just let the air out of the tires?" The emergency personnel, intrigued by the boy's suggestion, tested his solution and the truck was able to pass underneath the bridge. Initially, one might be inclined to not take the boy's suggestions seriously. However, it is in fact an appropriate and creative solution to the problem. And this is what design thinking is about.

Scan the QR Code or click on the link to read the whole story and learn more about design thinking:



Source: <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/what-is-design-thinking-and-why-is-it-so-popular>

In the following you will learn about how to attain a design thinking spirit. It is characterised by a combination of 7 mindsets (IDEO, 2015)

1) CREATIVE CONFIDENCE = PERSONAL GROWTH

In the spirit of design thinking, creativity is regarded as a way of interpreting the world around us. Therefore, everyone has the ability to be creative - it is something natural. Creative confidence thus means to be confident enough to rely on one's intuition. It also means to be okay, if you don't come up with a solution right away. It takes time to build up creative confidence and to test things out. It doesn't matter if things go right or wrong. What matters is the optimistic belief in yourself that eventually you will get there. Creative confidence means to grow.

2) MAKE IT = PUSH YOUR IDEAS FORWARD / THINK ABOUT YOUR IDEA

Building up ideas means to actually make them, so that they are tangible and no longer abstract. Only if you turn your ideas into reality – no matter the result – you can share them with the world around you and learn how to improve them. It will also inform you about the feasibility of your idea.

3) MISTAKES ARE WELCOME = FAIL TO LEARN, LEARN TO FAIL

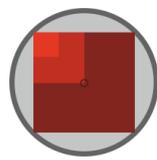
In order to learn and to progress, we sometimes are required to take risks. And taking risks means that you can also fail. However, this is not a big problem. On the contrary, if you fail, you get the chance to learn from your mistake. Let's be honest, what can you learn if you get things right straight away?

4) EMPATHY = BUILDING UP CONNECTIONS

If you immerse yourself in someone else's life, you start to understand how they see things, how things are for them. It is because of empathy that you are able to build up a connection with people that will allow you to create truly worthwhile solutions.

5) AMBIGUITY = POSSIBILITY

Being open to different ideas and solutions, embracing ambiguity is a key mindset in design thinking. Only if we allow ourselves to not know the answer straight away, are we provided with the possibility of finding innovative solutions.



6) OPTIMISM = A DRIVE OF ENERGY

Design thinking is a process guided by optimism. Optimism encourages us to keep going, to not give up - keeping an optimistic mindset increases our creative potential, with which we'll overcome any challenging situation.

7) ITERATION = IMPROVEMENT

To iterate means to refine and eventually improve the solution, because iteration gives rise to the feedback from the people we are designing a solution for. So iteration is an important part in the solution finding process.

3.0 Applying design thinking in youth work

In the following chapter you will learn more about applying design thinking in youth work. Specifically, the focus is on how youth workers can integrate design thinking activities into their curriculum and day-to-day work with youngsters at risk. Different labour market integration measures are introduced and respective guidelines and suggestions are provided. Tools and activities from design thinking are presented to support the efficiency of various labour market integration measures.

3.1 Second chance programmes: activities and tools from design thinking to transform your curriculum (DKolektiv / Croatia)

Second chance programmes are intended for young people, who left education early. They are designed to provide new opportunities for the target group to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to succeed on the labour market, but they also foster better social integration of young people into social communities. Second chance programmes include verified educational programmes and additional training programmes so that young people, who have left education early, are given the opportunity to acquire the necessary competencies at a later stage in life.

When thinking about the needs of young people, it should be taken into consideration that the target group involves people with difficult life stories. Some of them might have dropped out of education due to personal or family problems, learning difficulties or difficult socio-economic situations. It is important to note that the consequences of early school leaving can be long-term unemployment, social exclusion, poverty and health problems - these are precisely those circumstances that lead a person to early school leaving. This can even pose an increased risk for next generations of a family to experience similar situations.

In order to suspend such a series of events, it is necessary to develop quality programmes that allow people to return to school, taking into account the circumstances that led to their withdrawal from education. In order to prevent such situations from recurring it is important that trainers or youth workers are able to build up an inclusive atmosphere in which young people feel safe, accepted and encouraged. When developing programmes for the target group of young people at risk, we must consider that these programmes should have an additional emphasis on the practical dimension for two reasons:

Usually, second chance programmes last shorter than conventional secondary education (which lasts three or four years), but it has to be taken into account that the situation of young people attending such programmes often requires measures designed to accelerate participants' level of activation in order to fast-track labour market integration. Also, it is necessary for the teaching methods used to be flexible in design and for young people to be able to adapt to the learning process according to their individual capacities and capabilities. This involves different forms of teaching and learning such as distance learning, additional support when performing tasks, or an individualised approach (i.e. work in small groups or one-on-one teaching settings).

The length of the programme depends on young peoples' previous experience and education. Before starting the educational programme, prospective participants are assessed in order to determine their level of knowledge and education. Even though youngsters might be similar on the surface (i.e. in terms of socio-economic background, previous school experiences, age, etc.), their skills and competences as well as their needs might be highly diverse. It is therefore reasonable to develop a modular programme design that takes learners' needs into account. Moreover, it is also important to provide adequate training of staff implementing the programme and consider enough working time for additional preparations needed to implement qualitative training for the target group outlined above.

And this is exactly where design thinking can serve as an appropriate approach. In the following, you will learn how principles of design thinking can support you in establishing second chance programmes that focus on young people's needs.

How can design thinking further improve this type of training?

Design thinking can support the quality of second chance programmes on two levels:

Firstly, it can help elevate the overall concept of second chance programmes as the approach of design thinking covers and considers all stages of designing a quality programme. In the following, you will learn about relevant phases of design thinking and how they can enrich second chance programmes and curricula:

- *Empathise phase*: allows educators / developers of the curricula to really think about the lives of their students, to try to understand them and to think about what their everyday life

looks like. With the gained insights and knowledge, more appropriate and tailored programmes can be defined in the next phase.

- *Define phase:* enables a more detailed definition of the needs and problems of the participants, which are based on the considerations and insights from the first phase. This in turn allows for responding adequately to learners' needs in the phase to follow.

- *Ideate phase:* is the phase of systematising the collected reflections and information about the participants and trying to brainstorm as many possible solutions to the identified challenges as possible. There is no right or wrong in this phase. It is about collecting ideas with an open-mind, without judging each other's suggestions.

- *Prototype phase:* attempts to create an appropriate second chance programme, a model of a concept that brings the idea to life that was envisioned in the preceding phases. It can be one or more solutions that you plan to test and implement in order to evaluate the practicability of the current design.

- *Test phase:* guarantees the start of testing a designed second chance programme with a selected group and / or individuals; it represents the practical side of the whole process. This phase provides you with the chance to evaluate whether you have framed your opportunity (i.e. designing a curriculum for young learners at risk) correctly. In the testing phase you receive feedback and insights from users (i.e. participants, other people involved in the programme) on grounds of which you iterate the process, work on your prototype (i.e. designed programme) and make improvements. In addition, it is important to again note that this process is not linear, but that educators / developers of the curriculum can at any time return to previous steps and refine the entire process. Testing certainly supports the development of new Ideas and programmes. Prototype - thus takes us back to the previous steps, to develop a new or refined solution to the defined problem. Design thinking also allows you to even go further back - as educators / developers of the curriculum get to know the users in more detail during the testing phase, they can also return to the Empathise and Define phase to really try to understand their learners and their situation and to design even more inclusive ideas and programmes - not just in theory, but also in practice. This makes it a non-linear process - a process in which we solve a certain challenge sustainably through practice.

Secondly, design thinking benefits not only educators / developers of the curricula, but naturally and most importantly also their users - in fact, it is an excellent tool for working with young people who have left education, because it can respond to their real needs - it is a practical tool with clearly defined steps. At the same time, it encourages users to think outside the box, but it also provides the necessary framework or structure that guarantees for the whole process to be successful. It can be used in planning a learning process, for activation measures in the labour market or for resolving a personal situation. As educators/curriculum designers themselves have developed and prepared a curriculum for young people with the design thinking approach, they can serve as experienced mentors in young people's learning process, introducing and conveying design thinking to them.

In the following two links, you will learn how to create and implement a job search plan with the target group of young adult learners by using design thinking. You can either click on the links or scan the QR code with your smart device. With the first link you will find the job search plan explained as a written text. The second link is a video explanation.

Text: <https://uxdesign.cc/design-thinking-methods-for-career-planning-7af7e5b27cd1>



Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYPijuTTdP4>



· *Empathise phase*: allows young people to identify with prospective employers or employers in general. At this stage, learners can ask themselves several questions that allow them to take on an employer's perspective. What or how do employers think? What does their life look like? What are their needs and what matters to them in their role as employers? Can

they understand our experiences? Why yes / no and which ones can they identify with (or not)?

- *Define phase:* allows for a more detailed definition of needs and problems of employers - What do they expect from their employees? How can we support them in responding to those needs adequately?

- *Ideate phase:* allows you to systematise the collected information and brainstorm on all possible approaches during the subsequent job interviews - the more ideas you develop at this stage, the more options you have when it comes to prototyping in the next phase.

- *Prototype phase:* is a clear decision and conversation approach plan - in case the previous phase has produced many and substantial ideas, you can choose to prototype several models, so you are prepared for more than one situation.

- *Test phase:* in this case, it refers to the job interview as such, in which we test the designed approach.

It is especially important to remember that this is not a linear process - after testing, (i.e. the job interview in the example above), participants can at any time return to earlier stages and adjust or redefine the solution in order to guarantee for a better long-term success, which is dependent on the collected feedback.

3.2 Apprenticeship/traineeship programmes: activities and tools from design thinking to transform your curriculum (National Management School / Bulgaria)

National Management School (Bulgaria) has been focused in the last 30 years on providing opportunities for young people (16-25) to improve their career prospects through extracurricular training in business management, entrepreneurship, soft competences, and traineeships.

Looking back on our main activities through the perspective of design thinking, we recognise elements of this methodology are already in place, but they have not been used in a systemic and united manner. For each of our main activities mentioned, we have identified the current level of integration of design thinking methods and tools and formulated some ideas on how

to further facilitate this process. These ideas shall inspire you in further improving apprenticeship and traineeship programmes.

Business management and entrepreneurship training

We offer a two-year extracurricular programme for young persons during which they can earn an additional qualification. The programme is mainly led by academic staff and is organised in the form of lectures and homework assignments. It is a scientifically solid programme with up-to-date content. The meeting point of this training with design thinking approach focuses on developing action plans, conducting research activities for a certain idea and reporting the activities implemented.

How can design thinking further improve this type of training?

1. *Reiteration.* Design thinking places strong focus on the opportunity of revisiting an idea on an ongoing basis till the best solution is identified. We can introduce special classes during which students can be encouraged to challenge their ideas despite the stage of their development. We could encourage our trainers to look for inspiration also in agile project management, where they can find good examples of the power of reiteration. Reiteration is also linked to the principle that it is through learning by mistakes that we make the best progress.



Source: pixabay

2. *Human-centeredness.* Design thinking places strong emphasis on constant communication with target groups and stakeholders. It is about communicating with diverse groups in order to collect enough information on their needs and desires, which will allow for implementing a qualitative and sustainable solution. We can encourage our lecturers to

give team assignments to our learners, focusing on communicating with a given number of people.

One instrument from design thinking that seems realistic to embed in this context is the *Empathy Map*. Click on the video link or scan the QR code to watch an inspirational video about the power of Empathy Maps.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHFzIG99jvw>

3. *Every voice matters*. Design thinking is about reaching solutions that take into account every voice in the group. In classroom settings, due to time restrictions, lectures avoid providing much space for discussions and opportunities for each learner to speak up. We will encourage our trainers to open more space for the voice and opinion of every participant to be seen and recognised. It can be through special sessions dedicated only on exchange of ideas. It can be through individual assignments, which need to be presented in front of the group. On a process level, trainers can encourage team leaders (during team assignment) to introduce rules that every member of the team should provide opinion on the given issue.

“Design thinking is about reaching solutions that take into account every voice in the group.”



Source: Unsplash

Soft competences summer camps

For the last 8 years we have been organising summer camps for our learners. They are usually organised in a location outside the capital city (e.g. mountain resort) and are a combination of fun activities and intensive training. The main thematic focus of our camps are soft skills such as: communication, cooperation, problem solving, finding and managing information, and lifelong learning. We base the training on our international project work. They are highly interactive and, in most cases, are organised as project-based learning challenges. The meeting point of these activities with the design thinking approach focuses on communication with target groups and stakeholders, the importance of presentation of your achievements, team work collecting and analysing data. In the following, you will learn in more detail how apprenticeship/traineeship programmes can be enriched through design thinking.

How can design thinking further improve apprenticeship/traineeship training?

1. *Learners identify their own challenges.* In our soft skills training, usually trainers provide ready-made challenges for learners to engage in finding solutions. We will encourage them to provide enough space for learners to connect with challenges they are sensitive about and motivated to work on. This will energise the group process and will create conditions for developing higher quality solutions. This principle is linked to the above mentioned “*Every voice matters*” and emphasises the uniqueness of each person’s involvement and added value to the process.

“Learners identify their own challenges.”



Source: Unsplash

2. Go beyond creativity. During our training we emphasise on the importance of being creative and engage our learners in creativity training activities. We would encourage our trainers to go beyond traditional creativity paradigms and embrace the *"thinking outside of the box"* creativity mindset, which design thinkers embrace and promote. For example, invite learners to challenge their imagination and formulate solutions to paradoxical assignments.



"Invite learners to challenge their imagination..."

Source: Unsplash

Apprenticeship for students in NGOs

In 2020, as part of the international project "Social Innovators", we introduced an apprenticeship scheme for university students. The programme targets students from humanitarian subject fields and aims to provide them with structured practical training experience in the NGO sector. Students can choose and try the following job positions: Project Manager/Project Coordinator; Communication/PR Officer; Administrator/Office Manager; Advocacy/Program Officer; Trainer/Educator. Depending on the position they choose, students - with the support of their mentors - can engage in real work life activities. For example, writing a project for funding, preparing a communication plan, conducting training, etc. The meeting point of these experiences with design thinking is that all of them are encouraging students to be in contact with the actual field of work.

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How can design thinking further improve apprenticeship/traineeship training?

1. *Design thinking workshops.* In the apprenticeships the focus of mentors is on introducing students to the NGO world and supporting them in completing given assignments. We would encourage mentors to engage students in a design thinking workshop as a starting point of their apprenticeship. It can be an afternoon experience, 24/48 hours hackathons or a 1-week activity. This workshop will provide opportunity for students to untap and unleash their

innovation potential and formulate strong ideas for solutions of the NGO domain they are placed in (e.g. ecology, animal protection, social care, poverty, etc.) and will ensure they are motivated along the way.

Click on the link or scan the QR-code to watch an inspirational video from a design thinking workshop about social innovations:



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TkP477gMo4>

3.3 Employment skills training: activities and tools from design thinking to transform your curriculum (LoPe / Norway)

Microintegration

At LoPe we apply the programme “Microintegration”. Through our work we aim to empower young migrants and refugees on several levels, such as supporting them to find a job or (re)enter education.

For youngsters to be able to take an honest look at themselves and their own capacities, they are assessed in terms of their background, competences and interests.

Microintegration considers every single person and concentrates on individual everyday problems. The design of the Microintegration programme will later lead to a side effect that contributes to more and better integration at the macro level. Microintegration prevents parallelism, exclusion and extremism.

The integration process can be a personal burden for the individual newcomer, and weakly integrated immigrants can represent a significant social and economic burden for society. Research has shown that slow or ineffective integration creates for migrants themselves an experience of hopelessness and frustration, which can have negative consequences such as mental illness, disease, unemployment, lack of care, etc. In society this can lead to prejudice,

condemnation and racism. Many organisations and government agencies are working on different parts of the integration process such as providing them with language skills, work/employment, family protection, etc.

However, there are a number of individual challenges big enough to paralyse other parts in the integration process as they require a lot of attention and energy from the individual. Microintegration encompasses those areas that lie between several levels – or are in danger of becoming a dead-end between the fast-moving and incomprehensible community. It therefore becomes clear that it is in everyone's interest to establish an integration process as efficiently and flexibly as possible.

Based on the design thinking framework, we have identified several principles and tools for establishing a successful microintegration programme that fosters learners' employment skills:



Source: pixabay

Co-determination

Co-determination at LoPe means that the methods are selected and developed together with the learners. They will, from day one, participate in choosing their focus areas and participate in designing the content. This will consequently contribute to a raised sense of responsibility and ownership in the target group.

Recognizing Negative Patterns

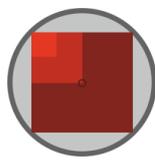
We want to help participants recognise the negative and self-destructive thought patterns of their own mind and change them to more positive behavioural patterns that will support their integration process. We found that one way to accomplish this is through meditation and mindfulness. These techniques raise learners' awareness of thought patterns. The learners can start to observe their own mind, and see that at times it can be quite deceiving.

The following exercise will help learners to recognise different kind of negative thought patterns:

“Another activity to try is identifying negative automatic thought patterns. Sometimes we may get stuck interpreting negative or distressing situations in a similar way without examining the evidence for that interpretation. Below are some common negative thinking patterns – see if any of them sound familiar or are ways of thinking you notice yourself engaging in. If so, practising reappraisal when you find yourself thinking in this way might be helpful!”

Types of Common Negative Thoughts:

1. **ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING:** You tend to see things in black-and-white categories. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure.
2. **GENERALIZATION:** The learners see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.
3. **MENTAL SIEVE:** The learners pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively so that your vision of all reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolours the entire beaker of water.
4. **REJECTING THE POSITIVE:** The participants reject positive experiences by insisting they “don't count” for some reason or other. In this way you can maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences.



5. **JUMPING TO UPSHOTS:** The participants make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion.
 - a. **MIND READING:** The participants arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you, and you don't bother to check this out
 - b. **FORTUNE TELLING:** The learners anticipate that things will turn out badly, and you feel convinced that your prediction is an already-established fact.
6. **CATASTROPHIZING OR MINIMISATION:** The participants exaggerate the importance of things (such as their goof-up or someone else's achievement), or they inappropriately shrink things until they appear tiny (their own desirable qualities or other fellow's imperfections). This is also called the "binocular trick."
7. **EMOTIONAL REASONING:** The learners assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel it, therefore it must be true."
8. **SHOULD STATEMENTS:** The participants try to motivate themselves with should and shouldn't, as if they had to be whipped and punished before they could be expected to do anything. "Musts" and "oughts" are also offenders. The emotional consequences are guilt. When they direct should statements toward others, they feel anger, frustration, and resentment.
9. **LABELLING AND MISLABELLING:** This is an extreme form of overgeneralization. Instead of describing their error, the learners attach a negative label to themselves. "I'm a loser." When someone else's behaviour rubs them the wrong way, they attach a negative label to him", "He's a damn louse." Mislabelling involves describing an event with language that is highly coloured and emotionally loaded.
10. **PERSONALIZATION:** The learners see themselves as the cause of some negative external event, which in fact they were not primarily responsible for."

Source: <https://sdlab.fas.harvard.edu/cognitive-reappraisal/identifying-negative-automatic-thought-patterns>

My life - my responsibility

Self-pity is paralysing. We must choose to focus on opportunities and solutions. The victim role itself is unfortunate. To over-identify as a victim, you see yourself as broken and wounded. It involves a general feeling of being treated unfairly, and the offence is not easily forgotten. The victim role has varying degrees of self-pity, self-righteousness and self-sacrifice. Taking the victim's role implies a perception of yourself as a victim in relation to the world, to events that one cannot influence or have any responsibility for. It is a role that affects several areas of life – the whole person becomes a victim. The perception of being a victim usually applies to past events, but the perception of oneself as a victim persists – often for decades. It therefore becomes an important task for the trainer to help the learner see that such a role is "paralysing" and prevents constructive change.

Social Understanding

When working with self-reflection and biographic work it is important to look at our own role in society. We aim to awaken a desire in learners that makes them want to contribute to the local community as well as awaken an interest in developing ourselves as individuals and as a society. The trainer must make sure that the learners are equipped with knowledge about the different channels of influence they can use to make themselves heard.

3.4 Entrepreneurship training: activities and tools from design thinking to transform your curriculum (BEST / Austria)

The "business contact person" – building bridges between young training participants and companies

In training courses for unemployed and low-qualified young adults, BEST not only focuses on basic skills or job searches in general. To add value to the training, participants have the opportunity to increase their perspectives through individual coaching and career counselling, held by business contact persons, who are counsellors, coaches, supporters, guides, and networkers with companies.

Participants are supported in their (re-)integration into the labour market in a needs-oriented and individual way. Career aspirations are clarified/checked on realisation possibilities, a concrete career path is gradually being developed. They are actively supported by business contact persons and coaches in their job application activities – searching for vacant positions, preparing application documents, coaching for and review of job interviews, coming to terms with placement obstacles etc. The business contact persons inform participants about recruiting strategies and personnel selection procedures in companies and foster their successful presentation on the labour market, i.e. in job interviews or assessment centres. This kind of targeted training promotes a sustainable entry into the labour market.

Another focus of the business contact persons is working on developing and improving participants' skills and competences which are in demand on the labour market, such as communication and interpersonal skills, service-orientation, problem solving, teamwork, positive attitude, assertiveness, conflict management, taking responsibility or critical thinking. Our years of experiences with the target group has shown that working with participants on these aspects, their self-esteem gradually improves. Not only will they feel more self-confident in job interviews, but the training also serves them in efficiently positioning themselves on the labour market in general.

The business contact persons also act as intermediaries between job-seeking participants and companies that want to hire employees in the respective areas. They have large networks in various industries and companies, and are dedicated to expanding their networks, acquiring new business contacts as cooperation partners. To foster contacts between potential employers and participants, they plan and organise company presentations, expert talks, company excursions or visits to vocational education fairs. These events are organised with the purpose of providing learners with practical insights into various areas of work. They are given the opportunity to ask questions, they can establish new contacts and practise how to interact professionally with prospective employers.

For participants to achieve the best possible results we aim for a holistic approach: the business contact persons work hand in hand with all other adult educators of the training programme. This means that there is an ongoing intensive exchange with all trainers and coaches as well as direct support in counselling interviews between coaches and participants.



Source: pixabay

Business contact persons as “personal coaches”

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Participants perceive the business contact persons as their “personal coaches”, who provide individualised counselling and support them in their search for jobs or vocational training programmes. The tailor-made assistance of business contact persons is essential to boost and motivate learners’ reintegration efforts. The chances of finding a job in the desired area and remaining employed in the long run are significantly increased by their effort.

4.0 How to support youth at risk in design thinking processes?

In the following chapter we would like to present you with selected step-by-step instructions, guidelines and recommendations of our project consortium. These shall guide youth workers in using design thinking methodologies with different target groups of youths at risk.

4.1 Design thinking to support economically disadvantaged persons - guidelines to address potential risks (Austria, BEST)

The target group of economically disadvantaged youths faces a variety of problem situations and are at a high risk of experiencing social exclusion. Due to their social position, they are often leaving school early or facing obstacles in terms of education. Consequently, they are lacking the necessary qualifications to enter a traineeship/apprenticeship programme. This aggravates (re)entering the labour market, leaving them unemployed and reinforcing their already challenging situation. Being a heterogeneous group in terms of their educational and socio-cultural background they are also prone to negative school experiences, family issues (i.e. lack of familial support), financial problems as well as physical and mental health problems.

Because of their problematic starting position and living conditions, these youths sometimes particularly struggle when re-entering educational programmes, such as second chance programmes for example. However, it is these programmes that actually have the power to turn the lives of those youngsters around and support them in revealing their potential. For several decades now, BEST Institut für berufsbezogene Weiterbildung und Personaltraining GmbH has worked with the target group and was able to collect extensive experiences as to how youngsters can be supported efficiently and sustainably by offering them educational training programmes tailored to their needs.

Although the design thinking approach has only recently gained increased attention in education, trainers have already been resorting to many elements of design thinking when working with economically disadvantaged youngsters. This is perhaps due to design thinking being a human-centred approach, grounded in creativity, which - as we have already learned - is intuitive and natural. The guidelines laid out below focus on interacting with and approaching youngsters and how training activities can be organised in the design thinking spirit.

Focus on (individual) needs

Socially and economically disadvantaged youths very often have a rather negative self-image and self-efficacy. Being able to build up a connection and trustful relationship with youngsters

is a prerequisite for learners to develop motivation. Motivation is one of the key aspects for educational programmes to be successful.

Therefore, youth workers and trainers are required to do a lot of motivational and relationship work throughout the training programme. This is very important, if you want your programme to have a positive impact on youths' lives. In order for youngsters to develop motivation and for youth workers to be able to motivate them, being able to first establish a relationship of trust is necessary. However, due to youngsters often lacking familial security and support systems, they find it difficult to trust in others. Especially if the person to be trusted is connected to an institutional context, the process of building up trust can be impeded.

Put yourself in youngsters' shoes – Empathy

Applying the key principle of *Empathy* can support youth workers in establishing a trustful connection with youngsters. For example, you could introduce design thinking to youngsters or approach them by keeping the following guidelines in mind:

- Try to get a clear impression of your target group and observe them carefully: What are their concerns, hopes and fears? What matters to them? Try looking at situations or problems from their perspective. Reflecting about youngsters' lives and their experiences will help you better understand their point of view. This again contributes to positive relationship building, because you will automatically feel more connected to them and hence, communicate with them more adequately.
- Build on youngsters' individual prerequisites, needs and requirements. This is important, because considering youngsters' resources and capabilities when developing their competences or when working on problem situations signals that you are accepting and acknowledging them for the individual that they are. No matter their strengths or 'weaknesses'. It is sometimes just that recognition that flips a switch in people's minds and all of a sudden, the motivational level in youngsters is elevated.
- Approach youngsters on eye level. They very often have an increased need to feel respected and understood by others. If youngsters feel that they are taken seriously, it will have a positive impact on their level of confidence. They will also be more willing to invest in building up relationships with other people.



Source: pixabay

Even though many youngsters seem quite confident and 'cool' on the surface, the way they actually feel is often the complete opposite. Young people regularly struggle with finding their identity. And this can be intensified due to a lack in external structures (i.e. support through family system or employment), which is characteristic for the target group in question. So working on youngsters' confidence, supporting them in uncovering their interests, ideas and skills is among the main tasks of youth workers and trainers. The design thinking mindset can be a useful tool to achieve this:

- Provide youngsters with opportunities (i.e. activities, exercises, etc.) through which they can experience success or a sense of achievement. It is important that exercises are not too demanding, but also not too easy for them to solve. Otherwise, youngsters can get bored quickly and are less willing to participate.
- Use positive, motivational or appreciative language when talking to young people. For example, regularly recognise and acknowledge youngsters' positive contributions. This will strengthen their self-confidence and self-efficacy.

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You can watch this inspirational video on how to nurture empathy in your everyday life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMpEzpSwyOk> or scan the QR-code with your smart device.



Pointing out the benefits of learning - Failing is ok

Socially or economically disadvantaged youngsters are now and again reluctant to participate in training programmes, because they are afraid of making mistakes or saying something 'wrong'. Often enough, they have been judged, rejected or stigmatised when they did not succeed at something, especially when it comes to learning. These experiences influence their motivational level to date and their ability or willingness to build relationships with others. The design thinking methodology can add value in this respect, because one ground rule is that making mistakes is welcome.

In fact, mistakes are leading the way of where we are going and what we still need or want to understand better. We therefore recommend discussing this topic with learners right at the beginning of training and regularly raise their awareness that failing *is ok*. Following the guidelines below, you can positively influence youngsters' perspective on making mistake:

- Prepare some examples for youngsters and tell them why making mistakes is an essential part of learning and life in general.
- As a next step, in small groups learners could brainstorm further reasons on the importance of making mistakes. Emphasise that development and growth can only take place, if we are willing to acknowledge our mistakes and the mistakes of other people as well. Point out that we cannot judge ourselves for something we did not have the knowledge or information about at a particular point in time. Highlight to youngsters that whatever they did in the past, was the best that they could do.
- Then, learners create posters on which they write down the most important points. As a follow-up, you can implement a group discussion.

If you are new to the design thinking methodology, we recommend that you first collect as much information as possible about the individuals of your target group (e.g. age, educational experiences, problem situations, interests and motivation to participate in the educational programme, etc.). This will help you in better understanding your target groups' needs and support you in selecting your area of focus.

4.2 Design thinking to support migrants and refugees - guidelines to address potential risks (LoPe / Norway)

Inspiration phase - About our target group

When it comes to targeting young migrants, in LoPe we distinguish between those who have come as refugees and those who are either 2nd or 3rd generation in Norway or have come for economic reasons. Young refugees are often traumatised, which is why our working approaches must be implemented with special care. For both groups, it is often the case that they are not only struggling with their past – especially those who have experienced war and flight – but are now also in the situation of having to manoeuvre through at least two cultures. This can lead to conflict with their environment and or conflict with themselves – for example, by giving up or dropping out of school.

It is known from research that slow or inefficient integration creates an experience of hopelessness and frustration for the immigrants themselves, based on negative consequences such as mental health, illness, unemployment, inability to care, etc. A lack of integration when immigrants first come to Norway can lead to prejudice, judgement and racism among the Norwegian society. Many organisations and government agencies work with different parts of the integration process; language, employment, family counselling, etc. Yet, there are a number of individual challenges that are big enough that they can cripple other parts of integration. This is because they require a lot of attention and steal energy from individuals. In LoPe, we will specifically focus on these challenges with each participant.

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Ideation phase - Empathy: Applying principles of design thinking to better understand our target group

The concept of microintegration focuses on the individual. *We found that the design thinking principle of empathy expresses what we intend to pursue with our work.* Each person is unique and must be treated in a unique way. When working with youngsters, micro integrators take the necessary time to build up a fruitful relationship with them. *We are in the design thinking process of empathy.* Trust is being built on both sides.

Do I identify with my past? Am I carrying a lot of unnecessary baggage? Some of the supervisors in LoPe can relate to the backgrounds of young migrants/refugees, having experienced war and conflict themselves. By sharing their history, experiences, and memories, a connection is built and youngsters are invited to share their stories as well. At the same time, these guides can be examples that it is possible to start over and succeed in a new society and culture. You can maintain your identity and see that it is entirely possible to navigate two cultures – this can be a great resource and a coveted skill in a society where multiple cultures are coexisting.

We need to dig deep into individuals' life stories to be able to look together at the barriers that hinder the integration process, enjoyment of life, participation in work, and communities. To do this, we must spend time building relationships and trust. We do this by making each participant feel seen and heard. Sometimes it is just about them feeling that they are being noticed and that someone is taking the time to listen to them, showing genuine interest in themselves and their life situation.

Group discussions, one-on-one meetings, and various coaching exercises are used as methods, but in the end it comes down to genuine human encounters – based on the principle of empathy – that have true value.

Implementation phase

If trust and a relationship with the young person can be established, the design thinking process can move to the next phase – implementation.

Co-determination – Participants are involved from day one. Instructors who share the same cultural and religious background as the participants have the advantage that they might have a more powerful influence than an indigenous Norwegian instructor with the same qualifications would have. Chances are higher that there will be a greater acceptance by participants, when the instructors are being direct and are making clear demands. At the same time, having a Norwegian instructor in the team is also essential to our programmes' success. They will be able to convey the basic values of Norwegian society and provide the necessary knowledge and understanding of our society to our learners. This twofold

composition of instructor teams will be a critical success factor in the goal of getting participants working.

From day one, participants will have a hand in shaping the content of the course. How can I make the best use of these available weeks and resources? How can I contribute? It is important to reflect on how much energy we put into "me and my life" compared to the energy we spend on helping others. Let the learners themselves choose ways and areas in their community where they can contribute actively. They might set up their own initiative, do fundraising or more traditional volunteer work. Focusing on helping other people has an empowering effect. We are able to see directly that our contribution is needed, which increases our sense of self-worth. Skills and experiences, which are trained and further developed during volunteer work can nurture responsibilities, which will enhance youth employability and employment prospects.

4.3 Design thinking to support Roma and youths with disabilities - guidelines to address potential risks (DKolektiv / Croatia)

When approaching the target groups of young people from the Roma community and youth with disabilities, one should take into account a handful of factors, of which we will list only the basic ones in the following text, which we have noticed so far.

For both target groups

Both groups have very likely experienced prejudice and negative effects of it in their lives, i.e. direct or indirect discrimination. For this reason, it is necessary to practice empathy with these target groups, not to condemn even things that are not clear to us at first, because youth workers who do not have such a background can hardly understand the complexity of long-term experience of social marginalisation. Many of the obstacles that these groups experience are invisible to us - while we are often sensitised to the problems of people with a certain physical (visible) disability that can be solved by a single intervention (construction adjustments such as a ramp or wheelchair lift), social and socioeconomic marginalisation and its consequences often remain invisible and abstract to us, because they are not visible at first. For this reason, it is good for youth workers themselves to go through workshops on human rights, working with vulnerable and

marginalised groups, and especially those that do not only concern only the legal basis, but that are aimed at raising awareness about human rights as a concept.

One such exercise is "step by step" which gives participants different roles (for example, a member of national or sexual minorities, a person with a disability, a child of a successful business owner, etc.) and then gives them life situations (I go to vacation every year, I can freely expressing love for my partner, I am not concerned about my future, I can pay my bills, I can afford quality education etc.) - people make a step if they agree that the statement refers to their role, and stand in place if it does not. The exercise is followed by a reflection in which we look at how far we have gone and in what role, and thus refer to the various starting positions given to us in life and how, although we all have the opportunity to progress and change our lives, many young people who we work with don't have the same prerequisites and starting position that we had - and that's important to take in consideration.

This is just one of the many methods we can use to make our youth workers aware of the specifics of working with vulnerable groups, but the most important step is to be aware that this is really important and that it should not be neglected as it is necessary the group does not experience additional experience of discrimination or stereotypical observation within youth work - which the youth worker does not do out of malice, but out of ignorance and / or inexperience.

Specifically for Roma

The Roma are a nation scattered throughout the world. Contemporary history records the connection of Roma in Europe and the world, but it is important to remember that it is still a community with rich cultural diversity, which has a number of peculiarities depending on the area in which they live. Therefore, it is necessary to get acquainted with the local culture and customs of the Roma, not to approach with large premade formulas, but to adapt the approach to the needs of a particular community. Approach openly, emphasising true partnerships based on shared detection and problem solving. Don't expect the whole community to embrace your initiative - like all of us, the Roma are a heterogeneous population with different interests. But within each community there are people who are open to cooperation and projects - be it in the form of activation in the labour market, activation in the form of social engagement or some third form. In all its forms, it is design

thinking that can be helpful, especially if it is carried out in partnership with the people we include in the programme.

Specifically for youth with disabilities

The most common feedback from youth with disabilities is that their abilities have been inadequately assessed. This goes on two levels - on the one hand, people without disabilities often underestimate the general abilities of youth with disabilities, which results in the person feeling undervalued and not fulfilling their potentials, but also the potentials of the program they attend. The second phase occurs after youth workers become aware of the capabilities of youth with disabilities, when - sometimes from good intentions - they stop adapting the program, and potentially make it too demanding. If possible, it is best to build an open and respectful relationship, check the progress of participants and regularly adjust the program so that it is doable but challenging at the same time - i.e. it is necessary to think procedurally, just as design thinking promotes.

4.4 Design thinking to support diverse learners - guidelines to address potential risk (National Management School / Bulgaria)

National Management School (BG) works with two distinct age groups of young persons as described in above employment skills-oriented programmes: 16-18 at secondary education level and 19-25 at university and post-graduate level. Apart from age and education level denominators, these target groups represent heterogeneous learners, coming from different socio-economic backgrounds. This heterogeneity has shaped our training approach, which is pursuing respect for each learner's individuality and context and trying to engage everyone in active learning from the perspective of one's current position and level of competences. From our experience and understanding of design thinking methods, we can provide the following methods and guidelines, which are effective in the context of a diverse classroom:

Group rules. It is a common practice for trainers to invite the group to adopt certain key rules for the group process to be a smooth and constructive experience (e.g., no talking when somebody is presenting, respect for time, etc.). We feel at this entry phase it is good to introduce some of the major principles of design thinking as grounding rules. For example:

- Mistakes are important stepping stones to success.
- Each idea counts and should be recognised.
- All group decisions are taken through voting and consensus.
- Together we can work on better solutions.



Source: Unsplash

Learning outcomes communication. It is important when introducing new elements from a design thinking methodology or directly engaging learners in a separate design thinking workshop to emphasise on the added value for them and their employability. There is evidence of research on the impact from design thinking on development of 21st century competencies such as (DFC Research, 2020) such as: empathy, leadership, problem-solving, collaboration, communication skills, critical and creative thinking. It would add value for the trainers to present concise rubrics of learning outcomes in that regard and present ways of evaluating educational achievements. In the spirit of design thinking it would be great to engage learners in a discussion about learning outcomes they pursue and how they can be achieved through chosen methodology.

Warm-up. Warming up the group is an important and sometimes underestimated activity, which is crucial especially when working with diverse learners, among which there might be learners from disadvantaged positions. There are numerous entry activities, which can be implemented to set a positive and trustful atmosphere in the group and ignite learners' creativity. In the context of design thinking, these preparatory activities might take the form

of group challenges with strong fun elements, which will lay the foundation for the future more “serious” core processes. One very popular activity is the marshmallow challenge.

Scan the QR code or click on the link to watch an inspirational video from a marshmallow challenge: <https://vimeo.com/199952243>



Source: Pixabay

Engagement strategies. One of the most challenging tasks for trainers is keeping young persons' attention and maintaining their motivation for learning. This is even more challenging when there are learners in the group, who due to different circumstances, might not demonstrate any enthusiasm for participation in planned activities. The setting of key rules such as the importance of team work and the recognition of each voice, might not be enough to ensure active participation. Design thinking in its essence is a methodology that encourages participation of learners, but still there is always a risk that some of the learners will stay passive and won't benefit from the activities planned. One proven strategy is to assign roles for group members and each role would need to report some aspect of the group's progress within the course of work. In the spirit of design thinking the trainer presents a sample list of roles for each team to have and opens space for discussion and group decision on how the actual role distribution will be made. As an additional small measure, you can encourage the group to discuss, what are the strengths of each group member and based on this take the most appropriate decision.



Source: Unsplash

4.5 What are the challenges when implementing design thinking in youth work?

This chapter highlights potential challenging areas when implementing design thinking methodologies in youth work. In the following, we have summarised the most important guidelines to raise your awareness when using design principles and processes in your daily work with youths.

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Design thinking to change the way of teaching and learning

Even though innovative and adequate methods - such as design thinking - exist, educators often rely on already established practises that are based on traditional teaching methods. This entails that educators can sometimes be reluctant to apply new methods, which again poses challenges for youth work across various sectors (e.g. second chance programmes) in developing further and improving their quality.

Very often, the focus of conventional methods is on conveying a lot of information in a short amount of time, which is counterproductive for the learning process and participants' learning progress. Therefore, second chance programmes sometimes tend to become rigid. Moreover, there are also strict parameters that must be met. Consequently, educators are sometimes reluctant to apply these new methods, which poses a challenge in further developing and improving the quality of youth work.

As conventional teaching methodologies are still prevailing in our educational system, both youngsters and youth workers might be at first overwhelmed by the design thinking

approach. Some learners might even feel uncomfortable or reluctant to acknowledge this new way of learning.

Put yourself in their shoes: Imagine, all of a sudden you are asked to actively participate, to make suggestions and contributions, to create and turn your ideas into reality. Youngsters might not have yet developed the necessary critical thinking or analytical skills that the design thinking mindset is characterised by. This can have a deterrent effect on them, resulting in the complete opposite of what youth trainers set out to accomplish with the design thinking methodology.

Step out of the comfort zone

However, in the increasingly competitive market of private and public adult education institutions, many educators and youth workers decide to step out of their comfort zone and are willing to try new methodological practises. They are open to innovative approaches, in order to provide their students with effective learning experiences. Given this context, it is important to promote design thinking on a metalevel as being one of the models that can help create an adequate curriculum, but also to promote it as a valuable tool for young people, who are returning to school to solve specific life challenges. It is therefore important for youth workers to be aware of the importance of an adequate use of this method. Even though it is relatively simply structured, the design thinking approach requires preparation and time. Improper preparation can lead to poor results and abandonment of the whole process. Therefore, educators are required to familiarise themselves with the different phases of design thinking and how they can be implemented for their individual target group. What is more is that you should try to make it palatable to them, make them curious so that they are willing to leave their comfort zone and embark on trying something new.

Be authentic

Another possible risk is also the resistance of students to innovative forms of work. Very often, this is rooted in negative previous experiences with learning. Like many methods, design thinking can also be trivialised and reduced to a game. People who have attended a variety of formal and non-formal education programmes may have negative experiences and prejudices precisely because of such cases. It is therefore important that youth workers present the method adequately, using their personal life examples that confirm its success.

By providing authentic real-life examples of their work, they show to youths that it is a long-term process, which does not bear fruit overnight, but the results of which are visible in the long run.

Choose topics wisely

This may be followed by the risk of an inadequate choice of topics to implement with design thinking. When mentoring young people who have left education early, it is important to remember that they face a whole range of challenges and problems on a daily basis. Choosing the right challenge is key to the success of the whole process. It must be clearly defined, complex enough to have visible results for the participants, but simple enough to be truly feasible, i.e. not to fail, which will only discourage students from further using the method, and even potentially from completing the educational programme as a whole. Therefore, youth workers are advised to prepare some examples and then tailor them to the needs of their participants. Then, in a next step, other challenges / problems that learners want to solve as part of their education, can be identified.

Engage youth workers in a design thinking workshop

The main challenge when embedding design thinking into an already set and tested through the years educational programme is how to ensure that proposed new elements fit in an organic way in the training design. This is much dependent on the level of pedagogical



expertise of youth trainers. It is an opportunity for trainers to innovate. A practical idea might be engaging youth workers themselves in a design thinking workshop with a thematic focus on how they can embed design thinking in their current training offer.

Source: Pixabay

Furthermore, design thinking when considered as a comprehensive training methodology itself requires following concrete steps/phases, in order to achieve quality learning outcomes. In that sense, youth trainers would need to consider not adding elements to different training modules but introduce design thinking workshops (covering all design thinking steps) along the whole training course. It is also important to be mindful of the leading learning objectives, which are linked to improving employment skills of young persons, opening chances for their successful career development.



Source: Unsplash

Being a very interactive, creative and engaging process, design thinking holds the trap for trainers, especially for those that are in their first years in the job. Oftentimes they are “carried away” easily and stay mainly in the fun zone of activities, without aligning them with the highlighted objectives. In order to avoid this defocusing, it would be recommended to plan for regular intervision sessions among trainers during which such situations can be discussed and reflected upon.

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4.6 Collaborating with other stakeholders

Based on each partner’s extensive experience with the target group, which suggestions/guidelines can we provide youth workers with to best collaborate with other stakeholders (e.g. parents, multipliers, social services, etc.). Or put differently, what is important to consider when collaborating with stakeholders from your country? The benefits of applying the design thinking approach in collaboration with stakeholders of youth work:

Participatory and engaging activities as well as relationship building is crucial to successful and efficient youth work. This is why it is so important to understand your stakeholders’ involvement, including youths, youth workers and other staff from your organisation, family members, policy makers, public administration services, education and VET providers, trainers, employers, etc. In order to ensure transparent stakeholder involvement, you can use the following as guidelines:

1) Identify your stakeholders

Firstly, it is vital that you know who all your relevant stakeholders are. Try to understand their needs and situation/context. Understanding this, you will be better informed about their needs, concerns, expectations, interests, conflicts and priorities. This will also support you in identifying potential challenges or things to look out for along the way. In this sense, the design thinking approach provides an opportunity to connect with your stakeholders' needs on a deeper level.

2) Identify stakeholders' involvement

Once the stakeholders are identified, you would think about their specific degree of involvement and to which extent this influences (the frequency of) your interaction and communication (i.e. face-to-face, via email or phone) with them. You will consequently gain a better understanding of when and how to approach your stakeholders, how to involve them and tackle certain challenges collaboratively. It therefore is about building trustful work relationships with your stakeholders.

3) Identify stakeholders' tasks

Individual stakeholders need to be aware of their individual roles and tasks in order to achieve an improvement in the lives of youths. Therefore, being able to point out individual responsibilities and communicating these transparently to stakeholders is key to effective and responsible youth work. Naturally, youth workers can't impose duties or tasks upon youths or other stakeholders. They need to be given sufficient time to opt for voluntary participation.

4) Documentation of stakeholder collaboration:

Knowledge management is another important aspect to take into account. It is critical that you document and share information among all stakeholders involved. This also entails reporting back to your stakeholders on work progress or successes.

Design thinking in its essence requires learners to immerse themselves into real life environments and situations. They are encouraged to conduct interviews with diverse stakeholders. In our experience with delivering activities linked to learners being motivate to

explore the field beyond the classroom, we have tested two approaches with regard to youth workers' collaboration with stakeholders:



Passive communication. Youth workers stay neutral and do not communicate with representatives of communities which will be interviewed by young persons. The benefit of this approach is that learners will have the opportunity to engage in authentic communication without any preparation from the other side. The risk of this approach is that their initiative of approaching some stakeholders

Source: Unsplash

might not be well accepted. For example, if learners are to interview members of the municipality council without any arrangements, their invitation for an interview might be declined, which will lead to decrease in their motivation and enthusiasm to continue. This risk is high for learners at risk, who might enter the whole process with a large degree of scepticism and any obstacle like the one described above can further fuel this scepticism.

Proactive communication. Youth workers are proactive and conduct preliminary meetings with stakeholders that will be interviewed by learners. The benefit of this approach is that everyone is aware of the process to follow and that learners will be received in a positive manner, allowing for them to conduct the learning activities planned such as individual or group interviews. The risk is related to the authenticity of the information they will receive. There is a high probability that stakeholders, especially representing institutions, might present a story and facts for the given challenge, which are socially acceptable, but not linked to the real situation.

Finally, when you are personally committed to further local or national youth policies or otherwise want to work with stakeholders at the decision-maker level, insist that your common activities are based on the “youth for youth” principle of long-term co-creation of activities, projects and policies for Youth. This is especially important when stakeholders rely only on expert opinions. You might assume that it is not as important to involve young people when experts are already involved, but it is quite the opposite. Top experts are sometimes locked into the world of statistics and theory, and working with young people is an ever-changing category that requires you to be up-to-date at all times. Otherwise, the practice can be based on research and theory that does not meet the real needs of youth at present time. The same is problematic when collaborating with experts in related fields, who know enough to understand broader concepts, but are not familiar with the specifics of young people as a group. So remember - always choose young people into project teams or ensure the methodological influence of ideas and feedback from young people. Organisations that really care about themselves, in the long run work on offering forms of youth participation in the work of the organisation and are working on long-term capacity building for a group of young people who participate in projects and activities. If you do that, your action will become more relevant to all other stakeholders and you will become an example of good practice of youth involvement.

If you recognise the importance of this as important, one of the best ways of including young citizens is design thinking. Going through the stages of design thinking, you provide the necessary structure to young co-creators that is needed to make the process meaningful, but you can also show the same model to other stakeholders as a form of cooperation and structured and meaningful work with young people on program development.

An additional advantage is that young people become interested in the topic of youth policies and youth work, and thus potentially become your future associates and / or competent representatives of partner organisations and decision makers.

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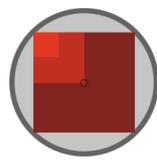
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