

PIONEERING INITIATIVES FOR JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS

Giving Back

Work Package 2 – Mapping Activity

Netherlands Helsinki Committee, Young Perspectives, Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency, Educational Institute of the Dutch Institutions



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Introduction: work package 2

In April 2021 the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC), Young Perspectives (YOPE) and the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency started the Giving Back project. The Giving Back project strives to create meaningful youth participation by including young people with lived experiences (experienced experts) in the training of justice professionals. The main goal of Giving Back is to improve the child-friendly practices of European youth justice professionals working in Juvenile Justice Facilities (JJF's) and to stimulate child-centered learning among European Member States.

Around Europe, various exciting initiatives are emerging whereby young people with lived experiences share their stories, are included, or even are the driving force behind systemic change and better care practices. One of the objectives of the Giving Back project is to increase our understanding of these participatory youth practices, with a specific focus on how young people are included in the training of justice professionals. In order to stimulate child-centered learning among European Member States, similar practices in Europe have been identified by setting up a mapping activity.

This document presents the outcomes of the mapping activity (Work Package 2) which took place between July 2021 and March 2022. The results of the mapping activity will be openly shared in order to enable a successful international learning process and inform the next steps of Giving Back.

The Initiators: NHC x Young Perspectives

The Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) is a non-governmental organisation with the objective to promote an international and societal rule of law under which human rights can be fully realised. The NHC sets out to reinforce and support the activities of international and national governmental and nongovernmental organisations in conflict prevention, human rights protection, upholding the rule of law, and promotion of democracy. It provides supported institutional development and organisational strengthening to many organisations, institutions and networks across the OSCE area. NHC is a part of the EU Financial Framework Partnership Agreement and has a strong track record of working with other civil society organisations on implementing complex projects involving EU funding. The proposed project complements many projects focusing on penitentiary reform that the NHC has implemented across Europe.

Young Perspectives (YOPE) meets youth and professionals in closed forensic care facilities. We work with creative methods – ranging from spoken word to



social design – and the perspective of youth is guiding everything we do. The people of YOPE are united in an energetic movement. The Urban Arts and Sports Teachers represent 24 subjects such as theater, philosophy, songwriting and football. Together with the Experts and Mentors, they are positive role models for youth and a critical ally for the forensic youth care system. In the Netherlands, YOPE designs services that directly benefit incarcerated youth and the professionals that they work with. YOPE engages with international partners in training programmes for like and unlike-minded organisations and professionals.

YOPE's Vision: We believe in a world where young people rehabilitate because they feel 'at home' in the world and reconnect with the people and places around them. The best path of young people follows where they came from, with new discovered stimuli and positive relationships for a meaningful life.



1. The Mapping Activity

The Mapping activity took place between July 2021 and March 2022 and was carried out by NHC and YOPE. We used a combination of methods (e.g., survey, interviews and desk-research) to reach a wide range of organisations and present qualitative insights. During the mapping activity the primary focus was to find and map proven or promising European practices which included young people in the training of justice professionals. However, after a thorough search process we found very few initiatives that focused specifically on the *training of youth justice* professionals through participatory methods. Therefore, we chose to broaden our mapping activity by including participatory youth practices within a broader range of care and in decision-making processes.

Search strategy

We used various search strategies to find potential organisations or initiatives active in this area, such as reaching out to CSOs and other relevant institutions, publishing a 'newsflash' about the Giving Back project and our research/mapping activity on the European Penitentiary Training Academies (EPTA) Network website and sending out a KMS Inquiry via the EPTA Network. The following organisations were approached to ask if they were able to share our message or know of potential initiatives: The EPTA network, The European Scientific Association on Residential & Family Care for Children and Adolescents (EUSARF), fellow Helsinki Committees across Europe, 29 participants from the Kick-off meeting of the CERV-Civil Dialogue Week 2021, who are active in projects with a youth participation element.

Search strategy

The mapping activity consisted of the following stages:

1. *Stage 1 - Handout:* A handout containing a link to a short inquiry distributed among key organisations in the networks of YOPE and NHC to map potential initiatives;
2. *Stage 2 - Survey:* A survey distributed among a range of organisations who responded to the online inquiry (stage 1). In addition, we used a snowball technique to find other organisations which did not respond to our first call. The survey contained questions related to the following domains: 1) the initiative or project, 2) participation of young people within the



- initiative or project, 3) the outcome or impact of the initiative or project, and 4) possible aspirations and testimonials;
3. *Stage 3 - Interviews:* We conducted in-depth interviews with organisations that responded to the survey. In the interviews more in-depth questions were addressed regarding the content, methodology and scope of the initiatives.
 4. *Stage 4 - Desk-research:* Throughout the course of the mapping, we collected data via desk-research to complement data gathered through the survey and the interviews.



2. Promising practices

In this section we present the outcomes of our mapping activity that took place between July 2021 and March 2022. We present an overview of the promising practices and highlight their successes, challenges and lessons learned on young people participating in decision making processes. The initiatives involving young people participating in the training of youth justice professionals are emphasized in this overview.

Overview of promising practices

A total of seven promising practices (see table 1) responded to our call. These practices filled-out the questionnaire and/or were interviewed by NHC and YOPE. The practices originate in various European Union member states, such as: Greece, Albania, Italy, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Two promising practices are part of an organisation of which youth participation in decision making processes is a sustained orientation / operation. The other five projects are shorter termed projects, primarily funded for a period of two years to boost the skills of professionals in the field. A total of three practices focused specifically on juvenile justice facilities/Youth Justice. We also spoke with representatives from projects focusing on health care (children's hospitals), youth care in general and justice (parents who are detained).

Table 1. Overview of promising practices

	<i>Area</i>	<i>Promising practice</i>
1.	Adult Justice	Youth ambassadors, Exodus
2.	Adult Justice	Soundboard group, Expertise centre K I N D
3.	Health Care	VoiCEs project, Consortium
4.	Juvenile Justice	Children's Rights Behind Bars 2.0, Consortium
5.	Juvenile Justice	The FOCUS project, Consortium
6.	Juvenile Justice	The i-RESTORE project, Consortium
7.	Youth Care	Experience Experts, ExpEx

ADULT JUSTICE

1. Youth ambassadors

Organisation: Exodus
Country: The Netherlands
Field: Justice - Penitentiary centers
Duration: Continuous

Aim of the initiative: Giving children of (ex) detained parents a voice, securing an audience to share their stories/experiences in prisons, schools or symposia.

Background of the project: Exodus is a forensic healthcare organisation that offers aftercare to (ex) detained people and their families. Exodus has two programmes that specifically focus on the wellbeing of children of detained parents which are the 'Parents, Children and Detention Programme' and the 'My child and me training'.

Participation of young people: Young people participate on a voluntary base in the child-focused programmes by taking on the role of 'Youth Ambassador' and being a buddy to other peers and sharing their story, perspective and needs with detained parents and the voluntary workers from Exodus.

Successes: Youth Ambassadors respond positively to sharing their stories with others, being able to share their emotions with someone when their parent is not able to be there for them. In addition, the audience is also impacted by the stories of young people. When needed, the Youth Ambassadors can support other young people with a detained parent.

Challenges: Involvement of young people on the long term.

Best practices: The way you talk to young people or about situations that concern them, changes the moment you are in a room with them or work closely with them. This is because you are more aware of their perspective, emotions, context etc. Therefore it is vital to involve young people and let them participate in decision making processes about topics which concern or impact them.

Link to website: <https://www.exodus.nl/regios/zuid-holland>

Keywords: Adult-led, on-going initiative, decision-making processes.

2. Soundboard group

Organisation: Expertise center K I N D
Country: The Netherlands
Field: Justice - Penitentiary centers, healthcare, social work and other organisations who come in contact with children with a detained parent.
Duration: Continuous

Aim of the initiative: Giving children of (ex) detained parents a voice, securing an audience to share their stories/experiences with in prisons, schools or symposia.

Background of the project: Expertise centrum K I N D is a network organisation for (ex) detained people and their families. K I N D provides advice to children with an (ex-) detained parent or family member or the professional who wants to help these children, in order to restore the bond between children and their (ex-) detained parent and their environment. Working from the restorative perspective 'Nothing about me without me', K I N D found the voice of children to be a necessity when doing research, developing child-friendly materials or implementing pilot studies. Therefore K I N D started the Soundboard group, a group of experience experts (children of (ex) detainees), led by an experience expert coordinator that provides input and feedback on topics that affect young people.

Participation of young people: Young people participate as experience experts by sharing their story with the audience f.e. to professionals (also in training), in focus groups during different projects and participating in collective advocacy through the Soundboard group.

Successes: Developing the 'Your Route 'map, which is a child-friendly roadmap for children visiting a prison. Next to that, K I N D managed to secure funding for the recently started pilot "Parent in detention 'with the help from input from the Soundboard group.

Challenges: Involvement of young people on the long term.

Best practices: When working with young experience experts it is vital to give them a clear 'job description 'so that young people know what is expected from them. In addition, young people need guidance in taking on their role as experience experts. When guiding them it is essential to take into account what they need in order to take on this role and what they can get out of it.

Link to website: <https://expertisecentrumkind.nl/>

Keywords: Adult-led, Youth-led, on-going initiative, decision-making processes.

HEALTH CARE

3. VoiCEs project

Consortium: Sant'Anna, School of Advanced Studies, Meyer Children's Hospital, Bernu Kliniska Universitates Slimnica – Children's University Hospital, HUS Helsinki University Hospital, New Children's Hospital, Erasmus MC – Sophia Children's Hospital, UNICEF Italy.

Funder: The VoiCEs Project is co-funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)

Country: Italy (Principal Investigator), Finland, Latvia, The Netherlands
Field: Healthcare
Start date: May 2021
Duration: 24 months + 5-month extension

Aim of the project: The VoiCEs project aims to strengthen youth involvement in the evaluation and improvement of the quality of care in children's hospitals, taking into account their opinions in modulating child-friendly care for inpatient services. In particular, the project will include the design, implementation, and evaluation of a children Patient-Reported Experience Measures (PREMs) Observatory on hospitalization and of an innovative tool to directly capture the voice of young people.

Background of the project: The target group of this project is represented by all pediatric patients (0-17 years old) who receive hospital care in the 4 hospitals involved in the project. Although young people are one of the most fragile segments of the population and the hospitalization experience can per se make them more vulnerable, usually hospitalized children do not have a chance to express an opinion about the care they received. Conversely, practitioners should make decisions considering young people's preferences and opinions.



Participation of young people: Young people participate by being part of a panel of experience experts, together with scholars and practitioners, and by being involved in focus groups, in which they will be able to share their experiences and feedback. The input of young people will be used to co-create child-friendly questionnaires, materials and tools, to gain insight in the perspective of young people who are hospitalized.

Expected impact: The project will contribute to enhance the direct participation of young people in the evaluation and improvement of healthcare quality during hospitalization. At the local level one of the expected results is the increased awareness among hospital staff, as well as external stakeholders, of the relevance of listening to the voices of young people as patients and using their feedback to improve care. This makes it possible to ensure a high-quality healthcare service and a better experience during hospitalization.

Successes: Young people contributed to creating the VoiCEs project logo and responded very positively to their involvement by participating to the panel and to interviews and focus groups. Due to Covid-19, the project is still in a starting phase with regards to implementing project activities and it is therefore too premature to evaluate the final participation of young people at this time.

Link to website: <https://voicesproject.eu/>

Keywords: Youth-led, on-going project, decision-making processes.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

4. Children's Rights Behind Bars 2.0

- Consortium:** *Defence for Children – Belgium, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, The Howard League for Penal Reform, the Italian Ministry of Justice - Department of Juvenile and Community Justice (DJC), The Council of Europe The Council of Europe.*
- Funder(s):** *European Union, Council of Europe, Loterie Nationale, Houtman fund, ONE office de la naissance et de l'enfance, Wallonie –Bruxelles, Fondation Reine Paola.*
- Country:** *Belgium, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom (UK).*



Field: Juvenile Justice
Start date: January 2017
Duration: 24 months

Aim of the project: Children's Rights Behind Bars (CRBB) 2.0 aims to improve the conditions of young people that are detained through the training of monitoring bodies and the capacity building of professionals in relation with deprivation of liberty; to promote the effective participation of young people; and to foster a comprehensive collaboration of all stakeholders involved in the reintegration process of young people who are detained.

Background of the project: The project (CRBB2.0) was a practical implementation of the achievements of the first phase (CRBB1.0) as well as those of other European projects led by Defence for Children International, such as the Twelve project on the participation of young people. The main result of CRBB 1.0 was the publication of a Practical Guide to monitor places where young people are detained.

Participation of young people: Young people participated in the project by co-constructing child-friendly materials on the rights of young people in detention during workshops in their detention center. To enable the young people to participate in the drafting of the child-friendly materials, their self-expression skills were strengthened by sharing their experiences with other peers and project staff during the workshops.

Successes: The development of a comic book explaining the rights and duties of young people in detention and an audio recording listenable on an MP3. The audio recording includes interviews with key figures as judges, probation officers and detention center staff, but also three thematic tracks on topics that had been highlighted by young people as very important for young people during their detention: participation, reintegration and privacy. The Belgian French-speaking authorities approved the produced tools and authorised their dissemination in the 6 youth detention centers of the French-speaking Community from January 2019. Upon their arrival, all newcomers will be provided with the comic book and a MP3 player with the audio recording at the same time as the internal regulations.

Challenges: One of the biggest challenges for CRBB 2.0 was getting access to the detention centers. Explaining the purpose and value of the project in every center took up a lot of time. In addition, getting validation from authorities for the usage of the developed child-friendly tools was not easy when some did not agree with the material.

Best practices: It is essential to set ground rules in the beginning of every workshop with young people, in order for them to participate. This because managing the expectations of young people is important for them to feel safe.

Link to website: <http://www.childrensrightsbehindbars.eu/the-project/crbb-2-0>

Keywords: Adult-led, completed project, decision-making processes.

5. The FOCUS project

Consortium: *Terre des hommes Regional Hub in Hungary, Terre des hommes Greece, Terre des hommes Romania, Child Circle, SAPI, DCI-ECPAT, Child Rights Centre.*

Funder(s): *The FOCUS Project is co-funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)*

Country: *Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, the Netherlands*

Field: *Juvenile Justice*

Start date: *January 2020*

Duration: *24 months*

Aim of the project: The "Focus on my needs - Working together for children in criminal proceedings – FOCUS project" aims to ensure that young people in contact with the law, as victims and offenders, receive individualized care and have access to personalized support and responses by promoting the implementation of robust and multidisciplinary individual assessment practices, including through restorative justice processes. For this, FOCUS will build the capacity of professionals and create new tools, as well as empower young people to contribute to a more child-friendly justice via participation in Child Advisory Boards. The guiding principle for the FOCUS project is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that young people can discuss and co-decide on all matters that affect them.

Background of the project: When a young person is involved in criminal proceedings, as victim or offender, relevant legal and child protection professionals should analyse together all the aspects of the young person's life, identifying his/her strengths and vulnerabilities. This multidisciplinary individual assessment helps to guarantee the access to a fair trial for the person. Although the importance of such an assessment, they are not

consistently implemented around Europe. Furthermore, there is a substantial lack of standards and practices to systematize this assessment.

Participation of young people: Young people with experience in the youth justice system joined the project's Child Advisory Boards in Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, The Netherlands and Romania. The Child Advisory Boards are steering committees of young people that are working with the project team throughout the whole project. Being part of the Child Advisory Boards, young people were trained on their rights in criminal proceedings, consulted on project activities and materials, and empowered to become Child Advocates. Through the Child Advisory boards the young people are directly involved in the training of professionals by exchanging ideas and sharing experiences with legal experts and practitioners, with the aim to improve the practices and procedures for individual assessment of young people in criminal proceedings. By using the participatory YouCreate methodology, the FOCUS project guides the young people in developing their own creative ways of communicating about young people's rights in criminal proceedings and youth-centered justice. To inform a wider audience about the importance of a multidisciplinary approach, young people's videos and other materials will be shared through social media, partners' networks and the child protection online platform ChildHub.

Successes: Within the FOCUS project, 250 young people involved in criminal proceedings will benefit from an assessment that leads to their better protection. All the professional guidance to support the practitioners in applying multidisciplinary individual assessments will be freely made available.

Challenges: Access to young people in detention and creating actual spaces for young people to actively share their voice.

Best practices: In order to gain access to the detention centers the key is to keep insisting on their cooperation and explain the benefits of youth participation to the directors. Giving good examples from the region can be helpful in this process.

Link to website: <https://tdh-europe.org/our-work/focus-on-my-needs-working-together-for-children-in-criminal-proceedings-/7144>

Keywords: Youth-led, completed project, YouCreate Methodology, training, decision making processes.

6. The i-RESTORE project

Consortium: *Terre des hommes Regional Hub in Hungary, Terre des hommes Greece, Terre des hommes Romania, European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ), Restorative Justice Netherlands (RJN)*

Funder(s): *The i-RESTORE project is co-funded by the Justice Programme of the European Union (2014-2020)*

Country: *Albania, Greece and Romania*

Field: *Juvenile Justice*

Start date: *September 2019*

Duration: *24 months + 3 month extension*

Aim of the project: The main objective of i-RESTORE is to promote the use of Restorative Justice (RJ) in cases involving child victims by improving knowledge amongst national stakeholders on child-victim friendly Restorative Justice and empowering children to advocate for better protection of child victims.

Background of the project: Restorative justice is a process in which offenders, victims, if they agree, and other members of the community participate in the resolution of matters arising from an offence. The aim is to prevent harm and ensure that people are responsible for their actions. However, many countries in Europe are still new to applying Restorative Justice in cases involving child victims. Moreover, the views of children are often not considered. Through i-RESTORE, Terre des Hommes and partners included children in the process and strengthened the capacities of justice professionals.

Participation of young people: Young people with and without experience in justice systems joined the Child Advisory Boards in Albania, Greece, and Romania. Being part of the project's Child Advisory Boards the young people were consulted as part of research, trained in public speaking skills and involved in the development of child-led awareness-raising materials. In addition, the young people participated with active voice in several advocacy events. With regards to the training of professionals, young people and justice professionals participated together in trainings about young people's rights and restorative justice. The young people participated by speaking directly to judges, prosecutors and other justice professionals and sharing their views and experiences.



Successes: The training activities were effective in determining a progress with regards to the knowledge on child friendly practices involving child victims in Restorative Justice among all beneficiaries, regardless of their initial level of proficiency on the topic.

Challenges: Due to Covid-19 all the trainings were online. At some moments the online setting was not always as ‘open’ for young people to speak up. This sometimes made the unequal power relationship between young people and professionals visible. A face to face setting would have been better, because you can place the young people in a good position (on a stage for example to strengthen their position).

Best practices: With regards to dealing with the unequal power relationship between young people and the professionals it is important that you do not address the youths directly in the online training sessions and put them on the spot. Instead, invite the young people to communicate via the project team, or wait until young people take the initiative themselves to communicate directly with the professionals.

Link to website: <https://www.tdh.ch/en/projects/i-restore-protecting-child-victims-through-restorative-justice>

Keywords: Youth-led, on-going project, training, decision-making processes.

YOUTH CARE

7. Experience Experts - ExpEx

Organisation: ExpEx
Country: The Netherlands
Field: Youth care
Duration: continuous

Aim of the initiative: ExpEx aims to improve youth care from the perspective of young people themselves, normalize the involvement of experience expertise in youth care reforms and make the position and perspective of young people in youth care just as relevant as the adult's.

Background of the project: In the Netherlands, experience has been gained with the deployment of experience experts in mental healthcare and social care for a long time. However, this is not the case for Dutch youth care while



young people from youth care have indicated for years that they have a need for help from young people who have experienced the same as them. Experts by experience who give young people the feeling that they are not the only ones who have experienced unpleasant things, and who can be a good example and a source of hope. From this need, the ExpEx initiative arose.

Participation of young people: ExpEx encourages and facilitates young people who have experience with youth care to be trained as Experience Experts. Through the role of Experience Expert, ExpEx helps young people to contribute to the transformation of youth care by setting up projects, giving advice and education to (government) institutions, organizations and partnerships and being a buddy to other peers. In addition, the Experience Experts give Trainings of Trainers to young people who aspire to become Experience Experts and they provide trainings for professionals working in youth care on how to use their own experiences in their work.

Successes: One example of a success is the basic course ‘Working with your own experience as an ExpEx’. This course was developed on the basis of an existing course ‘Working with your own experience’ that targeted adults. The KernKracht Foundation, in cooperation with young people as Mannus Boote (trainer and ambassador), adapted it to a course that is in line with the experience of young people in youth care. The course is implemented in the field of mental health care and targets young people (with experience in youth care) who want to learn to use their own experiences functionally as an experience buddy and/or as a sparring partner/advisor for guardians, counselors and policymakers. They learn this in a group with various young people who have a mix of experiential knowledge. Another example of a success is the training for professionals working in youth care that ExpEx trainers Mannus, Mohini and Lisa have developed. This training aims to teach the professionals how to use their own experiences in their work with young people. This way, ExpEx contributes to building a more equal, authentic and open relationship between professionals and young people.

Challenges: When working with young people from youth care one should always keep in mind that most are dealing with trust issues. They often have been disappointed by the system or adults. Therefore, young people should always have a person of trust who is there to support them. It is important that the young people choose this person of trust themselves.

Best practices: When selecting young people for the training to become an Experience Expert, one should firstly determine whether the person is capable of reflecting on their own experience in a healthy and safe way, before using this experience in any other way. In addition, it is important to



ask the young people in what way they would like to contribute to or be involved in a project, instead of appointing certain roles to them. This way, you allow them to express themselves in a way that suits them best, for example via: theater, workshops, panels etc.

Link to website: <https://www.expex.nl/>

Keywords: Youth-led, on-going project, training, decision-making processes.



3. Participation of young people in the training of (justice) professionals

Participation process of young people

Within the promising practices, young people participate in various ways - mostly through collective advocacy, by sharing their story or experiences, as recipients, or being part of a council or advisory board. To a lesser extent, young people participate as experienced experts, by training or coaching professionals or other experienced experts (e.g., peer-to-peer educators), being a buddy for other young people, in a theatre piece, being researchers/advisors and/or in the co-constructing of project outputs.

Adult-led vs. youth-led

Most of the promising practices were adult-led, however the practices differed from each other in the ‘space’ they offered young people to be involved in the practices with regard to the stages of projects/initiatives and/or organisational levels. Some projects involved young people continuously/on-going, while other practices involved young people for a certain element of the practice or project (on an irregular basis). Therefore, young people have a varying influence on the (shaping) of these practices.

Supporting young people

During their participation process, young people are supported via trainings, receiving education or mentoring, by the compensation of travel costs, by providing aftercare if needed, or by keeping their future perspectives in mind. Some of the organisations brought forward that young people were part of the operating staff. Furthermore, a couple of the organisations brought forward that they try to ‘stand next to’ the young person and look at their individual needs and wishes with regard to support.

Underlying methods and frameworks

When looking at the ‘underlying’ method, framework or inspiration for the participation of young people, some organisations use a flexible, multi-layered, sometimes less-structured, approach when it comes to involving young people, while others take a more structured approach when it comes



to participation (e.g., YOUCREATE method, CPAT Tool, CoE Handbook on Child Participation, nothing about us without us, co-production frameworks, restorative justice). A couple of the practices bring forward that they see the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a 'guiding principle'.

In addition, several projects bring forward that they are not aware of any underlying legal structures or formal mechanisms that promote, require and encourage youth participation in their country or situation. When there are underlying legal structures, there seems to be a lack of implementation of these mechanisms into practice.

Evaluation and monitoring processes

Even though not all projects used formal mechanisms to evaluate the participation process of young people and/or the outcomes of the practices, the representatives of the projects felt that young people really had an impact on the (outcome of the) projects. For instance, young people helped co-construct child-friendly materials, participated in advocacy events, or supported the development or shaping of services for young people through the (in)direct training of professionals that work with young people.

Successes and challenges

In addition, several of the practices provided significant examples of the greatest successes of their projects, such as conferences that are led by young people, (child)friendly materials that have been developed and (structurally) implemented by (governmental) organisations, or the training of (justice) professionals how to (better) support young people. Some also mention the impact of the project on young people themselves - by providing them with useful skills for the future.

Finally, many of the representatives mention the Covid-19 pandemic as one of the biggest challenges for the participation of young people in their practices; keeping young people involved and motivated via online meetings felt sometimes quite challenging. Next to the pandemic, keeping young people involved within the projects seemed to bring some challenges for the practices. Furthermore, some representatives brought forward that there were some structural difficulties with regard to the participation of young people - for instance getting validation from the higher administration/getting them on board.

Training of (justice) professionals



When specifically focusing on the training of (justice) professionals, young people either have a direct role in the training by speaking directly to (justice) professionals and sharing their (own) experiences, or young people have an indirect role in the training of (future) professionals by creating, influencing and/or evaluating policy about the practice field.

When young people had a direct role in the training of (justice) professionals, they participate by sharing their experiences or exchanging ideas/views with professionals with the aim to improve the practices and procedures (e.g., Focus Project, I-restore, ExpEx).

In one of the interviews, an Experience Expert organisation (ExpEx) brings forward that they also have developed a training for care workers to teach them how to use their own experiences in their work, so they can apply this more in their own work.



4. Lessons learned and next steps

Over the years, across many different countries around the world, there is an increased focus on the participation of young people in care and service delivery (Bell, 2011; Bouma, 2019; Cashmore, 2002; Gonzalez Alvarez et al., 2022; Manful & Manful, 2014; Vis & Possum, 2013). In line with this development, young people with lived experiences¹ are becoming more active within the practice field as experience experts. These experience experts are involved in collective advocacy as agents of change or in the support of other young people with similar experiences (Lindstrom & Rantanen, 2021; Lenkens, 2022; Stichting Alexander, ExpEx & Nji, 2021).

The main objective of the Giving Back project is to increase our understanding of these participatory youth practices and to enhance child-centered learning among professionals who work directly with young people. Therefore, within the mapping activity we had a special interest in practices which include young people in the training of youth justice professionals.

Our mapping activity shows that within European Union Member States there are various promising practices in which young people with lived experiences are included as consultants, co-creators and/or advocates for better care practices. The projects range across various fields of (youth) care, health care and (juvenile) justice. Despite our extensive search and recruitment strategies, we only found a few projects in the mapping activity which specifically include young people in the training of (youth) professionals (e.g., ExpEx, Focus project, I-restore).

When young people were involved in these training activities, they either had direct contact with professionals during trainings or coaching sessions, or they had a more indirect role in the training of (future) professionals by creating, influencing and/or evaluating policy about the practice field. The promising practices which we interviewed, were very enthusiastic about the involvement of young people in these training activities for professionals.

In most projects, young people are supported during their participation process (e.g., receiving training, guidance, aftercare, or financial support). In some occasions, young people were part of the operational staff. Despite these various opportunities for young people to participate in the care and service delivery, most participation processes of young people were one-time or temporal occasions/events. This was mostly due to the temporal structures of these projects (funded for a certain period of time).

¹ Some authors speak of care experiences

Furthermore, in many countries in which the promising practices operate there is a lack of (implementation of) underlying structures or formal mechanisms that promote, require and encourage youth participation - let alone in the training of professionals. A promising new development in this area is the Child Participation Assessment Tool by the Council of Europe, which formulates several indicators for measuring progress in promoting the right of children and young people in matters that affect them. Project partners of CP4Europe are currently investigating if/how there are legal structures or formal mechanisms in place that promote, require and encourage youth participation in their countries.

Participation of young people in the training of professionals: making it meaningful and sustainable

To really make the participation process of young people in the training of (justice) professionals meaningful and sustainable we have formulated the following lessons based on our mapping activity:

- In line with General Comment no. 24, Giving Back stresses the importance of including young people - in particular those who have experience with the youth justice system - to be involved in awareness-raising efforts, such as through the training of professionals across European Member States.
- As we saw throughout our mapping activity, there are several models of participation in place that shape promising practices. Specifically the model of Lundy (2007) offers a valuable underlying framework for the inclusion of young people in the training of justice professionals². We encourage promising practices to create a meaningful dialogue about the underlying frameworks, methods and guiding principles behind the participation process of young people in their practices.
- In the conversations we had with promising practices, the organizations stressed the importance of recognizing the diversity of different contexts and the people involved in these contexts when working with experience experts (e.g., background, wishes, needs). It is therefore important to recognize and acknowledge the different power structures that are present between young people and professionals, especially in the area of youth care and youth justice. In training activities, these power dynamics should be addressed with both professionals and young people and

² *Space: Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view, Voice: they should be facilitated to express their view, Audience: their views should be taken into account and, influence: their views must be acted upon.*

actions should be taken to dismantle these power imbalances to truly focus on equity and social justice. This implies a fundamental shift in our perspectives as adults (and professionals) of young people with lived experiences: seeing young people as ‘social actors’ with rights and creating real influence on decision-making and policy.

- Finally, when young people are participating in the training of justice professionals, we should support young people during every stage of their participation process (e.g., supervision, training and intervision, community care, financial support/salary)³. In addition, when we truly want to create participatory care practices in which young people are actively involved in the training of care professionals, we also should address factors related to the socio-political landscape and the regulatory regimes of countries and how they interact with professional practices (see Gal, 2017).

Next steps

We want to continue to learn and build further on this mapping activity, so organisations that want to share their expertise with the research team, please feel free to share your initiative with: FHoff@nhc.nl

Next to the mapping activity, NHC and YOPE will:

- A. Visit three countries with promising practices that were identified during the mapping exercise
- B. Host online learning sessions that will allow the broader European Network to participate in an international exchange of promising youth-participation based practices
- C. Create a manifesto advocating for the inclusion of young people with lived experience in the development and implementation of penitentiary staff training

³ Stichting Alexander, Nji and ExpEx in the Netherlands have published a report about the experiences of experienced experts in youth care (2021): <https://st-alexander.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/GEWoon-jongeren-over-ervaringsdeskundigheid-Stichting-Alexander-ExpEx-en-Nji-1.o.pdf>