

How to engage with young people

A Guide for Participatory Dissemination

In the framework of the PROMISE project, social media will not be enough in itself to engage with young people due to the specificities of the target group, not easily reached by the academic field through this channel and requiring more direct contact to get involved.

To engage with a group of “conflicted youth”, it is therefore **advisable to reach out to them through youth organisations who work with them on a daily basis.**

A good idea is to **organise a small-scale event in collaboration with such a youth organisation, which can even be linked to your next NPPN meetings.** This way, PROMISE partners could plan the event with the organisation’s help: young people will be more easily interested and willing to get involved if they are invited to a familiar place – the youth organisation’s premises – by people they trust – the youth workers. Such an event would also benefit the youth organisation.

Step 1 – Reaching out to the target group

- **Contact youth organisations working with disadvantaged and/or conflicted youth within your local/regional associative network**, presenting PROMISE’s aims, why you would like to involve young people in discussing and sharing PROMISE messages. Schools and their teachers would be relevant as well.
- If necessary, the YES Forum can help you by providing contacts from its member organisations in your country, or from non-members.
- Use **simple key messages and themes** that will interest the youngsters and the youth organisation more easily.
- A cliché, but it works as well: Plan refreshments, maybe a party-like small event, which will attract more young people.

Step 2 – The preparation: Be participatory from the start

- See the **young people as stakeholders**, not just as a target group
- **If possible, Youth workers** should be involved when choosing the methods of the event, to provide their own suggestions and feedback.
- Even better: **young people should also be invited to the preparation.** Ideally, the preparation can involve 1 young participant from the PROMISE partner’s research (from cases studies etc.) and 1 participant with no prior knowledge of the project: this way, you will ensure that the themes, methods etc., are adapted to the target group, and that all material is accessible to participants with no prior knowledge of PROMISE.

Step 3 – Take into account the target group’s needs

- **Choosing a theme for the event:** PROMISE topics should be broken down in simple themes, and an event with young people should focus on 1 or 2 themes.
- **Language:** academic language should be avoided. PROMISE materials and results should be presented in an accessible language so that young people without an academic background can also understand and engage with these results.
- **Methods: Alternative, Creative, Inclusive and Interactive.**
 - o Activities **should not require any specific skills** or knowledge.
 - o **Informal:** Start with a short informal, creative/interactive activity. It can simply be an energizer (youth workers usually know a whole library of energizers ☺) or a get-to-know-each-other game to break the ice. The Internet is full of such ice-breakers: many examples, which can be adapted to any group’s size, are for instance available [here](#).
 - o **Interactive:** participants should be invited to discuss PROMISE’s topics and messages. Any formal debate should be avoided: instead, you can use a variety of elicitation methods.
 - Photo: participants can be given topics, key words or questions, and illustrate them with their own pictures taken alone or in small groups before the event, or in between two meetings. When together, they can present their pictures, explain their choice, and start discussing thanks to these materials.
 - Lego, Collage, Theatre impro ...: Same as photo, but participants can respond on the spot with any creative material available. For instance, to answer “What’s wrong with public/private authorities? What changes do you need to improve that?”, they can improvise a first scene based on their daily life showing what’s wrong in their relations to authorities, and then a second scene showing the ideal interaction they’d like to experience instead.
 - World Café: A more dynamic and flexible way to address the same topics as a formal debate. By formulating the right questions, participants can engage with PROMISE’ key messages in a very interactive and lively way. Inviting participants to actively reflect about these messages on their own will more efficiently arouse their interest. A whole guide is available [here](#).

In the Annex, you can find several examples of accessible, informal and interactive methods which can easily be adapted to address PROMISE’s themes and future results. Additional methods are also available in the documents linked in the Annex.

Step 4 – the D-Day

- Ideally, the young people involved in the preparation should lead the event as much as possible, if they feel confident enough. Otherwise, they can be supported by both the collaborating youth organisation’s youth workers and PROMISE staff.

Step 5 – Engaging youngsters afterward

- If possible, **let the young people report about the event themselves**. One volunteer can take notes, pictures of the event (anyone recognisable in photos will need to complete an ethics consent form), write a Facebook article that will then be shared by PROMISE and the youth organisation/school.
- **Keep in contact with the youth organisation and their participants** by sharing Social Media content directly with them afterwards. They'll be more prone to share these contents if they were involved in person before.
- Perhaps **plan a follow-up event**: You can start with a more simple presentation and discussion of PROMISE, organise a flexible activity in between (photos?), and plan a second event to debrief. With photos, the second event can be a photo expo in the youth organisation's or university's premises, or in a suitable public space e.g. a library or gallery, illustrating PROMISE's messages with the young people's pictures.
- **Street activities**: Based on the themes/topics/questions they addressed with you during the small-scale event, the participants could be invited, with the help of the organisation's, to share the message and keep reflecting about these with a broader audience through street activities. These can simply be street interviews, small games etc (see the Annex and provided links).

Step 6 – Remember to involve young people in all your dissemination activities

Young people who already participated in PROMISE as part of the target group (in case studies in particular) should be invited to take a more active role as often as possible. They should be invited to, and even contribute to the planning and organisation of:

- Your NPPN meetings;
- Networking events at the national or international level;
- Any other dissemination events (e.g. Photo Exhibits)

When choosing a venue, take into account the young people's needs. To avoid creating additional barriers, make sure the place provides a familiar environment to them, and is easily accessible.

This way, they can also (1) give their own feedback on the project results, but especially (2) give their feedback on how to communicate these results to other young people and (3) have a stake in sharing these results themselves, becoming "multipliers" on their own.

Annex - Some methods and good practices

Below are also some examples of accessible, informal and interactive methods which were used to invite young people to engage with the theme of youth poverty, and which can easily be adapted to address PROMISE's themes and future results.

In addition, you can also find numerous other methods through these links:

- Extensive list of ice-breakers: www.icebreakers.ws
- "YES Academy Guide of Good Practice", Methods for Youth Social Inclusion: <https://goo.gl/e4dpg5>
- "Our Life. Our Voice Toolkit – How to engage young disadvantaged people" (pp. 14-27 especially): <https://goo.gl/CzawT4>

Take a Stand

Time: 20 – 45 minutes

Resources: Some statements, and signs with 'Agree', 'Disagree', 'Not sure'

During the first few sessions, the group discusses and listens to a range of views that young people express about poverty and those living in poverty. The 'Take a stand' activity is used to explore these views further. It is useful to get people moving about and listening to each other. It also gives a visual representation of where people stand on certain issues.

1. Start with a few fun statements to do with youth culture, sport, and food. Read out each statement and ask young people to move to their position: "Agree", "Disagree", "Not sure".
2. As the group warms up introduce statements that relate to the theme of work (e.g. poverty).
3. Encourage young people to discuss and debate why they agree, disagree, or are not sure.
4. Encourage young people to change positions if they hear something making them think differently.

Photo Activity

Time: 5 minutes per person to feedback

Resources: Camera/ phone camera, laptop, projector.

1. Early on in the process whilst exploring a selected theme (e.g. poverty), ask each young person to take photos in their own time (as many photos as they wish representing the issue at hand to them, such as poverty).
2. At the next session, ask the young participants to show their work and explain it if they wish to do so.
3. Others in the group can be invited to ask questions or share their reflections.

Moving Activity

Time: 15 minutes

Resources:

- Large sheets of paper
- Images to represent home, school, neighbourhood
- Sticky dots

Begin by introducing the activity – the theme is moving and transition. The activity helps highlighting a complex factor of poverty: mobility.

1. On each large sheet of paper, symbolise one of these areas: Home, School, and Neighbourhood. Place them at different spots in the room.
2. Give the young participants some coloured dots.
3. Ask them to think about their lives to date whilst living in the country, and to place a sticky dot for the numbers of times they have moved or changed homes, schools and/or neighbourhoods under each heading.
4. Summarise what the information tells you.
5. Invite reflections and questions.

The activity is useful to highlight the complex relations between poverty and mobility, as it can be a cause and/or a consequence of poverty when it is forced upon a family (for financial reasons for instance) and not chosen.

Street Quiz

Time: 1-2H for the preparation, ½ for the street activity

Resources: Printed quizzes

This activity can be used to disseminate any message to a wider audience through an informal and interactive method.

The participants first prepare a short quiz on a selected topic. The participants afterward use the quiz to invite wanderers in a busy street to engage with the topic by answering the quiz first. If it catches their attention, a small discussion can follow, and more material (e.g. flyers, posters etc) can be distributed to the quiz respondents.

Word Storm Exercise

Time: 30 minutes

Resources: Flipchart/Whiteboard and markers.

This activity can be implemented during the first meeting with a large group of young people.

1. The young participants are asked by a youth worker to say all the words that come to their mind when seeing the word 'disadvantage' written in big letters on a flipchart.
2. They call out all the words during a 5 minute period.
3. For the remaining 25 minutes, these words are grouped together according to how they relate to each other. Words that are associated or related in some way are grouped into several categories.

This exercise helps building creativity, confidence and helps the young people using their own words to discuss the problem of disadvantage, which then opens up a discussion about poverty and how it relates to disadvantage.

Generating Policy Recommendations

Time: 60 – 80 minutes per session.

Resources: Flipchart/whiteboard, markers, paper and pens, reading materials, Internet access.

This activity is designed to take place at the end of the project.

1. The mission of writing policy recommendations is divided into smaller pieces and responsibility is allocated to different people for different parts of the group project. Some people can decide to create art projects about youth poverty; others read policy papers and share their opinions with the group, or collect interviews from parents and young people about the cost of education. A time line is developed, including who will do what, in what form and by when.
2. At the end of each meeting, young people review their work and decide on what they will prepare for the following session. Care should be taken so that everyone has a chance to make a contribution to the discussion and to the group project.
3. At the beginning of each meeting the youth workers and the young people decide what they can expect to accomplish by the end of the meeting. A first goal is to produce as many ideas as possible without evaluating them first. All ideas are listed on a flipchart. After ideas have been generated and noted down, a second goal is for the young people to examine them. The young people themselves agree on the process of choosing from those ideas. Advantages and disadvantages of different policy recommendations are listed and then voted on. The three main policy recommendations that receive most votes are chosen.

Name that person (Icebreaker)

Time: 45 minutes

Resources: Blank cards and pens.

In a project, the first meetings should involve a lot of getting to know each other activities and icebreakers so that the group can be comfortable working together. The main goal of this specific game is to get to know each other better and strengthen the group dynamic.

1. Work with about 20 participants. Divide the group into to 2 teams.
2. Each person gets a blank card, where they write 5 things about themselves that they think the group doesn't know.

3. Then collect the cards into two team piles. Draw one card from the opposite team pile.
4. The other team tries to guess who the person is, based on the info on the card.
5. Five points if they guess right on the first clue, then 4, 3, 2, 1, 0. The team with the highest points wins.

Collage activity

Time: 2 hours

Resources: Magazines, newspaper, different kind of pens, scissors, glue, cardboards.

At the beginning of projects aiming to explore specific issues (e.g. poverty), divide the group into smaller groups. The main goal of this exercise is to get a lot of information about what the young participants really feel about this issue.

1. Work with 20 participants in 4 groups.
2. Each group gets the material handed out and has one hour to make a collage together that represents their opinions on the selected issue.
3. All the groups then present their collage in the end and explain their thoughts. The other groups can ask questions.

“Building your own school”

Time: 6 – 8 hours

Resources: Paper, cardboard boxes and tubes, sturdy tape, reused washed plastic bottles, glue, scissors, tempera paints and brushes, markers, pencils Construction or drawing paper.

The activity aims at highlighting what makes a good school (or more generally, learning environment) for young people:

1. Young people are asked to create their own ‘miniature’ school and are encouraged to build two, one representing their personal experiences of school and another reflecting their ideal school. The model of an ideal school should reflect the needs of young people; they should create an environment which matches to their wishes.
2. The miniature schools are then gathered and everybody explains their own piece of work. Debates/discussions can follow.

This method should be embedded into a wider reflection about school and school environment.

“Test the Teachers”

Time: Several sessions over a few days to prepare the interview, and a few hours to edit the final video.

Resources: A video camera/smartphone, a small microphone, a computer, paper and pencils.

Zefiro's young participants had the idea to test the teachers about school abandon and educational poverty. This idea developed into an interview of teachers, students, head teachers and among the young participants themselves.

The main goals are to:

1. Let the participants face the phenomenon of drop out;
2. Produce a tool to spread young people's voices;
3. Produce a document about the awareness of students, teachers and head teachers about the main topic.

The participants meet several times to decide what questions should be asked. Eventually, some nearby schools and teachers are invited to participate in the interviews.

The young participants should be active in this part, personally inviting students and teachers to participate and leading the interviews. The interviewed students and teachers sit in front of a camera and are asked to sincerely answer the questions. After they finish, the young participants can also take the interview themselves.

In editing the video, the young participants should also play a part, choosing together with the social worker what parts should be kept or not in the final product.