STARTERKIT

CITIES OF
LEARNING
by Badgecraft

INDEX

ABSTRACT

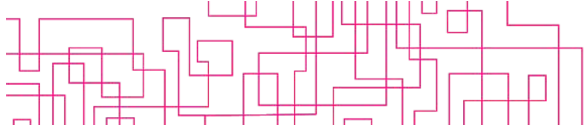This Starter kit will support organisations in building their City or Region of Learning (CRoL) and it is based on learning and experiences of partners who developed Cities and Regions of Learning in the following territories:

- Saxony Anhalt (Region in Germany)
- Vilnius (City in Lithuania)
- Lorca (City in Spain)
- Tilburg (City in The Netherlands)
- South Savo (Region in Finland), and
- Val de Loire (Region in France).

During our processes of coordinating Cities or Regions of Learning we have learned from many others. Very important were all the young people who collaborated with us, looked at our work, gave ideas and supported in our design thinking process. We've learned a lot from each other, the people involved in this network of cities and regions. And these people again learned from the people working in their Cities and Regions at Organizers (non-formal, informal and formal), Municipalities, and businesses.

And now, we are very happy to share in this Starter kit what has worked for us from our own experience and as well will share some additional tools and findings that were discovered in the process. Hopefully we will inspire you to connect and grow your City of Learning. Feel free to grab what you can use from it, adjust where you need to. Of course, there are many more ways to run a City of Learning, the success of a City of Learning is based on the understanding of the needs of local people and users of the online platform.

Chapter 1 of the Starter Kit will explain what do we understand by Cities and Regions of Learning and the main features of the platform. Chapter 2 is about how to start your City or Region of Learning, first steps before you get into the platform, how and what you will need to research in your area and how to choose what and who will appear on the learning map. Through the 3rd chapter you will discover how to create your profile and activity on the Platform and what is it and how to create a playlist, as well, we dedicate some space to open badges and how it functions on the platform. Those are the main parts of our Starter Kit. After these chapters you will find annexures: additional tools that will help you to create City or Region of Learning, as well as showcases and good practices of the project partners. We hope our Starter Kit will help you to understand how you can use the online Platform in your city or region and will inspire you to create exciting learning experiences for young people as well!
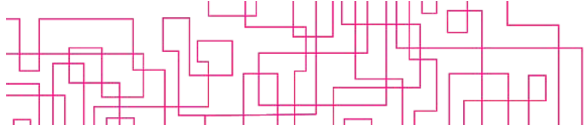
GLOSSARY

TERM	DEFINITION
City of Learning	A city connecting its citizens passions and interests with the learning opportunities across territories and using online platform to provide flexible learning pathways and recognition systems.
City of Learning Platform	A digital platform which maps learning opportunities and provides opportunities for people to pursue their passion or learning goals in a flexible and open way. The platform offers possibilities for learning providers to offer local or digital activities and learning playlists. Platform generates Open digital badges for every activity or playlist.
Connected Learning	"*Connected learning* is when someone is pursuing a personal interest with the support of peers, mentors and caring adults, and in ways that open up opportunities for them."[1] Read more in the annexure.
Learning provider	An organisation or an individual offering educational opportunities.
Learning playlist	A set of diverse activities combined into a flexible learning pathway, ending with a digital badge.
Open Badge	A digital and verified proof of achievement. Open digital badges allow learning providers to confirm learning experience and learners showcase their learning achievements. Every issued badge follows the international technical standard of Open Badges.
Trends	Observable developments that indicate changes in society (and therefore also in the future).

[1] Connected Learning Lab
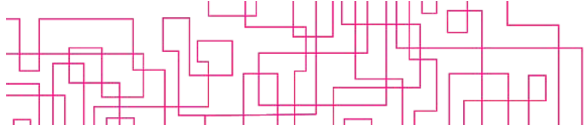
1. What is a City or Region of Learning?

Cities and Regions of Learning (CRoL) use the latest digital technology to map learning opportunities, offer local and digital experiences combined into playlists, and use digital Open Badges to value and recognise learning and achievements. Your city or region can become a partner and get access to a territory-based web platform that enables the creation of unique learning pathways using the following features.

- Interactive map for learners and organisations to easily navigate through the learning pathways in your territory searching and filtering learning opportunities

- Learning playlists created by local partners by combining local and digital activities organised into thematic learning pathways

- Digital open badges for learners and organisations to record, verify and showcase experiences, skills and achievements in a visual and secure way.

Our platform integrated the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) database. Every activity added can be aligned to a chosen set of skills. Learners can see all the skills related to a single activity or entire learning playlist.

Organisations and institutions that use the platform can access data and analytics about learning and impact.

2. How to map your City or Region

2.1 Mapping steps

In order to map your city or region you may need to take several steps:

1. Start with research to identify learning needs and interests of young people in your city.

2. Based on the research you've done decide what is the most needed and appreciated as learning experience.

3. Bear in mind that the main target group will be young people from your City or Region of Learning, engage young people in all the developing and maintenance steps through using participatory research methods.

4. Map learning spaces and places together with young people, that will be on your City of Learning map and start your work with promoting the ideas to learning providers and stakeholders.

5. After mapping the learning spaces, needs of young people and trends, it is time to decide what your strategic focus and priorities will look like.
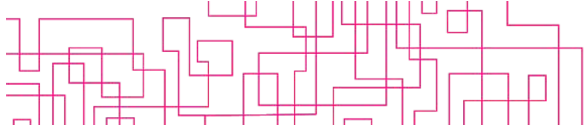
   A Strategic focus could be:

   ● Increasing a healthy lifestyle for everybody in your city
   ● More young people engaged in international volunteering
   ● Better employability skills for young people at risk
   ● Supporting immigrants to learn the national language
   ● Increasing digital and technical competences for better job opportunities

   When you have selected a strategic focus and priorities it is important to connect with priorities, passions, and interests of the target group.

6. Create an adequate communication strategy for your City or Region of Learning

Next part will give you some ideas for how mapping can be done, those are the tools that were used by the Cities of Learning Network, but is not a must to do, if you have your own research methods and ways and have an idea how it will work better in your City or Region of Learning then you can do it your way!

2.2 Start from research

Objectives

The main objectives of carrying out the research are:

- To shape priorities and the design of learning programmes for a territory by collecting **learner insights**
- To establish priorities, agree locally relevant sectors and skill domains, map learning opportunities across territory by involving **relevant stakeholders**
- To gather relevant inputs for building territory-based **communication strategy**

RESEARCH FOCUS
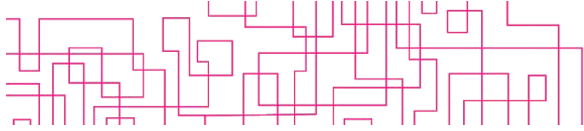
The research should focus on the three main areas:

1. How to establish a broad coalition/network of key actors who can support, be involved in and promote the implementation of your City or Region of Learning in a territory.
2. How to establish the necessary conditions for using an online platform for City or Region of Learning activities in a territory for:
   a. mapping interests and opportunities
   b. designing learning pathways
   c. validating and recognising learning
3. How to create an appealing communication content and resources to promote City or Region of Learning in a territory.

RESEARCH GROUPS

The research is designed to involve relevant target groups. Below are recommendations for planning and designing involvement of research groups:

Recommendations for involving **learners:**

- Define specific age groups (e.g. 13 to 17, 18 to 25) - usually their learning needs, interests and learning pathways differ.

- Ensure a good representation of age, gender, profile of learners.

- Include both, learners who are actively involved in the formal education system, as well those that are outside of formal education, or have struggled with traditional education (including, for example, those in the care system).

- Combine conventional research methods (e.g. surveys, focus groups) as well as interactive activities (e.g. workshops, Kahoot! sessions, World Cafe, Actionbound).

● Use opportunities to reach learners, where they are (e.g. educational settings, learning programmes, larger events and activities).

You can design your research tools based on our recommended question, identified in the Annexure 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5.

Recommendations for involving **relevant stakeholders:**
● Define specific groups of stakeholders who have influence and/or are influenced by developments of City or Region of Learning in a territory. Potential groups:
  ○ educators, non-formal educators, youth workers
  ○ parents and guardians
  ○ NGOs, civic and cultural organisations
  ○ administrators and decision makers of education, training and youth work/non-formal education
  ○ researchers and academics
  ○ business representatives and employers
  ○ Incubators, start-ups, co-working spaces
  ○ other
● Ensure a good balance and give equal value of inputs collected from various groups of stakeholders.
● When feasible, involve various groups of stakeholders in collaborative co-design sessions to identify priorities and map learning opportunities in a territory.
● Stakeholders may be very busy people, choose effective and efficient methods to collect their input.
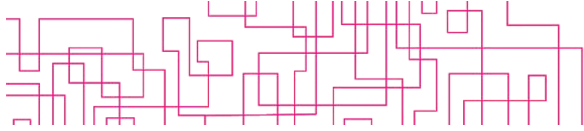
RESEARCH METHODS

To carry on with the user research you may choose one or a combination of the following methods:

● **Surveys** - A series of questions asked to potential users of the CRoL platform will help to learn about the people who will visit the site.

   Recommended for reaching wider numbers of learners and educators in the territory. Answers to the questions should enable the researchers to collect quantitative information.

● **Focus Groups** - Moderated discussions with a group of people to learn about their attitudes, ideas, and desires for the platform and implementation of City or Region of Learning.

Recommended for researching with groups of people who share some attributes (e.g. role in learning, age group, etc.).

● **Individual Interviews** - One-on-one discussions to learn how a particular individual thinks and perceives the platform and idea of City or Region of Learning. They enable one to get detailed information about a person's attitudes, desires, and experiences.

Recommended for using with harder to reach stakeholders or experts who are rather busy.
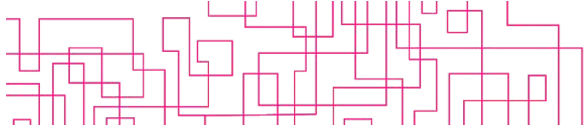
● **Participatory research methods** - Group based interactive activities or workshops (Kahoot! sessions, World Cafe, Actionbound) to learn attitudes, ideas, and desires for the platform and implementation of City or Regions of Learning. If you are interested in making young people participate and become an active part of the research you can try out Youth-led participatory action research (YPAR). Youth-led participatory action research is an approach to scientific inquiry and social change grounded in principles of equity that engages young people in identifying priorities relevant to their own lives, conducting research to understand the priorities, and advocating for changes based on research evidence.

Recommended for using with harder to reach learner group who otherwise would not respond to conventional research methods

● **Personas** - The creation of a representative user based on the available data and user interviews. Though the personal details of the persona may be fiction, the information used to create the user type is not.

Recommended to use with the staff who are directly involved in developing City or Region of Learning.

● **Future Trends Mapping**. What is a trend? Trends are observable developments that indicate changes in society (and therefore also in the future). Dive into trends in behaviour of young people and learning. To create a sustainable City or Region of Learning it is important to keep an eye on trends and new developments in your community, among young people, and about how young people learn. And design your short and long term strategy with these trends in mind. Read more in the Annexure 4.6.

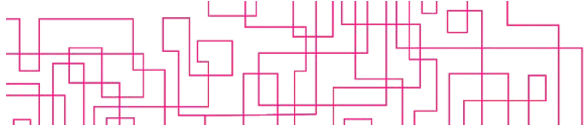## 2.3 Mapping learning opportunities

A learning space is a place where learning happens. An Organiser is an organisation, a group of people or just a person who suggested learning opportunities in the city or region. This can be a building like a community center, museum, school, sports hall, business, church, etc. But a learning place can also be a spot without a visible construction like a park, a digital space, or, for example, a group of friends that organises activism events.

Mapping the Learning Spaces in your City or Region of Learning means that you will conduct an investigation or inspection to obtain a precise overview of the potential Organisers of the learning activities in your City or Region, you will define the situation of your City or Region. This mapping will establish the condition or value of your City or Region of Learning.

Before starting with mapping the Organisers decide if you want to support the Organisers with putting them on the online map at the platform, or that you will inform them about the opportunity of showcasing their space and learning activities at the online platform of your City or Region.

The information from Organisers that can be conducted:

● Availability information (name of organiser, description of organiser, country, preferred language, address, telephone number, email, website, contact persons, twitter, facebook, logo image)
● Type of learning activity; event, internship, volunteering, digital experience, project, open space, course, workshop.
● Which interest of learners do they address; Technology and Computers, Sports and Active lifestyle, Career and Job Readiness, Crafts and Making, Civic Engagement, Creativity and Design, Experience abroad, Arts and Culture, Life Skills, International and Intercultural.
● Do they have a specific target group, can you programme activities, which methods do they use.
● What opportunities do they provide for young people?

3. Support for learning providers

3.1 An introductory session for Learning providers

When starting a City or Region of Learning you want to showcase already existing and new learning opportunities from your City or Region. The Platform Cities of Learning supports this need. Learning providers in your City or Region will be able to publish events, learning pathways and issue Open Badges. A learning provider can be any organisation, a group of young people, business, formal education, sports club, municipality, etcetera that is offering an educational activity.
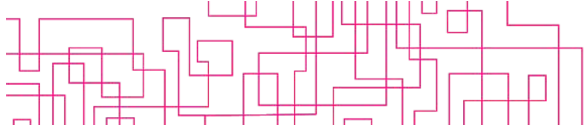
This Slide deck will support you in recruiting Learning Providers for the City of Learning Platform. Just make a copy of the Slide deck and change it to your needs. The comments at the bottom of the slide can support you in delivering a presentation or workshop.

3.2 How to create an activity on the platform

A user can create any type of educational proposal by going to the dashboard on the platform, choosing the organisation and then clicking on "Create activity". Then a form requires some essential data to describe an activity and display it on the platform.

If you are running a session of learning providers and all people have laptops or phones, you can give 30-60 minutes for people to try out creating their activity straight on the platform. If there are some technical limitations or lack of devices, you can use a worksheet for activity creation. It has the same questions as the online activity creation form except the cover image and activity logo.

It is essential that people first consider what the passions, interests and needs of young people are, and what a learning provider has to offer to young people. Cities of learning is way more than just a simple activity listing. The platform offers the opportunity to build flexible learning pathways for young people. Therefore the activity can be either in-person or digital and it can be the start to a longer learning journey.

ACTIVITY DESIGN

CHOOSE TYPE OF ACTIVITY:
(8 options to choose from)

- [ ] Event
- [ ] Project
- [ ] Volunteering
- [ ] Course
- [ ] Internship
- [ ] Open space
- [ ] Digital experience
- [ ] Workshop

DESCRIPTION OF WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO AND LEARN IN THIS ACTIVITY:
(8 options to choose from)

DO	LEARN

WHAT SKILLS WILL PEOPLE IMPROVE?

DATE AND LOCATION OF THE ACTIVITY :
(optional)

DATE	LOCATION

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY:

INTEREST CATEGORY:
(11 options to choose from)

- [ ] Crafts and making
- [ ] Environment and ecology
- [ ] Career and job readiness
- [ ] Civic engagement
- [ ] International and Intercultural
- [ ] Personal development
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Technology and computers
- [ ] Sports and active lifestyle
- [ ] Global world
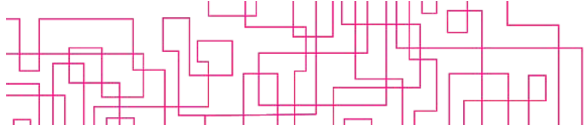- [ ] Creativity and design

DURATION:

IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL MATERIALS:
(videos, online tools, text to read, etc.)

BADGE NAME:

3.3 Open Badges - a tool recognise learning and achievements

The creators of the platform have worked with Open badge standard since 2012. Open badge is a digitally verified credential consisting of image and meta-data encoded within.

Learners can earn badges based on the criteria defined by the learning providers. Badges can be viewed on the learners' dashboard and shared anywhere online. Learners can show their achievements and their learning pathways by sharing Open digital badges anywhere online.

EASY BADGE CREATION

Every activity and every learning playlist has a badge on the 'Cities of Learning' platform. In fact, badges are created automatically and then activity creators can easily edit badge content if needed.
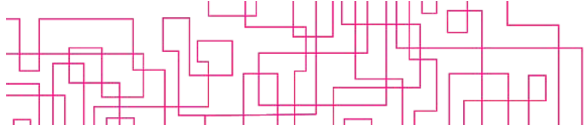
When activity is described, the "City of Learning" platform *creates an open badge automatically* by adding the following meta-data:

1. Badge name: added automatically from the *activity name*
2. Badge description: added automatically from the *activity description*
3. Badge criteria: automatically set up to be issued via scanning QR code. QR code and text code are created automatically. The QR code can be easily displayed from the platform and people can scan the code to earn a badge.
4. Badge image design is generated automatically. All badges on a city platform will have dominating colour decided by the city platform team. It will have a hexagon shape and activity image will be imported as the background image. The icon in the centre of the badge represents chosen category of interests. In this way, all badges will be unique, while at the same time forming unified visual identity for one city platform.

EDITING YOUR BADGE

In some cases you may wish your badge description to be different than your activity description. You may want to change the criteria or the method for badge issuing. Here is how you can do it:
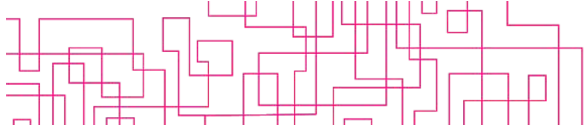
1. Enter the activity and click "Edit" next to the badge.
2. Click "unpublish" and change any data you wish.
3. Click "save and publish" and badge will be updated right away.

WAYS TO ISSUE A BADGE

You can decide among several ways to issue a badge. Identify which way is best for you relating to the objectives of your activities or learning playlists.

1. **Issue a badge by scanning a QR code**. This is the method of issuing generated automatically by the platform. This method is suitable especially for in-person events, when participants physically come to the activity and organisers can decide when to issue a badge. By using this method, learners will not add any other evidence to the badge. The badge itself will be evidence of participation.

2. **Issue a badge by email**. This method suits well if people could not scan the QR code on the spot or if they participated in a digital experience and organiser has emails of learners.

3. **Set-up tasks to earn a badge**. In many cases it makes sense that a badge is not issued, but earned by the learner upon completion of certain tasks. Organiser can define one or more tasks for each badge and require a learner to upload evidence - any kind of file: text based reflection; an image; a link, etc. Organiser can set up assessment in three different ways:

    a. Self-assessment. Evidence is self-approved upon the upload. This is a good method if you base your learning process on trust and self-reflection.

    b. Peer-assessment. You can set up a number of peers from the same activity who need to approve the evidence. Only then a badge is issued. This method is relevant when activity involves several people in accomplishing some tasks.

    c. External assessment. This method is suitable if activity organisers are willing to see the evidence and have the power to review and approve it. This is the most top-down approach and suitable for more rigid educational programmes.
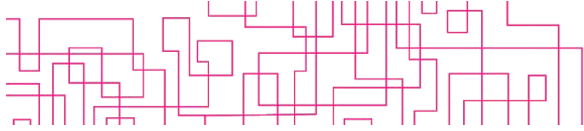
3.3 How to create a learning playlist

Cities and Regions of Learning platform allows the design of flexible or fixed learning pathways. We call them Learning Playlists. At first you need to have several activities uploaded already. If you wish to combine these activities and present them as a learning playlist. There are a few basic steps to build it:

1. Think of a playlist name and add a short description about the playlist.
2. Optionally add some video from Youtube or Vimeo to present the essence of your playlist.
3. Choose who is the organiser and add a cover image for the playlist.
4. Add activities to the learning playlist.
5. Set the order of activities and decide if learners should complete them in a strict or flexible sequence.
6. Select which activities are mandatory for earning a learning playlist badge. There should be at least one mandatory activity.
7. Click 'Publish' and your learning playlist is ready, including automatically generated open digital badge.

If you wish to explore more tips about learning playlists or present it in an event, you can look at this slide deck for that. Make a copy of the slides and adjust to your needs.

If people don't have devices or internet connection during the workshop on learning playlists design, you can use a worksheet from the next page and print several copies for workshop participants.

LEARNING PLAYLIST DESIGN

PLAYLIST NAME:

WHAT IS THE SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES?
(two choices: **Fixed** or **Flexible**)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

MARK WHICH ACTIVITIES ARE MANDATORY FOR PLAYLIST COMPLETION:

IDENTIFY ACTIVITIES FOR THE PLAYLIST:

BADGE NAME:

CITIES OF
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by Badgecraft

Erasmus+

Checklist for a good playlist

This checklist is based on the recommendations made by the winners of the 6th Digital Media and Literacy competition[2]. 11 organisations have received grants to create playlists in U.S.

We invite you to test your thinking and understanding of what makes a good playlist alongside the recommendations made by these organisations.

Mark only (☒) those items below in the checklist that you have addressed in your playlist design.

Have we thought of how to…

DESIGN PLAYLIST

☐ Co-design playlist by involving relevant people and young people at different stages of design

☐ Follow the five design thinking stages (e.g. empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test)

☐ Establish a common language among the co-designers, both adults and young people

☐ Be flexible to adapt to the needs of youth co-designers, and creatively try to turn constraints into design opportunities.

☐ Start with the end product and then work backward to build the steps needed for youth to experience a playlist

☐ Spend time with teams to understand shared aims and what can be done with playlist design

☐ Research learners well, their interests, needs and meaningful opportunities for them

☐ Know the resources needed to build the content and a community around the playlist

☐ Start with smaller playlists and then build more

TEST PLAYLIST

☐ Get as much feedback as possible, as early as you can, from the learners and partners that you want to engage in the playlist

☐ Allocate adequate time for playtesting and improvement of playlist

☐ Take time and give the opportunity to experiment

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[2] DML competition Winner Hub:
https://dmlcompetition.net/playlists-for-learning/winners-announcement/
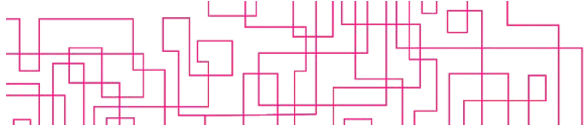
IMPLEMENT PLAYLIST

- [ ] Include industry professionals as possible mentoring partners
- [ ] Make playlist important for institutions at city/regional level
- [ ] Ensure that young people have fun while learning
- [ ] Include experiences from successful programmes in past
- [ ] Begin with experiences that can be successfully completed in reasonable chunks of time
- [ ] Allow learners to play with the content before reflecting on their engagement or completing related "tasks"
- [ ] Need for high-quality video content
- [ ] Build relationships with content experts, educators, and people who work with youth

ASSESSMENT & BADGES

- [ ] You can edit automatically generated badge, if needed.
- [ ] Don't forget to work together on badges and the criteria you want to use
- [ ] Be clear about how evidence supports achieving learning goals

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

- [ ] Align learning outcomes to current industry career standards
- [ ] Lead young people to sustainable career paths far beyond experience with our organisation
- [ ] Develop playlists that are sustainable
- [ ] Get to know the larger community of people doing this work and how to learn from each other
- [ ] Understand what you're hoping that both you and other partners will gain from collaborating on a playlist

Closing word

We hope you found our starter kit useful. You can check out more tips, good practices, research ideas and much more in the annexures. Write us an email to info@badgecraft.eu if you would like to get more information or if you have any feedback to give. This starter kit will be reviewed on a constant basis and we can incorporate feedback received.
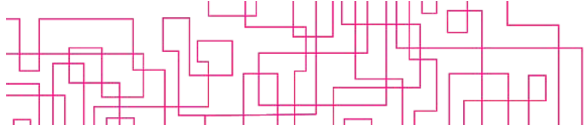
We'd like to thank everyone for inspiring our work, especially Timothy F. Cook and Leila Toplic, who previously worked at LRNG platform; Sybil Madison-Boyd, the director of the Learning Pathways Program at Digital Youth Network and coordinator of the Chicago City of Learning. We would like to express our great appreciation to the German National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme in the field of youth for believing in our idea and dedicating valuable financial resources for the development of our platform within the project "Connected Spaces of Learning in Europe".
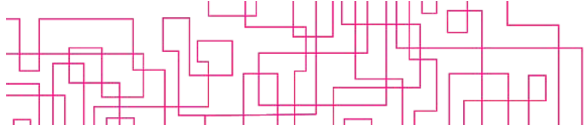
4. Annexures

4.1 Good Practice Examples

LORCA
city of learning
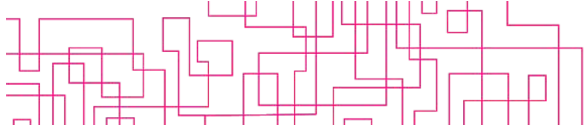
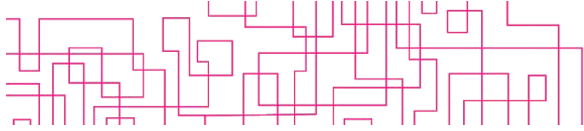|	
DESCRIPTION	The main focus of the Lorca city of learning is better opportunities for the employability of young people from the city. We believe that recognising competences they gained by participation in the activities and completing the playlists will give them better chances at the moment of the job search. On the platform you can find very specific playlists, like: how to search for a first job and also quite generic ones - how to become a local volunteer in the youth center. But all this serves the development of the competencies that will finally lead them for better career opportunities.
WHERE IS CONNECTED LEARNING?	For us connected learning - is a learning opportunity for young people that connect different stakeholders at the moment of creating opportunities. We have young people as users, Organisers - NGOs, public bodies connected with employability and business as future employers, but also as potential organisers of the activities for young people, where they can develop specific professional competences.
SUCCESSES OR TIPS	- Involve young people as much as you can in the research phase; - Connect different stakeholders, when you do workshops about platform, invite organisers with different profiles; - Find a person responsible for updating the platform; - Start from your own activities and then on your own example involve other organisers; - From the beginning, think about the value of the badges that will be issued by the platform.

TILBURG
city of learning

DESCRIPTION	**Target groups + Needs and objectives** HEALTHY AND HAPPY IN TILBURG We will only be satisfied when everyone in Tilburg can lead a happy and healthy life. The platform will support in creating a safe city where everyone matters, where all people are able to connect and everyone can learn. Tilburg is Experimental, Raw, Contradictory, Decisive, Social and Lighthearted! An industrial city, with a rich history in textile, and working on an unprecedented transformation! A surprising city, a city of makers and doers. Tilburg.cityoflearning.eu after being in existence for 5 months already offers 101 Learning Activities and 3 Learning Playlists. 16 Learning Providers are showcasing their learning opportunities in the categories Technologies and Computers; Career and Job Readiness; Crafts and Production; Creativity and Design; Civic Engagement; Arts and Culture; and Personal Development.
WHERE IS CONNECTED LEARNING?	During the start of development of the content at the platform the focus group and project team searched widely to find a combination of: ● **personal interests** of young people, ● seeing how activities and organisations could **support relationships** between young people, learning providers, municipality and employers, ● which **opportunities** our activities could unlock for further learning for everybody in Tilburg. ● Also we wanted to combine learning via local activities and online activities, so everybody can search for the right moment to learn. In a short moment after the start of our Tilburg.cityoflearning.eu platform we saw that learning providers are eager to use the platform, especially when it supports better chances for employment for everybody. For this, learning providers want to showcase how their activity connects with skills that are necessary for employers and recognised by official frameworks. Soon we will provide a 21st Century - and a Digital Competence Open Badges System - that will support learning providers in the recognition of skills in their activities.

SUCCESSES OR TIPS	- Always check with young people whether a development that adults want is also what young people in your city want - Start with providing activity examples on the platform right from the beginning - When necessary support new learning providers by putting the activity on the platform for them - Connect with an acknowledged learning framework, it gives recognition for everybody. The City of Learning platforms are already connected with ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) and this supports to connect the non-formal-, formal learning and business field. - Connect with aim of municipality

SACHSEN-ANHALT
region of learning

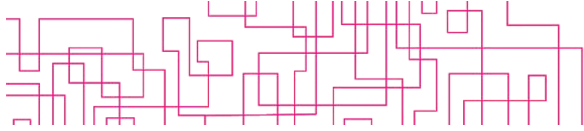|	
DESCRIPTION	**Target groups + Needs and objectives** The target group of our organisation are young people, living in Saxony-Anhalt, who want to gain international experience by living abroad for a while by joining international activities, such as youth-exchanges, voluntary services, internships, … We want to support young people in finding offers for going abroad and prepare them for their individual journey. Therefore we use the platform to show access points for mobility opportunities for young people in the region. Those access points are for example information centers or organisations, who are active in the field of international youth-work and offer lots of international activities. In order to guarantee that the information provided by us is appropriate for young people, we formed a team of young ambassadors between 15 and 25 years old, who actively support the presentation of mobility opportunities and eligible access points digital and offline in our region.
WHERE IS CONNECTED LEARNING?	Our ambassadors have been involved in the mapping process and have created several playlists under the theme "Finding my way abroad". A special highlight of connected learning could be established by forming a diverse group of ambassadors. Some of the young ambassadors already have wide experience in international mobility since they have joined several projects in the past. Based on their experience they designed playlists and added activities which help young people to prepare for their international mobility by showing videos, joining events or inviting to visit information points. Others are strongly

	motivated for such opportunities and are particularly familiar with the needs and requirements of the target groups. The connected work of young experienced people, young people willing to go abroad and organisations offering opportunities lead to a smoothly functioning dimension of connected learning.
SUCCESSES OR TIPS	Looking back on our activities, we understand that this connection of learning could only be established by the active participation of our diverse ambassador team during our development process. We held several workshops, where our ambassadors had time and space to try different methods for mapping activities and creating fitting playlists. Those workshops involved several steps, like becoming familiar with the available technical tools and the concepts of maps and playlists, brainstorming ideas, creating concrete playlists and adding events as well as finally testing them among their peers. As a tip we can learn from this, that it is worth it to follow the process of utilising information from young people's experiences.

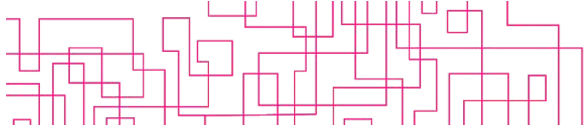## SOUTH SAVO region of learning

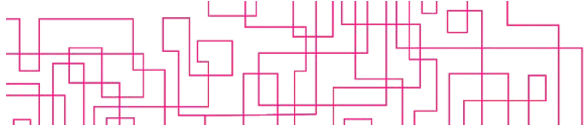|	
DESCRIPTION	Target group 15-29 year old young people. Municipality needs peer support from young people to help others, and to help municipality youth work as an information group, especially using social media. PR-youth training in four different sessions, 3 hours. All sessions held locally, with the option to cover topics by remote work. Every session leads to a digital badge, and four sessions build one playlist. Playlist: **https://etela-savo.regionoflearning.eu/activities/6481** Second session was also open for youth work professionals, and mixed adults and youngsters work together.
	Training offered options to work locally, or by remote work. Second session connected professionals and young persons. Those young persons who were studying in secondary high school, also had the opportunity to connect PR-youth training in their formal studies. Diploma achieved from the training was in the form of digital

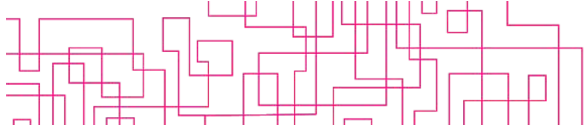|	
WHERE IS CONNECTED LEARNING?	badges. Playlist option made training's big picture visible for participants, before they took part in training.
SUCCESSES OR TIPS	Region of Learning platform was found easy to use by young persons, who were already interested in digital and social media. All practical introduction was to share link to playlist. Digital badge from complete training has value as a part of formal education in Juva municipality secondary high school.

DESCRIPTION	Digital applications in youth employment services project arranged Regioni2019-theme week, which took place in South Savo from 6th May to10th May 2019. The idea was to pilot the Region of Learning platform in South Savo. The theme of the week was promoting youth entrepreneurship and digital games. The main target group was young people from 15 to 29 years who are not in education or at work. Regioni2019-week consisted of several events connected to youth entrepreneurship. Digital applications project created a Playlist for those young people who were interested in games and game development.
WHERE IS CONNECTED LEARNING?	Our target group (Youth not in Education Employment or training) had the opportunity to test playlist of gamification activities and game development. This playlist was planned with youth. All events sourced from Region of Learning platform. This platform worked as a marketing and information tool of events. During the theme week Digital applications in youth employment services projects organised several events for youth and two Region of Learning workshops for professionals. Our project encouraged youth to test badges in Mikkeli Region of Learning platform. Our aim was to show existing regional possibilities to youth and they got the opportunity to become familiar with ongoing activities of Game Lab.
SUCCESSES OR TIPS	Events were organized in several small places in South Savo and many local operators were involved to collaborate with marketing possibilities of this theme week. We organized some events in collaboration with other projects and local organizations. Youth participated in the planning of the playlist. We encourage public organisations to take advantage of Region of learning platform by offering them training and consultation.

DESCRIPTION	The target group is all young people who need activities during summer holidays. Three municipalities hired a transporter, car, and employer. The employer organized activities in local places, and made those visible using Region of Learning platform. Sessions included opportunities to earn digital badges. Shortcut: www.kesa-auto.fi Leads to: https://etela-savo.regionoflearning.eu/opportunities?q=kes%C3%A4auto Examples of digital badge topics: Familiarize with several summer activities Develop new activity for summer car service Sub-boarding basic skills training
WHERE IS CONNECTED LEARNING?	Region of Learning platform helped in informing summer car route and local session places. It also gave opportunities to show what kind of learning will be available, by introducing digital badges. Summer car itself was a brand, but had no digital platform to use. Map based platform was a good choice for motorized and mobile youth work. Local sessions were organised together with local workers, and connected their services in with the same platform.
SUCCESSES OR TIPS	This practice reached best young persons from age group 7-12 year olds. Most of them didn't use personal accounts or log in to the platform. That's why it's good to see event descriptions without logging in. There were no commercials in the platform, and that's why it was a good choice for municipality organized summer car method.

VILNIUS
city of learning

DESCRIPTION	Nectarus team established cooperation with youth workers from the open youth centres in Vilnius. They played a key role in bringing several open youth centres on board and supporting them in describing activities on Vilnius City of Learning platform. Youth workers and the project team conducted several workshops to support youth centre staff in understanding how the platform works and what the added value could be of having their educational offers online. By November 2019, open youth centres had 224 activities and 14 playlists published on the platform. Activities tapping into the wide range of interests of young people: sport, creativity, career readiness, personal development, music, etc.
WHERE IS CONNECTED LEARNING?	Youth centres work directly with young people and activities often are co-designed involving youth workers, volunteers and youth centre clients. The platform allows young people to express interest in activities and earn open digital badges as recognition for participation, learning or other achievements within a particular activity. The platform enables youth centres to go beyond the usual promotion of a single activity. Now youth centres can combine several activities and offer learning playlists, which consist of several activities, both digital and in-person.
SUCCESSES OR TIPS	• Involve people directly working in organisations • Start with few organisations and create examples for others • Build their competence through workshops or training • Establish communication and support channels and be available to support on long-term basis • Look for cooperation opportunities with organisations where young people are: schools, youth organisations, etc, • Don't give up and keep on adding activities and building the habit of organisations to publish activities online • To reach young people who live away from open youth center or spaces.

4.2 Connected Learning

1.1 WHAT IS CONNECTED LEARNING?

"The research is clear. Young people learn best when actively engaged, creating, and solving problems they care about, and supported by peers who appreciate and recognize their accomplishments." (https://clalliance.org/about-connected-learning/)

"Connected learning is a practice involving someone pursuing a personal interest with the support of peers, mentors and caring adults, and in ways that open up opportunities for them. It is a fundamentally different mode of learning than education centered on fixed subjects, one-to-many instruction, and standardised testing.

"The "connected" in this learning approach is about human connection as well as tapping the power of connected technologies. Rather than see technology as a means toward more efficient and automated forms of education, connected learning puts progressive, experiential, and learner-centered approaches at the heart of technology-enhanced learning." (Connected Learning Alliance)

Connected learning focuses on "an equity agenda of deploying new media to reach and enable youth who otherwise lack access to opportunity." (Mizuko I, Et all)

Young people can have diverse pathways into connected learning:
- Youth centres
- Non-governmental organisations
- Schools
- Volunteering in a community
- Online spaces for learning
- And many more.

All of them potentially have a role to play in guiding young people to connected learning.
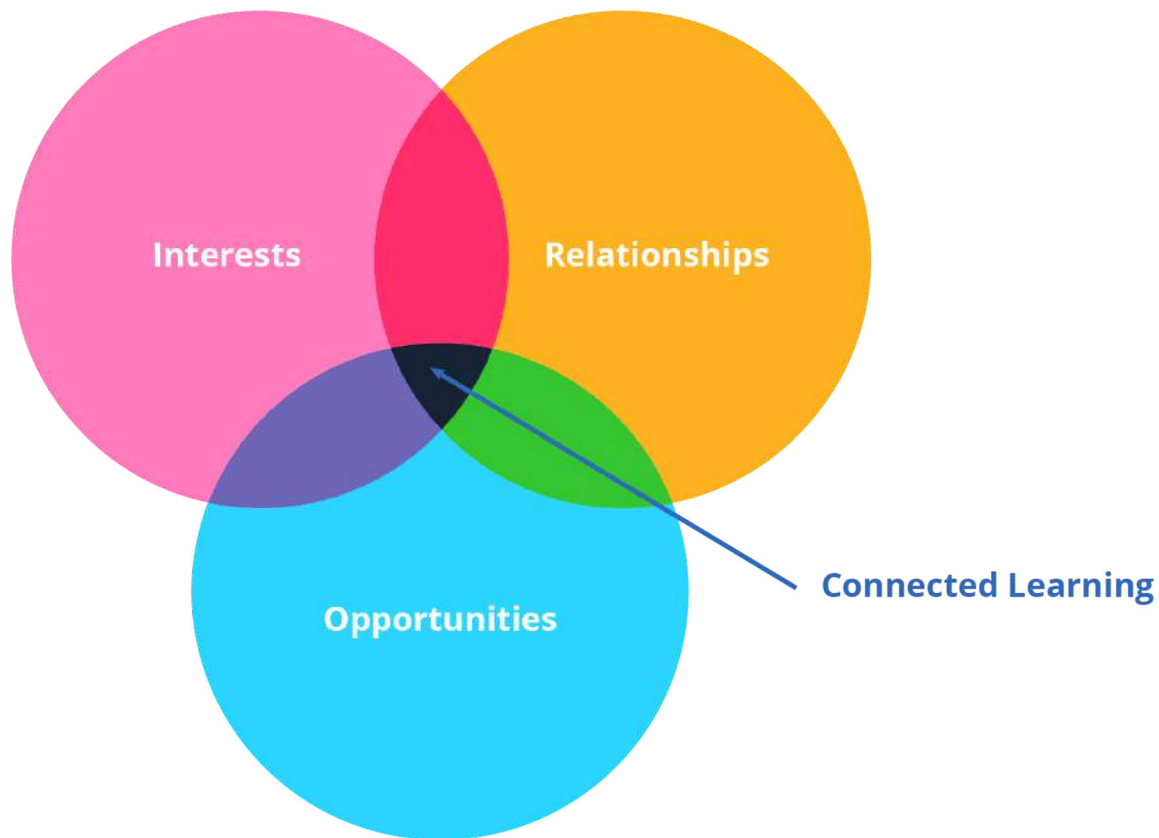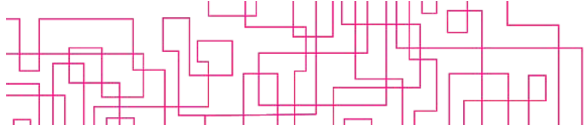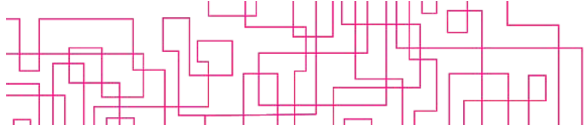
Image source: https://clalliance.org/about-connected-learning/

PRINCIPLES OF CONNECTED LEARNING

Connected learning is defined by the interplay between the three spheres of
learning that are present in young people's lives: interests, peer culture, and the academic sphere, which can also include career and civic opportunities.

1.   **Learning principles:**

●   **Interest-powered:** Interests foster the drive to gain knowledge and expertise. Research has repeatedly shown that when the topic is personally interesting and relevant, learners achieve much higher-order learning outcomes. Connected learning views interests and passions that are developed in a social context as essential elements.

●   **Peer supported:** Connected learning thrives in a socially meaningful and knowledge-rich ecology of ongoing participation, self-expression and recognition. In their everyday exchanges with peers and friends, young people fluidly contribute, share and give feedback. Powered with possibilities made available by today's social media, this peer culture can produce learning that's engaging and powerful.
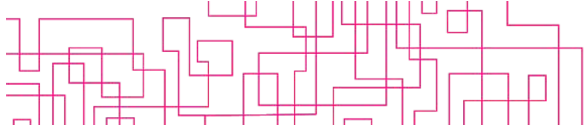
- **Academically oriented:** Connected learning recognizes that interests and relationships need to be tied to opportunities in order to realize life-changing outcomes. When workplaces and our civic and educational institutions draw from and connect to young people's peer culture, communities and interest- driven pursuits, learners flourish and realize their true potential.

2. **Design principles:**

- **Shared purpose:** The most engaged learning happens while doing something for a meaningful goal or purpose, whether that is creating something, contributing to a community, or engaging in a friendly competition. Today's social media and web-based communities provide unprecedented opportunities to learners to collaborate, engage in creative production, publish, and mobilize online. The potential of cross-generational learning and connection unfolds when centered on common goals.
- **Production centered:** Connected learning prizes the learning that comes from actively producing, creating, experimenting and designing because it promotes skills and dispositions for lifelong learning and for making meaningful contributions to today's rapidly changing work and social conditions.
- **Openly-networked:** Connected learning environments link learning in school, home and community because learners achieve best when their learning is reinforced and supported in multiple settings. Online platforms can make learning resources abundant, accessible and visible across all learner settings.

CONNECTED LEARNING IN PRACTICE

Connected learning isn't a burden that one organisation shoulders on its own; it is about building connections across different sites of learning.

Some examples of connected learning in action form the Cities and Regions of Learning Network:
- ➔ **Vilnius City of Learning:** Youth centres work directly with young people and activities often are designed together involving youth workers, volunteers and youth centre clients.
- ➔ **South Savo Region:** During the theme week digital applications in youth employment services projects organised several events for youth and two Region of Learning workshops for professionals.
- ➔ South Savo Region: The young people who were studying in secondary school, also had the opportunity to connect PR-youth training in their formal studies.
- ➔ **Sachsen Anhalt:** Our ambassadors have been involved in the mapping process and created several playlists under the theme "Finding my way abroad". A special highlight of connected

learning could be established by forming a diverse group of ambassadors. Some of the young ambassadors already have wide experience in international mobility since they have joined several projects in the past.
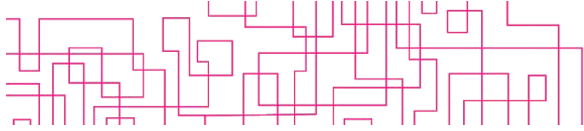
➔ **Tilburg:** We wanted to combine learning via local activities and online activities, so everybody can search for the right moment to learn.

➔ **Lorca:** For us connecting learning - is a learning opportunity for young people that connect different stakeholders at the moment of creating opportunities. We have young people as users, Organisers - NGOs, public bodies connected with employability and business as future employers, but also as potential organisers of the activities for young people, where they can develop specific professional competences.

RESULTS OF CONNECTED LEARNING

1. Greater depth and breadth of interests. Although less clearly documented than depth of interests, connected learning experiences should also, by definition, encourage a breadth of interests. Crowley and Jacobs suggest that with effective adult support, children expand the island and branch out from their specific interest to seek depth of knowledge in different domains (2002). They emphasize the importance of dialog and practices that connect the depth domain to other domains in order to expand a child's thinking and repertoire. This process of building connections to other areas of expertise from the base of an area of deep interest is core to the connected learning model.

2. Peer, adult, and institutional learning support. Young people who are immersed in connected learning are not pursuing interests in isolation, but in the context of rich social relationships. Therefore, another outcome connected learning aspires to is social capital in areas of interest, expertise, and opportunity. These social supports can include same-aged peers with shared interests, adult peers and mentors, as well as institutional relationships tied to areas of interest and achievement. By pursuing connected learning, young people should become embedded in social networks and communities of interest and expertise that they can call on for help, feedback, and mentorship.

3. Greater academic orientation. Through connected learning, young people are tying their interests and social relationships into academic, civic, and career relevant contexts. It follows that a key indicator of connected learning is a positive disposition to academic subjects, programs, and institutions.
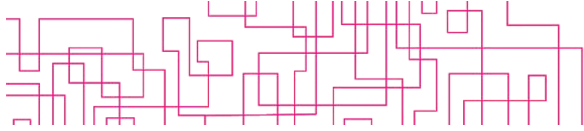
4.3 Research questions for stakeholders

The following questions can be included in the research phase of City or Regions of Learning. The questions should be adapted to specific research groups and activities.

Questions to **relevant stakeholders:**

- How do learners find information about opportunities to learn a new skill or follow their passion or develop their talent in _*add name of the territory*?
- How do learning providers promote their opportunities to learners?
- What internet solutions are used to match the needs and interests of learning opportunities in _*add name of the territory*?
- Which places/organisations/programmes are mostly popular among learners outside traditional education organisations?
- What are the reasons for a learner choosing these activities/organisations?
- What opportunities there are lacking in _*add name of the territory* to learn a new skill or or follow your passion or develop your talent?
- What skills do you think will be necessary to have in the future to live a good life in _*add name of the territory*
- What attractive learning opportunities can _*add name of the territory* offer to (young) people to be ready for future?
- In your opinion, what are the 3 most important characteristics that define the identity of _*add name of the territory*
- How can learners living in _*add name of the territory* benefit from the online platform with information about all learning opportunities _*add name of the territory*?
- How can learning providers benefit from online platform with information about all learning opportunities _*add name of the territory*?
- What learning opportunities would you expect to find at the online platform?
- How would you promote this online platform to your peers?
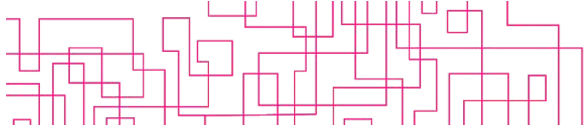
4.4 Questions to learners

The following questions to learners can be included in the research phase of Cities and Regions of Learning. The questions should be adapted to specific research groups and activities.

Questions to **learners:**

- How do you find information about opportunities to learn a new skill or follow your passion or develop your talent in *_add name of the territory*?
- If you use the internet to find such information, give examples of 2-3 web places where you search for information about learning opportunities in *_add name of the territory*?
- Which places/activities/organisations in *_add name of the territory*, do you choose to go to to learn a new skill or follow your passion or develop your talent?
- What are your reasons for choosing these places/activities/organisations?
- What opportunities do you lack in *_add name of the territory* to learn a new skill or or follow your passion or develop your talent?
- What skills do you think will be necessary to have in the future to live a good life in *_add name of the territory*
- What attractive learning opportunities can *_add name of the territory* offer to (young) people to be ready for the future?
- In your opinion, what are the 3 most important characteristics that define the identity of *_add name of the territory*
- How can learners living in *_add name of the territory* can benefit from an online platform with information about all learning opportunities in *_add name of the territory*?
- What opportunities would you expect to find at the online platform?
- How would you promote this online platform to your peers?
- What are your learning needs when using an online platform?
- Which learning has inspired you?
- What are the places and activities you want to learn from?
- What is a learning path you prefer to follow and how?

4.5 Youth-led participatory action research

Information you find in this annexure is a summery and adaptation of the tool, developed by Youth Activism Project "What is Youth Participatory Action Research?" (A where-to-start guide for youth, educators, and youth workers around the world):

Youth-led participatory action research is an approach to scientific inquiry and social change grounded in principles of equity that engages young people in identifying priorities relevant to their own lives, conducting research to understand the priorities, and advocating for changes based on research evidence. In our case we can use this type of research for identifying priorities and learning needs of young people in the community and mapping learning activities together with young people where these needs can be met.

THE PROCESS

1. Recruit

"If you are already working with youth, you might have your research team already. Or you might want to recruit more youth if you want to make sure you have a diverse team. Think about what kind of qualities or characteristics you want in your team members and recruit from there. If you are just setting up a new team in the City or Region, here are a few options you can explore (depending on the culture of your community)[3]":

- Think about what the motivation to take part will be; why does your target group want to participate? For example: You will meet peers who are in similar situations to yours. You can share your opinion about why it is important that the situation changes. You can support others with your experiences. It is cool to join
- "advertise the opportunity in your City or Region and follow up with door-to-door recruiting
- ask friends, families, neighbors and acquaintances for referrals
- advertise on social media and a youth radio channel"[4]
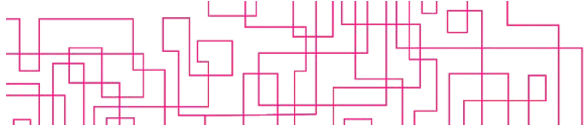- create a Playlist at the Cities of Learning Platform and make sure participants can earn an Open Badge

2. Build relationships
When you have the target group… keep them involved. "Focusing on building relationships between all members of the team before jumping into research is extremely important. This is what builds trust and helps adults share power with youth. Here are some tips to help you start thinking:

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[3] Youth Activism Project, 2018
[4] Youth Activism Project, 2018

- Fun icebreaker activities
- As an adult, you can build the right mindset to share power. Be curious and listen."[5] Don't only promise, also act!

Relationship building should happen throughout all the process. Create traditions for the group that build a sense of community (for example, start every team meeting with a new ice breaker and end every session by sharing reflections of the day) to know your team on a personal level and show them that you care about their learning.

3. Develop critical awareness

Before identifying priorities it is important to develop an awareness about the project, community and the importance of learning and opportunities for equal learning.

4. Identify priorities

"While youth should take the lead in raising priorities they want to explore, adults should help to facilitate narrowing down priorities based on key factors, such as timeline, resources, and the possibility of support from other members of the community. Here are a few tools that can help you narrow down your issue[6]":

- Root cause analysis: Discover the root cause of the priorities considered by the group to better ensure that the research will address the root causes of priorities.
- Cultural art: Use workshops where young people can combine activities like art making combined with supporting you in your research. Let your meetings be a creative and fun way to discover priorities.
- Anonymous priority election: Anonymous voting on priorities prevent adults from accidentally influencing the opinions of the learners.

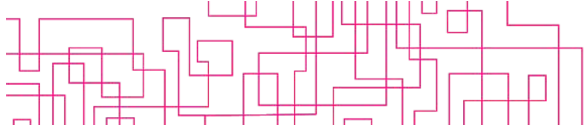### 5. "Create research design

This is where the group decides on the ways of collecting data. Have a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of different methods. When might data from numbers be necessary? When might data from interviews be necessary? Do you have the time and resources for the method you want to use? Here are a few methods to start with:

- Surveys can be a way to collect lots of data from lots of people quickly. Check out U-report, a free tool created by UNICEF to collect data using SMS.

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[5] Youth Activism Project, 2018
[6] Youth Activism Project, 2018

- Focus groups and interviews are ways to collect in-depth data from community members. Focus groups are like interviews but with more than one person.
- PhotoVoice is a popular technique used in Youth Participatory Action Research projects around the world. The purpose is to collect data by taking pictures in the community and provide visual evidence of the problems.

Once the research design has been created, it's time to go off into the community and collect the data.

An important practice used in many Youth Participatory Action Research projects is keeping a reflection journal as you collect the data. Here are some questions you could ask young people for their reflection[7]:

- What did I discover about myself during the research process?
- What did I learn from other researchers or from my research partner?
- Which tasks were well done?
- What would I do differently?

7. Analyse data

Data analysis will look different depending on what kinds of resources you have available. But you don't need fancy software or applications to do meaningful data analysis! Here are some ideas if you are low on resources:

- For data with numbers, you can calculate basic statistics by hand, such as mean, median, and range.
- Find patterns in interview or focus group data by cutting up quotes and sorting them into themes.
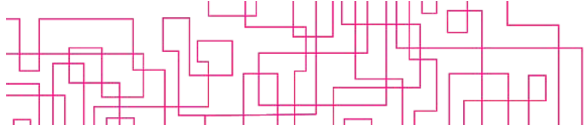- Use free tools, like SurveyMonkey or Microsoft Excel to create graphs and tables.

8. Advocate for change

Once the data has been analysed, have a discussion with the team about the results and their conclusions. How do the results lead to solutions? Once you have solutions that are supported by the data collected, there are many creative ways youth can share the solutions with the community[8] ". Support the learning by creating a Playlist that supports your team in learning and recognise and acknowledge the learning by earning an Open Badge.

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[7] Reclaiming Adolescence project
[8] Youth Activism Project, 2018

4.6 Mapping Trends

How do you enter the future well prepared? How do you connect with the fast changing realities of young people? How do you create an impact? The answer is simple. Dive into trends in behaviour of young people and learning. To create a sustainable City or Region of Learning it is important to keep an eye on trends and new developments in your community, among young people, and about how young people learn. And design your short and long term strategy with these trends in mind.

What is a trend? Trends are observable developments that indicate changes in society (and therefore also in the future).

Search for trends. There are many ways to search and follow trends. Some people use Twitter, others read national and international articles or blogs. We recommend staying connected with the Network Cities and Regions of Learning and share with each other what is happening in each City or Region. But most of all, listen to the youth, they are your customers and will decide if they will take part in the learning offer your City or Region provides, based on needs or new technologies that they want to try out.

Become aware of your own thinking. What are the connections between the facts and signs that you discovered? Which developments and values are behind what you have found? Are the facts and signs really true or just an opinion of one individual that is not shared by others?

Connect the dots. When you know everything about the trends that you have seen (and analysed) then work it out with images, text, etc. so that you can include others in your story and use it as the basis for getting other people on board your City of Learning Platform.

Dare to use the trend. A trend or game can end up in a hype. Think about for example Pokemon, which became a real hype among people. It can be interesting to use a hype as a method for learning activities that you will have on your City of Learning platform. The game in the activity can keep people on board or attract new people for learning opportunities that they would not participate in easily without this gamification aspect.

Only use trends and developments that are relevant for your City or Region, and that connect with the young people. Perhaps learning providers have the opinion that literacy is very important and young people feel much more connected with climate change. Then try to work at literacy via activities that enhance climate change.
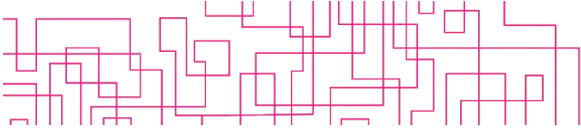
Worksheet on trends in learning

Search for trends.

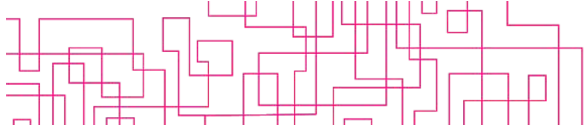| Gut feeling	Are there facts that prove your gut feeling and if yes, what is the fact?

Become aware of your own thinking. What are the connections between the facts and signs that you discovered?

1. Which developments are behind what you have found?
2. Which values are behind what you have found?
3. Are the facts and signs really true or just an opinion of one individual that is not shared by others?
4. Are the trends important for the end-users of your platform?
5. Where are the opportunities to use these trends?

Connect the dots. When you know everything about the trends that you have seen (and analysed) then work it out with images, text, etc. so that you can include others in your story and use it as the basis for getting other people on board of your City of Learning Platform.

Plan how and where you will use the trend in your City or Region.

……….

4.7. Worksheet "User persona"

A User Persona is a very detailed description of a user of the City of Learning Platform. With the help of personas, you can empathise with "real" people better instead of general target groups that are difficult to target in practice. By designing with a detailed description of the user of your platform, you ensure that you create a platform that optimally serves the target group.

Example of Persona ID of user of the City of Learning Platform

Create one or several User Personas on **your** City of Learning platform. Use your research about the needs of learners when creating your Personas.
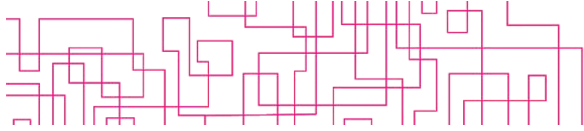
Sources

➔ Information in this Starter Kit is sourced from or inspired by these sources.

➔ LRNG Partner Handbook v.1, https://www.lrng.org/playgroundcity/activity/lrng-partner-handbook, accessed in 2017-07-10

➔ Connected Learning Alliance, https://clalliance.org/about-connected-learning/ accessed in 2018-02-14, https://clrn.dmlhub.net/, accessed in 2018-12-15

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➔ "What is Youth Participatory Action Research? A where-to-start guide for youth, educators, and youth workers around the world https://youthactivismproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Youth-Activism-Project-YPAR-Guide.pdf, accessed on 28.11.2019

Credits

The Starter kit was developed within the project "Connected Spaces of Learning in Europe" by a cooperation of partners:

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION	ROLE
Lithuania	Nectarus	Main Partner
Netherlands	Breakthrough Foundation	Main Partner
France	Centraider	Main Partner
Spain	Cazalla Intercultural	Main Partner
Germany	Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Landesverband Sachsen-Anhalt e.V.	Lead Partner
Lithuania	Vilnius open youth center "Mes"	Associated Partner
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Germany	Internationaler Bund, IB Mitte gGmbH	Associated Partner
Ireland	Badgecraft Ireland	Associated Partner

And now what? How to become a partner in the City of Learning Network?

Organisations or institutions interested in becoming a partner in the Network of City or Region of Learning can express their interest by sending an email to info@badgecraft.eu.

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*This **STARTER KIT** might be updated, make sure you use our latest version.*