

# Stakeholder Engagement Report

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# 1. INTRODUCTION. ABOUT THE PROCESS

The LEAP project conducted an assessment of the needs of and opportunities for young people in the Cluj metropolitan area consisting of a complex and interconnected process involving literature review, qualitative research, quantitative research, mapping of stakeholders, consultations with stakeholders and policy recommendations.

In order to incorporate the principle of participatory research and of systemic thinking/views in the overall design of the LEAP project we found it necessary to present and validate the findings and results of each stage of the research with relevant actors and to gather relevant information on the perception of stakeholders on the findings regarding needs, gaps and opportunities in youths aged 10 – 24 living in Cluj-Napoca.

The current report describes the process of stakeholder engagement, which was undertaken to validate and complement the findings of the previous stages of the assessment. The outcomes of the process are presented in two different reports that can be consulted separately.

Thus, the stakeholder engagement process coordinated by the Cluj Cultural Centre gathered relevant information from stakeholders on their perception on the focus areas of the LEAP study to support the quantitative and qualitative research of the partners and to offer input for recommendation on future course of action to address the identified needs.

The process consisted of the following stages:

## 1. Online Survey: perspectives on needs, opportunities, solutions

The Cluj Cultural Centre conducted an **online survey**, recruiting respondents through direct mail, using the database resulted from the Stakeholder Mapping stage, coordinated by the PONT Group. The process of recruiting participants involved all partners in the LEAP Consortium. Between 25th of May and 19th of June a total number of 53 representatives of different institutions and organizations responded to the questionnaire. The results were analysed by the research team of the Political Sciences Department of the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences (FSPAC) and concluded in the Stakeholder Survey Report.

## 2. Online Consultation Meetings: measures to address systemic gaps

The Cluj Cultural Centre organized a series of **online consultation meetings**, grouped around the four main areas of the LEAP Youth Well-being framework, namely **Health, Learning, Agency and Enabling Environment**. The participants of the four public consultations, which took place between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of June, were recruited through a snowballing technique, using our network of partners and relied heavily on the previous Stakeholder mapping process. Those who filled in the questionnaire could also sign up for the consultation sessions. The consultations were attended by 55 representatives of some of the most important local operators in the youth sector, who came up with over 150 possible measures to solve the most important 12 systemic gaps identified, following the interdisciplinary research conducted during this period by the consortium.

## 3. Online Poll: prioritisation of policy and action proposals

Through an **ONLINE POLL**, stakeholders were invited to vote the policy and action recommendation priorities from among the list of proposed measures. Feedback on the preliminary report on Policy and Actions Recommendations was solicited from the stakeholders participating in consultations.

## Connected documents:

Systemic Gaps Report

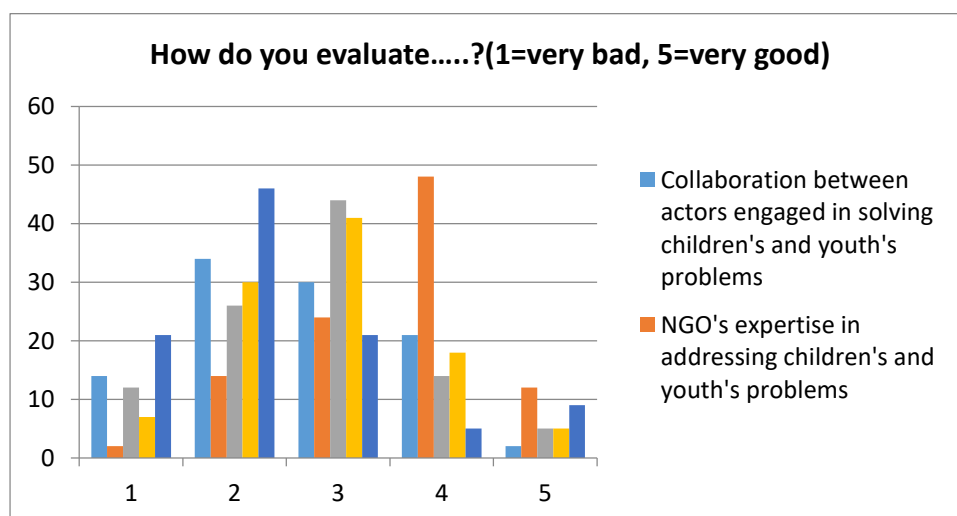
Policy and Actions recommendations

## 2. STAKEHOLDER SURVEY. MAIN FINDINGS

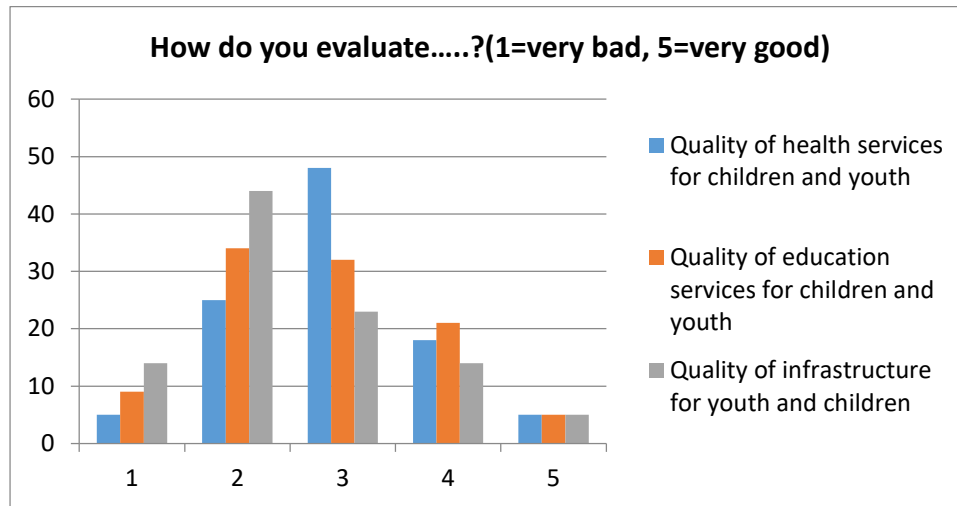
In addition to the broad surveys on youth, children, parents and teachers, we have also conducted an online survey of those working with children and youth. Representatives of 53 institutions responded to the questionnaire, out of which 39 worked for an NGO dealing with children and youth, 12 for public institutions, one from a private company and one from a private nursery/kindergarten. The main goal of this study was to explore these respondents' views over the needs of children and youth.

Overall, more than 60% of respondents consider that the crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected their activities and the organizations themselves. In this context, the analysis of the responses should be read by taking the exceptional context into consideration.

The graph below contains information regarding respondents' evaluations regarding the interaction between several societal actors and youth and children, including resources available for implementing projects on youth and children. When referring to the collaboration between actors engaged in solving children's and youth's problems, more than 50% of respondents considered that it is bad or very bad, and only about 20% considered it good or very good. It seems that there is not enough synergy between societal actors in terms of providing for the children and the youth, and this incongruence should perhaps be explored further by both public institutions and NGOs. Almost 60% of respondents consider that NGOs have expertise in addressing children's and youth's problems, while only less than 20% consider that public institutions are competent in addressing these problems. This rather unbalanced result may be a consequence of the fact that most respondents represented NGOs, and those, in general, develop a rather opposite/combatant attitude towards public institutions, often considered to be underperforming. Only slightly more than 20% of respondents consider that there are sufficient resources for implementing projects on youth and children, and slightly more than 10% consider that children are involved in making decisions vis-à-vis their own needs.



The graph below summarizes responses for three questions regarding the quality of different public services available to youth and children: **health, education and infrastructure**. Interestingly, for all three questions, barely 5% of respondents have given a maximum score, and the immediately lower score has been given, with some variation, by 15%-20% of respondents. The conclusion, then, becomes that approximately a quarter of respondents evaluate the quality of all three services as adequate. Infrastructure ranks the worst, with almost 60% of respondents considering it insufficient/inefficient, followed by education and then by health.



When asked to mention 3 most important problems that children and youth in Cluj face, respondents offered a plethora of opinions, but most of them converged towards the following:

- **The city is too crowded**, which means that the traffic is increasingly problematic, and pollution is on the rise.
- **The education system is too theoretical/abstract**, and insufficiently rooted in everyday life; knowledge is not often grounded in practical reality and competences are not adequate for entering the labour market.
- **Inequality** creates large discrepancies between types of access to all kinds of services, from education to health and extracurricular activities.
- The **city does not have sufficient interaction spaces** (public youth centres) where children and youth from different backgrounds and socio-economic contexts could interact, and form strong civic social values and acquire democratic value driven behaviours.

The same question asked about the problems faced by children and youth in the metropolitan area yielded similar responses: many respondents considered that the same problems that the children and youth face in the city are true for those living in the metropolitan area. Obviously, there are some problems faced much more by those living in the **metropolitan area: infrastructure** (especially in terms of transport, medical services, school services) is **less developed than in the city**, and there is a **danger for segregation** from the perspective of access.

When asked about the opportunities that the city of Cluj offers, most respondents mentioned:

- **Education**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Diversity**

One cannot but notice that education and infrastructure were also considered as problems that the city has in terms of youth and children, but it is encouraging to understand that while problems remain, overall, top

education institutions (as reflected in national test scores and international university rankings) and improvements in public transportation, parks and recreation spaces, and a vibrant cultural offer are considered as opportunities. Diversity is, as well, a top feature of the city: many respondents consider that the city's cosmopolitanism is beneficial for the children and youth's socialization, making them understand the benefits of living with others not necessarily similar and helping them realize their potential.

**The opportunities that respondents saw for the metropolitan area revert back to the city:** for most respondents, the city presents most opportunities, and living in the metropolitan area becomes an opportunity itself by virtue of granting access to what the city has to offer.

The representatives of organizations taking part in the survey have been asked to nominate several measures seen as effective and applicable, to address the needs of children and youth from Cluj city and the Metropolitan Area. Below, we outline part of the answers, while also observing that the common idea contoured by most responses highlights **the need for concerted action** involving local authorities, the NGO sector, schools and the School Inspectorate and the local business environment.

**Specific measures** mentioned by respondents include:

- Setting up an accessible youth centre as a joint action of local authorities and NGOs;
- Workshop-type activities for children and youth, hosted by cultural institutions and organized by schools and NGOs;
- Health education programs in schools organized through the joint action of the County School Inspectorate, local public authorities and NGOs;
- Setting up tutoring programs for students from vulnerable categories, with costs for teachers' activity covered by local authorities;
- Training teachers to be better prepared for using new didactic strategies (student-centered and incorporating the use of digital technology);
- Improving the school infrastructure and students' transportation in the Metropolitan Area;
- Education reforms targeting a better adaptation of training to the current requirements and challenges;
- Taking specific measures to counteract discrimination of LGBTQ+ in school settings and in public institutions (including anti-discrimination education programs for teachers and workers from public institutions);
- Better support provided by local authorities for NGOs that organize educational and extra-curricular programs for children;
- Improved access to online education;
- Improved programs of civic education;
- Better and stronger links between schools and other community-based actors (business actors included);
- More green spaces.

Most organizations that took part in the survey admitted to be **somewhat or very affected by the exceptional situation created by the current pandemic**. Generally, respondents referred to having less events (and therefore less visibility), less volunteers, decreased access to beneficiaries and sometimes delays in the implementation of their activities. In addition, some of them reported financial difficulties and additional challenges generated by the need to move some of their activity in the online milieu.

The respondents also mentioned the most important **problems generated by the COVID-19 pandemic likely to have an impact on children and youth**. Among these, one of the most frequently mentioned is the temporary transition to online schooling that was not equally successful for all, due to problems of internet and technology accessibility, and teachers' lack of preparedness for online teaching. Moreover, the social distancing measures are likely to have resulted in feelings of isolation and solitude for many children and young people, deprived of the possibility to interact with their peers.

## 3. ONLINE CONSULTATION MEETINGS. PROPOSED MEASURES

The four online meeting were organized to identify and discuss possible solutions to reduce the systemic gaps in the youth sector. The meetings took place through the Zoom online platform, as follows:

- June 15: Enabling environment (urban infrastructure, mobility, local policies);
- June 16: Agency;
- June 17: Health;
- June 18: Education.

Stakeholders could register for any and all of the consultations by filling a registration form. Subsequently, the registered participants received by direct email the links for each webinar, together with a summary of the partial results of our research so far.

## MEASURES PROPOSED DURING THE ONLINE CONSULTATION MEETINGS

### H1: HEALTH

#### **SG1.1: Insufficient and ineffective health promotion, health education and disease prevention**

- Peer-to-peer education;
- To link to the system of connectors we referred to in the consultation on Participation (through youth workers and others);
- Supporting organizations of medical students of all kinds, the Student Council, etc.;
- Call-centres;
- Social media channel with verified information (model: Vaccines and vaccinations - clarifications for parents, Virtual Hospital for parents);
- Research of health education programs;
- Information campaigns on the effects co-created with children;
- The Nordic model: culture and sport as health education.

#### **SG1.2: Rudimentary collaboration between local actors of health promotion and health education**

- The introduction of health in youth policies is now not addressed;
- Mapping these local actors with responsibilities in the field;
- Research of European and international best practices in the field;
- Coordination between schools and producers and suppliers of fruits and vegetables (school meals);
- Support for school psychologists, who are too few;

- Horizontal coordination (now we work only linearly, vertically, based on subordination relations);
- Co-opting the Faculty of Psychology in the ecosystem (and Universities in general);
- School County Inspectorate - University partnership for depression and other screenings;
- Mental Health Master students to be introduced in schools;
- Evidence-based measures (the need to involve universities);
- The role of School County Inspectorate as a node-generator of action, to mobilize key actors and disseminate in schools (eg the campaign Life is well established, but does not reach schools);
- Encouraging through local funding these types of interdisciplinary collaborations health-education-culture-etc .;
- Raising awareness campaigns to prepare and justify the need for interdisciplinary collaborations;
- Map of ongoing projects and initiatives.

### **SG1.3: Inequalities in accessing health and health services**

- Digital platform with free access to scientifically validated information;
- If you do not have a Cluj ID card, you cannot access housing services or certain protection services (eg in case of domestic abuse);
- Ensuring physical access at infrastructure level;
- Program for the integration of children with autism in schools (SCI - School County Inspectorate says that they are integrated, families and associations say that there is still a long way to go);
- The provision (by the University) of free medical services for students does not work in practice - if we solve it, then we help those who do not have a Cluj ID card;
- To see if language barriers are a problem - information campaigns for doctors about this need of families where the home language is not Romanian (it is not possible to speak Romanian in hospitals with children);
- Pata Rât problem - access is severely restricted.

## **L2: LEARNING**

### **SG2.1: Discrepancies between education needs and school offer**

- Identifying the real levers, we have at local and metropolitan level;
- Identifying the expectations of parents and companies;
- Absence of education and conversation on LGBTQ issues + frequent discrimination, bullying; Sex education included! (with discussions about sex and gender);
- Education about sex and gender for teachers and parents (about reality, about the needs of children);
- Measures against bullying in schools (especially for gender discrimination);
- Visibility and exposure for vulnerable categories;
- Fortress School vs. Community Centre vs. Mobile School - Creating reception points / offices in the school, not to keep it with guards;
- Education for emergencies, insecurity, illness;
- Supporting student and youth organizations to make their voices and needs heard;
- Clusters / networks / branches of schools for scaling / replication of good educational practices;

- Training for teachers to carry out learning by doing activities for children (by the Faculty of Psychology or by mixed consortia);
- Complex local partnerships for ecosystem development;
- Improving the pedagogical module, which is inadequate to today's reality;
- Complex local partnership for a career guidance system;
- Training for teachers to prepare them for today's labour market needs;
- Large local partnerships: ex. program through which all 11th grade students in the city to have two weeks of internship in companies;
- Teachers do not have life skills - program for them;
- Private and independent support for schools to develop internal HR systems;
- An annual local questionnaire for students' needs;
- Programs for teachers well-being; With rewards / incentives included;
- Identifying and promoting models of good practice (teachers, schools, etc.) - e.g. A students' journalists program to document these models);
- Complex partnerships (NGOs, companies) with the school system;
- Frequent debate contexts in which SCI + City Halls + ecosystem to participate;
- Programs grouped around very strong independent and private stakeholders (eg Transylvania College);
- Manifesto of local vision from the Administration;
- Pilot school / pilot school community, in collaboration with Cluj-Napoca City Hall;
- Grant programs for schools;
- Providing internship opportunities for pedagogy students in programs for children and young people offered by NGOs that do things differently;
- Job education is not efficient (the labour market is changing faster than the implementation capacity in the system is evolving);
- Encouraging invisible / not trendy careers, etc .;
- Improving the university program in Pedagogy;
- Cultural mediation programs for children, including permanent spaces dedicated to them;
- School Inspectorates to give more support to NGOs (especially through promotion at school level);
- Offering various optional courses for students, not just traditional subjects, in which to focus on different skills, to allow students to discover their passions and skills. And allow students to choose these optional courses;
- How do we educate on topics on which there is no consensus in society (eg sex and gender education)? By using international models that explain difficult topics, translate them into simple and natural language, by using good existing resources; Through demystification campaigns; By offering a curriculum related to
- Peacebuilding, with topics related to dialogue, negotiation and conflict transformation, conflict mediation, critical thinking; By developing youth centres that become spaces for this type of themes; hotlines; By creating and perpetuating discussion circles in physical spaces, online, etc.

## **SG2.2: Inequality in opportunities and access and urban-rural discrepancies**

- Internships in pedagogical practice in rural areas, to inform and raise awareness among young teachers about its specificities;
- Directing training resources to rural schools, for teacher training, for children, etc.;



- School / Village School program: inventory of alternative learning opportunities in the locality and their use in complementarity with traditional methods;
- Education cluster to organize caravans for rural children;
- Investments for access to technology-facilitated education;
- School meal programs to support school attendance;
- Early interventions (eg. the one for kindergartens of OvidiuRo) and other programs for preschoolers;
- The real insurance of a psychologist in each school (financing the program, but also the training of specialists);
- Reading programs / clubs for preschoolers in rural areas.

## A3: AGENCY

### SG3.1: Inhibitors and catalysers of agency

- The need to clarify who are we connecting (what type of youths, what stakeholders); which are the entities in Cluj that assume the role of springhead / responsible stakeholder; the need to map the models available on the local market;
- Mechanisms for stimulating connection are lacking;
- We need youth workers in every school (the school adviser is not enough);
- At University level there should be a heavily developed component for early career guidance, there is a great lack when it comes to connecting youths to the work market: the year tutor should be involved and we should have them in every faculty;
- At the level of local authority youth workers must be active in an individualized structure;
- Technological mediation: the need for a digital solution that sustains all these connecting mechanisms;
- The possibility of insuring contexts for connecting through physical spaces (youth centres or others)
- Insuring the permanence of the connection (now it is very much project-based and the structures are not permanent);
- Active measures for the public promoting of the initiatives (ex. gala like events, social media campaigns, dedicated channels in the mainstream media);
- The inclusion in the matching (connecting) system of other domains besides education and entrepreneurship in order to create a wider representation of different domains;
- Setting up a network of community facilitators (connectors) identically trained that have this role on a permanent basis (naming proposition: community navigator);
- Involving the Municipality in promoting a single digital platform – Cluj for Youth or another new one – a unique gathering place in the city having as owner an independent civic organization / consortium;
- Think Tank which will permanently / periodically work on developing the system;
- Identifying types of roles necessary for the well-functioning of the catalysing system: connectors, representation / charismatic leadership, promoters, etc.;
- How do we connect the main youth categories for the time being connected only inside their own category: older students + smaller students (unorganized) and youth over 27 years old

(unorganized); maybe by way of a stronger collaboration between the Universities and the County School Inspectorate in order to identify active groups in the apparently unorganized categories;

- Identifying, promoting, and putting forward of valuable youngsters that can serve as role-models;
- Working on the legal frame that will allow these measures (ex. the connectors as a job title);
- Special focus and design in order to provide access for youths coming from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Promoting volunteering for youths;
- Incentives for cool initiatives: prizes, contests etc.;
- Use / extend the volunteer network of the Municipality (the ones currently used only for the City Days event) and which can have an active role in our domain;
- Protocol for collaborating with the County School Inspectorate in order to work with the school network in the whole city or even the metropolitan area.

### **SG3.2: The lack of recognition for agency**

- A city label that includes life skills that could be recognized by employers in Cluj;
- A mapping of volunteering needs and diplomas / certificates for recognizing volunteering;
- A job shadowing / apprenticeship at city level, recognized city wide;
- Credit system for volunteering high school and university students (Timisoara West University);
- Piloting a centralized / organized mechanism for organizing volunteers in organizations, including clarifying legislation and procedures;
- Ownership of school over a volunteering program by which students or student councils could decide on concrete issues in the school, to have a dedicated budget etc. (in order to make relevant this volunteer label);
- Small investment projects of the municipality carried out by youth teams (mixed with practitioners);
- Pilot: the municipality or other big actors are to invite youths to consultations and projects as equal actors in collective undertakings;
- Cultivating values that could lead to the organic development of the system and which could be done in the beginning in structures especially designed for this purpose;
- Schools should set up events / socializing formats with professors / family for discussing and promoting these values as natural and to highlight the importance of awareness and involvement;
- Community education program in schools; Creating practice zones in schools;
- Ways of improving the Civic education class.

### **SG3.3: Participation of young people in decision-making**

- Local support for scaling and replicating successful involvement mechanisms (ex. Innovatory, The Local Youth Council);
- Contexts in which youth can seriously engage in processes of offering solutions to hard challenges and in the larger society (role-playing);
- To encourage organizations that have decision mechanisms (juries, contests etc.) to develop youth versions of these mechanisms;
- Living labs with youth;
- Integrating in the school curriculum of diverse programs and products (cultural, social etc.) that encourage youths in decision making, even if solely at the level of role-playing;

- Widening the frame in which youths have real decision power (Participatory Budgeting, Com'on Cluj, The Strategic Youth Council, a representative in the school Board).

## **E4: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT**

### **SG4.1: Urban and social infrastructure**

- Setting up the Youth Centre in the city centre is stalling for three years now and it wouldn't have solved the city's issues;
- Identifying available space in the neighbourhoods, especially for high school students;
- Identifying available spaces in the universities, for learning but also for leisure;
- Identifying spaces for youth centres in the localities of the metropolitan area;
- The municipality is to assess the needs of the youths when it comes to design of the spaces – participatory design;
- There are some technical or design projects proposed by high school students from the fields of arts and architecture;
- Opening up other functional spaces that belong to the municipality for the youth (cinemas, citadels, bulwarks, casino's etc.);
- Using the Youth Centre on Locomotivei street, developed in the Pata-Cluj project and currently unused;
- Neighbourhood schools should work as community spaces;
- The youth centre workers should be trained in the fields of social or psychological work;
- Identifying the already extant community services available for the youth;
- Identifying, developing and delivering the soft infrastructure necessary while also ensuring a local synergy: schools, companies, NGOs etc.;
- Reconceptualizing schools as spaces adapted to the diverse needs of the youths (tea room, yoga in the physical exercise room and so on)
- Involving youth in coming up and seeing through the activities of the Youth Centre (that is, to have ownership, not to always be told what to do).

### **SG4.2: Support systems and mechanisms**

- Transparency and traceability for the existing mechanisms (ex. budgets for school investment);
- Enhancing the capacities of youths and the whole youth sector;
- Developing human resources in order to work in the youth sector;
- Complementary mechanisms for parents and teachers;
- Youth – horizontal priority in all the strategies; Youth Department in City Halls, Dedicated Youth Strategy;
- Soft structures in schools (ex. Mayor for a day, Principle for a day);
- Raising awareness on the importance of youth workers. Promoting their work;
- Special funding program for youth activities with dedicated priorities and budget;
- Support mechanism for an easy support of the youth projects (regulation, frame) that need to be implemented (assumed by the City Hall, the metropolitan area, the schools).

### SG4.3: Urban living

- Developing ClujBike for serving commuting youths either for school or other activities. Digital expansion;
- Identifying and facilitating interest routes (connections between green spaces, better accessibility and signalling);
- An alternative to the hop on / hop off routine: nodes that gather more transportation options in the proximity of areas of great interest;
- Bike stands in but most importantly on the busses (especially on upward routes);
- CTP (Cluj Public Transport): should have the option for online subscription, should consult youths on rethinking their routes to better suit their needs, but also for improving time tables and better synchronizing vehicles;
- Assessing the needs of youths in the design of large scale mobility projects (metro, metropolitan train etc.);
- The metro / train should have a bike wagon;
- Involving youths in directing traffic in order for them to get a better understanding of the phenomenon and how it might be improved;
- Monitoring and improving the way in which ticket controllers behave with youth (but not only).