



Executive summary: Future Youth Information Toolbox foresight activities looking into youth information work 2030



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Subject matter

The Erasmus+ KA2 project consortium Future Youth Information Toolbox has conducted three foresight activities with the aim to explore future scenarios of youth information work. The foresight reports aim at looking into the year 2030, covering the information behaviour of young people as well as changes and challenges in youth information work.

Method

Three foresight activities were conducted, involving 55 participants from different parts of Europe. Young people (15-23 yrs) were engaged in three **future youth information camps**. The participants (n=34) discussed future youth information behaviour and visioned future information technologies and the ideal youth information service in 2030. A **scenario planning webinar** was held with 7 experienced youth information workers, where future youth information behaviour was discussed, as well as key aims and skills of future youth information services. A **delphi survey** was distributed to 14 youth work and policy experts. The experts replied to 3 rounds of questionnaires about future challenges and changes in future youth information work resulting in a consensus about the future scenarios.

Findings

Information behaviour of young people in 2030

The **information landscape will be increasingly complex**, most of the information will be found online, and we will live with constant information overload. Communication will mainly take place on social media, but also traditional media (newspapers, magazines) will co-exist. Fake news and manipulation will clearly be an increasing problem, along with lack of critical thinking. Youth will face challenges in handling information privacy, security and safety. The education system will change (online education), therefore the Internet will be required for conducting studies in the future. All this **means young people will need skills in finding information, evaluating reliability, and validating where the information comes from**. Areas of growing information needs are health and well-being, mobility and immigration, human rights, democracy, and data protection. Information needs on AI and big data is growing, especially on how to use these tools and data. There are some concerns that young people are increasingly avoiding information because of information overload or are uneasy about available information. At the same time, young people have a growing responsibility in engaging with the information.

Digital divide and diversity in 2030

Young people will be more diverse in 2030. This diversity will have many reasons and consequences, which means this aspect is one of the biggest challenges for future youth information work. The growing digital divide is not only due to access to technology, but also different levels of digital competencies, attitudes, interests, differences in socio-economic backgrounds, and declining reading skills. The consequences lie in growing isolation (social media bubbles), and too little attention to disadvantaged groups and groups with special needs. **Youth information work will need an inclusive strategy**.

The format of future youth information services

Youth information services will be **more often provided via mobile applications, using bots and automated information**. New social media tools will be developed and will be the main channel for communication. There will be a need for immediate services (any time, any place). **However, there will still be a need for face-to-face counselling** in addition to online and automated services. Regardless of the format, the services must be trustworthy, personalised and tailor-made. There will also still be a need for having the services in physical facilities, with a comfortable environment and with **new technologies**. Young people will be more creative in using new technologies and they will have support from fact checking and fake news alert tools. Young people will probably want information counselling using speech recognition services, gaming and new streaming formats, as well as video calls. It will be important to know how to use new technologies and not leave this space for commercial actors. There is a **varied picture on the situation of resources for youth information work**. Whether there will be more or less funding in the future depends on if we look at resources at local, national or European level. Alternative ways of funding will grow. Online information is not necessarily cheaper information.

Content and skills of future youth information services

One of the most important aims with future youth information and counselling is to give guidance to navigate the complex information landscape, meaning educating young people in increasing their **information and media literacy skills**. Youth information services will have a bigger role in translating information to young people, making sense of difficult information. Youth information workers will need more training and education in this area. Peer-to-peer services will grow, but it is important to be aware of the risk of passing on misleading information. There will be growing competition between different kinds of information providers and therefore youth information will need increasing collaboration and more marketing initiatives. Youth information workers must be **digitally competent** and be good at networking across services and platforms. They must know and be able to **engage youth**, focusing on a participatory and interactive approach. **Collaborative skills** will also be important. Cooperation between youth information services and other stakeholders and actors is needed (e.g. schools, business organisations). Mobility will grow and youth information workers will need more of an **international perspective**. They will also need skills in having quick reactions to change.

Recommendations

- Focus on **media and information literacy**, to educate youth information workers and support young people more in this area. Support the **digital competency** of youth information workers.
- A growing **diversity and digital divide** will be a key issue. It is important to discuss young people as the diverse group they are. Develop an **inclusive strategy** for future youth services. How to integrate new technology and face-to-face counselling?
- It is important to look at challenges and changes at **different levels of youth information work** (local, national, European, international)
- **It is important to explore different, alternative futures**. What kinds of alternative futures are there? How can we predict the consequences of different futures? How can we reach the future we want?

Limitations

The foresight activities in this project were pilots and therefore not representative of the whole youth information field on a European level. Therefore the results are only indicative.



This publication was made with the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.