

POSSIBILITIES AND GUIDELINES OF ONLINE YOUTH WORK

On the basis of conference materials

An active participant probably got a lot of new thoughts from the conference about online youth work, why do we need it and where to start. To help you remember all the things you have learned the conference team has prepared an overview of possibilities and guidelines of online youth work. Would you like to add anything here? Have a great time reading and implementing what you have learned!

1. **First of all you have to get over the ancient belief that adults know better than youth themselves what is good for youth! Get to know the world of the new generation!** The new generation consists of young people who demand and expect openness, honesty, constant innovation and development. They think differently from their parents. If for parents the Internet is another world, then for youth it is the World.
2. **Use new technological means in a new way when working with youth!** New technological means need to be used in a new way. There is a danger of representatives of the old generation falling for old methods while using means of new media. This is not very helpful because old methods don't work with new means. Previously used communication channels enabled to create a situation where information was held by one person who presented it to others. However, the Internet works slightly differently as a communication channel – there are no hierarchies there, information may be got right from the source and it is selected on the basis of genuineness. The main communication on the Internet takes place between individuals.
3. **Take into account that today it is easier to be in the same network with youth than ever before!** Virtual networks start having an impact on communication, and an assessment presented by an individual may acquire monetary value. As mentioned before, the structure of virtual communication networks is no longer hierarchical. The parents of a youth in a communication network are on the same level as the youth's friends.
4. **Get to know the life in virtual worlds! Get to know the principles of communication in virtual worlds and use them when working with youth!** Youth and the Internet will go together now and forever, and all kinds of youth work should be based on the Internet.
5. **Get to know the possibilities of information technology and dangers arising from them!** Remember that life is constantly changing! If you want to cope and keep your knowledge up to date, you have to move towards life!
6. **Use the Internet environment in work with youth keeping their needs and interests in mind!** If we are unable to generate adequate materials in Estonian on the Internet, then the current generation will not feel sad about it, they will manage their business in English from then on. If we are unable to generate

enough knowledge and entertainment on the Internet, then youth will use the knowledge and entertainment produced by others. The only way is to change with the times and to go to a place with youth work where youth already is and try to provide them the information which is interesting and important to them.

7. **Tell youth about possibilities and dangers of the Internet and teach them how to avoid dangers by using the possibilities!**
8. **Teach youth some source critical attitude, i.e. how to distinguish valuable information from less valuable!** Digital nomads do not need as much information as they need help finding the information, assessing its reliability and interpreting it.
9. **Support involvement of youth!** The new generation has not grown up in front of TV. As communication on the Internet is always two-sided, they have been able to have a say in things and express their opinion since they were children. That is what involvement is all about. The concept of the Internet favours involvement. Youth get involved because it is interesting for them. Create conditions in virtual worlds so that youth could get involved and create content in respect to subjects that matter to them!
10. **Turn the web environment you use for working with youth into the one which favours intercultural learning!** Create possibilities for presenting different cultures on the Internet! Translate the information into the mother tongue of the users! This is how information is transferred from one community to another and they can get to know each other better.
11. **Teach youth, including youth with special needs and other minority youth, how to present themselves positively (on the Internet), i.e. how to play the cards so that it suits best for the youth!** In the long run we will be communicating with persons not a colour of someone's skin or a wheelchair.
12. **Develop the computer park of your youth centre and create possibilities of communication in virtual networks for youth, regardless of their mother tongue, cultural background, special needs, possibilities, etc.**
13. **Give a child the freedom to test what he has learned on the Internet!** Create a trusting relationship so that the child can turn to you when he has questions! Just like you don't follow your child in streets to check, if he is crossing the street with a green light, in the same way you don't have to check on your child on the Internet all the time.
14. **Use means of the Internet and virtual worlds when communicating with youth and motivate them to communicate and act in real life, too!** Although virtual realities may be important, nothing can replace real contact with a person. Online youth work supplements youth work in real life but it cannot replace it.

15. **Support the developing of self-concept and self-confidence of a youth and his ability to put his foot down because this ensures coping in all areas of life, including virtual worlds.**
16. **When planning your resources, please take into account that online youth work takes time and commitment and the work will never end!** Improve yourself constantly and be a role model for youth and your colleagues! All virtual channels only work if they have a purpose and if their creators use them to exchange their everyday messages.