

FALLING INTO PLACE

COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

2024-1-DE04-KA220-YOU-000255934

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Background info

Project Full Title: Falling Into Place: Capacity-Building of Youth Workers in Participatory Placemaking & Creative Arts Methods in Rural Contexts, as a tool to build Democratic values at the local level
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This Competence Framework emerged from Local Alliance Building (LAB) activities conducted across test-bed sites in Germany, Lithuania, Italy, and Turkey. Through 20 interviews and an online focus group, the LAB process identified critical gaps in skills and knowledge among youth workers, who want to use placemaking with young people in rural and peripheral communities.

This Competence is therefore conceived to be the basis upon which the foreseen *Pedagogical Toolkit for Youth Workers* will be built.
The following structure has then been designed to best accommodate this objective, presenting the collected results in a way that would suit the design of educational activities targeting youth workers.

LAB Results

Based on the interviews and the focus group, it was possible to list the following competencies:

1. **Communication and Cross-Sector Collaboration**
   Enhanced outreach skills to engage diverse partners (including private-sector organizations) and build community partnerships.

2. **Digital and Technical Skills**
   Ability to effectively use digital tools for project planning, communication, and implementation.

3. **Motivating and Engaging Young People**
   Capacity to design programs that sustain youth interest, understand their motivations, and encourage long-term involvement.

4. **Resource Development and Sustainability**
   Skills in fundraising, securing local government support (especially in rural areas), and establishing financially sustainable strategies.

5. **Needs Analysis and Local Adaptation**
   Proficiency in conducting location-specific needs assessments and tailoring approaches to regional spatial practices and youth demographics.

6. **Technical Knowledge in Placemaking**

Expertise in physically transforming spaces, including understanding urban dynamics (e.g., spatial division, leveraging assets) for improved functionality and accessibility.

7. **Theoretical and Conceptual Application**
   Ability to apply urban anthropology theories and sensory anthropology insights to create psychologically engaging, inclusive public spaces.

8. **Social Construction and Inclusion**
   Competence in developing participatory frameworks to design socially inclusive spaces and prevent reinforcement of regressive social roles in community projects.

As aforementioned, these results were elaborated following the inputs provided by the people who were interviewed and that participated in the dedicated focus group and are therefore expressed summarising their direct words and inputs.

Methodology

In order to produce the foreseen Toolkit however and to make a product that could be easily used by a wider community of youth workers across Europe, the consortium decided to associate these competencies to the one listed within the **ETS Competence model for Youth Workers** working internationally, since it had already been used for the team internal learning process through the YOCOMO Self-Assessment Tool.
The reason for choosing this particular model among the others, is that it considers competencies as the synthesis between **Knowledge**, **Skills** and **Attitudes/Behaviours**, which is used among all the partners and that is particularly beneficial for the design of non-formal education activities.

Following this principle, ETS include 9 main competence areas:

1. **Facilitating individual and group learning in an enriching environment**
   Creating inclusive spaces for youth development through non-formal education methods.

2. **Designing programmes**
   Structuring youth-centered activities aligned with European values (e.g., inclusion, democracy).

3. **Organising and managing resources**
   Practical skills in budgeting, logistics, and risk assessment for international projects.

4. **Collaborating successfully in teams**
   Interpersonal skills for multicultural teamwork and conflict resolution.

5. **Communicating meaningfully with others**
   Adapting communication styles across languages and cultural contexts.

6. **Displaying intercultural competence**
   Addressing power dynamics and fostering equity in diverse settings.

7. **Networking and advocating**
   Building partnerships with stakeholders (NGOs, policymakers) to amplify youth voices.

8. **Developing evaluative practices**
   Implementing feedback loops to assess and improve program impacts.

9. **Being civically engaged**
   Being aware of and taking a principled stance on political and societal issues affecting young people, challenging power dynamics, encouraging their critical civic engagement in their communities, in Europe and beyond

Each of this is then composed of various knowledge, skills and attitudes/behaviours that together concur to form the specific competence. In the same manner, it's possible to unpack the competencies identified through the LAB activities, to understand the specific components that can concur to their developments.

Since it's been decided to adopt the ETS model also to insert our work in an existing framework, a first necessary action was to identify how our results could match the existing ETS areas, understanding that we had to develop ad hoc models for more specific competencies instead, like those related with placemaking, as well as for those connected with digital literacy, which is present across several of the 9 areas of ETS but with different focuses.

This operation resulted in the following scheme:

LAB Results	ETS Competencies	Matching Feature
Communication & Cross-Sector Collaboration	Networking & Collaboration	ETS stresses partnership-building across sectors, matching the need for finding allies and supporters
Motivating/Engaging Young People	Being Civically Engaged	Aligns with ETS's focus on sustaining youth involvement through participatory methods but also with being aware of the most pressing political issues for young people
Resource Development and Sustainability	Managing Resources	Both address fundraising and financial sustainability strategies
Needs Analysis and Local Adaptation	Displaying intercultural sensitivity	Shared focus on analyzing contextual/local youth requirements taking into account specific characteristics
Theoretical and Conceptual Application	Designing Programmes	Involves a good understanding of the different groups and environments that a youth worker works with, applying non-formal learning values and principles to address political, societal and cultural

		issues
Social Construction and Inclusion	Displaying intercultural sensitivity + Being Civically Engaged	Having a clear understanding of the context and of its structural problems to design activities and spaces that wouldn't reinforce them

After this matching we then went into the details of the specific competencies for the purpose of this framework, specifying for each the relative knowledge, skill and attitude/behavior.

Networking and Collaboration

Knowledge	Skill	Attitude/Behaviour
Knowledge of the needs of the community	Ability to include other community members during or after the project for wider impact	Encourage equity in relationships
Knowledge of how structural and systemic obstacles can limit people's possibility to act in solidarity	Ability to research and access relevant information	Take a pro-active role in networking with other actors and organisations/structures in line with the interest of the young people
Knowledge of advocacy approaches and methods in a youth work context	Ability to identify underlying privilege and power relations and mechanisms, and to assess their consequences and potential for acts of solidarity	Take a pro-active role in working on the political dimension of networking, making steps towards concrete actions
Knowledge of which structures and systems favour more solidarity for/with all		Transfer/share knowledge of youth and social rights and related formal regulations with potential partners and the young people
		Where relevant, overcome resistance to new partnerships through assessing the potential of that given partnership
		Readiness to allow being confronted with other views and work approaches
		Readiness to accept compromise while guaranteeing young people's interests and rights

Being Civically Engaged

Knowledge	Skill	Attitude/Behaviour
Understanding of challenges to young people's engagement (e.g., digital divide, social, cultural and own biases) and their impact on political and social developments	Skills to support young people to reflect on their values critically and those they are confronted with	Trust in young people's potential and their competences for meaningful participation and change-making
Knowledge of relevant policy frameworks, political and social actors, stakeholders, and community(ies) and their potential for impact	Ability to create and co-create opportunities for young people to meaningfully participate and critically engage with socio-political processes	Readiness to critically reflect on one's own values, perception of privilege, personal motives and urge to take social and political action
Knowledge of the potential risks of critical civic engagement processes in specific contexts	Ability to interact constructively with different socio-political actors for the benefit of young people and their civic engagement	Readiness to engage with relevant political and social processes and the life of the community and society(ies)
		Work towards engaging young people of different backgrounds in the social and political dialogue
		Encourage young people's connections inside groups (bonding), with others (bridging), and with those with power (linking)
		Co-create actions with young people to address local and global, progressive social and human rights issues

Managing Resources

Knowledge	Skill	Attitude/Behaviour
Knowledge of human resources management and inspirational leadership	Ability to use an inspirational leadership approach	Demonstrate self-management skills
Knowledge of financial management (with a focus on projects/programmes)	Skill of adjusting programme Elements to resources management	Willingness to take on tasks that perhaps are not normally a part of one's role
Knowledge of fundraising	Strength in knowing how to foster collaboration among the members of the group, while taking their (individual) surrounding environment into account	Readiness to be challenged with regard to leadership styles
Awareness of the potential of one's own resources and those of other contacts and partners'	Knowing how to empower young people to organise and manage resources	Readiness to share and to be open about one's own intentions
Awareness of the limit of resources, including personal ones		Readiness for continued learning, e.g. On financial management
Knowledge of policy and legislation on specific topics		Readiness to think long term about the impact of the project on participants, the community, resources and the environment, including utilising digital tools to maintain it, where appropriate

Displaying intercultural sensitivity

Knowledge	Skill	Attitude/Behaviour
knowledge of the mechanism of bias and how it affects feeling and acting	Being able to deal with ambiguity and change	Openness towards the unexpected and towards ambiguity in the group and in the learning process
Knowledge of identity-related mechanisms and theories (with a focus on cultural contexts and senses of belonging)	Being able to deal with tension and conflict	Readiness to confront others and be confronted in a respectful and constructive way
	Ability to work with interrelated dimensions of culture and identity	Openness and willingness to look at identity, culture and related aspects from different perspectives
	Being able to initiate critical reflection	Empathy towards people who hold different values and worldviews - beyond in-groups, bubbles and circles.
Knowledge of how a cultural environment can shape the understanding of different concepts (such as solidarity or inclusion)	Ability to raise awareness about each other within the group	Encourages young people to reflect on their own identity and related elements
Knowledge of discrimination mechanisms and how to address them	Being able to recognise discrimination and to understand the related mechanisms in order to react properly	Carefulness to use methods that do not implicitly reinforce stereotypes and discrimination mechanisms
Knowledge of human rights, human rights education methods	Being able to address human rights topics through different methods (human rights education)	Awareness that culture is a dynamic and multifaceted process

Designing Programmes

Knowledge	Skill	Attitude/Behaviour
Knowledge of the young people involved and their community	Ability to work with and on different values through a variety of [learning] approaches	Assesses the needs of the young people before or at the very beginning of the activity (and proceeds with tailored adjustments if needed)
Knowledge of project management processes	Skill of developing meaningful programmes that motivate and engage young people	Involves the young people in designing the programme, where possible
Knowledge of different educational methods and concepts; knowing how to tailor and apply these to respective needs	Skill of identifying external influences on the development of practice of youth workers	Considers and applies the principles of non-formal learning when designing the programme with a particular focus on 'youth-centredness', 'transparency', 'democratic values', 'participation', 'empowerment' and 'social transformation'
Knowledge of assessment practices in non-formal learning	Ability to encourage and empower young people to recognise if and when the need exists for solidarity in the hosting community and to act on it.	Keeps an eye on the objectives of the activity and the young people's needs
	Skill of taking the contexts of the young people and their community into account and from this deriving an appropriate educational approach	Maximises opportunities in programme planning for young people to connect to others that have different values.

Placemaking Competence

According to the results, the priorities outlined for Placemaking competencies are the following:

Knowledge	Skill	Attitude/Behaviour
Knowledge of urban dynamics	Space Design and Transformation	Being open and proactive to facilitate group agreements
Urban Anthropology Theory	Application of urban anthropology principles	Matches knowledge, theories and experiences to the reality and the identities in the group (explicitly or implicitly)
Principles of inclusive spaces design	Ability to apply theoretical and sensory insights to design inclusive, psychologically engaging spaces	Addresses others' unexpressed concerns, feelings, or interests
Knowledge of structural oppression and power dynamics in the spaces	Using practical tools for conducting needs assessments	Readiness to open the group process towards the wider community
Knowledge of different crafting materials and techniques	Using different materials and crafts	Readiness to accept the 'unexpected' (elements, learning,forms of expression)
Knowledge about value systems and related mechanisms	Developing location-specific strategies	Readiness to face external factors that can influence the development of the programme/practice
Knowledge of how to apply research into practice	Skills in participatory frameworks and group agreements to ensure inclusivity and equity in social dynamics.	
	Supporting creativity and artistic processes in young people	
	Using Observation and supporting young people in developing it	
	Promoting self-expression for individuals and groups	

Digital Competence

For Digital Competence in relation with Placemaking initiatives instead, it's possible to outline the following:

Knowledge	Skill	Attitude/Behaviour
Knowledge on the basic digital communication tools	Using Digital Tools for Project Planning	Where relevant, uses digital tools to support the assessment and evaluation process, or the data analysis
Knowledge on the basic digital tools that can be useful for placemaking and urban design	Using Mapping, design, and visualization tools	Being curious about political and social developments, including in the digital sphere
Knowledge about digital tools for networking and collaboration, and more inclusive approaches	Ability to create and disseminate digital contents as videos, podcasts, memes, digital presentation formats etc	Being aware that specific groups such as online communities have precise identities and behaviours to comprehend when reaching out and interacting
Knowledge about platforms, risks and benefits of using different digital tools	Skills to integrate digital tools, media and environments in the activities when needed and beneficial	Awareness of digital divide and readiness to propose strategies to mitigate it, as well as workarounds to include participants who are in that condition too
	Skills to increase inclusion for all participants when using digital environments for activities	Knowledge about power structures behind digital technologies and connected issues as datification, etc.
	Skill to allow space for emotions and informal relationships, in particular when using digital environments for activities	Uses digital media and tools proficiently to spread and disseminate positive and supportive messages and as platforms to act in solidarity

Introductory Note

This set of competencies is the one most directly related with *Falling Into Place*, it must be noted however, that our consortium didn't introduce a ranking among the competencies emerged through the interviews and the focus group, since there's no difference in terms of value. As aforementioned though, we had to select the ones that better suited the purposes of our 24 months project and for our Toolkit more specifically.

For this reason, following the unpacking of the different competencies in knowledge, skills and attitudes/behaviours, we agreed on a classification based on the foreseen time for achieving the different competencies, dividing them into:

- **Short-term**
- **Mid-Term**
- **Long-Term**

The short-term ones are the best suited for the Toolkit, while the mid-term can represent a working objective for the co-creation and implementation phases in the local communities and the long-term ones for follow-up and sustained development of the project results.

Considering that knowledge and attitude/behaviours are usually achieved in the mid and long-term and that the Toolkit is focused on practical tools and activities to propose to youth workers that want to introduce/improve placemaking in their communities, we decided to focus more on the short-term skills, privileging of course those that could also serve as building block for the mid-term and long-term ones, for which we are listing possible resources and actions to take in the nearest future instead, in the context of a longer and continuous work within the community.

This process was conducted through an attached Google Sheet that allowed for the detailed work on each of the competencies previously listed, according to the project context and objectives.

This resulted in what you can find in this document, where for each competence are listed the following elements.

- Objectives (in relation with the project ones)
- Selected short-term knowledge. skills, attitude/behaviours to work on during the project
- Suggested Actions

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🎨 Placemaking Competence

Objectives:

1. Getting acquainted/improving competence needed for the practical application of placemaking
2. Supporting young people in doing the same
3. Involving the community in the whole process by tailoring the intervention as much as possible

Selected short-term knowledge. skills, attitude/behaviours to work on during the project

- Using practical tools for conducting needs assessments
- Skills in participatory frameworks and group agreements to ensure inclusivity and equity in social dynamics.
- Using Observation and supporting young people in developing it
- Promoting self-expression for individuals and groups

Suggested Actions

- Conducting desk research looking for best practices and get in touch with professionals and organisations already working on it
- Attend dedicated course
- Research the heritage of your community and get in touch with older generations and local artists
- Cooperate with art schools/institute and young artists
- Map all the local artistic and architectural initiatives



Digital Competence

Objectives:

1. Improving Placemaking practice, especially in the planning and design phase
2. Improving outreach and dissemination for advocacy purposes
3. Expanding the initiative's positive aspects in the community

Selected short-term knowledge. skills, attitude/behaviours to work on during the project

Considering the more technical nature of this competence, it hasn't been possible to identify short-term actions.

Suggested Actions

- Finding people (especially young) in the community or through other organisations that are already competent in this field and that could be interested in learning about placemaking or contributing to it.
- Make a list of desirable basic tools/platform that could be beneficial for placemaking projects and for project management in general (G-Suite, Asana, Slack?)

🤝 Networking & Collaboration

Objectives

1. Supporting Youth Workers in their role as active listeners, enabling them to better understand the community and especially young people's needs and vision.
2. Outreach: Enabling Youth Workers to go out of their "bubbles", communicating with other stakeholders (e.g companies, institutions)
3. Using social relationships as a resource towards overcoming structural and systemic obstacles

Selected short-term knowledge. skills, attitude/behaviours to work on during the project

- Practice active listening periodically through specific activities
- Ability to research and access relevant information
- Where relevant, overcome resistance to new partnerships through assessing the potential of that given partnership
- Readiness to accept compromise while guaranteeing young people’s interests and rights

Suggested Actions

Networking and collaboration need a good time investment, especially when considering that most of the people interviewed stressed a “cultural” and “mentality” problem, meaning that there is an inherent resistance to collaboration.
Nonetheless there is a series of doable and practical actions that can be easily made to facilitate the starting of positive processes and can be integrated in the project’s Toolkit, such as:

- Conducting interviews and focus groups (*considering that some have already been made it’s already a start*)
- Organise meetings, bilateral and group ones
- Make a research about community's stakeholders
- Studying main principles of advocacy
- Make activities reflecting on power structures
- Map community stakeholders according to their value, so you can always appreciate their contribution when making a decisio

Being Civically Engaged

Objectives

1. Framing placemaking as a change-making practice connected with young people's role in communities
2. Connecting local scenarios with wider structural problems
3. Affecting Policy-making at local level

Selected short-term knowledge. skills, attitude/behaviours to work on during the project

- trust in young people’s potential and their competences for meaningful participation and change-making
- knowledge of relevant policy frameworks, political and social actors, stakeholders, and community(ies) and their potential for impact
- encourage young people’s connections inside groups (bonding), with others (bridging), and with those with power (linking)
- co-create actions with young people to address local and global, progressive social and human rights issues
- knowledge of the potential risks of critical civic engagement processes in specific contexts*
  **This is of great importance in more delicate and complex scenario, e.g like the ones connected with organised crime emerged from Southern Italy*

Suggested Actions

- Engaging in self-reflection practices and developing dedicated activities
- Conducting desk research and talking with different people to discover relevant policy frameworks, political and social actors, stakeholders, and community(ies) and their potential for impact, including their potential risks.
- Look for successful initiatives regarding political participation that already exist
- Continuous conversations with different youth groups in the communit

💰 Finding & Managing Resources

Objectives

1. Ensuring project's success
2. Ensuring project's sustainability
3. Ensuring the wellbeing of the people involved

Selected short-term knowledge. skills, attitude/behaviours to work on during the project

- awareness of the potential of one's own resources and those of other contacts and partners'
- awareness of the limit of resources, including personal ones
- readiness to think long term about the impact of the project on participants, the community, resources and the environment, including utilising digital tools to maintain it, where appropriate

Suggested Actions

Also in this case the competencies addressed are very technical, meaning that they should ideally be possessed by anyone who's starting a project. For this reason we are focusing on anything that can facilitate the process, e.g mapping exercises and meeting with people.

- Looking for competent people already in the community
- Conducting an in-depth research and talking with people to think about alternative fundings
- Conducting a self and internal assessment within the team to list all available resources

☮️ Displaying Intercultural Sensitivity

Objectives

1. Ensuring every identity present in the community feel part of the process
2. Applying an intersectional approach
3. Ensuring a human rights based approach - respecting everyone's rights

Selected short-term knowledge. skills, attitude/behaviours to work on during the project

Also in this case, the competencies should already be present within the working group that wants to initiate such processes or can be acquired with time. It's certainly possible however, to boost them through some dedicated actions, especially when it comes with self-reflection, active listening, awareness about identity mechanisms and biases.

Suggested Actions

- Engaging in self-reflection practices and developing dedicated activities
- Exploring self and identity through dedicated activities
- Looking for competent people already in the community
- Organise open meetings/Meet-Ups with different groups
- Apply active listening and talk with marginalised people
- Using dedicated manuals and practice non-formal education activities within the communitie



Designing Programmes

Objectives

1. Ensuring project's relevance for the young people involved
2. Ensuring the best impact
3. Creating a virtuous process, acknowledging errors and growth

Selected short-term knowledge. skills, attitude/behaviours to work on during the project

Many of the competencies listed in this section are considered necessary from the start of the designing phase of the project, while others are taken for granted in the ERASMUS+ microcosmo, for this reason are considered “short-term” even though they actually need time and experience to be appropriately applied.

- Knowledge of the young people involved and their community
- Assesses the needs of the young people before or at the very beginning of the activity (and proceeds with tailored adjustments if needed)
- Involves the young people in designing the programme,where possible
- Keeps an eye on the objectives of the activity and the young people’s needs

Suggested Actions

- Have continuous talk with the young people you're involving
- Periodic Needs Assessment
- Identifying experts in the community
- Mapping the territory and the stakeholders
- Researching best practices
- Create opportunities for diverse youth groups to meet and interac

Conclusions

All the listed competencies are profoundly interconnected, meaning that there are several suggested actions that can benefit some of them at the same time, especially when they imply a direct involvement with people of the community (e.g organising meet-ups, meetings and mapping local talents).

This causes the repetition of some of the suggested actions, that can therefore be considered of primary importance for the objectives of the project and for the compilation of the Toolkit according to the views of the people constituting our data sample.

Also the expertise and resources of the project's consortium are a prominent factor in the selection of the best tools and activities they can provide for the benefit of other European Youth Workers through the means of this project, to ensure its impact on a wider group of people.

Overall, thanks to this framework it's possible to affirm that for the compilation of the toolkit we will need to focus on the following suggested actions:

Research & Mapping

- Conduct desk research (including best practices, local heritage, resources)
- Map community (stakeholders, territory, local experts and artists)
- Conduct needs assessments (periodic)

Community Engagement

- Hold regular meetings and meet-ups (bilateral and group)
- Maintain continuous dialogue with young people
- Connect different community groups (including intergenerational connections)

Learning & Development

- Find and use resources (online manuals, courses, successful case studies)
- Practice and develop activities (including self-reflection)
- Track and document initiatives

Expert Engagement

- Identify and connect with local expertise (professionals, knowledgeable community members, competent young people)
- Build partnerships

Local problems identified:

- **Generational and Institutional Disconnect:** Older generations and local authorities often resist youth initiatives, contributing to a lack of spaces and opportunities for young people.

- **Economic and Demographic Issues:** Economic challenges and outmigration of youth result in stagnation and a loss of innovation in rural areas.
- **Ideological Divisions:** The rise of far-right ideologies creates tension and disconnection among diverse groups.