# Youth Empowerment for Social Inclusion Methodology

# Summary

# Contents

## 1. Introduction

Youth empowerment for Social Inclusion (YES-SI) is an Erasmus+ project that targets young people (age 18-25), especially NEET / disengaged, and youth workers / youth work organisations. The indirect target group is city stakeholders which can range from policy makers and local entrepreneurs to activists and citizens.

The project aims to achieve the following objectives:

✓ Engage young people by involving them in challenging activities that stretch their abilities, imagination and view of the world and the part they can play in it.
✓ Connect young people to networks they would otherwise not know of that give them a platform for their own ideas, their own aspirations and allow them to say what sort of world they want to live in.
✓ Empower them with new skills and knowledge, provide the experience of creating real change, become owners of the social capital they create, and start to realise the value of their own ideas.

This will be achieved through providing a comprehensive and complementary set of information and practical tools and resources that will put the theory presented in this document into action. These are as follows:

● Training modules
● Stories of impact and inspiration
● Changemaker Labs incubation programme
● A gaming app for crowdfunding
● The YES-SI Handbook

The project runs from February 2022 to August 2024. Project partners are based in Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain. For more information see the project website: https://yessi-project.eu/.

**The YES-SI methodology is the first of its kind introducing Social Innovation Education (SIE) into the youth sector through the YES-SI intervention logic**. This is a summary of the methodology. The full document explains how the YES-SI methodology was created and presents the intervention logic at the end. It provides a theoretical, methodological and practical background for the areas of youth work, civic engagement and Social Innovation Education (SIE) as it is a point of reference for project developers and researchers of youth work, civic engagement and participation who are looking for guidance on embedding SIE principles into their own programmes and practices. It has been created through blending desk and empirical research.

**The YES-SI intervention logic is made up of SIE elements adapted for the youth sector combined with the four components identified by young people and youth workers through the field research.** SIE in YES-SI is an educational model that enables **young people to identify and analyse local sustainability and social issues.** They do this through **cross-generational collaboration with**

**external stakeholders in Co-creation Labs to design and lead social innovation projects that affect transformative social action by addressing issues important to them**. Through this process they **learn about the Sustainable Development Goals, develop their social innovation competences and grow a mindset and drive to address global issues through social innovation** both now and in the future. This combines with the four key points the young people and youth workers identified in the focus groups the that are important for good youth work: **building relationships and trust, developing digital competences, being given autonomy and ownership of youth work plus the agency to act and being able to meet their basic needs though sourcing funding for projects**. Therefore, these combine with SIE to create the YES-SI intervention logic (see summary infographic on page 40).

## 2. YES-SI definition of youth work

We have used the definition of youth work provided by the European Commission as a basis for the definition of youth work in YES-SI: 'youth work offers young people meaningful activities based on young persons' needs and interests and supports their personal development' (EC, 2014, p.5). The typology below details this definition by explaining key methods of youth work and what good youth work should lead to for the young people involved and society at large.
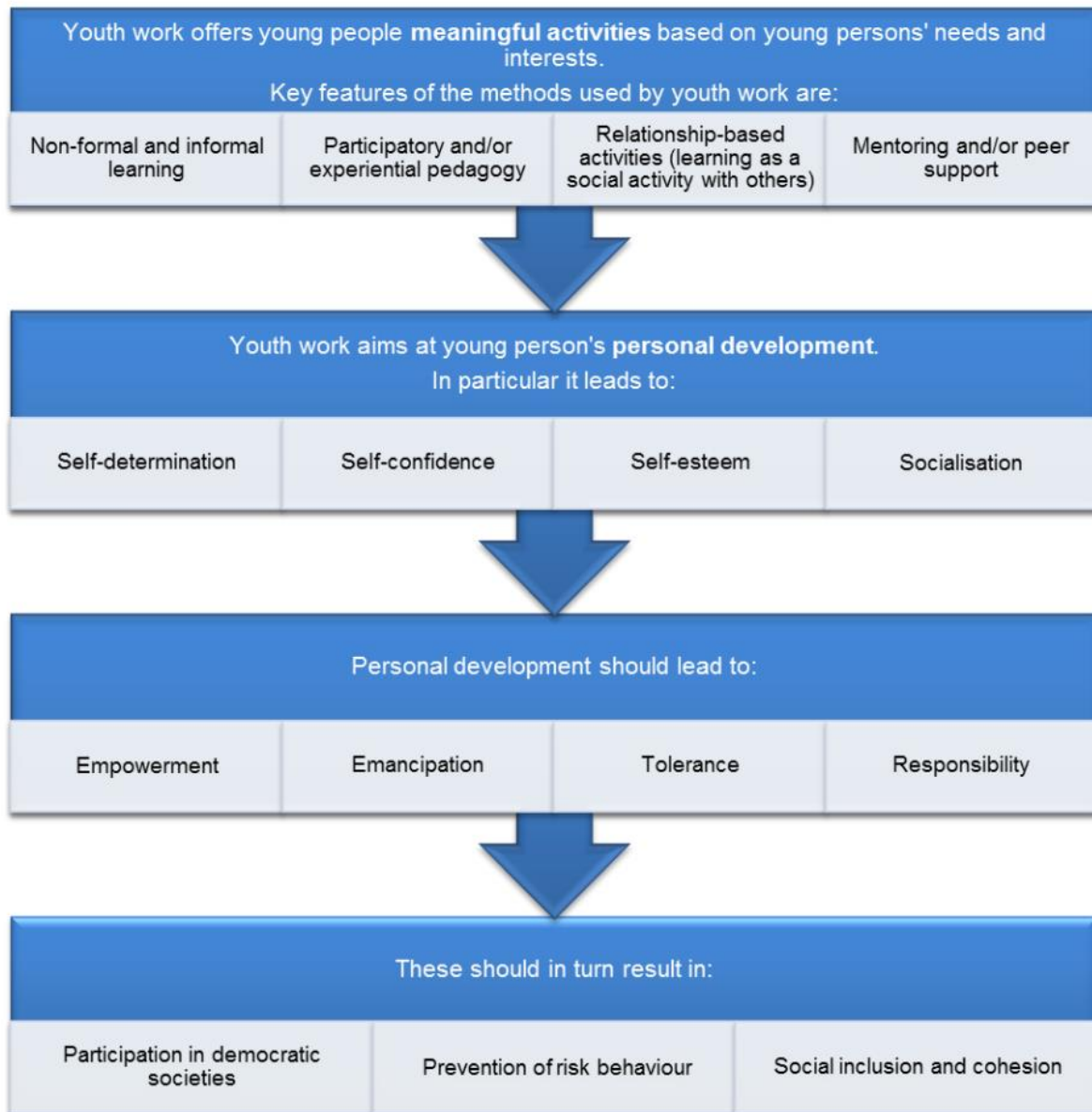
| Youth work offers young people **meaningful activities** based on young persons' needs and interests. |||| 
| Key features of the methods used by youth work are: ||||
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Non-formal and informal learning | Participatory and/or experiential pedagogy | Relationship-based activities (learning as a social activity with others) | Mentoring and/or peer support |

| Youth work aims at young person's **personal development**. ||||
| In particular it leads to: ||||
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Self-determination | Self-confidence | Self-esteem | Socialisation |

| Personal development should lead to: ||||
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Empowerment | Emancipation | Tolerance | Responsibility |

| These should in turn result in: |||
| --- | --- | --- |
| Participation in democratic societies | Prevention of risk behaviour | Social inclusion and cohesion |

*Figure 1 European Commission's typology of youth work*

Thus, youth work covers a range of activities that have a real impact on those involved and society and at the heart of these activities are three principles:

- focus on young people
- personal development
- voluntary participation

**In the context of the YES-SI project a key principle of youth work is that it aims to achieve positive social change**, including social inclusion and cohesion, thus when we refer to youth work in this methodology, it includes this as a core element additional to the three EC principles. Therefore, we use the term youth work to cover all forms of youth development programmes including youth social action, youth civic engagement, youth led social change (changemaking) and programmes / initiatives that empower young people and achieve positive social change.

> **Youth work in the YES-SI project**
> Focus is on young people
> Supports their personal development
> Participation is voluntary
> Achieves positive social action

*Figure 2 The definition of youth work in the context of YES-SI*

Young people in the context of the YES-SI project are aged 18-25. Any stakeholders from the community, city or any organisation who engages in YES-SI projects with the young people shall be referred to as 'external stakeholders.'

## 3. Social Innovation Education

This section summarises the theoretical basis of Social Innovation Education (SIE), a key part of YES-SI, and then shows it in practice.

### Design principles

The three design principles of SIE are young people at the centre, co-creation, and transformative social action:

1. **Young people at the centre** SIE shifts the traditional teaching and learning experience of teachers directing young people to young people as leaders. This supports their intrinsic motivation by giving them autonomy, as seen in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Providing young people with choices and control over their actions can support their engagement and empowerment (Litalien et al, 2017; Reeve, 2012). Principle 2 supports this.

2. **Co-creation as cross generational and collective problem-solving** Co-creation builds on the shift from didactic teaching to collective learning experiences. Young people and adults collaborate on an equal footing through mutual and participatory decision making where young people s' voices are heard, valued and acted upon. This powerful collective action leads to principle 3.

3. **Transformative social action** The shift to young people as leaders, the focus on collective over individual action and benefits and the co-creative nature of SIE prompt young people to question the status quo of a socially unjust world and empower them to advocate for sustainable positive change in society through civic engagement.

Thus, the definition of Social Innovation Education is:

| Social Innovation Education |
|---|

*SIE is a collaborative and collective learning process for the empowerment and socio/political activation of young people to drive social change no matter their professional pathways. it builds their competences to identify opportunities for social value creation, to form collaborations and build social relationships and take innovative action for a more democratic and sustainable society.*

## SIE 3-layers analysis

**Contextual variables:**
- Teachers' competence in SIE
- Quality of interactions with external stakeholders
- Institutional culture

**Programme Components**
- Co-creation labs
- External stakeholder community
- Teacher's Professional Development - MOOC
- Serious game

**Design principles**
- Student at the center
- Co-creation (as cross-generational and collective problem solving)
- Transformative social action

**Underlying educational philosophy**

SIE involves students in an intrinsically motivated, collective learning process whereby they co-create real life Social Innovations to address community/school concerns, influence change and create social value, leading to empowerment, socio-political activation and development of SI competences.
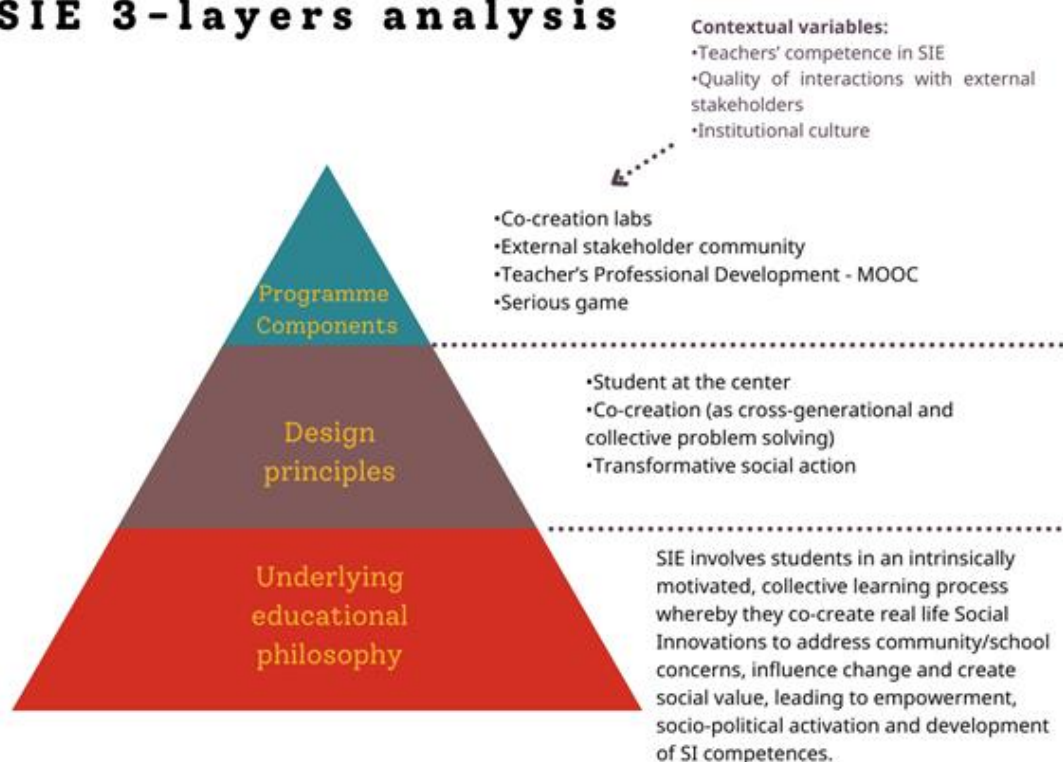
*Figure 3 3 layer analysis*

## Social Innovation Education in practice
Now we will see how the programme components put the theory behind SIE into practice.

## Co-creation Labs
SIE draws together youth action with social innovation through young people deciding on and leading social innovation projects to address social and sustainability issues that are important to them. Community engagement is an important element as young people work on the projects together with local stakeholders. The projects are designed, developed and carried out in **Co-creation Labs** which can take place anytime, anywhere and are led by a facilitator who

enables both the preparation and implementation stages of a lab. Co-creation labs are an open learning environment where different stakeholders such as young people, youth workers, parents, social innovators, community actors, city stakeholders or any other member of the local community collaborate in the design and implementation of social innovation projects.
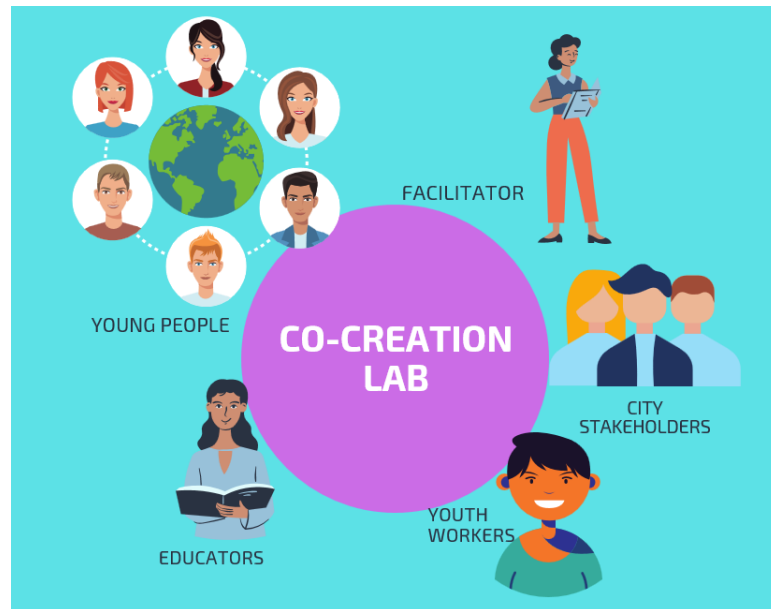


*Figure 4 Participants in a co-creation lab*
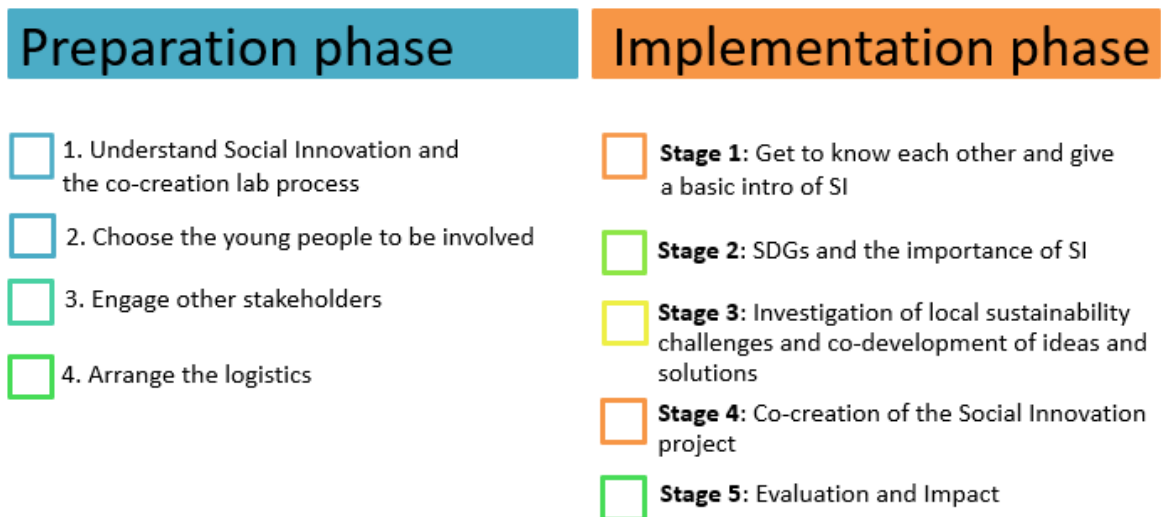
There are two main phases to a lab:



## Preparation phase

1. Understand Social Innovation and the co-creation lab process

2. Choose the young people to be involved

3. Engage other stakeholders

4. Arrange the logistics

## Implementation phase

**Stage 1**: Get to know each other and give a basic intro of SI

**Stage 2**: SDGs and the importance of SI

**Stage 3**: Investigation of local sustainability challenges and co-development of ideas and solutions

**Stage 4**: Co-creation of the Social Innovation project

**Stage 5**: Evaluation and Impact

*Figure 5 Stages of a co-creation lab*

### Sustainable Development Goals

SIE uses the framework of the **Sustainable Development Goals** to guide young peoples' social innovation projects with potentially one goal being the focus and more being connected as the goals overlap and interconnect:

*Figure 6 The sustainable development goals*

In practice, projects take many forms because Social Innovation Education involves **young people carrying out social action projects** with adults to address issues that are important to them. Naturally, they differ from town to town and country to country. For example, projects have ranged from upcycling clothes, creating friendship benches, developing empathy for young people with visual impairment, repurposing a building as a nurture centre, cleaning up a stream, making school a cheerier place to be and creating a food bank. See the annex for more details of existing Social Innovation Education projects.

### Social Innovation Competences

These projects develop the social innovation competences. These competences are a set of skills and values that enable young people to put their knowledge of local community social and sustainability issues into action, guided by the Sustainable Development Goals. Using these competences follows the process of social innovation where young people learn to:

- Identify opportunities for social value creation
- Form new relations
- Take innovative action for value creation

This results in young people having real-life experience to develop a drive, mindset and attitude to affect positive social change now and in the future.

| | Social innovation competences | Explanation |
|---|---|---|
| **Identify opportunities for social value creation** | 1. Vision for a better world | *Imagine a better and fairer world* |
| | 2. Responsible and critical thinking | *Spot the good and bad points so you can improve something responsibly* |
| | 3. Empathy | *Understand and respond to the feelings of others to build something better* |
| | 4. Self-efficacy | *Believe in yourself. Identify and assess your strengths and weaknesses. Value the opinions of others* |
| **Form new relations** | 5. Collective and creative problem solving | *Create, as a group, ideas that trigger social change* |
| | 6. Embracing diversity | *Work with lots of different people for a positive outcome* |
| **Take innovative action for value creation** | 7. Collective efficacy | *Help others to achieve their goals* |
| | 8. Social resilience | *Persevere and stay focused on your vision despite setbacks or failures* |
| | 9. Take the leap for value creation | *Act upon your vision to help others* |
| | 10. Using resources well | *Coordinate people and use resources (including digital ones) to help achieve your goal* |
| | 11. Social communication | *Effectively communicate and interact with others to make positive and sustainable (long lasting) relationships* |
| | 12. Reflective learning | *Step back and reflect on / analyse what you have achieved in order to learn and improve* |
| | 13. Collaborative planning & democratic decision making | *Democratically (as a group) decide upon your future actions and shared vision* |

*Table 1 Social Innovation Competences*

**Impacts and learning outcomes**

Social Innovation Education has been shown to impact primary and secondary school students' emotional, cognitive, behavioural and agentic engagement (Garefi, Kalemaki & Kantsiou, 2021). It was developed in a Horizon 2020 project and rigorous testing took place consisting of a first pilot year in 2018-19) and a

second pilot year in 2019-2020. The second year was, inevitably, affected by the pandemic crisis so many ran their social innovation projects online. The engagements and learning outcomes found during the two pilot periods are summarised in the table below.

## The SIE Engagement and Competence Impact Framework

| | |
|---|---|
| **EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT**<br>(1) sense of belonging, being valued, or a feeling of being important[1]<br>(2) appreciation of success in school-related outcomes[2]<br>(3) 'task-facilitating emotions' that promote beneficial learning which include curiosity, interest and enthusiasm[3]<br>(4) feelings, attitudes, and perceptions toward school[4] | ● Empowering young people<br>● Students having ownership<br>● Being heard<br>● Feeling valued<br>● Enabling autonomy<br>● Feeling respected by adults<br>● Being important<br>● Sense of belonging to the community<br>● Increasing confidence and maturity<br>● Being equal co-creators with adults<br>● Learning that has a real-world purpose<br>● Improved intergenerational relationships |
| **COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT**<br>(1) psychological involvement in learning processes[5]<br>(2) profound conceptual understanding[6] | ● Developing deep understanding of how action can produce a tangible outcome<br>● Understanding real-world value<br>● Taking ownership<br>● Finding learning personal, important & relevant |
| **BEHAVIOURAL ENGAGEMENT**<br>(1) Student involvement in academic, social & extracurricular school activities[7]<br>(2) Student conformity to classroom and school rules[8] | ● Increased involvement in class<br>● More interest in school activities<br>● Improved conduct in class<br>● Increased self-esteem<br>● Improved relationships with school staff<br>● Better behaviour among peers |

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[1] Fredricks et al, 2004

[2] Christenson et al., 2012; DeVito, 2016

[3] Reeve, 2012

[4] Archambault et al., 2009

[5] Archambault et al., 2009; Reeve, 2012

[6] Reeve 2012

[7] Fredericks et al, 2004

[8] Archambault et al, 2009

| | |
|---|---|
| **AGENTIC ENGAGEMENT**<br>(1) Students' intentional, proactive, and constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction they receive[9]<br>(2) Students take on meaningful roles in their schools[10] | ● Becoming more proactive<br>● Taking the initiative<br>● Making and designing constructive suggestions<br>● Increased willingness and efforts to influence real change<br>● Increased determination to achieve goals<br>● Being enthused |
| **SOCIAL INNOVATION COMPETENCES**<br>(1) Identifying opportunities for social and collective social value<br>(2) Developing collaborations and building meaningful relationships<br>(3) Taking action in an individual and collective manner | ● Understanding an issue that others are facing and taking action to support them<br>● Imagining how to change things for the better<br>● Learning how to put ideas into action to create social value<br>● Using critical thinking to help people in a responsible way<br>● Self-evaluating and valuing others' opinions to improve<br>● Solving problems creatively through multigenerational collaboration<br>● Using diversity as a strength for the benefit of all<br>● Supporting each other to persevere through hard times and achieve collective goals<br>● Learning that successes and failures are not destinations but part of a bigger journey<br>● Using resources, including technology, to create social value<br>● Communicating well to form positive relationships<br>● Reflecting for continuous self-improvement<br>● Managing planning and decision making collaboratively |

*Table 2 The SIE Engagement and Competence Impact Framework*

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[9] Reeve 2012

[10] Mitra & Serriere, 2012

## 4. YES-SI intervention logic

This section explains the YES-SI intervention logic in a written summary and infographic. The YES-SI intervention logic blends the Social Innovation Education (SIE) model with elements of the Fairshares brand and effective youth work approaches to present the **first SIE intervention logic for the youth sector**. This logic draws together the **key elements of youth work** as defined in the YES-SI project:

- Focus is on young people
- Supports their personal development
- Participation is voluntary
- Achieves positive social action

…with the **three layers of SIE which provide the content of the intervention logic**:

| Programme components | sustainable development goals (SDGs) co-creation labs external stakeholder community |
|---|---|
| Design principles | young people at the centre co-creation (cross generational and collective problem solving) transformative social action |
| Educational philosophy | an intrinsically motivated, collective learning process where young people co-create real life social innovations (SI) to address community/ school concerns, influence change and create social value, leading to empowerment, socio political activation and development of SI competences |

*Table 3 The key elements of SIE for the youth sector*

This content combines with the components highlighted as valuable by the field research:

- building relationships and trust
- developing digital competences
- having autonomy, ownership and agency
- becoming financially secure

Thus, we have an intervention logic where the core content of **what young people need to know to affect positive social change is knowledge of the sustainable development goals and how to co-create with external stakeholders yet ultimately lead projects**. Thus, young people are at the centre of this process but collaborate with external stakeholders to affect transformative social action that has an impact on real life. Through this, young people will develop their social innovation competences, particularly their vision for addressing local social and sustainability issues and how to act on this vision. **Building relationships and trust, developing digital competences, being given autonomy and ownership of the youth work plus agency to act and being able to meet their basic needs through sourcing funding for projects are the four key components in the design, delivery and sustainability of SI projects created by young people.** See figure 7 below.
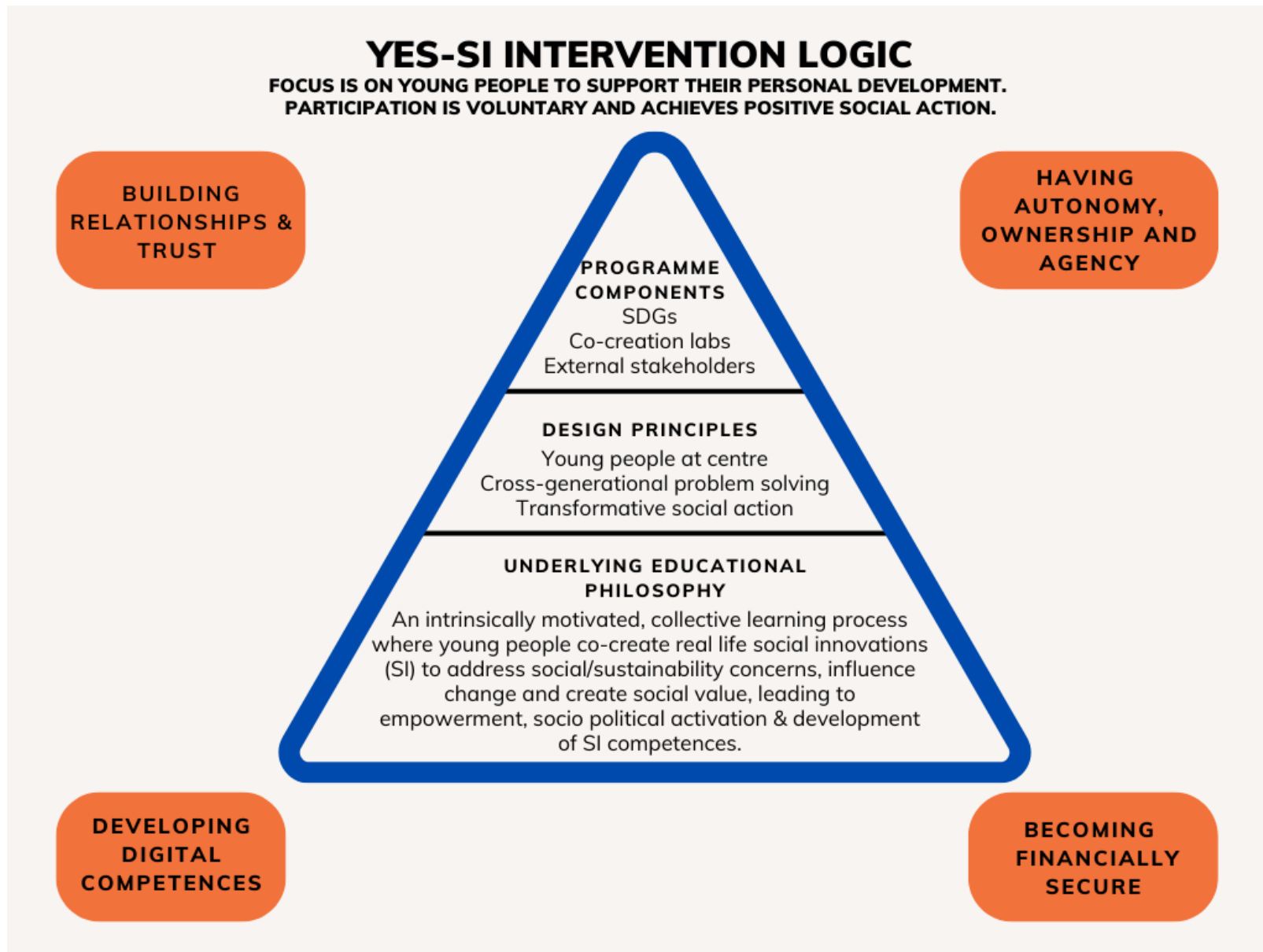
# YES-SI INTERVENTION LOGIC

**FOCUS IS ON YOUNG PEOPLE TO SUPPORT THEIR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.
PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY AND ACHIEVES POSITIVE SOCIAL ACTION.**

**BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS & TRUST**

**HAVING AUTONOMY, OWNERSHIP AND AGENCY**

**PROGRAMME COMPONENTS**
SDGs
Co-creation labs
External stakeholders

**DESIGN PRINCIPLES**
Young people at centre
Cross-generational problem solving
Transformative social action

**UNDERLYING EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**
An intrinsically motivated, collective learning process where young people co-create real life social innovations (SI) to address social/sustainability concerns, influence change and create social value, leading to empowerment, socio political activation & development of SI competences.

**DEVELOPING DIGITAL COMPETENCES**

**BECOMING FINANCIALLY SECURE**

*Figure 7 The YES-SI Intervention Logic*

# References

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**Annex - examples of Social Innovation Education projects**

**Project name:** Understanding the visually impaired
**Location:** First Experimental Primary School, Thessaloniki, Greece

This school is very close to Helios School, a school for visually impaired children. So close that they even organised shared music lessons for their students. It was therefore no surprise that, when asked to think about problems in their neighbourhood, their attention quickly shifted to the difficulties of visually impaired people.

They used literature, cinema, and arts to learn about other's experiences, took walks around the area and noticed all the difficulties for disabled people. Eg. non-adapted crossings or car owners parking on the wheelchair ramps. Then they started working together with the Helios School students, learning Braille and playing sports together (goalball, a sport especially designed for visually impaired and visually impaired people). The children developed their empathy for those who are visually impaired through these activities so they could understand and more effectively help them.

The project then moved onto the stage of planning actual interventions. Students interviewed disabled people in the neighbourhood to understand how they cope with problems and what they would need to improve the quality of their life. They planned real life observations with the intention of mapping the problematic points of the area plus an informative campaign to make other neighbours aware, during the open market day.



*Developing empathy - guiding my visually impaired friend*

**Project name:** Changing students and society through improving our playground
**Location:** CEIP Los Albares, Zaragoza, Spain

The aim is not to change the playground, but to students and society. The 1st Phase was to modify playground to make it more welcoming and build a space in which each student finds his place, materials, and design an easily replicable project. involved taking these proposals from the school spaces in La Puebla de Alfindén and then onto the the proposals to Zaragoza capital spaces. The change the the school inclusive then using recycled The 2nd Phase yard to other 3rd Phase: move possibility of centres of Venecia, has been the day so that contacting the great shopping Zaragoza, especially Puerto valued, where families spend when the families stop to eat or rest, instead of giving their child a mobile, they have the possibility to play various games. Our contact from the NEMESIS Community helped us to create an app which shows parents how to play hopscotch. Now parents can enjoy the game with their children and we are thinking of putting instructions for other games on the app as well as translating it into other languages.





*Do you like to take part in the NEMESIS project?*
*"Yes, because is funny and amazing to see how our playground is improving little by little."*

Primary school pupil

**Project name: Aqua Corner**
**Location:** Third Battalion of Kragujevac, Kragujevac, Serbia
English teacher Dr Nenad Miladinović, works on a social innovation project which involves 20 students and 5 teachers. First, they considered the SDGs and then they used the traffic light activity to identify a local sustainability issue. This surfaced that the eutrophication of Bubanj lake – a heart-shaped lake in the city of Kragujevac – was the most important issue for students because the excess of minerals and nutrients kills fish and other lake-dwelling life.



Lake Bubanj

Students wanted to deal with the problem of polluted water and ways of purifying water in a sustainable way but how to do this?

- Step 1 Research Lake Bubanj (chemical composition of water, species of animals and plants that live there) in cooperation with the research associates of the Faculty of Science, Institute of Biology and Ecology.
- Step 2 Form an Aqua Corner in the school hall with a system for water purification with plants and drainage gravel that could be applied on the lake as well as making a school self-sustaining aquarium.
- Step 3 Fish spawning and trade/exchange with local aquarists or at exhibition sales (entrepreneurial competencies).

The project envisages the improvement of students' entrepreneurial competencies through the school fair of aquarists, and then the involvement of other students of the school and the local community through various activist events. With the support of a five-member mentor team of teachers, cooperation was established with the academic community - specifically the Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, University of Kragujevac, Public Aquarium in Kragujevac and local associations dealing with water protection and sustainable development EkoMar and EkoMatoTeka.