

# GUIDE FOR PROMOTING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN THE COMMUNITY





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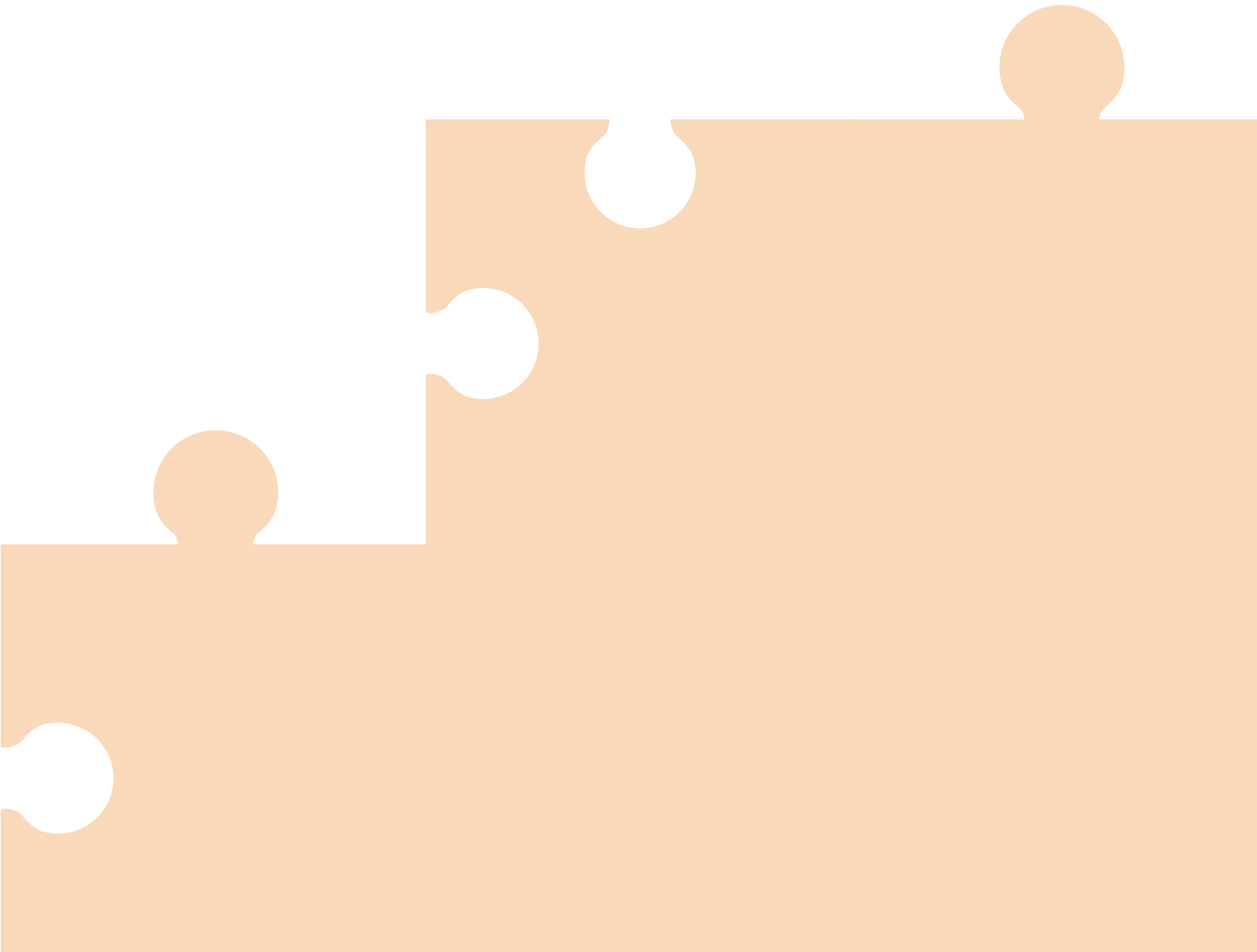
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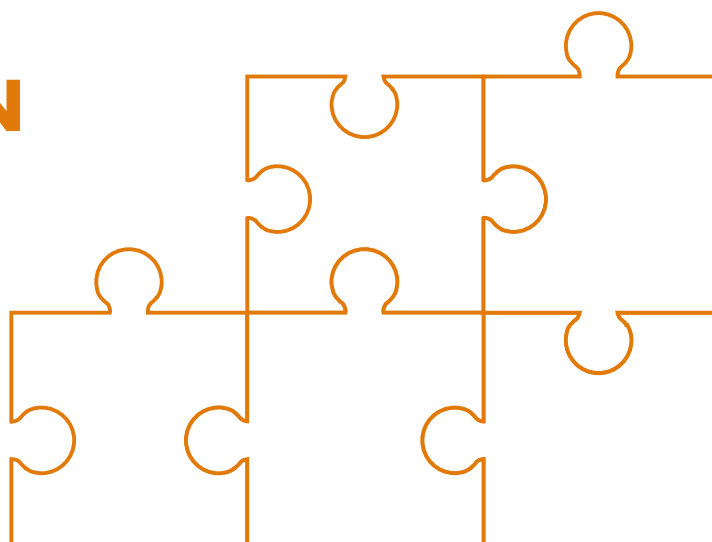
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# PRESENTATION



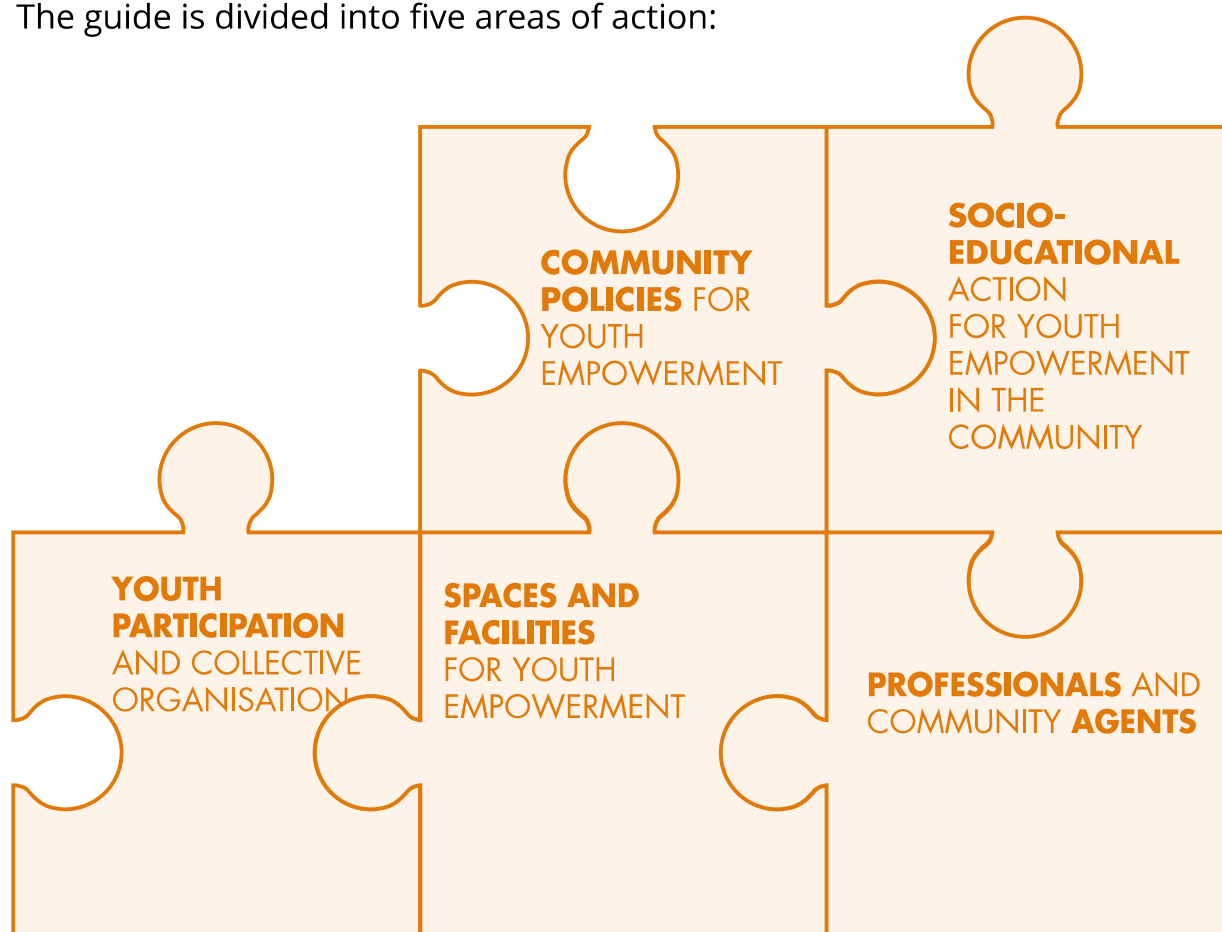
This guide is one of the outcomes of the **HEBE Project**, a research study on youth empowerment. The study involved the participation of researchers from four universities: the University of Girona (coordinator of the study), the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), the University of Barcelona (UB) and the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). The HEBE Project was jointly funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (MICIU) and the State Research Agency (AEI) (Project Ref.: PID2020-119939RB-100 funded by MICIU /AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033).

The guide is designed as a structured compilation of objectives and actions to guide us in building communities that enable the empowerment of young people. That is, communities that contribute to:

*“... increasing the possibilities for a person to make decisions about and consequently act on everything that affects their lives, to participate in decision-making and to be involved, in a shared and responsible way, in the collective they form part of. This requires two conditions: that the person acquires and develops a set of personal capabilities and that their environment enables them to effectively exercise these capabilities” (Soler, Trilla, Jiménez-Morales i Úcar, 2017, pg. 22)*

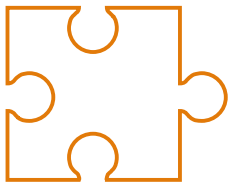
This definition emphasises the idea of not solely attributing the responsibility for this process to the young person individually or to young people collectively. Therefore, this guide is aimed at administrations, services, programmes and projects whose objectives include promoting the empowerment of young people from the municipal public policy perspective.

The guide is divided into five areas of action:



Each area has different objectives (33 in total), broken down into various proposals for actions that can be implemented (84 in total). This aim of this resource is to facilitate decision-making, guide planning and action and to serve as inspiration for public policies for young people. It is not intended as a list of objectives and actions to be carried out in their entirety, but as material that inspires and guides the implementation of possible strategies and actions according to the specific reality of each community.





# COMMUNITY POLICIES FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

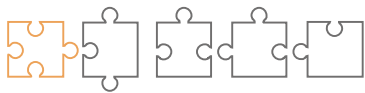
Communities must ensure the autonomy and active participation of young people in different public affairs. It is therefore strategic to strengthen local youth plans, with greater involvement by young people themselves, and include in them actions that are applicable and viable in all policies that affect young people, and provide the necessary resources to implement. Interdepartmental and interinstitutional coordination should be improved and the triangular relationship between young people, professionals and the administration simplified to ensure greater accessibility and response to the needs of young people. This would allow more inclusive, personalised support to be provided.

## Objectives and proposals for action:

**Objective 1.1.** Overcome paternalist dynamics and adult-centric approaches in the design and development of youth policies and value the voice and proposals of young people beyond exclusively consultative processes.

- > Encourage the participation of young people in municipal councils and other decision-making bodies.
- > Study the youth participation model in each municipality or community, allowing debate and validation of the proposals for action and the main political lines in relation to youth affairs. This youth participation must include different profiles of young people and be updated annually.

**Objective 1.2.** Further develop youth plans and allocate more resources to them. Improve coordination within the administration and between the different public administrations, working jointly and cohesively to effectively address the needs of young people.



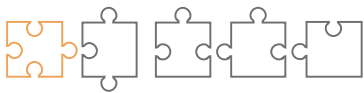
- > Create interdepartmental committees, who will designate youth representatives as interlocutors and share with them how each department is involved in the development of youth plans.
- > Establish an interadministrative coordination committee with representation from all public administrations involved in youth policies. This committee can develop a joint plan of action, ensuring a coherent and efficient approach.
- > Implement a shared information system that allows all public administrations to access and contribute relevant information about youth and youth policies to a common database.

**Objective 1.3.** Simplify the bureaucratic processes of the public administration to make them more accessible to young people. Improve communication channels so that information effectively reaches all young people in the community.

- > Designate a professional of reference to explain how these channels work and guide young people in bureaucratic processes related to administration (e.g. establishing organisations, booking spaces, applying for grants, etc.)
- > Reduce and simplify procedures, making the processes accessible and comprehensible.
- > Implement an online management system to make it easier to submit applications and obtain services.

**Objective 1.4.** Ensure that young people have access to the minimum material conditions with regard to basic rights. These include, as a priority, rights related to health, education, employment and housing.

- > Implement equal opportunity policies so that all young people, regardless of their profile or situation, have access to the same material conditions.
- > Ensure that all young people have access to educational leisure proposals (through grants, discounts, etc.)



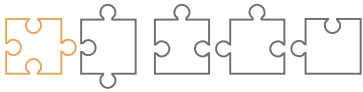
- > Disseminate and provide information about all existing spaces, resources and support in the territory so that they are accessible to any young person.

**Objective 1.5.** Establish programmes and actions to support young people who need it during the various transitions: from the family nucleus of origin to their own nucleus; from training to employment, etc.

- > Offer free, accessible workshops on useful topics that might interest them, such as life skills, home economics, gastronomy, bureaucratic procedures, training and career guidance, etc.
- > Offer leisure options adapted to each stage of youth and provide strategies for alternative and healthy leisure activities that benefit their overall development. In this respect, offer training for junior monitors, monitors and managers of children's and youth leisure activities.
- > Raise awareness and send positive messages to society, professionals and families about the different transitions of young people and emphasise the importance of adequate guidance in their identity processes.

**Objective 1.6.** Consider the needs of all young people, ensuring inclusion and adequate support especially for those in situations of greater vulnerability, taking into account the intersectional perspective.

- > Design youth programmes and services with universal design criteria that ensure inclusion and accessibility for any young person, regardless of their origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, etc.
- > Offer intersectional training to people working with young people, to ensure the sensitivity and strategic focus necessary for this type of approach.
- > Implement non-discrimination policies in all youth programmes and services and create evaluation indicators for youth actions.



**Objective 1.7.** Raise awareness and gradually involve the business fabric of the community in proposals for socio-educational youth actions and any action that promotes youth empowerment.

- > Foster the creation of youth-led companies through grants, contests and awards.
- > Encourage inclusive contracting in companies within the territory, promoting diversity and the inclusion of young people of all profiles.
- > Create a network of local companies that could hire young people or offer them an internship.

**Objective 1.8.** Promote the study and research of youth and youth policies to help with decision-making.

- > In the community, promote the visibility and dissemination of projects, research and studies carried out on youth and youth policies.
- > Incentivise, through grants or specific calls, projects and studies on youth and youth policies (e.g. pre-university level projects and bachelor and master's degree final projects).



## SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL ACTION FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Youth professionals are key agents in the community. They can help facilitate youth empowerment by ensuring specific educational processes and providing favourable contexts for personal and collective development. Their socio-educational action must be shared with all young people and, if possible, must also involve the rest of the community.

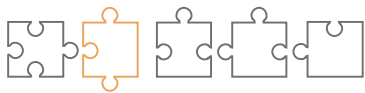
### Objectives and proposals for action:

**Objective 2.1.** Design projects with the needs of young people at the centre and that connect them with the resources and opportunities offered by their communities.

- > Involve young people in the design, development and evaluation of policies and actions aimed at them. This entails a joint commitment throughout the entire process, beyond ad-hoc consultative spaces.
- > Take advantage of the social infrastructure of each community (libraries, civic centres, youth centres, educational centres, etc.) for organising meeting places for young people.

**Objective 2.2.** Listen to young people and acknowledge their needs, demands and actions and help them to contextualise them in the community.

- > Carry out participatory consultations in the relational spaces of young people, such as schools, training centres, cultural and youth centres, sports centres, the public space, etc.
- > Carry out consultation processes with young people whenever possible and assume concrete and explicit commitments. Ensure maximum sensitivity in these processes.



**Objective 2.3.** Carry out local socio-educational work with young people, with specific and comprehensive orientation programmes and services.

- > Include specific youth actions in community development plans and plans in the surrounding area.
- > Ensure the continuity of the professionals in order to build long-term relationships for educational guidance.

**Objective 2.4.** Allow for intersectional work through constant dialogue, taking into account the diversity of cultures, gender, ages, training, resources, etc. This will help overcome the dynamics of racism and the stereotyping of young people.

- > Move away from the single-focus perspective centred only on one axis of inequality and include actions and resources that take into account all axes of inequality. This will require establishing a constant dialogue with young people, enabling them to share experiences and to give visibility to different realities and voices.
- > Ensure that youth initiatives and programmes reflect diversity in the community in terms of culture, gender, age, etc.
- > Encourage reflection on privileges and inequalities in the community and how these can influence the experiences and opportunities of young people.

**Objective 2.5.** Promote the autonomy of young people in the spaces and facilities so they do not have to depend exclusively on adults or the administrations.

- > Incorporate youth association representatives into the territorial councils and roundtables, thus promoting intergenerational work.
- > Provide practical resources such as physical spaces for meetings, access to contact networks, association management training, etc.
- > Have open spaces in public facilities that allow spaces to be booked for ad-hoc or periodic activities for non-constituted youth groups.

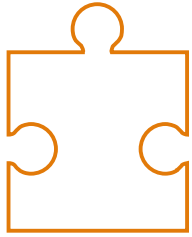


**Objective 2.6.** Provide guidance for young people from the perspective of training, the critical analysis of their reality within the community and self-awareness of their own skills and abilities.

- > Offer volunteer and community service programmes that allow young people to apply their knowledge and skills and become aware of the reality around them.
- > Promote social mentoring projects that support young people in their personal development.
- > Increase resources and self-management facilities for young people, where they can learn for themselves how to manage community spaces.

**Objective 2.7.** Share knowledge of informal associations and groups and encourage their creation and development.

- > Organise an annual meeting of all youth organisations, groups and initiatives to promote their activity and make them known to other young people and the community.
- > Promote mentoring programmes in which experienced people can advise and guide the new informal associations and groups.
- > Offer free web spaces for entities, so that they can present their projects and activities at no cost to them.
- > Use social prescription, as professionals know the reality of the territory and the characteristics, abilities and needs of the young people they work with.



## YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND COLLECTIVE ORGANISATION

Community identity is one of the key dimensions of youth empowerment. Social participation is necessary for strengthening this identity and is also a powerful resource for developing and empowering young people. Recognising participation and associationism as rights impels the administrations and the community as a whole to make these rights effective through the necessary mechanisms to give value to and support the associative fabric and organised youth movement.

### Objectives and proposals for action:

**Objective 3.1.** Promote youth participation at the different community and socio-cultural levels and in processes, from initial decision-making to evaluation.

- > Ensure that the participatory processes are binding. Make the conditions and possibilities of the process clear from the outset.
- > Incorporate in all neighbourhood cultural and festival programmes a budget for the self-management of offers and proposals designed and implemented by young people
- > Work together with young people to identify the needs and opportunities for community and socio-cultural work, beyond the stable structures of youth participation.

**Objective 3.2.** Ensure that organisations and institutions listen to and have a positive disposition towards the proposals of young people, leaving space for questions, demands and negotiation.





- > Establish a stable advocacy agenda where administration representatives sit down with representatives of youth associations and groups to put forward their contributions.
- > Implement programmes that give young people the opportunity to share their ideas and perspectives and to co-construct with adults.

**Objective 3.3.** Promote the autonomy of young people, thus facilitating their independence in organising and implementing activities, using spaces and facilities and managing certain services.

- > Promote the creation and maintenance of self-managed centres where young people can learn and put their projects into practice.
- > Establish agreed participatory evaluation systems for the self-managed services.
- > Facilitate the self-organisation of activities beyond the criteria established by adults.

**Objective 3.4.** In the community, give value to the contributions of young people. Giving meaning to and recognising their activities helps break down the barriers between collectives and fosters social cohesion in the community.

- > Recognise and applaud young people's contributions and inputs to informal associations and groups through awards, public recognition and special events.
- > Publish interviews, articles, videos, podcasts, etc. that tell the stories of young people or youth entities who have contributed to the community.
- > Establish service and knowledge exchange networks where young people can offer their skills and put them into practice.



**Objective 3.5.** Ensure that youth collectives have access to resources and public funding, without excessive dependence on professionals, or partisanship.

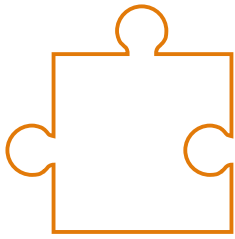
- > Facilitate grants processes for youth organisations and ensure that the grants are not conditional or co-opted.
- > Open participatory spaces to non-constituted organisations also, making opportunities for participation and activity management more flexible for all youth groups.

**Objective 3.6.** Promote coordination and joint work among the different participatory social initiatives and the associative fabric of the community.

- > Ensure transparency of information and management of the youth initiatives, maintaining an updated web portal with information about each initiative as well as providing contact persons.
- > Promote self-managed leisure activities in public and community spaces, alternating between constituted and non-constituted youth groups.

**Objective 3.7.** Foster the creation of youth networks by facilitating contact and interconnection between the different youth groups in the community.

- > Promote community action by professionals in the territory, either in the various community plans or in youth facilities, through the dynamisation and promotion of cooperation between organisations.



# SPACES AND FACILITIES FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Meeting places facilitate the active participation of young people in the community and their interrelation with other collectives. These spaces are necessary for fostering joint awareness and reflection on the life experience of being young. Both physical and virtual inclusive spaces and facilities must be considered.

## Objectives and proposals for action:

**Objective 4.1.** Using an analysis of the reality of youth, plan an adequate provision of local spaces, facilities and resources of reference for young people, taking into account their needs and demands.

- > Identify the needs of young people in the territory, based on their voice in studies and consultations.
- > Provide young people in the community with sufficient spaces and resources to meet their needs.

**Objective 4.2.** Rethink the uses and opening hours of youth facilities to reach more young people.

- > Provide open spaces adapted to the needs and times of young people in the territory (afternoons, evenings, nights and weekends), e.g. civic centres, youth centres, libraries, etc.
- > Rotate and introduce new activities and programmes on a regular basis to accommodate the changing interests and needs of young people.



**Objective 4.3.** Promote the use of the public space by young people and consider their forms and practices of expression and leisure.

- > Promote public transport and sustainable mobility so that all young people can access the youth spaces and facilities.
- > Ensure an equal use of the public space through participatory processes such as the exploratory walks, where social, physical and functional aspects are identified from an intersectional gender perspective.

**Objective 4.4.** Promote youth spaces open to diversity, where young people can participate in making decisions about their use.

- > Ensure that the architectural design is not a barrier to people with mobility issues. Facilitate physical accessibility, e.g. have an open, accessible lift.
- > Promote youth participation in public spaces and facilities aimed at young people but managed by the administration, to incorporate forms of shared governance.

**Objective 4.5.** Promote spaces that also foster relationships that go beyond associationism and facilitate intergenerational relations.

- > Promote intergenerational programmes and facilities where different generations can meet and learn to live and share together, e.g. foster contact between local artists in the community, youth activities in care homes, and historical memory activities, etc.

**Objectiu 4.6.** Influence the online space through the networks and websites of the administration, to adapt them to the characteristics, communication styles and language in the world of young people today.



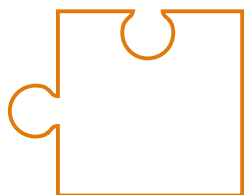
- > Co-design websites aimed at young people with the young people themselves, e.g. with young interns.
- > Promote positive references of young *influencers*, inviting them to the facilities and projects.

**Objective 4.7.** Use the online space to establish links with young people, to disseminate information and receive feedback and evaluation on what is being done.

- > Ask young people which channels and tools they want to use to interact with the facility, and adapt these to their realities.
- > Create an online portal where young people can easily access information about all the spaces, resources and services available to them.

**Objective 4.8.** Allocate resources to bridge the digital divide between young people at different socio-economic levels.

- > Ensure the availability of quality physical and online IT resources in the facilities and consider offering a loan service.
- > Identify young people without resources and advise them on how they can access the planned services, programmes and resources.



## PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITY AGENTS

The community is a powerful educational agent by action or omission. All members of the community play an important role, especially the community agents who support the development of the community and its members. It is important to identify these agents and connect them with youth professionals.

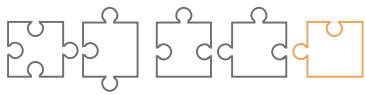
### Objectives and proposals for action:

**Objective 5.1.** Have professionals in the territory with specific youth training and the ability to connect with and build relationships with young people.

- > Promote training for professionals and community agents that will help them identify the starting point for establishing a link with young people. This would involve studying and working on how to establish more horizontal and healthy relationships based on this link.
- > Involve professionals in applied research projects.

**Objective 5.2.** Establish teams of sufficiently qualified professionals, with autonomy and appropriate working conditions, to guide young people and create environments that foster their development.

- > Allocate economic resources that ensure the implementation of youth policies, from an economic, material and human perspective.
- > Develop training workshops for professionals, technicians and others who work with youth and youth policies, teaching them how to create empowerment scenarios for young people.



- > Recognise and professionalise the role of youth technician and promote the stability and optimum working conditions of the technical teams during the implementation of youth plans, programmes and projects.
- > Assign youth technicians to the professional teams who work with territorial logic, giving them contracts with the same conditions of stability and employment status as other professionals working in this area.

**Objective 5.3.** Improve the coordination and cross-cutting nature of the network of professionals who work with young people. Strengthen the link between areas and departments and work together in a coordinated manner.

- > Ensure sufficient spaces and time to allow coordination between the different teams involved in the design and implementation of youth policies, so that young people can become the centre of community action.
- > Offer youth professionals structural, regular and institutionalised spaces for exchange and reflection.
- > Design and update resource banks where all information related to policies, plans and programmes is available and accessible to everyone involved in their implementation.

**Objective 5.4.** Promote a fairer vision and positive evaluation by the different community agents regarding the actions, aspirations and future of young people.

- > Design anti-rumour campaigns that eliminate limiting beliefs and prejudices about young people.
- > Give visibility to the diversity of the youth collective, based on plural and concrete realities, so that the vision that endures is neither homogeneous nor abstract.
- > Give value to youth experiences and youth-led projects linked to the community that attest to their commitment and show their reality (what they do, how they do it and how this has an impact in the community).



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