MEET – JOIN – CONNECT!

Digital International Youth Work – A methodology

Manual

IJAB

Allowing individuals to interact across borders, getting to know new people, exploring new cultures, exchanging views and developing intercultural skills and an open view of the world together – all this is made possible thanks to International Youth Work. And yet something has shifted in recent years. International Youth Work is no longer an exclusively offline domain; rather, it has begun to benefit from the digital transformation. Digital formats have become commonplace, with digital elements now a fixture in International Youth Work activities. The experiences made and insights gained during the process of digitalisation have shown that digital tools deliver real added value to learning mobility programmes. They make it easier to involve young people more in programme design, they enable organisations to reach out to new target groups, and they allow participants to get to know each other even before they travel to an on-site activity. Yet how can digital elements be integrated into International Youth Work activities in a purposeful way? What methodological aspects and challenges have to be considered?

In 2021 and 2022, IJAB and JFF – Institute for Media Research and Media Education teamed up with specialist and funding agencies for International Youth Work on a research project known as *Internationale Jugendarbeit.digital*. In 2020, IJAB published **MEET – JOIN – CONNECT! Digital tools for international youth work practitioners**, a brochure highlighting the many ways digital tools can be used in this field. This publication builds on that foundation – it is a compilation of the pedagogical and methodological expertise acquired by organisations that work in this area, as well as of the insights gained while implementing digital formats such as the DIY² Lab event series and the international BarCamps known as *Digital Transformer Days*.

MEET – JOIN – CONNECT! Digital International Youth Work – A methodology offers an overview of the pedagogical and methodological approaches that are suitable for digital formats. The first two contributions in part 1, by Dr Niels Brüggen and Franziska Koschei (*JFF – Institute for Media Research and Media Education)*, offer an introduction to the fundamentals of Digital International Youth Work. Digital International Youth Work, a sub-field of Digital Youth Work, is a combination of the pedagogical aspects of media education and those of International Youth Work. Contribution number two outlines general issues in connection with digital settings. This is followed by a methodological examination of group dynamics in digital exchanges by Christoph Schneider-Laris. The fourth contribution, by Bettina Wissing of IJAB's Language Unit, centres around language and communication in digital settings.

Part 2 of the publication is dedicated to hands-on examples of Digital International Youth Work. Readers, including experts and team leaders, are invited to read through these tried-and-tested methods and diagrams to gain a rapid overview of what has previously worked in which settings. The bibliography and list of further resources at the end of the publication offer useful tips and information on methodologies and tools for Digital International Youth Work. The checklist in the annex summarises the most important aspects to be considered when planning and implementing digital formats.
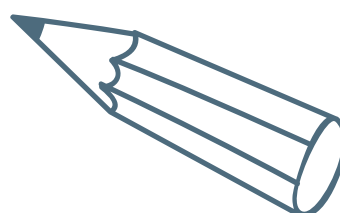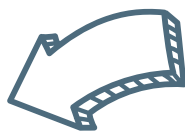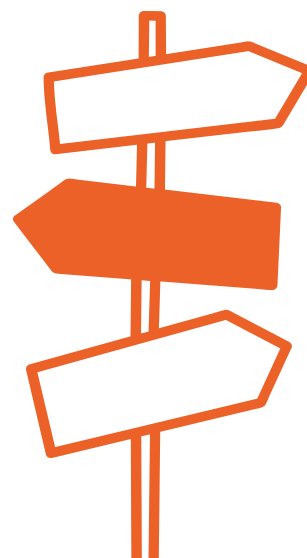
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Fundamentals

of Digital International Youth Work

Digital Youth Work: The Background

Dr. Niels Brüggen, Franziska Koschei | JFF – Institute for Media Research and Media Education

Regarding the use of digital media in youth work for educational purposes, several concepts and approaches exist. To learn how to integrate digital media effectively in International Youth Work, it makes sense to first obtain an overview. This chapter hopes to help clear up any ambiguity over the many terms and concepts that are used in the context of youth work with and through digital media, and to provide some useful background information. It also covers the fields of media education and smart youth work in the context of digital youth work.

Objectives of Digital Youth Work

Note that digital youth work has the same objectives and is based on the same set of values as youth work per se (see Brüggen/Rösch 2022, p. 21.; European Commission 2018, p. 6.; YouthLink Scotland, no page no.). Youth work and international youth work are regulated by Book 8 (the Child and Youth Services Act) of Germany's Social Code and operate according to the rules and regulations governing child and youth services. One of the key principles of child and youth services is that all young people have a right to assistance and support as they grow into adults and become independent, community-minded individuals. Against this backdrop, the youth services field is responsible for supporting young people's personal and social development and helping them avoid or reduce disadvantages (see section 1 of Book Eight of the Social Code).[1] In other words, the overarching objective is to assist young people in their development. They are assisted in making their own choices, participating fully in society and embracing civic engagement. The support services in question are aligned with the interests of young people and are shaped and designed according to their input (see section 11 of Book Eight of the Social Code). Thanks to the use of technologies, digital youth work can help to improve access to support services and align them even more closely with young people's needs.

Digital youth work also pursues objectives that relate directly to young people's needs as regards digital transformation. Specifically, it seeks to empower young people in the following areas:

» To engage actively and creatively with a digital society

» To assess the risks of digitalisation and in turn, become able to make well-informed choices

» To assume control over their digital identity

» To express their opinions using digital tools

» To explore new tools for networking, collaboration and community engagement.

(see YouthLink Scotland et al. 2019, no page no.).

Digital youth work and media education

One of the objectives mentioned above – giving young people opportunities to participate effectively in a society marked by digitalisation – is a declared goal of digital youth work and media education alike. Accordingly, many media education approaches that involve young people working with digital media can be seen as valid approaches for digital youth work, too.

That said, digital youth work also extends into areas that reach beyond the traditional domain of media education (see Brüggen/Rösch 2022, p. 21). Besides the teaching of media skills, other relevant aspects include digital infrastructure (that is, software applications for educators), organisational development, and continued professional development for experts using digital tools. This is reflected in key European publications such as the Conclusions of the Council on Digital Youth Work (13935/19), the recommendations of the European Com-

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[1] Additional fundamental principles and tasks of youth work are detailed here: https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/94106/40b8c4734ba05dad4639ca34908ca367/kinder-und-jugendhilfegesetz-sgb-viii-data.pdf. Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (2020).

mission expert group on digitalisation and youth (European Commission 2018) and the guidelines for digital (child and) youth work that were developed as part of a pan-European cooperation project (YouthLink Scotland et al. 2019).

Smart youth work

Smart youth work differs from digital youth work in that it has a specific focus on the development of software applications for child and youth work. Examples include digital tools that assist experts in documenting their work, or game-based media education apps in whose development experts were involved. One of the objectives of smart youth work is to create tailor-made programmes that meet the needs of a range of child and youth work stakeholders. A key document in this regard is the Council of the European Union's conclusions on smart youth work (2017/C 418/02), where it is explicitly stated that "development of smart youth work should be built upon the active engagement of young people themselves, allowing them to best contribute their already existing digital competences".

Digital and media skills

Many publications on digital youth work, especially international ones, use the term "digital skills". While their interpretation of the term reflects many aspects of the media competence model commonly used in Germany, they focus largely on training- and qualification-related aspects (e.g. the ability to use digital tools) rather than engage in a critical reflection of said tools (see Brüggen/ Rösch 2022, p. 17). This is mirrored in the requirements placed on experts, who are expected to be proficient enough in the use of digital media so they can use them to design activities for young people. Reflections on digital transformation and what it may mean for young people's lives are not given nearly as great an emphasis. That notwithstanding, the recommendations of the European Commission expert group on digitalisation and youth do make reference to this (European Commission 2018).

Types of digital youth work

Digital media can be applied in digital youth work in various ways, as illustrated by the following diagram, which is an excerpt from the aforementioned guidelines for digital (child and) youth work of the European Commission expert group:

As a tool	As an activity	As content
The focus is on digitalising youth work services to make them more accessible, up to date and relevant	The focus is on learning by doing and hands-on activities	The focus is on issues related to digitalisation
Participation in decision making with digital tools	Gaming groups to foster a positive gaming culture	Discussing relationships and behaviours online
Using social media applications to reach young people	Maker projects to develop 21st century skills	Exploring themes relating to digitalisation and digital literacies
Online counselling with vulnerable young people	Collective learning to create digital media	Empowering young people to champion their digital rights

Fig. 1: How digital media can be used in Digital Youth Work. Source: https://www.digitalyouthwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/european-guidelines-for-digital-youth-work-web.pdf.

The Digitalisation of International Youth Work

Dr. Niels Brüggen, Franziska Koschei | JFF – Institute for Media Research and Media Education

How is digitalisation changing International Youth Work? Before answering that question, it is a good idea to call to mind the goals and particularities of International Youth Work. The following section describes, against the backdrop of the digital transformation, the goals of International Youth Work and what characterises International Youth Work as compared with Youth Work.

The goals of International Youth Work

International Youth Work pursues the general goals of Youth Work as defined in section 11 of Book Eight of Germany's Social Code while at the same time aiming to achieve the substantive goals of cross-border exchanges and encounters. In particular, international exchanges and cross-border encounters aim to contribute to

» teaching intercultural skills, providing international learning opportunities and promoting an awareness of global interdependencies,

» fostering tolerance and diversity-sensitive attitudes in a diverse society,

» critically engaging with a shared history and reconciliation,

» strengthening European integration and peace in Europe and the world.

As an aid to achieving the goals of International Youth Work in the long run, quality criteria for International Youth Work and the relevant indicators were drawn up back in 2004 (see Quality Standards and Indicators for International Youth Work, IJAB 2004). These quality criteria now need to be reassessed and updated in light of the digitalisation of International Youth Work. Account needs to be taken of the particularities of Digital International Youth Work, which are presented in the following.

When developing a methodology of Digital International Youth Work, particularities can be pinpointed on the basis of a modified version of the model proposed by Kutscher et al. (2015). This model has established itself in the field of social work when it comes to observing mediatisation and digitalisation processes; it focuses on the triad comprising addressees, experts (both staff and volunteer) and the organisation. Factors and variables can be defined in relation to these three groups and their relationship to one another to create a methodology of Digital International Youth Work. What is characteristic of International Youth Work is that at least two of the three interact (see Fig. 2).

When designing online, blended or hybrid Digital International Youth Work formats, the focus can be placed on various design aspects in line with Fig. 2. However, additional questions arise in relation to digital formats when it comes to achieving the aforementioned goals and facilitating meaningful youth exchanges.

Examples of these include
» in relation to young people:

› What skills do young people already have that enable them to use digital media?

› How can these skills be put to specific use?

› Which digital services (apps and software) do young people use in which countries to communicate, including informally?

» in relation to partner organisations:

  › Do organisations have any specific rules (e.g. not using certain services, regarding the use of social media) that need to be observed when designing digital formats?

  › What binding legal requirements (e.g. regarding data protection, data processing and consent) apply in the participating countries?

  › How can the "host principle" be interpreted and implemented in digital exchanges? And should it even be?

» in relation to experts:

  › What skills and experience do experts have when it comes to designing and implementing digital formats?

  › What roles are needed when implementing digital formats? What support can other experts provide in which context?

  › How are these roles divided up in the educational teams?

These aspects can often influence common issues that arise at the planning stage, for instance as regards daily schedules.
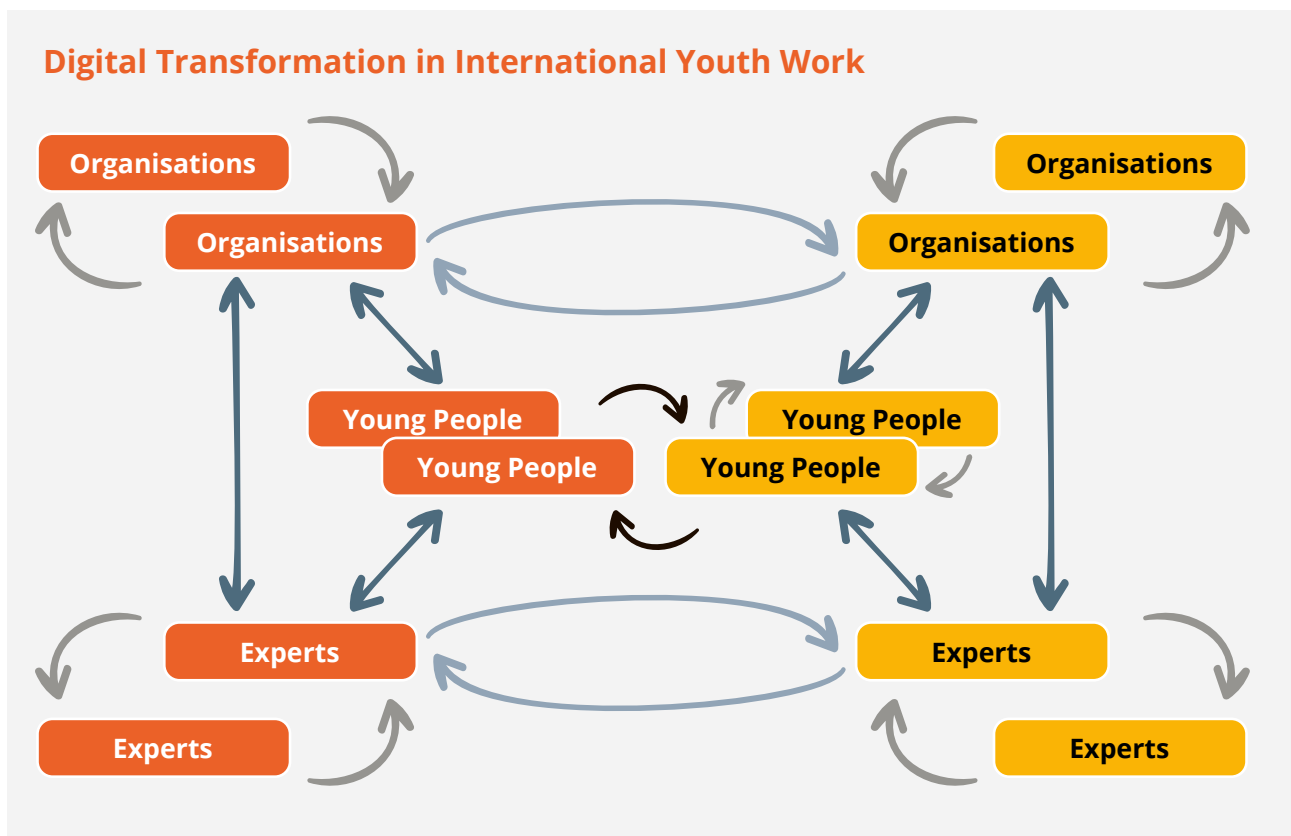

Fig. 2: The specific constellation relating to digital transformation in International Youth Work (Brüggen/Koschei, after Kutscher/Ley/Seelmeyer 2015)

Digital transformation in International Youth Work: Opportunities and challenges

The change process described in the above can have an influence on project design in International Youth Work. The following table compares the resulting opportunities and challenges for extracurricular activities.[2]

CHALLENGES

New obstacles to participation

Using online tools can create new obstacles to participation and new forms of discrimination. The discrimination of young people who have no or only low-performing devices at their disposal is one example. Other aspects, such as an unstable internet connection or lack of private space can mean that young people are unable to take part in projects with digital elements or that they (have to) eventually drop out. One solution is to choose a hybrid format in which young people can sit in the same room as other participants and the team leader (see the paragraph headed "Formats" on page 12). This ensures that all the participants have equal access to activities.

More obstacles to intercultural exchanges

Immersing yourself in other lifeworlds and, in particular, getting to know other cultures can be difficult in an online setting and so needs to be carefully structured. It may be useful to show videos or play audio recordings produced by participants in which they introduce their country/town/city. Joint online cooking events in which participants cook typical local dishes or watch a local film together can mitigate the challenges involved. Such events also provide an opportunity for informal exchanges between young people. Informal exchanges like these are particularly good at helping young people make friends in an online setting, which can often feel quite impersonal.
IJAB details how Digital Language Animation can promote intercultural exchange in its handbook on *Language Animation in Online Youth Meetings*.[3]

OPPORTUNITIES

Fewer obstacles to participation

Using digital media enables certain obstacles to participation to be eliminated. They include limited time and financial resources, mobility limitations on account of a disability or travel restrictions, difficult political situation, restrictions owing to residence status or lack of a visa. Digital meetings can also provide a safe space in which young people can get to know each other virtually in a familiar setting (e.g. at home). Social interactions can be difficult for some young people, especially if they take place in unfamiliar surroundings like a foreign country.

Insights into individual lifestyles

On the other hand, participating in an exchange from the comfort of one's own home provides low-threshold insights into participants' individual lifeworlds. Without having to go anywhere, participants can gain an insight into the everyday life of the other young people taking part – or even of a national group – in real time, so without any great time lag. This can range from a live tour of someone's apartment during an online session to a preproduced follow-me-around video in which participants record a day in their life on camera. Compared to on-site exchanges, online settings provide a "neutral" country-independent place and the opportunity to focus on new and diverse, culture-independent differences and commonalities.

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2 This section is based on an expert report published in 2021 entitled Veränderungen und Handlungsbedarfe angesichts des digitalen Wandels Internationaler Jugendarbeit, which uses current discourses to systematise opportunities and challenges for youth exchanges, workcamps and the challenges of the transformation process relating to International Youth Work (Brüggen et al. 2021). The results of an article that was also published in 2021 entitled Digitaler Wandel – Veränderungen und Handlungsbedarfe für die Internationale Jugendarbeit were likewise drawn on (Koschei/Brüggen 2021).

3 https://ijab.de/bestellservice/language-animation-in-online-youth-meetings. See also p. 18 re communication in online exchanges.

CHALLENGES

More difficult communication

Communication can likewise be an issue in an online setting. Different first languages and language skills, difficulty recognising facial expressions and gestures and technical glitches all play a role in this. The contribution by Bettina Wissing on p. 18 contains contains a detailed description of which aspects of the online setting are important in relation to communication and what needs to be borne in mind to ensure communication is as effective as possible.

Need for additional preparation

Projects that use online tools lead to participants having to prepare in entirely new ways. Besides knowledge about a country, media-related preparation will be necessary to ensure young people can take part in a specific setting. This can, for instance, mean that some participants will need to be provided with the necessary devices. In addition, you need to make sure that participants have the necessary skills to use the tools used.

Reduced commitment

Digital projects may prove a challenge as regards participants' commitment. Long intervals between online sessions, everyday commitments and time differences can mean they do not stick to agreements and keep appointments. The possibility of switching off one's camera and muting one's microphone during an online meeting means participants may take part less actively in online sessions, or not at all. This problem can be mitigated when designing an online meeting. Individuals speaking for long stretches at a time, not enough breaks or opportunities for participants to interact should be avoided, as these things can have a negative impact on young people's motivation to actively participate. Instead, you need to plan short, interactive and varied formats that facilitate active exchange between participants both during an online session and between individual sessions. It may also be useful to draw up a netiquette together with the young people detailing the rules you all want to stick to throughout a project.

OPPORTUNITIES

New communication channels

Certain online functions can, however, facilitate certain communication processes. For example, interpreting functions on videoconferencing platforms enable simultaneous interpretation into/out of various languages, and speech-to-text interpretation can be provided for hearing-impaired participants. Young people can also use translation services throughout a project. Messenger services enable young people to stay in contact at the start of a project, between two project phases or once a project finishes. However, you need to be aware of privacy issues when using commercial providers such as WhatsApp.

Acquisition of media literacy

Digital projects give young people the opportunity to learn how to use online tools. By familiarising themselves with new devices and tools and using them independently in digital projects, they can acquire technical know-how. Besides, digital projects give young people the opportunity to reflect on their own media consumption, challenge media structures or cooperate on creating media products.

Greater scope for participation

Online tools also open up new opportunities for participation for young people. For instance, digital elements included before the start of a project mean they are involved in organising activities. This can include, for example, digital preparatory sessions in which the project structure and individual items can be prepared together with participants. These sessions can also be used to choose the online tools that are to be used. When young people take on tasks in a project using the tools they have themselves suggested, this can help to incorporate and activate those skills they have learned elsewhere. Being involved in designing a project can boost young people's feeling of self-efficacy and motivate them to participate. Also, involving young people at an early stage helps to ensure that an activity is designed so that it reflects their own reality.
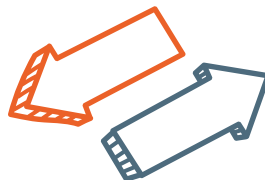
Design options for Digital International Youth Work: An overview

Zoom, BigBlueButton or something entirely different? A day, a week or several months? There are numerous ways to design digital projects depending on the project goal, available resources and funding guidelines. This section provides an overview of how to design digital projects in terms of format, project term, use of digital elements, devices, online tools and composition of the educational team.

Formats: online, hybrid, blended

Digital projects follow different formats depending on how their online and offline phases are structured. A distinction can be drawn between online, hybrid and blended formats. This distinction should be regarded as a *suggested* definition that serves to roughly categorise projects. The three terms are used differently in the current debate.

Online

In online-only formats the entire exchange takes place virtually. That means that all the participants communicate with each other online. They take part individually in these online sessions using their own device or participate using various digital tools.

Example: All the participants in the partner countries take part in a project individually on their own devices and at various locations.

Hybrid

In hybrid formats, online and offline activities take place simultaneously, for instance when one youth group is located in one place and another joins the session virtually from another location. When individual participants in a group take part online while the rest of the group is on site, this is also described as a hybrid format.

Example: Youth group A is in a youth centre in country A; youth group B is in a conference centre in country B. The two groups are linked up online, each group using its own device.

Blended

In blended formats, online and offline phases alternate. The online phases can be incorporated into the project structure in various ways, that is either in parallel, at the start or at the end. The term "blended format" was coined in analogy with the term "blended learning". The term "blended" was originally used in the drinks and tobacco industry when different types of coffee or tobacco, for instance, were mixed together to produce a new, better product (see Stecher et al. 2019, p. 21.)

Example: A project involving two partner countries starts with an online phase in which all the participants take part virtually and individually. The next phase is offline, that is, all the participants meet in person in one of the two partner countries.

However, some projects cannot be assigned to any of the above three categories as they contain a mix of different formats. They can involve a national, in-person session at the start during which the two country groups link up online during certain phases. After that both country groups attend an in-person session. As a result, the project has hybrid elements (in-person sessions with the partner group linked up online) and blended elements (an online phase at the start and an offline phase at the end).

Project duration

Using digital elements in International Youth Work can sometimes change the duration of a project. Here, too, there are multiple ways to design the project. Short one-day online formats are one option, as are digital projects lasting several weeks or months. The options available for designing the sessions within a project lasting several weeks or months can also vary from one long online meeting per month to short daily meetings over a period of two weeks, for example. One thing to remember is that processes can often take longer in an online setting, on account of technical delays, for instance, having to explain the technical equipment being used or other dynamics in group processes. In contrast to offline settings, it is more difficult to fill any idle time that may arise by having an informal discussion. This, in turn, can negatively impact both participants' motivation and various group dynamic processes, such as how participants perceive the group building process. Account needs to be taken of this during a digital project's conception phase.

Approaches to offline sessions cannot be transferred wholesale to online settings. Instead, digital projects should be designed as such from the start by taking aspects specific to the online setting into account. That can, for instance, mean that online sessions need to be shorter than offline sessions and include online-specific, interactive methods that help create a more relaxed atmosphere (see the contribution on Group Dynamics in Digital Exchanges).

Use of digital elements

The section on formats (p. 7) describes how digital elements can be used as a tool, activity or content. In the context of International Youth Work, that can mean the following:

» **Tool:** a youth exchange takes place on a specific videoconferencing platform so as to be able to include those who are unable to travel.

» **Activity:** media such as films or podcasts are produced in the course of a project.

» **Content:** young people collaborate on issues such as data protection or other media-related issues.

Devices

The devices young people use to take part in a project's online phases can also vary from project to project. Many projects apply the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) approach where participants use or bring along their own devices.[4] There are several advantages to this. First, it saves on the costs, time and effort involved in organising a project. Second, participants do not need an introduction to using specific devices because they work with the ones they are already familiar with. This also makes sense from the point of view of sustainability because it means no new devices have to be bought unless absolutely necessary.

At the same time, though, there are disadvantages to using one's own device. For example, there is a high risk that participants will be distracted because they may be tempted to use the apps and programs (messengers, games, etc.) they use privately or to start doing something else during an online session. The BYOD approach can also disadvantage those young people who do not have the necessary equipment to take part in a project. Different operating systems and software versions on privately used devices can pose a challenge for team leaders. Certain programs used in a project may not work properly on certain devices. In these cases it can be helpful to check with participants before the project starts what hardware and software they use (devices, operating system and software versions). Doing this makes it possible to tailor the digital methods applied to the equipment available to participants, although it should be borne in mind that this can be a time-consuming and laborious process.
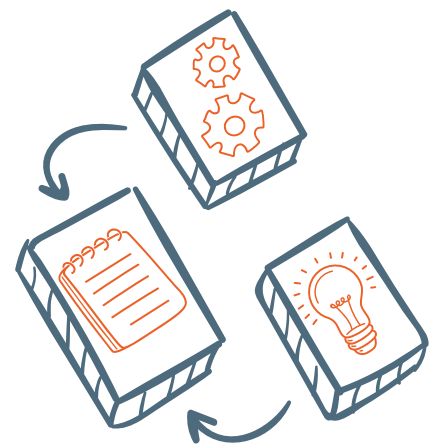
Online tools

A wide range of tools is available for use in digital youth projects. The most frequently used ones include videoconferencing tools, digital pinboards and collaborative writing tools. An overview of the digital tools that are available for International Youth Work is provided in IJAB's brochure *MEET – JOIN – CONNECT! Digital tools for international youth work practitioners.*[5] The online platform DINA.international (https://dina.international/) combines various tools under one roof and enables not only preparations for an exchange and follow-up work but also entire exchange projects to be conducted online.

Educational purpose trumps tool: When selecting and using a tool attention should be paid to ensuring that the tool serves goal achievement. The educational purpose and the chosen method determine which tools are to be used. Less is often more. Also, remember that the participating countries may have privacy rules that apply to the tools being used, and the tools used should match participants' lifeworlds as closely as possible. National and international preparatory meetings should be used to brainstorm and discuss the wishes and preferences as regards digital tools of the young people taking part.

Composition of educational teams

What skills are needed in teams that run digital projects in International Youth Work? As a general rule, the same as those that are important in offline International Youth Work projects. Additional skills are needed, though, when conducting digital projects, that is technical skills, specific moderation skills and digital methodology/pedagogy skills. In principle, team members need to be open to engaging with digital technologies in connection with those pedagogical issues that arise (see "agile mindset" in European Commission 2018). Having a positive attitude is the foundation on which the skills needed to use digital tools in educational work can be built and reinforced by means of specific training courses.

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4   Other definitions and concepts around the BYOD approach can be found, for instance, in BYOD – Start in die nächste Generation (in German), the final report produced by a research team following a pilot project in which online tools were used in a school context (Kammerl et al. 2016).

5   IJAB – International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany (2020): https://ijab.de/en/publications/meet-join-connect-1.

Roles within the team

Project teams involved in digital projects should be as diverse as possible in terms of their composition. Sufficient resources thus need to be budgeted for. The various roles in an educational team involved in digital projects can include the following:

» moderation,

» technical organisation/support (e.g. setting up break-out rooms, using external tools, assisting when problems arise with cameras and microphones, setting up the digital environment),

» Language Animation and/or translation & interpreting,

» teaching content/inputs,

» chat monitoring.

The roles do not need to be fixed for the entire project term, but can, for example, differ from session to session. However, it is important to coordinate and make a note of these roles ahead of each session so that work is divided up evenly among the experts and none of them ends up with too heavy a workload. Since these roles can quickly overlap in a digital setting, it is recommended that project teams agree in writing who is responsible for what and which tasks. Participants can also take on various roles and responsibilities in digital exchanges depending on their interests and skills set, thus enabling them to contribute more to shaping a project.

Group Dynamics in Digital Exchanges

Christoph Schneider-Laris | Freelance coach, including for the German-Polish Youth Office

In International Youth Work, the term "group dynamics" describes how group processes develop across the various phases of an exchange. Generally speaking, there are five phases in an international youth exchange (although these cannot be adopted like for like in digital formats): the getting-to-know-you phase, the orientation phase, the creative phase, the differentiation phase and, finally, the saying-goodbye phase. Experts working in a digital setting face the major challenge of having to find new ways of Identifying and handling group dynamic processes and phases.[6]

Group dynamic processes in digital exchanges

It's OK if things take a bit longer

Since you need to make sure to include informal time in digital exchanges, shared digital project time will end up being shorter. Sharing a meal and breaks, evening activities and time spent physically in the same room are not automatically part of an activity, but may have to be planned in addition. And three digital days are not the same as three in-person days. Both the content and structure of an in-person exchange are hard to transfer wholesale to an online project. In addition, shared screen time has its limits in terms of participants' attention span. A week-long exchange with several hours of screen time every day can be tough. Participants and team leaders need a change of pace and activities that get them up off their seats and moving around. A rule of thumb to apply to digital formats is that you should start a new activity around every 15 minutes. For example, an interactive whole-group activity can be followed by a 15-minute input block and then pair work. Try experimenting with what works for a group and suits a particular activity. If you're planning to have several hours of screen time, then it is recommended that you do this on a maximum of only two or three consecutive days.

To kick off with, it is good to plan shorter units of around two hours. That means less planning time, a lower threshold to participation and less risk of people dropping out. It gives participants the opportunity to spend time together, to talk and try things out, which can lead to them coming up with ideas for subsequent units.

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6   Regarding group dynamics online, see also various IJAB documents on the DIY2 Labs entitled Online group dynamics using the 5 Rhythms (available at https://ijab.de/bestellservice/online-group-dynamics-using-the-5-rhythms) and Group dynamics online (available at https://ijab.de/bestellservice/group-dynamics-online).

Pick up on details

Group dynamics has a lot to do with picking up on the group atmosphere. How are my participants responding to an activity? How well does a particular task suit their needs? What are they interested in right now and how well can I get them to focus on that? In digital exchanges participants should mute their microphone while they are listening to instructions or when only one person is speaking. Otherwise, there is too high a risk of them being distracted by background noise. In a digital setting you won't pick up on those things you normally would in a seminar room. Reactions, comments, follow-up questions are more difficult online. Instead, you should focus on people's facial expressions, give clear and simple instructions, be prepared for non-verbal responses and address participants directly. A few pointers on how to better identify group dynamic processes are provided in the following.

Identifying and handling group dynamic processes in online settings

Group dynamic phases in online exchanges

The various group dynamic phases are typically not as clear-cut in online exchanges as they are in in-person exchanges. They also need significantly more support, especially at the start. Besides, there is no informal time as described in the above, or it becomes part of the online programme, meaning there is less group time. Still, using the right methods and planning a varied programme can lead to a surprising amount of interaction in a short space of time. Compared to spending several days travelling to an offline meeting, the threshold to taking part in an online exchange is much lower, which makes it easier for participants to drop in. There are also tools that can be used in online exchanges to get the group working creatively and not just listening passively. Here are a few:

Breakout rooms

Dividing up the group into small rooms with two or more people or even small groups of three to five people creates an opportunity for a lot of interaction in a short space of time. It is one of the most effective tools for creating virtual contact between participants and should form part of each whole-group unit. Participants can be assigned to the breakout rooms at random or by the team leader, or else they can themselves choose which breakout room to join. After the end of the allotted time, everyone returns to the main room. This is an ideal situation for team leaders because groups can be divided up quickly and brought back quickly with a specific amount of interaction on a specific topic in the interim. After this the level of interaction within the group is greatly improved. The inherent nature of breakout rooms creates an atmosphere of trust without the team leader being present and "controlling" the situation. Participants are more ready to talk about personal things that they may not wish to reveal to the whole group.
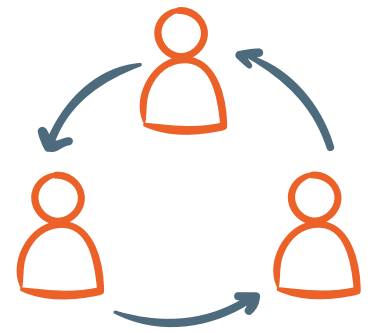
Schedule opportunities for feedback

Anyone who runs online exchanges will quickly notice that it makes sense to regularly get some feedback on the mood in the group or tasks assigned, because you tend to be talking to yourself a lot of the time while the others are on mute. And so you need to actively ask for feedback, for instance by planning time for everyone to comment. In smaller groups of up to 25 feedback can be done verbally. Here's an idea: let the last person to speak nominate the next person to give feedback. This cuts the gap between two people speaking, creates a virtual circle and generates more interaction. Other moderation tools make more sense in bigger groups, such as an online pinboard, whiteboard, Padlet, Mentimeter, etc. The group then produces something everyone can see and further comment on.

Incorporate variety

As quickly as you can tune in to an online session you can tune out again. That's the very definition of "low-threshold". In every online unit there are most likely going to be some who are a little reticent to join in at the start, are slow to switch on their camera, have technical issues or are passive in some other way. Team leaders should focus on those who are actively participating and help those who need support. It is best to divide up roles in the team. You need to provide a varied programme to stop participants dropping out. Those who keep their microphone on mute all the time after joining an online meeting are likely to be tempted to quickly finish reading an email or look something up online. You therefore need to keep participants' attention after giving them a brief introduction by explaining the programme to them and giving them the opportunity to get involved. A variety of units that elicit a response or comments from the group are a good way of doing that. An energiser activity also works wonders. Team leaders may want to think about how to incorporate a longer online creative work phase – and doing what – so that they can give the group an interesting task during the creative phase. There are lots of options that can be used in an online format, for example taking photos or making videos and animations. Participants will come up with their own good ideas, too. A small group can also complete a task in person and then present it later online.

Discover new scenarios

In the spring of 2020 most of us had not yet taken part in many video conferences. Since then we have all experimented with various things, taken part in various online meetings and possibly even organised some our-

selves. It is important to keep reminding ourselves that we learn and discover new opportunities together. And it is a process where things can occasionally go wrong. We try things out and get to experiment. By visualising the schedule for participants – a good idea even in shorter sessions – you both create structure and give them information. What's the plan, and in what order will things be happening? When is what method planned, when will there be time to share insights and take a break? Where are we right now? This provides orientation and helps participants focus their attention better.

Online exchanges add an entirely new element to youth exchanges in that the participants' physical environment takes the place of a shared seminar room. You can discover how to use this new context if you are sensitive to the situation. Participants can show each other objects in their room and find out more about each other and get talking. You could make a fun game of finding objects of a particular colour, begin with a particular letter or are weird in some way. This gets participants up and moving and helps them find out interesting things about the others and their languages. One such method is described on p. 17.

Plan time for informal chats

Planning formal and less formal time poses a particular challenge for group dynamics. During an in-person meeting we take breaks, which provide an ideal opportunity for spontaneous interaction between participants. During a break the team leader can be planning the following units. Contact between participants is not automatically established here either, but at least it is much easier to do so. During an online meeting, shared time ends when the video conference ends. Alternatively, you could try sharing a "break", perhaps structuring it a little, for example by suggesting topic-related breakout rooms that participants can move freely between. Another option is to use a pad to which participants can upload interesting information and photos. Social media (e.g. Instagram, WhatsApp, Signal) can also facilitate networking by enabling participants to keep each other up to date. It is important to be aware of the option of planning informal time so as to use its potential and get participants involved. Team leaders should check – including with participants – what suits the group and what can help support group dynamics.

When do digital elements work particularly well?

### Plan a getting-to-know-each-other session before the online session

Before the digital push brought on by COVID lockdowns, preparing exchanges mainly involved making arrangements for individual groups that then met for the first time in person. Although several tools were available for making contact before the first meeting, only few organisations made use of them. Now, the first meeting in a digital setting is easy to prepare, with a low entry threshold, thus enabling participants to get to know each other beforehand, to pass on information to each other and increase their level of participation. Issues around implementation and the programme can be discussed and ideas brainstormed with participants – a new means of getting them involved. Discussing these things afterwards in the project team delivers quick feedback and creates short decision routes. That can have a positive impact on the preparatory phase. Participants will then look forward even more to the first in-person meeting and get the sense that the exchange itself lasts longer. In summary, digital settings are an interesting option especially at the start of a project and during the getting-to-know-you phase.

Anyone who knows how challenging the first orientation meeting can be in a big group will value the available online options. Whether you have 20, 30 or 40 participants, you can divide them up into small groups at the click of your mouse and bring them back again punctually. A great alternative for group leaders who need to raise their voice to be heard in a seminar room or have to go in search of their participants in different rooms in an educational establishment.

Can you join us for a while?

People who organise exchanges want participants to meet other interesting people. And so they sometimes invite along experts and other speakers to talk about specific topics. If these have to travel a long way, you will usually have to do a cost-benefit analysis first. That is no longer necessary in a digital setting, because speakers can join an exchange for a shorter period of time, either as part of an online or a hybrid format. There are no journey times. This creates more – also international – possibilities.

We are still in the process of learning what other options are available for enhancing online exchanges and what new opportunities they open up. From the practical point of view, online exchanges have great potential in terms of the preparatory and follow-up phases, meaning that the exchange itself can be experienced and shaped even more intensively.
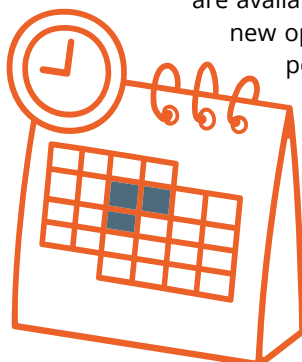
Methods for shaping group dynamics: Some examples

Short warm-up discussion

Description:
Short interviews done in pairs or small groups are an interactive way to start an online session. Choose a few questions that give participants the chance to get talking about something. It could be something to do with the exchange or the vibe, location or participants' expectations. This exercise is about interaction and curiosity about the other people in the digital setting. Set a time limit for each round. Three rounds lasting three minutes each is recommended.

Procedure:
1. Tell participants the following:

   » In a minute I'll be giving you each a question you can use to start a conversation in groups of two/three. Then you'll automatically be divided up into breakout rooms. You have three minutes to talk about your question.

   » After three minutes everyone will come back to the main room and I'll hand out new questions and divide you up into new breakout rooms.

2. After the end of the last round you can ask participants about what they learned or get them to write down certain information for you.

Tips:
» Make the questions as simple as possible so as to make it easy for participants to get talking. This is especially important when they have different first languages. Participants can also use translation apps if they have difficulty understanding each other.

» You can get participants to use visualisations to share personal information. For example, three emojis they like using or three emojis that depict things they like doing.

» You will notice a distinct difference in participants' faces before and after this exercise. It is great for getting exchanges and the getting-to-know-you phase off to a good start. And it also creates a relaxed atmosphere for the online exchange as a whole.

Find an object

Description:
This method is taken from Language Animation. It incorporates participants' immediate environment and also allows them to get up and move around. The exercise can be a short unit, can be used as a filler exercise or to introduce a new topic. The language aspect is particularly fascinating in exchanges. New words can be introduced by holding an object up to the camera, naming it and writing the new word in the chat function.

Procedure:
1. Write or show a randomly chosen letter. Pick a frequently used letter.

2. Participants then look for an item in their immediate environment that begins with that letter. They can use the first language that comes to mind (presumably their first language). They should then hold the object up to the camera so everyone can see it.

3. The word should be spoken clearly for everyone to hear and then written down, for instance in the chat function or on the whiteboard.

Tip:
» Objects are also a good means of introducing a new topic. Ask participants: "What object do you associate with...?" Then divide them into small groups to discuss their answers. This creates a more personal atmosphere, and you get to find out something about participants.

Other scenarios for online youth exchange projects with concrete ideas and descriptions of methods are available here: *https://dpjw.org/szenarien-fur-online-austauschprojekte/* (in German)

Many collections of ideas for short warm-ups and filler activities are available and are easy to adapt to youth exchanges. Here's one that is recommended:*www.workshop-spiele.de/online-warm-up-finder/* (in German)

Language and Communication in Digital International Youth Work

Bettina Wissing | Language Unit – IJAB
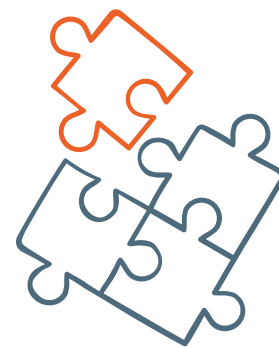
When designing an international youth exchange, attention has to be paid to what language(s) will be used during the programme.[7] What is already a crucial decision for in-person meetings becomes a challenge for digital or hybrid settings. That said, access to technical aids for multilingual communication is made significantly easier in the digital sphere – for instance, online dictionaries. This chapter serves to encourage organisers and team leaders to give careful consideration to the matter of language as they prepare for an exchange.

Communication channels in the digital sphere

Communication in digital settings works differently from that in offline spaces. It flows less naturally since by its very nature, it needs to be enabled (or disabled) by technical means. For instance, participants should mute their microphones by default when not talking, and only activate them when they wish to take the floor. Another aspect is sound quality: participants cannot be sure whether their sound is well received by the others, whether their microphone is of sufficient quality, or whether participants' internet connections are stable enough to hear each other well. Informal chats with the person in the next seat are impossible. Neither is direct eye contact. Whether or not a community spirit can develop will (also) depend on whether participants can or want to switch on their cameras.

That notwithstanding, digital settings offer a range of alternative communication channels. Most video conferencing platforms allow participants to send each other private chat messages so they indeed can communicate one on one with individual participants. However, this may generate hidden dynamics that team leaders cannot sense. The general chat function allows users to send messages to the entire group of participants, for instance to comment on what they are seeing on the screen. A written discussion can develop while a presentation is being shown or a debate is taking place, which can enrich the communicative dynamic. However, this can be a challenge in itself: moderators or hosts need to keep track of the chat and respond where necessary. Chat etiquette should also be enforced, meaning no insults or hostilities or similar.

Shaping foreign-language communication

In international contexts, the challenges of working in foreign languages exist as much for oral communication as they do for written. While preparing digital events, consideration must be given to how foreign language communication should be shaped in this specific setting. First off, the considerations resemble those for in-person meetings:

» Is there a common language that all participants understand and speak sufficiently so they can interact meaningfully with each other? The required level of proficiency in this language will depend on the subject matter of the meeting and the methods to be used. The more cognitively intense the event and the more technical the subject matter, the higher the required language proficiency. The more creative and intuitive an activity or event, the easier it will be for participants who are less proficient in the chosen language.

» Or should all participants be enabled to use their first language so the dialogue can be truly meaningful and everyone can say what they want to say rather than just what they can say in a foreign language? If interpretation is indeed an option, should it be simultaneous or consecutive?

» Or should there be a mix of the two? For instance, should core elements of the programme (e.g. presentations, short speeches) be interpreted while other, more cooperative elements (e.g. group work, BarCamp sessions) are offered in one common language?

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7   See Wissing: Fremdsprache als Hemmnis oder Chance? Sprachbarrieren in der Internationalen Jugendarbeit, in: IJAB (2019): Forum Jugendarbeit International 2016 – 2018, Bonn, p. 191-204.

Choosing what language regime to offer during an event will ultimately also determine whether interested individuals decide to sign up, or whether the language barrier means they decide not to.

Interpreting in online settings

The advantage of simultaneous interpretating is that it takes place in real time, without causing any delays. Digital events are typically shorter, as is the attention span of participants, so simultaneous interpreting may be preferable. It is easy to implement if the agenda is dominated by one-way communication elements such as presentations. It becomes more challenging the more time is allocated to debates and discussions. Another aspect is the number of languages. From a technical point of view, interpretation between two languages is easy to provide via Zoom, Webex or similar platforms. Although most major videoconferencing platforms meanwhile accommodate interpretation both into and between several languages (via "relay" interpreting), care must be taken to arrange a test run before the actual event and in particular, to ensure the interpreting team is familiar with the tool so they can select the right channels. In summary: from a technical standpoint everything is possible, yet the more complex the requirements, the higher the cost.

As consecutive interpretation does not require additional equipment, it is a low-key and financially more accessible form of interpretation, especially in bilateral settings. The interpreters connect from their offices to the meeting as if they were a participant. Another advantage is that consecutive interpreting creates greater awareness of the other language, which can help create a stronger international feel inside the group and promote mutual understanding.

One key aspect – with which online interpretation, specifically simultaneous interpretation, stands and falls – is the speakers' audio quality. A strong and stable internet connection, a well-functioning headset and a quiet room from which to participate are crucial. Depending on the target group, it is not always possible to place such high expectations on participants, yet organisers must be aware that interpretation can only be provided (and provided well) if the participants can be clearly understood. The audio quality of participants whose contributions are to be interpreted simultaneously needs to be particularly high since the interpreters need to continue hearing the speakers' voices while they interpret.

Regardless of interpreting mode ¬– consecutive or simultaneous –, online interpreting (also known as remote interpreting) is cognitively more exhausting for interpreters than on-site work. The duration of sessions to be interpreted must be shortened or where necessary, the team of interpreters enlarged.[8] This is all the more the case if organisers choose not to recruit professional interpreters but lay interpreters or language assistants, as is often done in youth exchanges. These are individuals with strong foreign language skills who are also very familiar with the dynamics of youth groups.[9]

Using written communication

When planning the language regime of an exchange, oral communication tends to be high up on the agenda. However, in online exchanges, written communication needs to be considered, too. Some specific aspects to consider include:

» What language should the chat be used in? Just one common language, e.g. English? Or in all languages spoken in the group? If so, which team member(s) can ensure that messages are translated? Or will only oral questions, e.g. asked during a Q&A session after a presentation, be admitted that are then translated by interpreters into the other languages?

» What language will any documents or presentations to be shared on the screen be written in? Will they be understood by all those present? Will videos be shown that have an audio component?

» What additional tools or apps might be used? Are they available in different languages?

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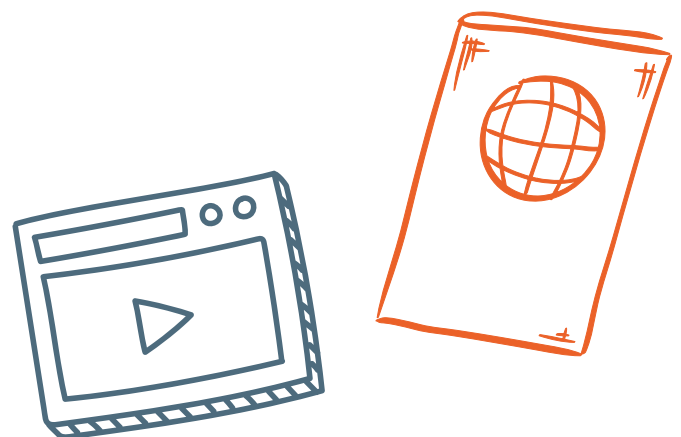
8   For more information on the conceptual and technical aspects of online interpreting, see: IJAB (2021): Handbook "Interpreting at Online Events".

9   For information on using lay interpreters/language assistants in International Youth Work, see Wissing 2019 as well as Ackermann/Domachowska: "Was hat sie gesagt? Übersetz doch mal schnell! Zu den Aufgaben, Herausforderungen und der Rolle von Sprachmittlerinnen bei deutsch-polnischen Begegnungen und Projekten" (in German), German-Polish Youth Office, 2018.

Example: Interpreting using DINA.international

DINA.international, the digital exchange platform for the International Youth Work community, has an integrated video conferencing tool known as BigBlueButton that offers an interpretation function. Like Zoom or Webex, for instance, the platform also allows for relay interpreting (meaning between several languages) without the need for additional technical equipment. When working in relay, the interpreters interpret the message that is interpreted by their colleagues rather than the original speaker's audio.

Example: The interpretation team for a given event consists of interpreters for German><English, German><French and German><Polish. Thanks to relay, interpretation can also be provided between French and Polish because the German-Polish team can access the interpretation provided by their colleagues from French into German and interpret that into Polish.

Interpretation was provided successfully via DINA during the international BarCamp *Digital Transformer Days 2022*. The plenary elements of the BarCamp were interpreted into six languages: English, German, French, Polish, Czech and Turkish. During the BarCamp sessions English was the language of communication, with one exception, when German was spoken and interpreted into English. Below are some key insights gained during the event on DINA:

» A test run ahead of the event with all interpreters and the person providing technical support is indispensable. The interpreting function is not entirely intuitive, so the interpreters have to familiarise themselves with it and check they have the right equipment and settings.

» To enable them to use the interpreting channels on DINA, the interpreters are given host rights, which go beyond the rights they need to provide interpretation. The interpreters need to be made aware of this to ensure they do not inadvertently activate certain functions (e.g. muting other speakers).

» Technical support must be provided for the interpreting team during the meeting.

» Especially in the case of larger interpreting teams, it makes sense to assign a coordinator to support the team. They should create a backchannel for the team via which any problems can be flagged up and dealt with quickly. Any team-internal problems should not be resolved via the general group chat since the messages are visible to everyone; neither should a private chat be used since this is too time-consuming. An emergency contact number (e.g. mobile phone) should also be communicated to the team.

» If presentations are to be shown on screen, these should be sent in advance to the interpreters. For one, this helps them to prepare more effectively; for another, they can then open the presentation on a second screen and see the slides better than they could in the DINA window.

» When using relay interpreting, care must be taken to leave a time when switching speakers so no content is lost. Interpreters working from relay need a little more time to finish interpreting before they can switch back to the floor (original language). All participants should be made aware of this before the event starts, and compliance monitored during the event to ensure smooth communication.

Interpreting at hybrid events

How can interpretation be provided when not all participants are connected remotely, but some are online, some are in the room? This constellation was tested as part of the *Internationale Jugendarbeit.digital* project. The DIY² Lab event How to Hybrid (publication in German), which focused on how to organise hybrid youth exchanges, was itself a hybrid event. Around half of the participants connected remotely via Zoom, the other connected to Zoom while in the same room. The workshop took place as part of a conference on remembrance organised by the German-Greek Youth Office. The remote participants were German speakers, while those present were Greek or German speakers, so the following solution was chosen:

An interpreter was present in the room who interpreted all German-language interventions (by both online participants and speakers as well as by those in the room) simultaneously into Greek via a tour guide system. Any Greek interventions from the participants were interpreted consecutively, so the interpreter's voice could be heard through an in-room mic both by those present in the room and by those listening via Zoom.

Breaking the ice: Digital Language Animation

Language Animation is all about reducing the barriers to foreign-language communication, enjoying using the partner language and, given that it's an interactive method, improving group dynamics. All of these objectives are equally valid when it comes to online exchanges. The Coronavirus pandemic has allowed organisers to gather ample experience adapting in-person Language Animation methods to the digital sphere. Language Animation activities can help break the ice, get participants up and moving and help them develop a sense of community even though they are online. Linguistically, the participants can come closer to each other by experimenting with and interacting in the language of the others in the group. The linguistic diversity hidden behind interpretation or the use of a common event language (usually English) can hence be explored and appreciated. Non-verbal communication, which is limited given the small size of users' screens, can be applied deliberately.

For more information on Language Animation and suggested activities in digital youth exchanges, download the IJAB handbook on *Language Animation in Online Youth Meetings.*

Digital
Exchanges
in Practice

Virtual Workcamps – Opportunities and Challenges of Digital and Hybrid Formats in Non-Profit Volunteering

Janina Hansmeier, Christoph Meder, Lukas Wurtinger | IBG – Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V.

International workcamps have been shining the light on international solidarity and against national isolationism for over 100 years. They are characterised by their combination of four special elements: a heterogeneous, international group; a shared commitment (usually involving manual labour) to a meaningful project; all the participants learning from and about each other; and being integrated into the host project venue. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020 at the latest, workcamp organisations across the world were faced with the question of whether this format can be transposed into a digital setting. In the following we reflect on the different experiences gained and approaches applied and point out the challenges, potentials and prospects.

The spring and summer of 2020 in particular resembled the Wild West as far as digital projects were concerned. Everything seemed possible and was tried out and everyone wanted to join in. The activities on offer, which were often planned and technically improvised entirely by volunteers, ranged from home gardening projects to joint cookery sessions via a videoconferencing tool to workshops in sign language and language exchange groups. All these projects were completely international – that is neither bilateral nor trilateral. Young people from across the world showed a huge interest in them. A total of 1,138 young people from 72 countries took part in 86 different virtual projects organised between May and July 2020 by the workcamp networks ALLIANCE of European Voluntary Service Organisations and CCIVS alone. After the end of their respective projects, 94% of them stated that, based on that experience, they would like to take part in an in-person international workcamp.

Virtual projects not only appeared to present an alternative to in-person camps that had to be cancelled – they also provided **low-threshold access to gaining initial experience of the world of international volunteering**. Barriers to participation such as high travel costs and visa restrictions did not apply to virtual projects and it was possible to take part while staying in one's own, familiar surroundings. The number of projects and interested young people was initially high, but towards the end of 2020 a noticeable degree of online fatigue had generally set in.

In September 2020 IBG took advantage of the opportunity that arose under the "ProPadD – Progress on the Path of Digitalisation" strategic partnership funded by Erasmus+ to begin sharing experience and ideas with its partner organisations Egyesek (Hungary), INEX-SDA (Czech Republic), Lunaria (Italy) and Compagnons Bâtisseurs (Belgium) on moving forward with digitalising activities for young people. The strategic partnership was used to ensure that digital alternatives and additions were kept as a permanent feature in all areas across the full range of activities provided by the involved organisations and that these are jointly taken forward.

Exchange and seminar-like projects were by far the most frequently organised virtual projects run by workcamp organisations in 2020. This was widely criticised within the organisations, as these approaches do not always do justice to their objectives. These formats lack some aspects that are key to international workcamps and that allow a project to radiate beyond the small circle of its participants, that is, the clear volunteering aspect and the international participants' integration into the local community. This led to a change in thinking within most workcamp organisations. More specifically, they began experimenting with volunteer-like projects – with varying levels of success and a significant drop in quantity.
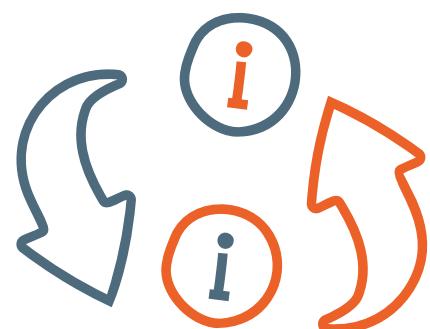
Non-profit status and anchoring of virtual workcamps in the local community

How can volunteering be incorporated into virtual projects and how can such projects be integrated into the project location? These were questions we all found hard to crack. We have yet to find any approaches that are perfect, but we have come up with some examples that point in the right direction.

A. Virtual Workcamp in Aach (IBG)

Overview

Project term and location
May 2020; four online sessions within the space of eight days; two to four hours each day; individual work between the online sessions.

Countries and participants
Six participants from Germany and Mexico who were already familiar with the German village of Aach after having previously taken part in in-person workcamps. The participants from Estonia, Japan and Italy cancelled at short notice.

Educational team
Supervision/support provided by the local community in Aach and one volunteer group leader.

Digital tools
Zoom, WhatsApp, Animaps.com (for the interactive maps; note: tool no longer available)

Brief project description

IBG has been organising international in-person workcamps in the small western German community of Aach for several years now. They help to improve the local infrastructure and provide the community with new intercultural ideas. After the workcamp that had been planned for spring 2020 had to be cancelled at short notice, in May 2020 the volunteer who had been IBG group leader in previous years and the local mayor together initiated a virtual project in cooperation with IBG and invited all those international volunteers who had previously attended workcamps in Aach to take part. All those who joined in were thus familiar with Aach and individual local actors on account of having taken part in previous in-person workcamps. IBG hoped to be able to transpose into the digital setting that aspect that is typical of workcamps, namely participants' integration into the local community.

> "The advantage of a virtual workcamp is clearly that participants get to see each other again and together initiate small, sustainable projects, like translating the flyer. Unfortunately, we only had a few participants, but produced more results than expected: The flyer was translated into three languages and an interactive map with photos of Aach past and present was put together. Everyone really enjoyed the evening they spent cooking together."
>
> *Beat Seemann (group leader)*

The virtual project involved translating a flyer about Jewish life in Aach that provides an overview of historical and present-day Jewish sites in Aach into English, Spanish and French. At one participant's suggestion, an interactive map with old photographs of the village was put together. A joint cookery evening via a videoconferencing tool provided an additional opportunity for exchange and the chance to get to know each other.

The big advantage of this approach – the fact that the international volunteers already knew the project location and local actors – also proved to be a disadvantage. Although this enabled some enthusiastic locals to be drawn into the project, it became repeatedly apparent to all those involved that virtual meetings are only an inadequate substitute for in-person exchanges and were by no means as good as past in-person projects. Claudia Thielen, mayor of Aach, said that there were many small things that made her aware of this. "For example, I didn't know how to properly thank the participants for all their work at the end," she commented. Previous in-person workcamps were often rounded off by an intercultural evening during which volunteers and villagers cooked together and had a party, exchanged contact details and gave each other small souvenirs of the joint project. In the virtual setting such personal leave-taking and thank-yous were relatively brief and impersonal.

Setting and methods

Example: Methodological/didactic run-down of the first Zoom session

	Objective	Methods	Lead	Duration
Acclimatising & getting to know each other	To get to know each other (again), find one's feet in the virtual setting	Welcome & introductions in plenary	Group leader	20 mins
Warm-up	To connect, lay the foundation for an open exchange	Energiser activity	Group leader	5 mins
Introduction to the project (1/2)	To collect experiences and expectations, get to know the project and set goals	Exchange in plenary, gathering ideas via chat, visualisation using digital board (shared screen)	Group leader/local partners	30 mins
Screen break				**5 mins**
Introduction to the project (2/2)	To get to know the project idea better, set milestones & tasks, answer questions, create commitment	Discussion of project ideas & individual contributions in small groups, debriefing in plenary	Whole group: Group leader/ members of local community	40 mins
Intercultural exchange	Personal exchange, to develop a group spirit	One person (a volunteer or local partner) gives the group a short tour of their home via video: This is what my life looks like right now	Volunteers/local partners	15 mins
Close-out	Outlook on next session	Information about login for next session, thankyou & saying goodbye	Group leader	5 mins

Overview

Project term and location
August 2020; 11 online sessions within the space of two weeks; two hours each day.

Countries and participants
Twelve volunteers (aged 18 to 50) from Mexico, China, South Korea, Bangladesh, Spain, Italy, Serbia, Ukraine and Germany.

Educational team
Supervision/support provided by two organisers from the Nazi Forced Labour Documentation Centre in Berlin-Schöneweide, one photographer and one volunteer group leader.

Digital tools
Zoom, Trello, Riseup Pad

Brief project description

The German branch of Service Civil International (SCI) has cooperated with the Nazi Forced Labour Documentation Centre in Berlin-Schöneweide for many years. International workcamps have regularly been held in and with the Documentation Centre. In August 2020 SCI, in cooperation with the Documentation Centre, organised the virtual workcamp on Searching for Traces of Forced Labour.
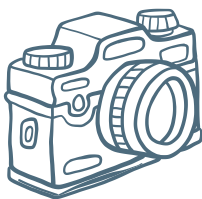
The project was dedicated to the topic of forced labour, which was analysed from a historic and present-day perspective in study sessions. Volunteers were encouraged to research the local situation as regards forced labour in the past and present. The Documentation Centre provided any assistance that was needed. Volunteers were also given professional input on photographic techniques. They were thus able to share their insights about and stories from their home countries and collate content and photographs for an exhibition on the traces of forced labour in their own surrounding environment.

According to SCI, the photo project format was a particularly good way to tap into the strengths inherent in decentralised online settings and to overcome some of the difficulties that arise in long-distance exchanges. The visual aspect of the project created a connection between participants and provided insights into different lifeworlds.

However, according to the organisers, the strong focus on putting together a digital exhibition also put pressure on the volunteers and sometimes stood in the way of a more relaxed form of cooperation. The exhibition display tool was made available and administered by an external provider (the German Digital Library), which produced a professional result but with comparatively little personal involvement of the group in putting together the exhibition. Despite these challenges, SCI and the Documentation Centre feel that a virtual camp is a meaningful addition to in-person activities. The virtual camp "Searching for Traces of Forced Labour" was organised a second time in July 2021.

The digital photo exhibition is available at:
https://ausstellungen.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek. de/searchingfortraces/

"Besides Trello there are a few other online platforms (such as Padlet or Slack) that can be used for group exchanges. They can all contribute in their own way to communicating organisational matters so that everyone can access them and provide ideas for the getting-to-know-you phase. But they cannot replace an in-person exchange - nothing really can. The opportunity provided for people to get to know each other during the joint video sessions was the most valuable aspect for everyone."
Leonardo Pape (group leader)

Overview

Project term and location
September 2020; eight online sessions within the space of three weeks; two hours each (some participants stayed for longer); individual and pair work between the sessions.

Countries and participants
Ten participants from Slovakia, Turkey, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Greece and Germany.

Educational team
One volunteer group leader, technical support by a long-term ESC volunteer.

Digital tools
BigBlueButton

Brief project description

The virtual camp *Once upon a time… around the world* was designed and coordinated by a volunteer IBG group leader as part of a training programme lasting several months that she was taking part in. Young women from eight countries participated in the project in September 2020 in which they shared and discussed children's stories from their respective countries. The group's goal was to put together an intercultural children's book with "typical" children's stories from the volunteers' different cultures. The stories were written in the volunteers' original language along with an English translation; the group also provided illustrations. Besides the online sessions involving the whole group, participants also met in pairs for additional online meetings so they could continue their "live" exchange on a story's translation or illustrations. These meetings created more intimate opportunities for dialogue, which also had a very positive effect on the overall group dynamics.

Creative freedom and the potential to gain lots of experience during the shared creative process without external support contributed a great deal in terms of self-efficacy. Compared to other virtual projects, participants were very committed to the camp because the process of creating their own content was designed as team work or pair work, with participants assuming mutual responsibility for the project. To us, the main disadvantage was that no connection was established between the group and its results and any local organisation or community and its needs. However, that is not a fundamental disadvantage – such a connection was only raised as an initial idea during the project design phase, but could not be realised in autumn 2020 as most potential facilities like open child and youth work services, kindergartens, etc. were closed or only provided a skeleton service. Responsibility for the content of the end product thus entirely lay with the participants.

The texts the group put together and the accompanying illustrations they produced were edited by the group leader after the end of the camp. The intercultural children's book was published digitally and sent for the most part to cooperation partners active in the field of child and youth work.

The group's collection of stories is available to download at:
https://ibg-workcamps.org/files/ibg/documents/InternationalChildrensStories.pdf

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Opportunities and challenges of virtual workcamps

As is the case with in-person workcamps, mutual exchange and getting to know others in the intercultural group were often the most interesting aspect for participants. The virtual format has some advantages in that respect compared to projects that manage to get all the volunteers together in one place. In virtual camps, participants can share their everyday home life directly with the group. Virtual sessions can put the physical distance to good use for direct cultural exchange by enabling participants to provide an insight into their home, take others with them to places in the vicinity or prepare a typical meal in their own kitchen.

Striking a balance between an organisation's content-related and pedagogical objectives on the one hand and the participants' interests and ideas on the other can, however, present a huge challenge in virtual projects. Virtual camps do not have the element of self-organising a day in the camp in the same way as in-person workcamps do. Instead of cooking, cleaning and planning leisure-time activities together, other opportunities need to be created in virtual camps to hand over co-responsibility for the project to participants and make their involvement participatory. Involvement in setting the project's common objective, for example in a virtual pre-meeting, can be a valuable step towards strengthening self-efficacy.

Commitment is another particular challenge. During in-person projects, participants are less likely to be distracted by other things they could be doing, and they also have to push through those phases they find less fun, or deal with conflicts with other participants. In virtual projects, by contrast, logging off or not attending a video conference is an extremely easy alternative. And yet it is these phases that often hold the greatest potential as regards personal development. Friction and conflict resolution are essential for learning experiences.

Virtual workcamps: Prospects and potentials

It is possible to transpose the aspect of non-profit work to a virtual setting. In all three of the projects presented above, the participants produced concrete digital products together. The virtual workcamps thus went beyond the aspect of a mere exchange or encounter. This format has advantages especially when it comes to creating digital products such as virtual exhibitions, flyers or collections of texts, as asynchronous work can be used in a very meaningful way.
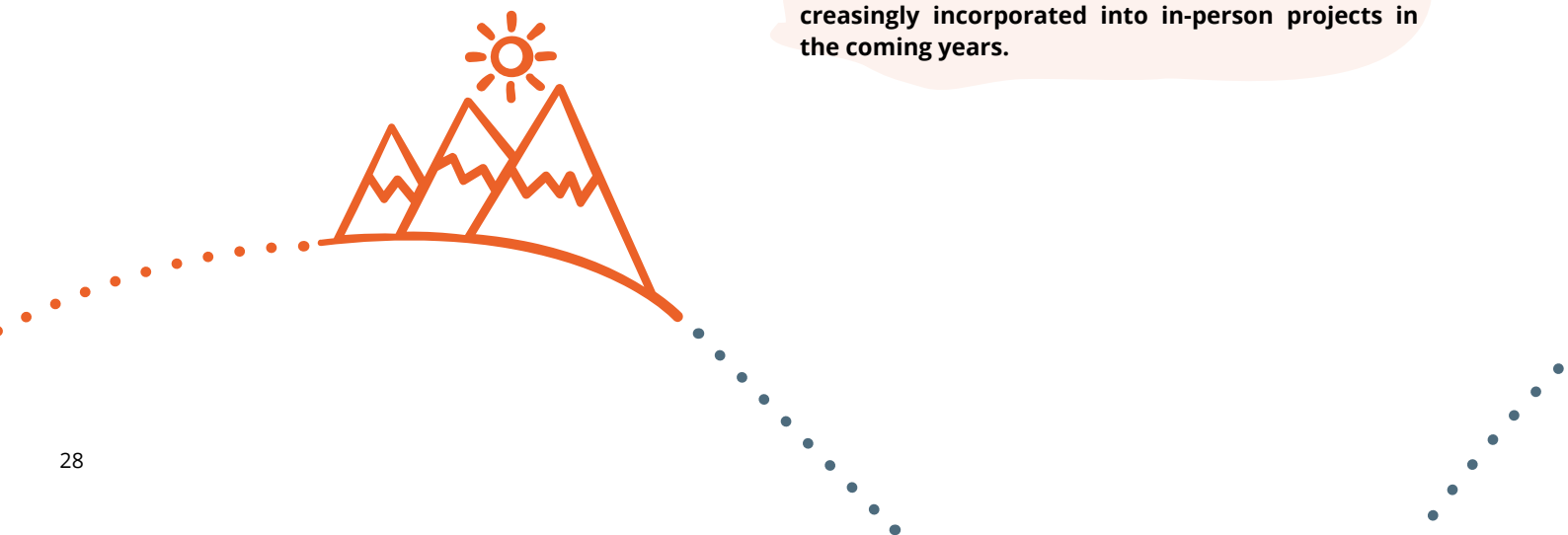
The more participatory the shared work on the end result can be, the greater the young people's self-efficacy and motivation and their commitment to the project.

The biggest challenge in relation to virtual camps is integrating them into the local community. It can be useful in in-person workcamps to incorporate local cooperation partners when content-related instructions are given during the project implementation phase. However, an informal exchange with local young people and getting to know a local community is hardly possible, or even impossible, in virtual projects. This is where the limits to the transferability of concepts to other settings are most apparent.

Virtual camps can make international volunteer work more accessible to all, meaning they can be opened up to new target groups.

Young people can gain initial experience of an international exchange without having to leave their familiar surroundings. Although a digital exchange is no substitute for an in-person encounter, it can be a very meaningful addition to international youth work and open up new ways for young people to access them. And yet: online-only workcamps will in future play a more minor role.

Digital elements should and will undoubtedly be increasingly incorporated into in-person projects in the coming years.

» **Bear time differences in mind:** Owing to participants being in different time zones, depending on the scheduled times it may be almost impossible for interested young people in some countries to take part in a specific virtual camp. Starting in the early afternoon (Central European Time) often provides the greatest flexibility.

» **Increase commitment:** Commitment to virtual camps, which usually involve neither costs nor travel, is much lower than to in-person camps where participants have to pay a registration fee and pay for their own travel before the start of the project. It is worth considering this at the planning stage, constantly communicating this aspect and, for example before the first meeting, incorporating asynchronous formats for the introduction and getting-to-know-each-other phase. For instance ,participants can then be encouraged to record a video or voice message or take a photograph by a certain deadline to introduce themselves, and to upload the files to a platform (Slack, Padlet, etc.) so that everyone can access them.

» **Consciously and specifically plan asynchronous phases:** Depending on the project, the asynchronous work that certain tasks involve can be meaningful and useful. Besides, new ideas generated by a virtual camp that are shared and directly implemented in one's own environment not only lead to everyone thinking more seriously about a specific topic, they are also a welcome change from sessions where everyone sits in front of their own screen and an opportunity for more in-depth exchange during the next virtual group meeting.

» **Create space for informal exchange:** Regardless of the content, technical implementation and timeframe of virtual projects, participants regard personal exchange within the group and the chance to get to know others as a particularly valuable experience. It thus makes sense to provide space for informal exchange, for instance keeping virtual breakout rooms tools open after a session officially ends.

» **Actively involve participants:** Instructions for an energiser exercise, preparing a playlist for a farewell party, checking time management during a session – as is the case in in-person formats, it can also be useful in virtual camps for participants to take on concrete tasks and responsibility for shaping the meetings. This is particularly relevant in longer projects when participants volunteer to take on tasks rather than being assigned them at the start.
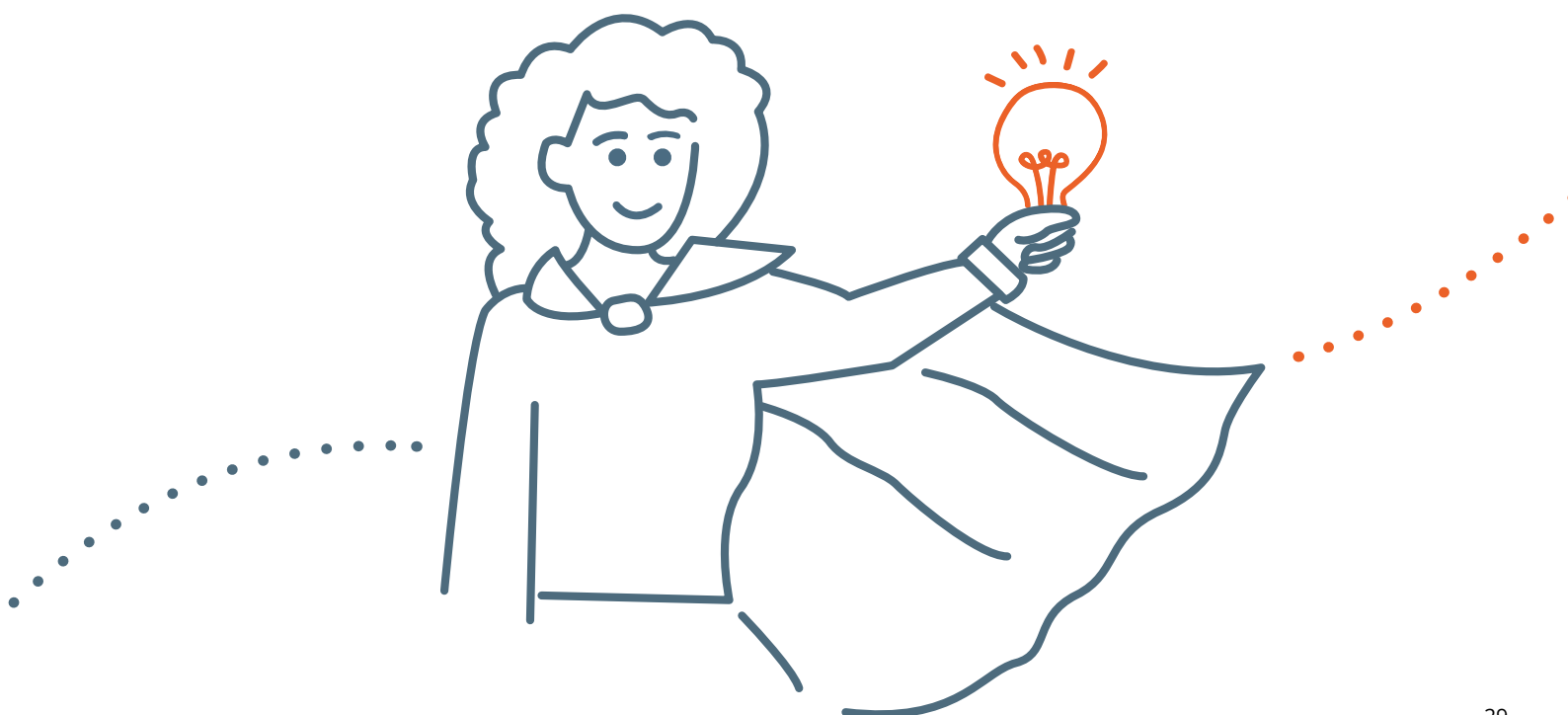
A Bilateral Franco–German Child Exchange

Anne-Laure Leroy | Blossin Youth Education Centre

Overview

Project term and location
Project period: 15 May to 9 July 2021
The joint programme switched between offline and online elements. Online sessions were primarily used for Language Animation exercises, for participants to present the various work results to each other and to talk about how they experienced an activity once completed.

15 May 2021, 10 am to 5 pm
One-day event in the two youth centres in Donchery (FR) and Cottbus (DE).

10 June 2021, 5 to 9 pm and 11 June 2021, 10 am to 5 pm
in the two youth centres in Cottbus and Donchery.

4 July to 9 July 2022
Youth hostel in the Vosges region (French group) and Blossin Youth Education Centre (German group); alternative activity as the in-person youth exchange had to be cancelled owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Partner organisations and countries
Germany: Blossin Youth Education Centre (Heidesee) and M-ECK Open Youth Centre (Cottbus)
France: ECCO Association (Donchery, Ardennes)

Participants
Seven children aged between eight and 12 from Cottbus in Brandenburg and eight children aged between eight and 12 from Donchery in the Ardennes département.

Educational team
One social worker and one intercultural team leader from the German side and one social worker and one intercultural team leader on the French side.

Funding
The project received funding from the Franco–German Youth Office under the project call *Digital ganz nah* ("Digitally close").

Brief project description

The project helped implement a Franco–German children's exchange. The two associations in Donchery and Blossin had already cooperated on several Franco–German and trilateral youth exchanges between 2017 and 2019, and they wanted to expand this cooperation by organising exchanges aimed at children aged between eight and 12.

Even leaving aside the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused severe travel restrictions, it still made sense to kick off the project with an online meeting during which the children did joint activities at a distance. We wanted to gradually get the children used to the idea of taking part in an in-person exchange and travelling to the other country. The same applied to their families.

The French group comprised children living in the area around Donchery in the Ardennes. This is a very rural region with very few mobility options or international youth exchanges. The German children lived in a suburb of Cottbus. Most came from socially and financially challenged families – another reason why we wanted to make this a multi-stage project, the first phase of which involved a remote exchange between the two groups. The project was an enormous challenge for the children taking part because it was so very far from their everyday reality. The fact that the exchange began without them having to travel abroad was a key step both for the children's and their families' wellbeing and for gaining their trust.

The programme consisted of alternating online and offline elements. Topics covered during the exchange were mutual support and solidarity. These are two fundamental values that both partner organisations incorporate in their day-to-day activities. We developed the project activities based on these topics in consultation with the partner organisations.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Blossin Youth Education Centre had been testing and adapting its methods to a digital format. The focus was on hybrid digital group exchanges (one group together at one site, another at another location). The Franco–German Youth Office's educational expert in Blossin, Anne-Laure Leroy, worked with intercultural team leaders to compile a brochure detailing these methods[10]. The majority of them were used in the online child exchange, some were adapted, and some were newly developed.

Anne-Laure Leroy closely supported and coordinated the entire project, especially during the conceptual stage and content and programme preparation phase.

Setting and methods

The technical infrastructure varied at the two project locations. The minimal equipment available comprised a laptop, a microphone, a camera and a projector – and lots of creativity.

During each phase the groups had their own room (e.g. a room in the youth club and a seminar room in Blossin) where they were able to meet and where the technical equipment needed for the online exchange was set up.

The exchange was moderated in various ways. First, there were online sessions in which the two groups communicated with each other using various videoconferencing tools (e.g. Zoom, Jitsi). Second, team members worked individually with each group to prepare them for the video conferences and lead up to those activities that took place simultaneously.

This format enabled the media and formats to be varied in both countries and also for the exchange and interaction to be structured in as balanced a manner as possible, either directly on- or off-screen or indirectly.

The teams used messenger services such as WhatsApp, Signal and Telegram to communicate. Team members were in contact between the individual activities, during specific activities (where necessary) and at the end of the day to do a follow-up.

WeTransfer was used to share photos taken and videos made by the two groups.

General methodology in the various project phases

The main goals of the overall project were
» to facilitate a first meeting with children from a neighbouring country,

» to develop soft skills,

» to build self-confidence,

» to learn to value one's own living space,

» to prepare for an in-person exchange with a group of children from another country.

Activities were designed so that the children had the opportunity to get to know the language and culture of the partner country actively through play. The children were also given the opportunity to get to know where the other children lived and learn about their hobbies and interests. The aim was for the children to be prepared in the best possible way for the planned in-person phase and to improve the quality of the intercultural exchange as a whole.

The programme comprised
» activities aimed at getting to know each other and discovering the two groups' living environments,

» digital Language Animation to get to know each other and find out more about the languages spoken in the other group,

» joint activities that generally comprised a preparatory phase (e.g. making a video about where they live) followed by a short online phase (presentation of videos plus time for exchange),

» cooperative activities (adventure education methods) during which the children gained concrete experience of mutual support and solidarity (jointly or separately), after which they told each other during an online session about the activities they had done,

» time to prepare the in-person meeting that was originally planned.

The children in the two groups ultimately did not meet in person, and yet the exchange and dialogue was very important. The idea, from the start, was to create opportunities for intercultural exchange. That was how the exchange was advertised. It was the first time all the children had had any contact and connection with the

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10 Fascicule franco-allemand outils d'activités numériques – Deutsch-französische Broschüre digitale Aktivitätswerkzeuge, bilingual brochure in French and German only, available to download as a PDF file at
https://www.dfjw.org/media/fascicule-fr-all-activites-numeriques-blossin.pdf

partner country. The main focus of the Franco–German group dynamics was to have activities running in parallel, meaning that both groups were doing the same activities in familiar surroundings at the same time. The first two phases (three days in total) began with a video conference in which participants were able to introduce themselves and get to know each other. Videos of their favourite places (see description, p. 32) helped them get to know the surroundings that the other group would be spending the week in.

Communicating about their work results (using video clips or video conferences) enabled the children to stay in contact during both phases. Video conferences were held at the start and in the middle of each activity and at the end of each day to enable the young people to talk about the activities.

During the recipe activity (see p. 32) the young people had the opportunity to try a dessert from their partner country, the recipe for which they had been sent beforehand. Despite being a long way away from the partner country, this meant they could get a taste of the other country and learn about its culinary specialities. The activity concluded with an online exchange.

The video conferences enabled the children to ask additional questions even after the end of each activity. The presentations aroused their curiosity, the group began to show an interest in their partner group and got to know more about their partners in the course of the exchange.

An instant messenger service that was moderated by the team was another tool that was used to maintain contact between the two groups. This enabled them to report in real time about what the other group was doing, especially by means of photos taken while they were doing the activity. All these elements ensured that the partner group's presence became more and more tangible over the course of the two phases.

Getting to know children from the partner country via a computer screen was new and special for the entire group. The cooperative game The Egg, for instance, posed a huge challenge (see p. 33 for description). Agreeing on how to build a structure via a videoconferencing tool was a difficult exercise. After some difficulties and thanks to their great will to succeed, participants achieved their goal. After completing the exercise, the vision of this collaborative work and the cooperative process was rated positively by all the participants.

Method descriptions

PHASE 1
Video presentation
To enable them to show each other their surroundings, participants in the two groups together make a video of places that are part of their everyday life, such as their youth club, children's centre or neighbourhood.

The following rules apply: At most one minute long; five different scenes; no voice-over, but with sounds and pantomime, movement, close-ups and long shots, humour.

As soon as the clip has been edited, it is passed on to the other group(s). Each group first watches its own video, then that of the other group(s). The groups can then meet online to share their impressions. Questions to ask: Did you enjoy this activity? Did you find out something new watching the other group's video? Would you like to visit the other group and find out more about its surroundings?

PHASE 2
Intercultural baking and sharing a meal
Participants in each group suggest a recipe for a cake that is typical of and traditional in their region. They send the recipe (with a list of ingredients, quantities, method) to the other group. Before introducing the recipe to the other group, the team leader uses Language Animation to introduce the group to the ingredients to prepare them for the second step (buying the ingredients).

Participants then together go and buy the ingredients they need. After returning from their shopping trip they start baking. As soon as both groups have finished, they return to their screens and show each other what they have baked. They all take a piece and eat it.

The team can ask the following questions: Why did you choose this recipe? Do you think the cake you just baked turned out right? Does it taste good?

Feedback: The children really enjoyed choosing a recipe and sending it to the other group, but especially imagining what recipe the other group might send them.

The Cottbus group made crêpes and the Donchery group made a strawberry cake with cream. Writing the shopping list and going shopping together promoted group dynamics. Everyone was able to contribute in their own way.

The method can also be used for other meals, for instance sharing an evening meal.

Cooperative game: The Egg
Goal: To build an aesthetically pleasing construction that can catch an egg dropped from a height of 2 metres without the egg breaking. The two groups' constructions should be as similar as possible.

Both teams are given the same materials. Each group builds its own construction without being able to see what the other one is doing. To be able to communicate with each other on building the same construction, each group chooses two speakers (who can be swapped out after each round). The speakers talk to the two speakers in the other group via a videoconferencing tool and relay what they have discussed back to their own group. Participants have three joint online sessions to do this:

1. Type of construction? (Then 10 minutes of group time before the next online session)
2. Aesthetic details of the construction? (Then 10 minutes of group time before the next online session)
3. Final details that need clarifying? (Then 10 minutes of group time before the next online session)

Participants are allowed to use all means of communication available to them (drawings, pantomime, verbal, non-verbal, etc.). The team and/or interpreters do not interpret any of what is said. Participants have three "interpreting jokers" they can use in an emergency at any point throughout the game. At any point in the game participants can choose to test their construction using a table tennis ball. After the last online session, when final details have been clarified, participants show their construction to the other group in a video conference and both constructions are then tested live at the same time.

Feedback: The children were very patient when doing this activity. They were not always able to make themselves understood by the other group and did use some of their jokers, but were very accommodating as far as negotiations during the game were concerned. Each participant was able to contribute in their own way.

Activity: Sharing snacks
The children are asked beforehand to bring along any sweet and savoury snacks they like eating.

A video link is set up. Everyone presents their snack to the camera and explains to the others what it is and why they like eating it.

Feedback: Both groups said this was one of their favourite activities. They really enjoyed being able to talk about their favourite snacks with each other. They carried on talking off-camera during the break and asked one another lots of questions. They also said they would like to repeat the activity in the next project phase.
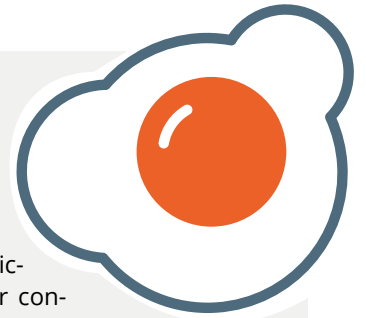
The aim of the third phase in July 2021 (originally planned as an in-person meeting) was to continue learning more about each other and on a more personal level than during the first two phases. Talking about what they had produced during the suggested activities (via video clips or videoconferencing) kept the children in contact in the same way as during the first two phases. During the video conferences they were able to talk about how they had experienced the activities they had done during the day. Participants again had another opportunity to ask the other group questions at the end.

Lots of cooperative games were played during this phase. After the end of each one, all the participants in both groups were able to evaluate the games together. This meant they were able to find out how the other group had experienced the game and to share their own experience. At the end of the balloon challenge (see description, p. 34), it was surprising to see that both groups had come up with the same idea without having come to an agreement. Once again, they noticed many commonalities between themselves and the partner group, which created a connection between the young people in the two groups and reinforced the intercultural learning process.

PHASE 3
Digital paper chase
A digital paper chase gives participants the opportunity to discover their surroundings.

Using their own smartphones/mobiles and the Action Bound app, participants form small groups and select a team name. They have as much time as they like to explore their surroundings and to complete various tasks. Besides the tasks that are included in the app, the two groups were asked the following: What's the most important place on these grounds you'd like to show the other group? What's the most important place in the surrounding area you'd like to show the other group?

Of course, they are allowed to send other photos as well. The team also shows participants, on a map, where the other group is. To show the other group the surroundings participants record a video of the various places they are at.

As soon as the paper chase is over, the photos and videos are sent to the other group. Each group first watches its own videos, then those of the other group. The two groups then meet online to share their experiences of the activity.

Possible questions to ask: How did you like the activity? Did you find out anything new watching the other group's video? After watching their video, would you like to visit the other group and explore their surroundings? Why?

Digital talent fair
Everyone shows their interests and hobbies to the others in a talent fair. The goal is to give participants in both groups the opportunity to present new things to each other and to try out things for themselves.

Each participant thinks about what activity they would like to present (e.g. dance, drawing, sports). They have two hours to prepare a video tutorial to explain what they are doing. After two hours are up they send their video tutorials to the other group by email or WeTrans-

fer. The two groups each watch the other group's video tutorials, then meet online to clarify any open questions and possibly to answer the other group's questions. After that they can each start following the tutorials they have been sent.

After participants have tried out the activities, the team offers them the chance to have a video conference in which the two groups can share their experiences about what they tried out, what they enjoyed, etc.

Cooperative game with balloons
(Both groups do the same activity at the same time)
Goal: To use 50 balloons to build something pretty and useful. The groups have 30 minutes to complete the task. Each team first has to agree on what they want to make and to communicate with each other to reach the goal together.
Each group will produce a different result.
At the end of the activity the team offers the groups the opportunity for online feedback. The aim is to find out what the other group has made and how they communicated and cooperated to achieve the goal.

Feedback: The two groups both had the same idea and made a garland out of the balloons. The garland was pretty, colourful and useful for decorating the room and the disco on the last day.

Boum playlist
A Franco–German playlist is created for an online mini *boum* (the French word for "party") on the last evening. Everyone gets to suggest one song they would like to share with the partner group. These songs are compiled into a playlist that is uploaded to a music platform such as Spotify or Deezer so that both groups can access it at the same time. The two groups listen to the playlist simultaneously (via Zoom's audio function), possibly alternating between a French track and a German track. During the informal chat at the end, the music can continue playing in the background and the chat function can be left open in the videoconferencing tool so that participants in both countries can write to each other or share their contact details.

Conclusion

Since the first stages of this project were not originally planned as a substitute for an in-person meeting, but were designed to be digital from the start, the team did not sense any frustration as regards the format used. Nevertheless, the children needed a little time to get used to meeting a group of children who did not speak the same language. Judging from their feedback, it gradually became clear that the children found alternative non-verbal means of communicating (see below) and were also able to have fun with children from another country far away. Generally speaking, the children gave very positive feedback, which became more and more positive the longer the project lasted. Very good feedback overall was also given on the project activities. It was not unusual for the children to ask to do a game again.

The last stage, in which the two groups spent a week separately at a third location, was key as regards further cooperation. This stage enabled the youth leaders to gather all the children in their group together in one place and give them the chance to have a group experience in shared accommodation. Being away from home in itself already poses a special challenge for children in this age group, and that applies all the more to many of the children in this specific group on account of the various challenges they have to contend with. The various hybrid and blended phases before the project started therefore contributed a great deal to the success of the last phase.

Language and communication

During each phase of the project, each group was supported by someone who spoke both German and French. All the activities were designed so that the children were able to get to know the other group's language as well as different ways of communicating (e.g. show-and-tell, drawing, gestures). Besides, great importance was attached to choosing activity-centred methods to facilitate and promote interaction within and between the two groups.

Opportunities and challenges

» Even after thorough preparation, technical challenges are likely to arise at any time.

» The team spent a great deal of time preparing the three phases, at a great distance and without a common language (consecutive interpretation was provided during all the meetings). This posed a huge challenge, especially since health regulations in the youth centres in both countries constantly changed and dates and activities (e.g. cooking permitted in one country but not in the other, a youth facility having to close owing to COVID infections, etc.) thus had to be changed.

Practical recommendations

» Bear data privacy in mind.[11]

» Do not plan too many online elements.

» Do not use too many different online tools.

» Adjust the length of online sessions to the group (max. 30 mins in this case).

» Choose simple activities based on what the group is interested in.

» Choose online activities that have lots of non-verbal elements and do not require too much language interpreting.

» The team needs to prepare and coordinate well before the project. Agree who will do what and when.

» Stay flexible so you can adjust activities to the group dynamics where necessary.

11 There is a section on this in the French-German bilingual brochure *Fascicule franco-allemand outils d'activités numériques – Deutsch-französische Broschüre digitale Aktivitätswerkzeuge*, which is available to download as a PDF file at https://www.dfjw.org/media/fascicule-fr-all-activites-numeriques-blossin.pdf.

"Dream Your Future – Zukunftsträume" – A Multilateral Hybrid Youth Exchange

Elena Neu | IJAB

Overview

Project term and location
11 to 13 December 2020, online
The educational team held 11 preparatory meetings between October and December 2020.

Partner organisations and countries
Germany: IJAB in cooperation with local organisations in the Kommune goes International (KGI) network from Eislingen/Fils (Baden-Württemberg), Cologne and Hamm (North Rhine-Westphalia), Kassel (Hesse), Oldenburg (Lower Saxony) and Teltow-Fläming district (Brandenburg)

Partner communities abroad
Seferihisar (Türkiye)
Poznań and Toruń (Poland)
Thessaloniki (Greece)
Huarte (Spain)
Bradford (UK)

Participants
Forty participants from six countries aged between 14 and 24

Educational team
» Three IJAB coordinators
» Six coordinators from the local communities
» Six workshop leaders
» One moderator
» Two technicians

The educational team assigned the following roles/functions during their virtual meetings:
» Moderator
» Technician
» Chat moderator
» Pedagogical workshop leader
» Documenter (e.g. screenshots)
» Screen sharer (presentations, videos, photos, music, etc.)
» Contact for participants
» Contact for speakers

Digital tools
Zoom, Discord

Funding
Dream your Future formed part of the Kommune goes International (KGI) project and was funded by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The City of Hamm provided funding for one workshop leader.

Brief project description

As pandemic-related restrictions meant that it was hardly possible to run any youth exchanges, in the summer of 2020 IJAB invited the members of the Germany-wide KGI network to take part in a virtual experiment. The aim was to try out various options for conducting a digital youth exchange and to disseminate the insights gained. Other objectives were to promote opportunities for communication with participants with other first languages and to break down barriers to communicating in a foreign language. Further, participants were to learn to be more open towards people they do not yet know and to establish contact with young people from other countries, enabling them to better deal with unfamiliar situations and become open to new experiences with people from other cultures.

Setting and method

Programme
FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2020
5 TO 8 (10) PM
5 pm	Kick-off
	Getting to know each other
	(whole group and breakout sessions)
	Language Animation (whole group)
7:20 pm	Introduction of workshop leaders
	(whole group)
8 pm	End of day 1
8-10 pm	Informal, optional get-together in breakout sessions (Discord)

SATURDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2020
11 AM TO 6 (8) PM
11 am	Start and warm-up (whole group)
11:20 am	Round 1 of workshops: six simultaneous workshops (breakout sessions)
5:30 pm	Meeting in main room
	Language Animation (whole group)
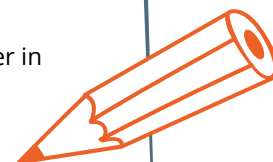
6 pm	End of day 2
6-8 pm	Informal, optional get-together (Discord)
SUNDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2020	
11 AM TO 6 (8) PM	
11 am	Start and warm-up (whole group)
11:20 am	Round 2 of workshops: six simultaneous workshops (breakout sessions)
4 pm	Final presentation of results of workshops (whole group)
5:30 pm	Evaluation (whole group)
6 pm	End of day 3
6-8 pm	Informal, optional get-together

Dream your Future was a digital/hybrid youth exchange. Most of the participants took part individually using their own (mobile) device and either logged in from home or from a youth centre. Some groups made use of the hybrid format by alternating between logging in alone and as a group. Depending on the setting, PCs, laptops, cameras, headsets, projectors, loudspeakers and projection screens were needed to participate. One group met in a local youth centre in order to be able to take part in the exchange. Some of the young people were picked up at home in person by two assistants. They were then able to log on to a session as a group in the youth centre using a camera and projector or to participate individually using a PC. This had several advantages for participants. First, the assistants were able to provide immediate help when technical or other difficulties arose. They were also able to answer questions and provide moral support. Participants were likewise able to support each other, for example if someone was no very keen on speaking English or was not willing to take part in the workshop without a friend accompanying them. Second, other activities could be suggested to the young people during breaks and in the evening, for instance eating breakfast together at the start of the exchange or a disco on the last evening. This made the kick-off session as a whole easier and increased both participants' commitment to the project and the quality of support available.

The exchange was conducted using the videoconferencing software Zoom. Discord was used for informal elements during which participants needed no support. It was a conscious decision that no group leaders were to be involved in these informal elements.

The exchange comprised group, small group (breakout sessions) and individual work (offline), depending on which creative workshop the young people attended. The group phases were primarily used to do energiser activities, to break down language barriers, to give participants the opportunity to get to know each other and for the final pres-

entation. Participants worked in small groups to prepare joint performances, some of which they were able to rehearse and/or record during offline sessions.
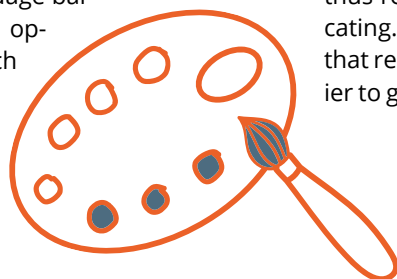
When designing the programme, particular importance was attached to giving participants the opportunity to express themselves and participate in different ways, to facilitating group and individual settings and to providing diverse audio-visual stimuli. Owing to the large number of participants, it was important to keep dividing them up into small groups so that they were able to get to know each other better and establish more trusting relationships for working together. Right at the start of the exchange, Language Animation activities helped to reduce language barriers, get to know the various languages spoken by those taking part and get used to using English as a lingua franca.

It became apparent that the creative, sometimes non-verbal methods used in the workshops (dance, theatre, drums, art, photography, rap) are excellently suited to the digital setting and that they lead to interesting creative processes and produce great results. They also enabled participants to meet and get to know each other without having to communicate verbally.

Group dynamics

The majority of the young people taking part did not know each other before the start of the exchange. That meant they met a lot of unfamiliar people in a digital setting. Owing to the lack of activities on offer during the COVID-19 pandemic, the young people were however motivated from the very beginning to participate in the exchange – and this was reflected in the group dynamics. Energiser activities and above all Language Animation sessions helped break the ice and get people talking to each other without fear of language barriers. An informal exchange on Discord on the first evening helped the group to bond. A group of young participants organised these informal exchange themselves, so they represented a safe space. Working in small groups enabled the young people to get to know each other better in more intimate settings. By the end of the exchange, the group had settled into small established workshop teams. It became apparent that a high facilitator-to-participant ratio is needed in order to promote and positively influence group processes in a digital setting and to be able to respond to and intervene when problems arise. Clear communication channels therefore need to be available and familiar to all participants.

Groups taking part in the hybrid format benefitted from the fact that they were able to support each other and thus reduce their inhibitions when it came to communicating. That was especially important for those activities that required working in small groups. Many found it easier to go to a workshop together with a friend rather than

alone. This is especially helpful for younger participants or those who are rather shy. It contributed to the positive group dynamics, because participants summoned up more courage to talk to each other and to interact when they were in those teams, which in turn made for good communication. Overall, the different forms of participation used in the course of the exchange did not have a noticeably negative impact on group dynamics.

Informal settings

Discord provided an informal setting in the digital arena. It was a very conscious decision to allow the participants themselves to organise these sessions and for them not to be supported by team leaders. Sometimes the hybrid groups were given the opportunity to engage in informal analogue activities during some of the project phases, such as having breakfast or lunch or a close-out activity.

Language and communication

Because participants in the exchange spoke different languages, English was chosen as the project language. To make it clear that all the official languages of those taking part were valued, they were incorporated into Language Animation games. Among others, the games Hallo, wie geht's (Hello, how are you?) and Farbenjagd (Colour trail) were used. In the latter game, participants have to go in search of an object of a certain colour and hold it up to the camera. Afterwards, they write the name of the object in their own language and/or in English in the chat function. Key words (e.g. colours) in all the languages spoken in the group were shown before the start of both games and repeated by the group (for a description of Hello, how are you?, see *https://ijab.de/bestellservice/language-animation-in-online-youth-meetings*, p. 7–8). Especially in a group as big as this, the games provided a great opportunity to get comfortable with each other and practise using the chat function or unmuting the microphone.

A conscious decision was taken to choose non-verbal creative methods that enabled participants either to engage in the exchange without having to say very much or to speak in their own language. That way, when they were asked to record a rap song, they were able to write the text and then either sing or speak it in their own language.

Challenges and practical recommendations

Meeting the needs of each individual participant and not losing sight of anyone in the digital setting proved a big challenge. Difficult situations or tension in the group are difficult to pick up in a digital setting, which means you need a large number of facilitators. Hybrid groups were at an advantage, because the team leaders were in the same place as the participants and were able to intervene or respond immediately. When young people are taking part in a hybrid element, attention should therefore be paid to ensuring that they also have the opportunity to log in on their own while in a quiet, safe space, especially when they are rehearsing something or have to concentrate on a task.

It is recommended that support is not only provided during an exchange but also prepared beforehand.

An intense preparatory phase, reaching clear agreements and a clear division of roles are important for team leaders, too, to ensure the project runs smoothly.

While external technical back-up did not prove to be essential, it was considered very useful. One further challenge in that regard was dealing with data privacy issues. Especially when you have minors taking part, you should point out that their personal data will be handled with care. Also, you should get the signed consent forms back before the project starts so that great products can be published after it finishes.
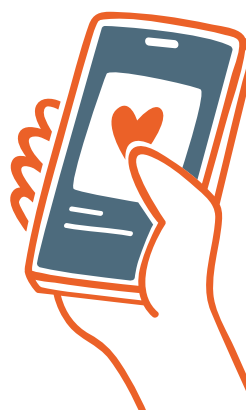
Further reading
Articles on IJAB.de (German only):
https://ijab.de/projekte/kommune-goes-international/aktuelle-beitraege-zu-kommune-goes-international/virtuelle-internationale-jugendbegegnungen-organisieren
Guidelines (German only):
https://ijab.de/bestellservice/arbeitshilfe-virtuelle-internationale-jugendbegegnungen-organisieren

Site-oriented Bilateral Youth Exchanges: The Living Labs

Natali Petala-Weber | IJAB

The "Living Labs: International Places of Encounter for Tolerance" project was initiated by IJAB in 2021-2022 on behalf of Germany's Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in cooperation with the German-Greek Youth Office. It created experimental settings for hybrid youth exchanges on a specific topic, accompanied by IJAB's research partner JFF – Institute for Media Research and Media Education. The subproject "Silence is no longer here, because of us" focused on remembrance and memorial work and on integrating a physical space into a digital setting.[12]

Overview

Project term and location
February to May 2022: Monthly hybrid meetings on Saturdays (of varying length, between 2 1/2 and 7 hours) using the videoconferencing tool Zoom.
17 to 22 June 2022, Ravensbrück Memorial Site
19 to 26 July 2022, Lechovo, northern Greece

Partner organisations and countries
In Germany:
Ravensbrück Memorial Site
International Friends Association (IFK), Ravensbrück
Ernst Litfaß School, College of Media Design and Media Technology, Berlin
In Greece:
Prophet Elias Cultural Society, Lechovo

Participants
Thirteen young people and young adults from Germany and 15 from Greece aged between 15 and 24. The young people from Greece were from a rural region in the north of the country around three hours by car from Thessaloniki. Participants from Germany were students at the Ernst Litfaß School's College of Media Design and Media Technology.

Educational team
The German group was supported during the hybrid youth exchange by the director of educational services at Ravensbrück Memorial Site and a graphic printing lecturer at the Ernst Litfaß School in Berlin. The Greek project team comprised the director of the Prophet Elias Cultural Society in Lechovo, an educator, and a student who had already taken part in several German-Greek youth exchanges.

Digital tools
Zoom

Funding
The Living Labs projects were funded through the "Experiencing Diversity through Exchange and Encounter – Strengthening Youth Exchanges" programme run by Germany's Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The digital/hybrid sessions and the initial and return exchanges were funded through a grant from the German-Greek Youth Office.

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12 For more information on remembrance and memorial site work in digital exchanges, see the DIY²Lab summary report (2022), available at https://ijab.de/bestellservice/remembrance-and-memorial-site-work-in-digital-exchanges.

Brief project description

For the partner organisations, the aim of "Silence is no longer here, because of us" was to contribute to the prevention of racism and antisemitism in young people, promote young people's commitment to remembrance and memorial work, and help boost their media literacy. As they are also cooperation partners in the Internationale Jugendarbeit.digital (IJA.digital) research project,[13] IJAB invited the Greek and German organisations to experiment with new youth exchange formats and to find appropriate digital means for achieving their educational goals. To help cover the additional expense of delivering digital/hybrid solutions, the partners were able to use technical appliances/equipment and/or software provided by IJAB. Based on the research project, the project investigated what options a digital setting provides for participants to be involved in shaping a project and whether digital means can also be used to reach young people who have no obvious link to international exchanges.

The project partners' content-related goals were

» to enable a critical, creative examination of the partner countries' shared history,

» to provide the opportunity to take a critical look at the respective places of remembrance both in person and in a digital setting,

» to facilitate creative collaboration and improve the young participants' media literacy by having them work together to produce podcasts and slam poetry, engage in creative writing and learn printing technology.

IJAB, the project team and research partners held monthly reflection meetings throughout the project term. JFF – Institute for Media Research and Media Education applied the participatory observation method to support the hybrid and on-site sessions, held interviews with experts and participants, and led a group discussion with the young people from Greece and Germany.

Setting and methodology

In the period between March and May 2022 the groups got to know each other in a digital setting and worked together to find ways to approach historical topics and the places of remembrance in Greece and Germany. The participants used a hybrid setting: in Greece, they were all in a seminar room on the premises of the Prophet Elias Cultural Society, while the participants in Germany logged in to Zoom individually on their own devices. IJAB gave the Cultural Society a laptop, a projector and a room microphone to use in this setting.

The partner organisations chose English as the language of communication in the digital sessions, as participants had sufficient command of English and direct communication was felt to be more effective than interpretation. The team leaders provided support whenever participants had difficulty understanding each other, or even translated what was said where necessary. In the German group there was also one participant who spoke both Greek and German and who provided language support where necessary.

Digital exchange, February 2022
5 hours with one break

The young people's first digital exchange was a chance for them to get to know each other, to talk about the goals and content of the project and to familiarise themselves with remembrance and memorial work. For the getting-to-know-you phase, participants were sent into breakout sessions for a kind of speed dating and were asked to answer questions such as "What kind of music do you like listening to?" The questions were geared to the young people's lifeworlds and offered them an introduction to the project content. Also, Lechovo and Ravensbrück were presented as places of remembrance. Providing information about places where people were brutally murdered helped prepare the young people and prevented them from being overwhelmed once they later visited the actual sites.

To facilitate work in the breakout sessions, the participants in Greece were asked to use their own mobile devices.

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13 For more information on the research project, go to https://ijab.de/en/projects/internationale-jugendarbeitdigital.

Digital exchange, March 2022
4 hours with two breaks

Dan Wolf, a rapper from the United States, was invited to lead the second digital exchange. He had previously led creative/educational workshops in Ravensbrück in cooperation with the Memorial Site.[14] It was only thanks to the digital setting that it was possible to invite Dan to take part as an external expert, as otherwise it would have involved a lot of time and expense. One disadvantage was that on account of the time difference between Europe and the United States the exchange had to take place late in the evening and participants were therefore already quite tired. Dan started the workshop with a hip-hop performance and then went on to show the young people how to write their own texts about their place of remembrance. They then read out their texts on Zoom and Dan accompanied them with a beat so that participants could learn how to incorporate rhythm into a rap.

For this workshop, the Greek participants were divided up into two groups, each with one laptop.

Digital exchange, May 2022
7 hours, two 15-minute breaks and one 2-hour working break

An audio recording and podcast workshop with an external speaker from Germany was organised during the digital meeting in May in preparation for participants together producing podcasts on the places of remembrance during their in-person meetings in June and July. A two-hour working break, i.e. an offline phase, was also planned for this meeting. During the offline phase participants were able to relax, although they were also given the task of using their phones to record sounds that can be heard where they live. The recordings were supposed to create a link to the history of that place. Participants in each of the national groups were able to choose whether to do the recordings alone or in pairs. Before the break started, the speaker talked about what to look out for when making audio recordings and how to create a podcast. After the break, the recordings were played back and discussed. Towards the end of the workshop the participants were shown how to combine literary texts – for instance a poem downloaded from the internet – with background audio recordings or instrumental music.

Participants again used their smartphones to make the audio recordings during this meeting.

Opportunities and risks

Participants' commitment

It became apparent that participants' commitment to a project is different in digital settings versus on-site sessions. The participants from Germany, who were able to log in to sessions individually, took advantage of being able to switch off their camera at will to participate from various places – for example when walking around outside or out shopping – or to take part only sometimes or not at all. This could be an indication that participants' commitment has to grow over the course of a project and cannot be taken as a given from the beginning. If experts take this aspect into account, they can plan specific activities to boost participants' intrinsic motivation to take part in the digital sessions. But how can that be done?

When participants get to know each other and explore each other's lifeworlds and surroundings, that increases their curiosity and strengthens mutual relationships. They want to see each other again and find out more about their peers and their culture and language. Language Animation activities and methods for strengthening intercultural learning are well suited to that. The Greek group, for instance, recorded videos at the start of the project in which they introduced Lechovo to the participants from Germany. These videos were then shown and discussed during a joint Zoom meeting. The Greek group's recordings encouraged the German group to make their own recordings of their surroundings and then present them to the Greek group. Another idea is to get participants to make up a quiz or an escape game about the place where they live.

It became clear during the project that joint creative activities can boost participants' motivation to take part in digital meetings. Creative exercises or games should be done in a variety of formats, that is as individual work, in mixed pairs, in the national groups and as a whole group. If they can present an outcome they have worked on together, participants are more likely to feel they belong to a group.

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14 For more information on Ravensbrück Memorial Site's "Sound in the Silence" project conducted in cooperation with Dan Wolf, go to https://www.ravensbrueck-sbg.de/bildungsangebote/projektgalerie/ (in German).and https://www.ravensbrueck-sbg.de/en/educational-programmes/project-gallery/ (in English).

**Group dynamics and familiarisation
in hybrid settings**

Because the participants in Greece were all sitting in the same room and logged in to the video conference together, it was difficult for those in Germany to get to know individual participants. It was often difficult to recognise individual people because only the whole group and not individual participants could be seen on Zoom. In such a hybrid setting when only one room microphone is in use, it is more difficult to see which member of a group is speaking and to make out facial expressions and gestures. Another difficulty in this setting was that the Greek participants often spoke Greek and the team leader had to translate what they said into English for the German participants. That proved an obstacle to direct communication between the participants and thus made it difficult for them to get to know each other. Hybrid settings have their advantages and disadvantages, and both need to be taken into account for a project to succeed. If a hybrid setting is chosen, you should use methods that are particularly well suited to supporting both the getting-to-know-you phase and group dynamics, and find suitable ways to overcome the language barrier. A good way to boost group dynamics can be to get participants to work in German–Greek pairs. Participants can then talk to each other using a phone app (WhatsApp or Telegram), for example. To get a better view of individual participants sitting in a room together, it is recommended that a second device is set up for the video conference (either a smartphone or laptop) that individual participants can use when they want to say something. The second device can be used as a mobile device to present individual participants or the surroundings – the room or the view out of the window. Also, a fixed "speaker's seat" can be set up that participants sit in when they want to say something, meaning they are easier to see by the other young people taking part digitally.[15]

Time difference and cultural habits

When organising digital projects, you should bear in mind that even an hour's time difference can lead to misunderstandings and create challenges. It is frustrating to log in to a session and find that you're the only one there. That's why it is important to always communicate times transparently for everyone, for instance 2 pm Greek time or 1 pm German time.

Cultural differences can make it difficult to agree on the "right" time of day for a meeting. In Greece, for example, people generally eat lunch and evening meals later than people in Germany. Greek participants may have little trouble staying in a video conference until 10 pm, while German participants and experts may feel that is already too late in the day. Unlike on-site meetings in which you are immersed in the partner country's cultural habits, those taking part in digital meetings may still be wrapped up in their everyday life at home and factors such as school and training courses, siestas, evening meals with the family, etc. can then have a bearing when it comes to reaching consensus on timings. That is why it is important to discuss cultural habits before the project starts in order to find a format that suits everyone. Participants can also make these arrangements, or rather do this intercultural exchange, together as part of a game at the start of the exchange. You could, for instance, get them to do partner interviews and then share what they have learned about the partner country with the rest of the group.

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15 For more information on designing hybrid settings and interpreting in hybrid settings, see also the DIY² Lab summary report "How to hybrid" (in German), available at https://ijab.de/bestellservice/how-to-hybrid.

Practical recommendations

» At the start of the meeting, participants should talk about cultural habits and make sure that the timings of sessions fit into all the participants' daily schedules.

» Plan lots of interactive elements and a variety of methods in which participants establish close contact with each other.

» Take into account that group dynamics needs to be promoted much more, and more consciously, in a digital setting and that it may sometimes develop more slowly than in in-person meetings. Good group dynamics can be fostered through working creatively together, which also boosts participants' motivation to take part in the digital sessions.

» If you have planned to include external speakers, it is important to discuss with them ahead of the project that they should incorporate interactive elements into their input and not make their theoretical input too long. Experts on specific subjects do not always have a lot of experience using digital formats, and lengthy input blocks can be tiring for participants.

» When using hybrid formats make sure that participants who are sitting together in the same room are clearly visible and audible. A room microphone can be useful here, as can a second device that is logged in to the video conference and on which the participants who take the floor can be seen in close up.

» Plan regular reflection loops with participants so that they can share their work results in the digital setting and express their needs and wishes.

"IN A DIGITAL SETTING, ALL THE DIFFICULTIES THAT ALSO EXIST IN IN-PERSON MEETINGS HAVE AT TIMES BEEN MAGNIFIED LIKE UNDER A MICROSCOPE."
Dr. Matthias Heyl –
director of educational services
at Ravensbrück Memorial Site

List of Methods

List of Methods

Title	Suitable for		Description on page
Warm-up methods			
Short ice-breaker conversations (speed dating)	**online projects possibly also hybrid if enough devices are available**		**p. 17**
Participants are sorted into tandems or small groups and given a short time window to discuss a given question.			
Object search	**online and hybrid projects**		**p. 17**
Participants get up to look for an object close by whose name begins with the letter announced by the host either orally or in writing (in whatever language they prefer). They hold up the item to the camera.			
Cooperation methods to create positive group dynamics			
Cooperation game: The Egg	**hybrid projects**		**p. 33**
Using a pre-set list of materials, the groups attempt to build a structure that can catch a falling egg without it cracking. The groups should be as similar as possible in terms of composition.			
Cooperation game with balloons	**hybrid projects**		**p. 34**
Participants are requested to build something pretty and useful using 50 balloons. All groups complete the same activity at the same time. Afterwards, the respective groups' communication and construction strategies are compared and contrasted digitally.			
Methods to help participants get to know each other and their respective surroundings and promote intercultural exchange			
Video presentation	**online and hybrid projects**		**p. 32**
The groups of participants in the respective locations create a video to show the other groups how they live their daily lives. The groups can watch the videos either individually or together and comment on them online.			

Title		Suitable for		Description on page
Snack exchange	📶	**online and hybrid projects**	🖥️🖱️	**p. 33**
Participants bring along any sweet or savoury snacks they like to eat. They hold their snacks up to the camera, explain what they are and say why they like them.				
Digital talent exchange	📶	**online and hybrid projects**	🖥️🖱️	**p. 34**
The participants describe their interests and hobbies and invite the others to try them out too.				
Digital paper chase		**hybrid projects (offsite)**	🖥️🖱️	**p. 34**
Participants split into smaller groups and explore the surroundings they are currently in, using the Action Bound app, for instance.				
Intercultural baking and eating	📶	**online and hybrid projects**	🖥️🖱️	**p. 32**
Participants send a baking recipe that is typical of their region to the other group. When both groups are done baking, they show each other the results and enjoy them together, too.				
Party playlist	📶	**hybrid projects**	🖥️🖱️	**p. 34**
Participants work together to create a playlist for an online party, e.g., for the last day of the exchange. Each participant suggests a track that they would like to share with the partner group.				

Checklist:

Planning and Implementing Digital Formats

Checklist:
Planning and Implementing Digital Formats

This checklist helps to plan digital formats and covers all aspects that should be taken into account during the process. It is helpful when discussing details within the team and also when liaising with the partner organisations. Note that any choices that are made should be in line with the educational goals of the exchange in question.

Setting: Defining the format, duration and structure

☐ Online, hybrid or blended

☐ Discuss where participants will connect from (home, youth club, another place entirely, etc.)

☐ Synchronous/asynchronous phases

☐ Total project term, duration of individual phases

Choosing the methods

☐ Interaction and alternating activities in various constellations (tandems, groups, plenary, individually, etc.)

☐ Shared creative activities that produce a shared result

☐ Intercultural learning

☐ Language Animation

☐ Mix of analogue and digital elements

☐ Physical activity

☐ Sufficient breaks

☐ Check-in and check-out activities

☐ Space and opportunity for informal interactions

☐ Read the room: regular reflection and feedback sessions

☐ External speakers/contributors

☐ Don't overstretch the agenda!

Selecting the tools

☐ Data privacy: ensure compatibility with the EU General Data Privacy Regulation (GDPR) and/or regulations in the participating countries

☐ Research open-source and climate-neutral alternatives

☐ Consider the languages in which the tools are available

☐ Give preference to the tools that young people in the participating countries use regularly

☐ Note country-specific age limits for the tools in question

☐ Technical requirements for using the tools (Which devices do they run on? Do users require cameras and/or headsets? Are they browser-based or available as an app? What connection speeds do they require? etc.)

☐ Accessibility

☐ Costs

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Equipment

- [ ] Number and type of devices
- [ ] Other equipment (depending on the setting): cameras, in-room microphones, projectors, headsets …
- [ ] Ensure everyone involved has suitable equipment (team leaders, participants, contributors/speakers, interpreters/translators)
- [ ] Ensure everyone involved has a sufficiently strong internet connection
- [ ] Enquire who needs technical support
- [ ] Technical support (Which team member or participant can provide support? Will a technician or other outside provider be necessary?)

Language, communication and interpretation/translation

- [ ] Consider participants' and team members' language skills
- [ ] Choose (a) language(s) for the exchange
- [ ] Consider using interpretation/translation if required (What should be interpreted and when? Simultaneous or consecutive interpretation? Who will provide interpretation?)
- [ ] Ensure all tools, presentations and activities are available in all selected languages
- [ ] Appeal to several senses at once (two-senses principle), e.g. seeing and hearing
- [ ] Chat: Choose the languages to be used in the chat; consider whether the chat box should be used as a tool; consider translating chat messages and if so, appoint someone to do so)
- [ ] Consider using online translation tools
- [ ] Work out whether sign language or speech-to-text translation is required
- [ ] Consider using Language Animation (for whom, when, by whom?)
- [ ] Consider using non-verbal communication (facial expressions, gestures, "likes", emojis…)

Clarifying project team roles

- [ ] Educational lead
- [ ] Moderator/host
- [ ] Chat host/moderator
- [ ] Technical support provider
- [ ] Translation/interpretation/Language Animation
- [ ] Inputs and speakers

Participation: Involving participants as early as possible

- [ ] …in creating the programme
- [ ] …in selecting familiar digital tools
- [ ] …in negotiating rules of engagement with participants:
  - [ ] How do we want to work together online?
  - [ ] What do we need to feel comfortable in a digital setting?
  - [ ] What do we feel strongly about?
  - [ ] What rules for respectful interaction in digital spaces do we want to adopt?
- [ ] Reflect on and make use of the participants' experience and skills:
  - [ ] Media skills
  - [ ] Technical skills
  - [ ] Method skills
  - [ ] Language skills

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DIGIT-AL: In 2021/2022, the project DIGIT-AL – *Digital Transformation in Adult Learning for Active Citizenship* published a series of English-language "Facilitator Handbooks", *including the Competendo Facilitator Handbook: LEARNING THE DIGITAL.*
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Innobox: a tool for developing innovative digital youth work formats.
The VERKE Innobox, originally in Finnish, is also available in German and English – a tool for developing new and improving existing ideas for digital youth work.
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Deutsch-Polnisches Jugendwerk [German-Polish Youth Office]: Ideenfundus. The **Ideenfundus** (Ideas Collection) is a database that organisers of youth exchanges can use to find suitable methods for their groups, projects or exchanges (also online). Users can enter aims, keywords or other options to filter the contents and find what they need. *https://ideenfundus.dpjw.org/*

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https://dpjw.org/publikationen/dpjw-apps/

DINA.international – A digital meet-up platform for international youth work. *http://dina.international*

JFF – Institute for Media Research and Media Education: **Medien_Weiter_Bildung.** This CPD database offers information on current events and courses as well as media education resources for educational experts working in child and youth services.
https://www.medien-weiter-bildung.de/

Netzwerk Inklusion mit Medien (nimm!): Comprehensive collection of resources, tips, events and networking opportunities around inclusive media education and accessible digital media.
https://www.inklusive-medienarbeit.de/

Siebel, Caspar (2021): **Wilde Workshop-Spiele. Für Trainings und Meetings [Wild workshop games for training courses and meetings].** A collection of quick ice-breaker exercises and warm-ups that are suitable for adaptation to digital youth exchanges.
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Reports on digital projects

Dokumentationszentrum NS-Zwangsarbeit/Service civil international/IBG – Internationale Begegnung in Gemeinschaftsdiensten e.V.: **Virtual exhibition "Searching for Traces of Forced Labour".** *https://ausstellungen.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/searchingfortraces*

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Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück: **Projektgalerie. Kulturelle Bildung @Ravensbrück. Sound in the Silence.** The project gallery of the Memorial Museum Ravensbrück contains information on youth education projects and international youth exchanges such as *Sound in the Silence.* *www.ravensbrueck-sbg.de/en/educational-programmes/project-gallery* *www.ravensbrueck-sbg.de/bildungsangebote/projektgalerie*

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MEET – JOIN – CONNECT!
Digital International Youth Work – A methodology

This manual offers an overview of the pedagogical and methodological approaches that are suitable for digital formats. Part 1 introduces readers to the fundamentals of Digital International Youth Work, covering the background, general issues around digital settings, group dynamics in online settings, and language and communication aspects. Part 2 outlines a variety of formats that have been tried and tested in practice, along with an extensive list of methods. A checklist as well as a collection of resources with further information round off the publication.

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Federal Republic of Germany