



NON-FORMAL CAREER COUNSELLING TOOLKIT NO. 4

Career Planning

TURNING SELF-UNDERSTANDING INTO CLEAR NEXT STEPS



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Career planning is a dynamic, lifelong process through which young people learn to understand themselves, explore opportunities, and build realistic steps toward meaningful futures. In today's rapidly changing world shaped by technological shifts, evolving labour markets, and increasing uncertainty, young people need more than information. They need confidence, adaptability, and supportive environments that help them navigate choices with clarity and purpose.

For today's young people, career planning is not simply about deciding "what to become." It is a developmental process through which adolescents explore who they are, what matters to them, and how they can move toward a meaningful future—while they are still forming their identities. Young people often face overwhelming expectations precisely at the time when their self-concept is still developing and when social, family, and institutional pressures can be intense.

Career planning therefore acts as a bridge between self-understanding and purposeful action. It helps translate internal experience—interests, strengths, aspirations, values—into concrete steps that young people can actually take. For youth workers and career counsellors, understanding the developmental and psychological foundations of planning is key to providing effective support that fits a young person's stage, context, and needs.

This chapter brings together theoretical foundations, practical methods, and digital tools that can empower young people across Iceland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Spain to shape their own pathways with agency, resilience, and creativity. It also includes insights on youth needs and realities observed across the four countries and highlights what tends to make planning easier—or harder—for younger and older adolescents.

Key concepts and definitions

Career planning

Career planning is a structured yet flexible process whereby young people explore themselves and the world of opportunities, set meaningful goals, evaluate alternatives, and make decisions that support their long-term development. The structure matters because it helps reduce overwhelm, but flexibility matters because young people's interests, contexts, and opportunities change over time.

1. Career construction theory

Career Construction Theory, developed by Mark Savickas, proposes that individuals actively "construct" their careers through personal narratives rather than simply selecting from a fixed set of options. From this perspective, career development is understood as a meaning-making process, where choices are shaped by how people interpret their experiences and imagine their future selves.

Career choices emerge from the interaction of several interconnected elements:

- Values and identity, which reflect what matters most to a young person and how they see themselves in relation to the world;
- Life themes, such as recurring motivations, concerns, or aspirations that give coherence to past experiences;
- Personal stories, or the narratives young people tell about who they are becoming and what kind of life they want to build.

For adolescents, this approach is particularly relevant. Young people are in the process of forming identity and often make sense of their experiences through stories rather than abstract analysis. Narrative-based activities—such as reflection, storytelling, and guided discussion—help them connect experiences across contexts and see career planning not as a single decision, but as an evolving story they actively shape over time.

This perspective is particularly relevant for adolescents, who often respond well to storytelling, reflection, and activities that help them make meaning from their experiences. Planning becomes more sustainable when a young person can explain their direction as a story they own—not as a choice imposed from the outside.

2. Super's life-span development theory

Donald Super emphasises that career development unfolds in distinct stages across the life span, rather than as a single decision made at one point in time. From this perspective, career planning is closely linked to overall identity development and changes as individuals gain experience, self-knowledge, and opportunities.

Super identifies several broad stages of career development:

Growth (childhood–14)	Exploration (15–24)	Establishment (25+)
A stage focused on the formation of interests, imagination, and early self-concept. During this period, young people begin to notice what they enjoy, what they are curious about, and how they see themselves in relation to different roles.	A stage characterised by trying out roles, testing choices, and gradually refining goals. Young people experiment with different educational paths, activities, and work experiences while learning more about their preferences and capacities.	A stage involving greater commitment, consolidation, and stabilisation in chosen roles and pathways.

These stages help explain why career planning naturally looks different at different ages and why younger adolescents should not be expected to "decide too early." At earlier stages, planning should focus on awareness, exploration, and learning rather than on commitment. Planning, in this sense, is not a single event or decision, but a developmental process that evolves over time, adapting as individuals grow, learn, and encounter new opportunities.

3. Holland's typology

Holland's typology is based on the idea that both people and work environments can be described using a limited number of recurring patterns. Holland identifies six personality–environment match types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Each type reflects characteristic interests, ways of working, and preferred environments rather than fixed abilities or talents.

This framework supports career planning by helping young people recognise that satisfaction and sustainability are more likely when there is a fit between the person and the environment. Instead of asking only "What job should I choose?", young people are encouraged to reflect on questions such as: In what kinds of environments do I feel comfortable? What type of tasks energise me? How do I prefer to work with people, information, or materials?

For adolescents, Holland's typology is particularly useful because it offers a non-judgemental and accessible language for talking about preferences. It helps move conversations away from narrow job titles and toward broader patterns of interest and engagement. Many young people discover that they do not need to identify with a single type; instead, they often recognise combinations that better reflect their complexity and evolving identity.

In practice, this typology provides a bridge from vague interests to clearer environmental preferences. For example, a general interest in "helping others" can be explored through different social or enterprising environments, while an interest in creativity may take shape across artistic, investigative, or even conventional contexts. Used in this way, Holland's framework supports exploration and planning without forcing premature decisions, helping young people articulate where they might thrive while remaining open to multiple pathways.

Youth needs and realities in four countries

Although adolescents across Europe share common experiences, the Study report on the need for non-formal career counselling services for youth (Staliūnas & Stasiukynas, 2024–2025), conducted within the project Open Yourself for Career Skills, demonstrated that each project country faces unique contextual pressures that shape career planning in different ways.

Iceland

Youth experience significant freedom in schooling and personal development but often lack structure. Many have diverse interests yet struggle to commit or set long-term goals. Wellbeing is highly valued, and young people avoid career paths perceived as overly demanding or stressful. The challenge is not the absence of opportunities but the difficulty of choosing and organising these opportunities.

Latvia

Latvian youth face stronger expectations to be practical and realistic. Many fear making "wrong" decisions and prefer safe options. Opportunities differ greatly between urban and rural areas, and limited access to career guidance outside cities affects planning skills. Emigration potential also influences career thinking and shapes long-term perspectives.

Lithuania

Lithuanian adolescents often experience high academic pressure and expectations from families. Motivation is strong, but self-confidence can be low. Many worry about financial security and long-term stability. The main challenge is balancing ambition with emotional wellbeing, and translating aspirations into actionable plans.

Spain

Spanish young people enter a labour market marked by competition and high unemployment, which shapes their perceptions of risk and opportunity. Strong family influence affects decision making, while many doubt whether education will guarantee stability. Youth also show interest in informal career paths (arts, sports, entrepreneurship), which are not always supported by formal guidance systems.

Across all four contexts, the study identified common themes:

- fear of uncertainty and making irreversible choices,
- difficulty structuring decisions,
- low confidence in navigating options,
- a gap between interests and realistic pathways,
- limited awareness of new and emerging careers.

Planning needs of younger and older youth

Young people under 16

This age group is in the exploration stage. They need:

- opportunities to try different activities, fields, and roles,
- tools to recognise their interests and strengths,
- positive experiences that build self-concept,
- simplified goal-setting exercises that encourage curiosity rather than pressure.

Career planning at this stage should be playful, reflective, and focused on self-discovery. The aim is not to force commitment, but to help young people develop a clearer sense of what they like, what they can do, and what kind of environments fit them.

Young people aged 16 and above

Older youth face growing expectations regarding education, employment, and independence. They need:

- guidance in decision-making,
- realistic and current information about labour markets,
- mentoring and emotional support,
- structured tools for mapping steps toward goals,
- help balancing aspirations with practical realities.

This group benefits greatly from supportive dialogue and structured planning processes that reduce overwhelm and translate ambition into manageable steps.

Core competencies developed through career planning

Career planning supports the development of a set of interconnected competencies that are essential not only for immediate educational or career decisions, but also for long-term adaptability in an uncertain and changing world. Rather than focusing solely on choosing a destination, planning strengthens young people's capacity to navigate complexity, adjust direction, and remain engaged with their own development over time.

One of the most visible competencies developed through career planning is goal setting. Young people learn how to define goals that are meaningful and realistic, drawing on their interests, values, and aspirations. Importantly, they also learn that goals are not fixed commitments. Through guided planning, young people practice refining goals over time—distinguishing between short-, medium-, and long-term aims and understanding how small, achievable steps can gradually move them forward. This reduces overwhelm and helps transform abstract ambitions into concrete, manageable intentions.

Career planning also strengthens decision-making skills. Young people practice comparing alternatives, weighing advantages and constraints, and reflecting on the potential consequences of different options. Rather than seeking a single “correct” answer, they learn to understand the reasoning behind their choices and to accept that most decisions involve trade-offs. This process supports more thoughtful, less fear-driven decision-making and helps young people develop confidence in their ability to choose—even when information is incomplete.

In rapidly changing societies, adaptability becomes a core outcome of career planning. Young people learn that revising goals, changing direction, or responding to unexpected challenges is not a sign of failure, but a normal and necessary part of development. Planning helps them remain open to new possibilities, recognise emerging opportunities, and adjust their pathways in response to changing circumstances, labour market shifts, or personal growth.

Closely linked to adaptability is resilience. Career planning builds resilience by helping young people anticipate uncertainty, cope with setbacks, and navigate transitions more effectively. When young people learn to plan in flexible ways, they are better prepared to handle disappointments, delays, or changes without losing motivation or self-belief. Planning thus becomes a tool for sustaining engagement and hope, even when progress is non-linear.

Throughout the planning process, self-awareness continues to deepen. Through reflection, feedback, and exploration, young people gain clearer insight into their identities, strengths, motivations, values, and preferred ways of working. Planning provides a context in which self-understanding is not only explored, but actively applied—allowing young people to test whether emerging plans genuinely fit who they are and what they need.

Taken together, these competencies highlight that career planning is itself a key competence. It is not only about deciding what to choose, but about learning how to move forward when choices are complex, uncertain, or emotionally charged. By developing goal-setting, decision-making, adaptability, resilience, and self-awareness in an integrated way, career planning equips young people with tools they can reuse across multiple transitions throughout their lives.

Key challenges identified in the research

The research identifies several recurring challenges that shape how young people experience career planning. These challenges are not signs of personal weakness or lack of ambition. Rather, they reflect developmental processes, social pressures, and structural conditions that influence how adolescents approach decisions about their future.

1) Fear of uncertainty

One of the most pervasive challenges is a fear of uncertainty. Many adolescents worry about making the "wrong" choice in education or career and becoming trapped in a path they might later regret. This fear can be deeply paralysing. Instead of helping young people move forward, it often leads them to avoid decisions altogether, postpone choices repeatedly, or cling to unrealistic ideas about the future in the hope that clarity will eventually appear on its own.

Young people frequently express a desire to keep all options open. They fear that choosing one direction will permanently close others. Paradoxically, by trying not to choose, they often end up limiting themselves, delaying learning opportunities and reducing their sense of agency. Avoidance becomes a temporary coping strategy for anxiety, but it ultimately reinforces uncertainty rather than resolving it.

Uncertainty about the future generates anxiety that can significantly reduce motivation and weaken young people's belief in their own capacity to take meaningful steps. Importantly, however, uncertainty is not a problem to be eliminated. It is a natural and expected part of adolescent development. Young people are still forming their identities, experimenting with interests, and discovering their strengths and limits. Feeling unsure does not signal failure or indecision; it reflects a developmental stage in which exploration is both necessary and healthy.

When supported through structured guidance and reflective dialogue, uncertainty can become a starting point for growth. Rather than asking young people to resolve uncertainty too quickly, effective career planning helps them learn how to act within it—by testing small steps, gathering information, and building confidence through experience.

2) Lack of structure and guidance

A second key challenge identified in the research is a lack of structure and supportive guidance. Without a clear framework for thinking about choices, many young people struggle to organise their thoughts, compare options, or translate vague ideas into realistic plans. Career planning can then feel overwhelming, abstract, or simply too large to manage.

In such situations, young people may disengage early in the process, not because they lack interest in their future, but because they do not know where to begin. A lack of structure often appears externally as "low motivation" or passivity. In reality, it frequently reflects that young people have not been taught how to break a complex life question into smaller, workable steps.

Structured planning tools, supportive conversations, and clear sequencing can therefore play a critical role. When young people are helped to map options gradually, identify immediate next steps, and understand that planning is iterative rather than final, their sense of control and engagement increases significantly.

3) Unrealistic or unclear goals

The research also highlights challenges related to unrealistic or unclear goals. Some young people hold ambitious dreams about their future careers but lack an understanding of the concrete steps required to achieve them. Their goals may be inspiring but vague, making it difficult to decide what action to take next. This gap between aspiration and pathway can create hesitation, frustration, or repeated postponement of decisions.

At the same time, other young people struggle in the opposite direction. They underestimate their abilities and potential, not because they lack skills, but because their self-confidence has been shaped by social circumstances, cultural expectations, or economic conditions in their immediate environment. Limited role models, prior negative feedback, or perceived financial constraints can all contribute to a narrowed sense of what feels "possible."

As a result, some young people avoid opportunities, initiatives, or exploratory steps that they could realistically pursue. Effective career planning must therefore address both extremes: supporting young people to ground ambitious goals in realistic pathways, while also helping those with low confidence to recognise their capabilities and expand their perceived range of options.

Implications for non-formal education and counselling

Non-formal education plays a particularly important role in supporting career exploration and planning because it offers young people a space that is fundamentally different from formal schooling. In non-formal learning environments, young people are invited to explore freely, reflect deeply, and learn without the pressure of grading, assessment, or performance comparison. This shift in context creates conditions that are essential for meaningful career-related learning.

Non-formal settings support:



Creativity

By encouraging experimentation, imagination, and the exploration of multiple possibilities rather than a single "correct" path.



Emotional safety

By reducing fear of failure and allowing uncertainty to be expressed openly without judgement.



Hands-on exploration

Through experiential activities that make career ideas concrete and relatable.



Personalised guidance

Where support can be adapted to individual needs, pace, and developmental stage.



Active participation

Enabling young people to take ownership of their learning and planning processes rather than passively receiving information.

These environments are particularly valuable for young people who lack confidence, have had negative experiences in formal education, or feel disconnected from traditional schooling structures. For such youth, non-formal learning can re-open engagement by providing a sense of agency and belonging that is often missing elsewhere.

Mentoring and small-group support

Mentoring plays a central role in translating exploration into forward movement. Mentors help young people connect their experiences with real opportunities, recognise emerging patterns in their interests and strengths, and maintain motivation over time. Through regular contact, mentors can also help young people reflect on setbacks, adjust goals, and remain engaged when progress feels slow or uncertain.

Small-group counselling—typically involving two to five participants—further strengthens this process. In small groups, young people benefit from peer support, shared learning, and mutual encouragement. Hearing others articulate similar doubts or struggles helps normalise uncertainty and reduces the sense of isolation that often accompanies career planning. At the same time, group formats create a degree of accountability: young people are more likely to follow through on small steps when they know they will return to a supportive peer space.

Many young people report feeling more comfortable discussing uncertainties and tentative plans in small peer groups than in formal, one-to-one or classroom-based settings. The combination of guidance and peer presence supports both emotional safety and practical progress.

Digital support tools

Digital tools can significantly enhance career exploration and planning when used thoughtfully within non-formal education contexts. Tools such as interest assessment quizzes, goal-mapping applications, career planning templates, and online portfolios make exploration more accessible and flexible. They allow young people to engage in self-reflection and independent exploration at their own pace, revisiting content as their understanding evolves.

By helping young people visualise possible pathways, compare options, and break long-term goals into manageable steps, digital tools provide structure in what can otherwise feel like an overwhelming process. Visual clarity supports sustained motivation, makes progress visible, and fosters a sense of ownership over personal planning. Instead of feeling lost or pressured to decide, young people begin to experience career development as a journey built from small, achievable actions.

At the same time, it is essential to emphasise that digital tools should support—not replace—human guidance. Youth workers and counsellors remain central in helping young people interpret information, reflect on emotional reactions, challenge unrealistic assumptions, and connect digital exploration to real-life contexts and opportunities. When combined with relational support, digital tools become powerful facilitators of agency rather than substitutes for meaningful guidance.

Practical guidance for youth workers

This section translates theory and research into clear, actionable guidance for youth workers supporting career planning in non-formal contexts. The focus is not on providing ready-made answers, but on shaping conversations, activities, and learning environments in ways that help young people move forward with confidence and realism.

What to emphasise in conversations

Career planning conversations are most effective when they are framed as a process of building workable next steps, rather than as a demand to make perfect or final decisions. Young people often arrive with the expectation that they must "figure everything out," which can increase pressure and avoidance.

A helpful emphasis for youth workers is to shift the narrative from final answers to progress:

"Let's make your next steps clearer and smaller," rather than "Let's settle your final answer."

This framing reduces anxiety and helps young people experience planning as something they can actively engage with, even when certainty is low.

Helpful questions

Questions play a central role in making planning practical. They should invite reflection, experimentation, and movement rather than evaluation or justification.

Young people under 16

For younger adolescents, questions should support curiosity, confidence, and learning through experience:

- "What activities make you feel engaged or proud, even in small ways?"
- "If you could try one new role for a week, what would you want to test?"
- "What is one small goal you could try this month—just to learn something about yourself?"

These questions encourage exploration without pressure and help young people see planning as a process of discovery rather than commitment.

Young people aged 16 and above

For older youth, questions can focus more explicitly on structure, decision-making, and reducing uncertainty:

- "What is your next step that would reduce uncertainty—information, a conversation, or a try-out?"
- "Which options match your values, and where are the trade-offs?"
- "What would a realistic plan look like if you had to start with small steps?"

Such questions support the translation of aspirations into concrete actions and help young people regain a sense of control.

What to avoid

Youth workers should avoid presenting career planning as a one-time, irreversible choice. Language that implies there is one correct decision, or that mistakes cannot be corrected, intensifies pressure and can block engagement.

It is also important to avoid turning planning into a performance task—where young people feel they must present impressive or socially approved plans—or comparing one young person's pathway to another's. Planning works best when it remains personal, flexible, and free from competition.

1–1 vs small-group facilitation

Both individual and small-group formats are valuable, and their use should be intentional.

Small-group work (2–5 participants) is particularly effective for normalising uncertainty, sharing planning strategies, and building accountability around short-term steps. Hearing how peers approach similar challenges helps young people realise they are not alone and often generates practical ideas.

One-to-one sessions are more appropriate when planning is blocked by fear, shame, strong family pressure, or low self-confidence. Individual work allows young people to speak honestly, explore sensitive concerns, and rebuild trust in their ability to plan at their own pace.

Emotional safety and boundaries

Career planning should remain reflective and developmental, not therapeutic. Youth workers play a key role in creating emotional safety by consistently normalising that:

- plans can change,
- uncertainty is expected,
- discovering a mismatch is useful information,
- taking a small step is better than waiting for perfect clarity.

Making these principles explicit helps reduce fear and supports sustained engagement with planning.

Links to real-life contexts

Planning becomes more meaningful when it is connected to immediate, real-life contexts. Practical links may include:

- mapping local training routes and realistic entry points,
- analysing local opportunities and constraints,
- identifying one conversation or one visit that could clarify a pathway.

These connections help young people see planning as grounded in reality rather than as an abstract exercise.

Micro-cases

Young people under 16

A young person has many interests but cannot choose. Instead of pushing a decision, the youth worker supports short, one-month "try-outs" through small projects or roles. Reflection is then used to identify which environments feel supportive, energising, or challenging. Planning emerges gradually from experience rather than from pressure.

Young people aged 16 and above

A young person aspires to a high-status profession but feels overwhelmed by the steps required. The youth worker breaks the plan into short-term actions—verifying information, having one conversation with a mentor, and mapping one realistic pathway. Anxiety decreases as progress becomes visible and manageable.

Why theory matters in practice

A key challenge that often emerges in planning is fear of uncertainty—worrying about making the "wrong" educational or career choice and becoming stuck. Some adolescents hesitate to choose elective subjects because they fear limiting future possibilities. Others avoid applying to programmes because they doubt their abilities. This fear can become paralysing, leading to avoidance, repeated postponement, or unrealistic expectations that clarity will appear suddenly.

This is where theoretical insight becomes particularly valuable. Understanding key developmental and career guidance theories helps youth workers move beyond intuition and select methods intentionally. Theory provides a framework for recognising why young people may hesitate, avoid decisions, or set unrealistic goals. It allows practitioners to interpret behaviour not as laziness or lack of motivation, but as part of identity formation and cognitive development.

By grounding their work in theory, youth workers can choose appropriate tools, structure conversations effectively, and provide support aligned with the young person's developmental stage. In practice, theory becomes a guiding lens that shapes questions, activities, and follow-up actions in real-life counselling situations.

Conclusion

Career planning is an ongoing developmental process that supports young people as they navigate complex choices and evolving realities. In a world shaped by rapid change and uncertainty, effective career planning does not aim to provide definitive answers, but to strengthen young people's capacity to act with confidence, adaptability, and purpose.

When theoretical insight is combined with non-formal methods, mentoring relationships, and accessible guidance, career planning becomes a powerful tool for building youth agency. It helps young people translate self-understanding and exploration into realistic next steps, while remaining open to revision and growth. Rather than reducing uncertainty, planning equips young people to engage with it constructively.

Young people flourish when they are given space to explore who they are, recognise their strengths, and take steady, achievable steps toward their aspirations. The role of youth professionals is not to direct this journey, but to support it—by offering structure without rigidity, encouragement without pressure, and guidance grounded in empathy and trust in young people's potential.

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2. Practical activities

This section presents a set of structured, non-formal activities designed to support young people in translating self-understanding into concrete, manageable next steps. The methods focus on developing planning as a practical competence by engaging participants in real-life scenarios, decision-making exercises, reflection on values and strengths, and interaction with external perspectives such as professionals and mentors. Rather than asking young people to define a fixed future, the activities create opportunities to explore options, test ideas, and understand the consequences of different choices. Through experiential learning, young people begin to see planning not as a single decision, but as a process of trying, reflecting, and adjusting.

The activities are adapted to different developmental stages and levels of readiness. For younger participants, the focus is on exploration, curiosity, and reducing anxiety related to "choosing the right path," using visual, interactive, and low-pressure formats. For older youth, the methods introduce more structure, including evaluation of risks, consideration of alternatives, and breaking long-term goals into realistic steps. Across all activities, emphasis is placed on emotional safety, autonomy, and inclusiveness, ensuring that young people can engage at their own pace, recognise their own starting points, and develop confidence in navigating complex and uncertain career pathways.



ACTIVITY NO. 1

Reality Check Game

Target group: ☑ 16+

Duration: 45 minutes

Learning objectives

- To strengthen critical thinking when evaluating career options.
- To help participants recognise possible consequences of different choices.
- To develop awareness of alternative pathways and backup strategies.

Competences and skills developed

- Critical thinking
- Social competence
- Learning-to-learn competence
- Entrepreneurship competence (risk analysis and opportunity evaluation)

Materials needed

- Scenario cards with common youth dilemmas (e.g., dropping out of school, changing a study programme, moving abroad, accepting an unpaid internship, taking a gap year)
- Paper and pens for notes

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introducing the activity

The facilitator explains that career decisions often involve uncertainty, risks, and multiple possible outcomes. Participants are invited to explore real-life dilemmas and practise structured decision-making.

02

Forming groups

Participants are divided into pairs or small groups of three to four people. Each group receives one scenario card.

03

Analysing the situation

Each group analyses their scenario using a clear structure: potential benefits, potential risks, two alternative options, and their preferred decision with reasoning. Participants are encouraged to consider both short-term and long-term consequences.

04

Preparing responses

Groups organise their ideas and prepare a short explanation of their analysis and decision.

05

Group presentations

Each group presents their scenario and reasoning to the rest of the participants. The facilitator encourages others to listen and compare different approaches.

06

Facilitated discussion

The facilitator leads a discussion on how different decisions can lead to different pathways, highlighting that there is rarely one "correct" choice. Emphasis is placed on understanding consequences and being able to justify decisions.

07

Reflection and closing

Participants reflect on what they learned about decision-making and how structured thinking can support career planning in real-life situations.

Facilitator notes

- Emphasise that the goal of the activity is not to find the "right" answer, but to practise thinking and reasoning.
- Support participants in considering both positive and negative consequences without judgement.
- Adapt scenarios to the local context and realities of young people in different countries.
- Encourage balanced participation within groups.

Expected outcomes

- Participants improve their ability to evaluate consequences of different choices.
- Participants show greater readiness to make informed and structured decisions.
- Participants develop a better understanding of the complexity of real-life career situations.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Provide a clear structure (benefits → risks → alternatives → decision) to support participants who may feel overwhelmed.
- Avoid scenarios that may be too sensitive or personally triggering unless a safe environment is well established.
- Offer additional guidance or examples if participants struggle to begin the analysis.

Reflection questions for participants

- What surprised me when analysing this situation?
- How do I usually make decisions in real life?
- Which alternative option would I consider in my own situation?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants show more risk-taking or more avoidance in their decisions?
- Which barriers to decision-making appeared (e.g., fear, confusion, external pressure)?
- How can support be adapted for participants who need more structure or guidance?



ACTIVITY NO. 2

Strength Cards Exchange

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants identify and name their personal strengths.
- To increase awareness of how others perceive their abilities.
- To strengthen confidence and positive self-understanding.
- To connect personal strengths with possible future pathways.

Competences and skills developed

- Personal competence
- Social competence
- Emotional literacy
- Learning-to-learn competence

Materials needed

- Printed strength cards (30–40 strengths such as creative, patient, problem-solver, caring, curious)
- Pens
- Sticky notes or paper

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introducing strengths

The facilitator briefly explains that strengths are patterns of behaviour that people show in different situations. Emphasis is placed on recognising strengths through real actions, not labels.

02

Exploring the cards

All strength cards are spread on a table. Participants are invited to read through them and become familiar with different strength concepts.

03

Individual selection

Each participant selects five strengths they believe describe themselves best. They may reflect on past experiences to support their choices.

04

Pair exchange

Participants work in pairs and present their selected strengths to each other. Partners discuss whether the strengths feel accurate and provide examples from observed behaviour where possible.

05

Adding external perspective

Each partner adds one additional strength they genuinely see in the other person, based on interaction during the activity or previous experiences.

06

Finalising strengths

Participants create their final list of six strengths (their original five plus one added by a peer) and write them down.

07

Group reflection

The facilitator leads a short discussion on how strengths can be applied in different contexts, including learning, teamwork, and future career directions.

Facilitator notes

- Encourage participants to give specific, evidence-based examples when naming strengths.
- Maintain a supportive and respectful environment to ensure psychological safety.
- Allow alternative communication methods (e.g., written notes) for participants who are less comfortable speaking.

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain clearer awareness of their personal strengths.
- Participants experience increased confidence through peer recognition.
- Participants understand how strengths can relate to future learning and career choices.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Some participants may struggle to accept positive feedback; provide reassurance and validation.
- Use simple language or visual symbols for strengths where literacy may be a barrier.
- Ensure that all participants receive balanced and respectful feedback.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which strength surprised me the most?
- How do these strengths appear in my everyday life?
- Which strength could support my future goals?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants struggle to recognise their own strengths?
- Did peers provide supportive and constructive feedback?
- Which participants may benefit from additional one-to-one support?



ACTIVITY NO. 3

Professional Speed-Dating

Target group: ☑ 16+

Duration: 60–90 minutes

Learning objectives

- To explore diverse career paths through direct interaction with professionals.
- To gain realistic insight into work tasks, required skills, and everyday challenges.
- To reduce stereotypes about professions and broaden understanding of career options.

Competences and skills developed

- Social competence
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Communication skills
- Cultural awareness (different work contexts and career paths)

Materials needed

- Timer
- Chairs arranged in pairs (speed-dating format)
- Name tags for professionals
- Optional: question prompt cards

Step-by-step instructions

01

Preparation of the activity

The facilitator invites 6–10 professionals from different sectors (e.g., healthcare, IT, arts, trades, education) and ensures diversity in background, experience, and career pathways.

02

Setting up the space

Chairs are arranged in pairs facing each other to allow short, structured conversations. Each professional sits in a fixed position while participants rotate.

03

Introducing the format

The facilitator explains the rules: each conversation lasts approximately 5 minutes, and participants are encouraged to ask simple, direct questions about the profession.

04

First round of conversations

Each participant meets a professional and asks guiding questions such as: who are you, what do you do, and what skills are required in your work.

05

Rotation

After 5 minutes, a signal is given, and participants rotate to the next professional. This process continues until several professionals have been met.

06

Group sharing

After completing the rounds, participants reflect in a group discussion. They share what surprised them, which professions they found interesting, and what challenged their expectations.

07

Linking to self-understanding

The facilitator briefly connects the discussion to participants' own strengths, interests, and possible future directions.

Facilitator notes

- Select professionals who are open to sharing both positive and challenging aspects of their work.
- Encourage realistic storytelling rather than idealised career narratives.
- Support participants who may feel hesitant by offering optional question prompts.

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain a broader and more realistic understanding of career options.
- Participants improve their confidence in communicating with adults and professionals.
- Participants develop increased curiosity and openness toward different career paths.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Some participants may feel intimidated; provide question cards to support interaction.
- Allow anxious participants to rotate in pairs during initial rounds.
- Ensure professionals use clear and accessible language.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which profession felt most interesting to me, and why?
- What did I learn about the real working world?
- Which skills do I want to develop after this session?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants actively engage and ask questions?
- Which misconceptions about careers became visible?
- How could future sessions include a wider range of professions or experiences?



ACTIVITY NO. 4

Future Me Letter

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants clarify personal values, hopes, and future aspirations.
- To strengthen imagination and motivation when thinking about the future.
- To support understanding of how present actions can influence future outcomes.

Competences and skills developed

- Personal competence
- Emotional awareness
- Learning-to-learn competence
- Sense of initiative

Materials needed

- Paper
- Envelopes
- Pens
- Optional: stickers or decorative materials

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introducing the activity

The facilitator introduces the idea of writing a letter to oneself in the future and explains that this is a way to reflect on goals, feelings, and personal direction.

02

Setting the timeframe

Participants are invited to imagine themselves in the future (e.g., 5 years ahead). For younger participants or those who find this difficult, a shorter timeframe (e.g., 1 year) can be offered.

03

Guided writing

Participants write a letter to their future self. The facilitator provides simple prompts to support reflection: where they live, what they are doing, how they feel, what they have achieved, and what message or advice they want to remember.

04

Personalising the letter

Participants are encouraged to write freely and honestly. They may decorate their letters if they wish.

05

Sealing the message

Each participant places their letter in an envelope and seals it.

06

Optional follow-up

The facilitator may collect the letters and return them after a defined period (e.g., 6–12 months), or participants may keep them privately.

07

Reflection and closing

A short group reflection is held, focusing on how thinking about the future can influence present choices and motivation. Sharing is optional.

Facilitator notes

- Provide sentence starters for participants who struggle to begin (e.g., "In the future, I hope...", "I want to remember...").
- Keep the tone supportive and avoid pressure to define a "perfect" future.
- For older participants, offer a digital alternative (e.g., scheduled email tools).

Expected outcomes

- Participants develop a clearer sense of personal direction and meaning.
- Participants strengthen the connection between present actions and future possibilities.
- Participants increase motivation and reflection about their goals.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Be sensitive to participants for whom thinking about the future may feel uncertain or stressful.
- Allow shorter timeframes and focus on emotions, strengths, and small hopes rather than achievements.
- Ensure participation and sharing remain voluntary.

Reflection questions for participants

- What part of imagining my future felt easiest or most difficult?
- What do I hope will stay the same in my life, and what do I want to change?
- What is one small step I can take today toward this future?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants express more hope or uncertainty about the future?
- What needs, fears, or motivations became visible through the letters?
- Would any participants benefit from additional support or follow-up mentoring?



ACTIVITY NO. 5

Career Map Walk

Target group: ☒ Under 16

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants explore a variety of professions in a visual and accessible way.
- To increase awareness of personal interests, preferences, and dislikes.
- To reduce anxiety related to choosing a "right" career path by encouraging exploration.

Competences and skills developed

- Personal competence
- Learning-to-learn competence
- Social competence
- Sense of initiative

Materials needed

- Large posters representing different career fields (e.g., Arts, Technology, Sports, Health, Trades, Business, Education)
- Post-it notes or stickers in three colours (green, yellow, red)
- Markers

Step-by-step instructions

01

Preparing the space

The facilitator places posters around the room, each representing a different career field. Each poster may include short descriptions, examples, or visuals.

02

Introducing the activity

Participants are told that they will explore different career areas and express their reactions using colour-coded stickers. The facilitator explains the meaning of each colour: green (I like this), yellow (maybe or curious), red (not for me).

03

Individual exploration

Participants walk around the room freely, read the posters, and place stickers based on their reactions to each career field. They are encouraged to follow their first impression rather than overthink.

04

Identifying preferences

After completing the walk, participants select three green choices and one yellow choice that they want to explore further.

05

Pair discussion

Participants work in pairs and briefly discuss their selected choices, explaining what attracted their interest or raised curiosity.

06

Group reflection

The facilitator gathers the group and highlights visible patterns (e.g., strong interest in certain fields). A short discussion is held about diversity of interests and how preferences can change over time.

07

Closing

The facilitator reinforces the idea that exploring interests is a process and that uncertainty is a normal part of career development.

Facilitator notes

- Use simple language and visual elements to make career fields easy to understand.
- Encourage openness and curiosity rather than making "final" decisions.
- Avoid judging or ranking career choices.

Expected outcomes

- Participants experience reduced pressure related to making career choices.
- Participants gain broader awareness of different career fields.
- Participants develop clearer understanding of their own preferences and interests.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Use short descriptions and visual materials to reduce cognitive load.
- Provide support for participants with reading difficulties (peer or facilitator support).
- Ensure that examples are diverse and relatable to different backgrounds.

Reflection questions for participants

- What did my choices show me about my interests?
- Which category surprised me the most?
- What would I like to explore more in the future?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Which career fields attracted the most interest?
- Did any participants show strong avoidance or uncertainty?
- How could this activity be expanded with deeper exploration in future sessions?



ACTIVITY NO. 6

Try and Fail Challenge

Target group: ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants overcome fear of failure through safe experimentation.
- To develop resilience and adaptability in uncertain situations.
- To encourage action and learning through experience rather than perfection.

Competences and skills developed

- Entrepreneurship competence (risk-taking, initiative)
- Social and emotional competence
- Learning-to-learn competence
- Creativity

Materials needed

- 3–4 challenge stations (e.g., creative task, problem-solving task, sales pitch, teamwork puzzle)
- Simple materials depending on tasks (paper, pens, small objects)
- Timer

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introducing the concept

The facilitator explains that the goal of the activity is not to succeed, but to try, experiment, and learn from mistakes. Failure is presented as a normal and useful part of learning.

02

Setting up stations

The facilitator prepares 3–4 short challenge stations. Each task should be simple, quick, and achievable within 5–10 minutes (e.g., create a logo, sell an object, solve a puzzle, complete a small teamwork task).

03

Rotation through challenges

Participants rotate through the stations in small groups or individually. Each round lasts a limited time to encourage quick thinking and reduce overthinking.

04

Immediate reflection

After each station, participants briefly reflect by answering two questions: what worked and what did not work. Responses can be written or discussed in pairs.

05

Group debrief

After completing all stations, the facilitator leads a group discussion on what participants experienced, focusing on emotions, reactions to difficulty, and what they learned from mistakes.

06

Linking to real life

The facilitator connects the experience to real-life situations, highlighting how trying, failing, and adapting are essential for learning, career development, and personal growth.

Facilitator notes

- Emphasise throughout the activity that perfection is not expected.
- Create a safe and supportive environment where mistakes are normalised.
- Use humour and encouragement to reduce tension, especially for participants who feel uncomfortable.

Expected outcomes

- Participants increase confidence in facing new and uncertain situations.
- Participants show reduced fear of failure and perfectionism.
- Participants become more willing to try new activities and take initiative.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Ensure tasks are simple, inclusive, and do not require specific prior knowledge or resources.
- Provide additional emotional support for participants who may experience anxiety or low confidence.
- Allow participants to opt out of specific tasks if needed.

Reflection questions for participants

- What did I learn from failing today?
- Which challenge felt the most difficult, and why?
- How can I use this experience in real-life situations?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- How did participants respond to failure and uncertainty?
- Did any participants require additional emotional support?
- How can future activities further strengthen resilience and willingness to try?



ACTIVITY NO. 7

My Values Ranking

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 30–45 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants identify personal values that influence decisions.
- To increase understanding of how values relate to long-term satisfaction and direction.
- To support prioritisation of what matters most in life and career choices.

Competences and skills developed

- Personal competence
- Emotional literacy
- Learning-to-learn competence
- Decision-making competence

Materials needed

- Value cards (e.g., stability, creativity, helping others, adventure, teamwork, independence, income, balance, learning)
- Ranking sheets or paper
- Markers

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introducing values

The facilitator explains that values are what matter most when making decisions and that they often guide choices, even when we are not aware of them.

02

Distributing value cards

Each participant receives a set of 12–20 value cards. The facilitator briefly clarifies unfamiliar terms if needed.

03

First sorting

Participants sort the cards into three categories: very important, somewhat important, and not important. They are encouraged to make quick, intuitive decisions.

04

Prioritising

From the "very important" category, participants select their top five values. These represent their current priorities.

05

Small-group discussion

Participants share their top values in small groups and explain why these values are important to them, using simple examples from their life.

06

Linking to career choices

The facilitator guides a short discussion on how different values can connect to different career paths (e.g., creativity, stability, helping others).

07

Reflection and closing

Participants reflect on how their values may influence future decisions and what this means for their personal direction.

Facilitator notes

- Support participants in distinguishing between personal values and external expectations (e.g., family or social pressure).
- Use concrete examples to help participants understand abstract values.
- Maintain a non-judgmental environment where all values are valid.

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain clearer understanding of their personal motivations.
- Participants improve their ability to make decisions aligned with their values.
- Participants become more aware of the difference between internal and external expectations.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Recognise that some participants may prioritise values related to security and stability.
- Validate all value choices without promoting "ideal" or socially preferred answers.
- Provide simple explanations and examples to support understanding.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which value surprised me the most?
- Do my current actions reflect my values?
- Which career paths could support my top values?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants choose values independently or under external influence?
- Which values appeared most frequently in the group?
- Are any participants experiencing tension between different expectations?



ACTIVITY NO. 8

Life Timeline

Target group: ☒ 16+

Duration: 45 minutes

Learning objectives

- To help participants recognise key experiences that shaped their development.
- To increase understanding of how past events influence current choices and future goals.
- To develop a longer-term perspective on personal and career pathways.

Competences and skills developed

- Personal competence
- Learning-to-learn competence
- Emotional intelligence
- Career management skills

Materials needed

- A3 sheets
- Coloured pens
- Stickers (optional)

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introducing the timeline concept

The facilitator explains that everyone's life includes important moments that influence who they are today. The activity will help participants visualise these moments.

03

Adding meaning to events

Participants are encouraged to briefly note what each event meant to them or what they learned from it.

05

Pair or small-group discussion

Participants share selected parts of their timeline in pairs or small groups. They reflect on patterns, influences, and what has shaped their current identity. Sharing remains voluntary.

07

Closing

Participants are invited to reflect on one insight they gained about themselves and one possible next step for their future.

02

Creating the past timeline

Participants draw a horizontal line representing their life from birth to the present. They mark key events such as successes, challenges, transitions, achievements, or meaningful experiences.

04

Creating the future timeline

Participants extend the timeline into the future (e.g., 5–10 years ahead). They add possible goals, dreams, or milestones they would like to achieve.

06

Group reflection

The facilitator leads a short discussion focusing on how past experiences connect to future directions and how patterns can support decision-making.

Facilitator notes

- Maintain a safe and respectful environment, especially when discussing personal experiences.
- Encourage participants to focus on growth and learning rather than difficulties alone.
- Allow flexibility in expression (words, symbols, drawings).

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain clearer awareness of their personal development journey.
- Participants identify patterns that influence their choices and goals.
- Participants increase motivation and clarity regarding future steps.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Do not require participants to share sensitive or personal experiences.
- Offer alternative ways of expression such as symbols or drawings.
- Be attentive to emotional reactions and provide support if needed.

Reflection questions for participants

- What moments have shaped me the most?
- What patterns do I notice in my journey?
- What do I want my future milestones to look like?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants express hope or uncertainty about the future?
- Were there signs of emotional discomfort that require follow-up?
- Would any participants benefit from additional mentoring or support?



ACTIVITY NO. 9

Mentor Speed Matching

Target group: ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To introduce participants to potential mentors in a structured and accessible format.
- To strengthen communication and question-asking skills.
- To support the development of meaningful connections with adults for career guidance.

Competences and skills developed

- Social competence
- Entrepreneurship and initiative
- Communication skills
- Cultural awareness

Materials needed

- Timer
- Name cards for mentors
- Room with small tables or spaced chairs
- Optional: question prompt cards

Step-by-step instructions

01

Preparing the activity

The facilitator invites mentors from different fields (e.g., students, professionals, entrepreneurs) and ensures diversity in experiences and backgrounds.

02

Setting up the space

The room is arranged to allow short one-to-one or small-group conversations. Each mentor stays in one place while participants rotate.

03

Introducing the format

The facilitator explains that participants will have short conversations (3–5 minutes) with each mentor and encourages them to ask simple, relevant questions.

04

First round of conversations

Participants meet mentors and ask guiding questions such as what their daily work looks like, what challenges they faced, and what advice they would give.

05

Rotation

After each round, participants move to the next mentor. The process continues until several mentors have been met.

06

Choosing follow-up connection

At the end of the activity, participants select one mentor they would be interested in speaking with further or learning more from.

07

Group reflection

The facilitator leads a short discussion where participants share insights, impressions, and new ideas they gained.

Facilitator notes

- Select mentors who are open, supportive, and able to communicate clearly.
- Encourage mentors to share both positive experiences and real challenges.
- Provide question prompts for participants who may feel unsure how to start conversations.

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain access to relatable role models and mentors.
- Participants develop a more realistic understanding of career paths.
- Participants improve communication confidence in professional interactions.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Ensure mentors use simple, inclusive language and avoid jargon.
- Provide additional support for participants who may feel intimidated or anxious.
- Allow participants to observe first or participate in pairs if needed.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which mentor inspired me the most, and why?
- What new opportunities or ideas did I discover?
- Would I like to continue a conversation or relationship with any mentor?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did all participants feel comfortable engaging with mentors?
- Which interests or career areas appeared most frequently?
- How could future sessions improve mentor diversity or engagement?

3. Digital tips

This section presents digital activities that support career planning as a gradual and structured process rather than a one-time decision. Using artificial intelligence as a support tool, young people are guided to move from uncertainty to clearer direction by exploring their interests, strengths, and possible pathways. The activities focus on three key dimensions of career planning: identifying possible directions, translating goals into manageable steps, and connecting personal values with realistic career environments. AI is used to generate options, structure thinking, and make abstract ideas more concrete, helping participants see that multiple pathways are possible and that planning can start with small, achievable actions.

At the same time, these digital tips emphasise critical thinking and personal ownership of decisions. AI suggestions are treated as exploratory input rather than final answers, and participants are encouraged to question, adapt, and personalise the outputs based on their own context and opportunities. The role of the facilitator remains essential in ensuring that the process is reflective, inclusive, and grounded in reality, particularly for young people facing structural barriers. By combining self-reflection with practical planning, these activities help reduce anxiety, increase confidence, and support young people in taking initial, realistic steps toward their future.



DIGITAL TIP NO. 1

Overcoming Uncertainty and Finding Direction

This digital activity uses artificial intelligence as a structured support tool to help young people navigate uncertainty about their future education and career path. Instead of providing direct answers, AI is used to generate possible directions based on participants' interests, strengths, and experiences. The activity transforms vague feelings such as confusion or doubt into clearer options that can be explored further.

Through guided reflection and AI-assisted exploration, participants identify patterns in what they enjoy, what they are good at, and what challenges them. The process supports self-awareness and helps young people see that multiple pathways are possible. The activity reduces pressure to "decide now" and instead encourages small, realistic steps toward exploring future opportunities.

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To support self-awareness by identifying interests, strengths, and challenges.
- To explore possible study paths and career directions.
- To reduce anxiety related to uncertainty about the future.
- To encourage initial steps toward career exploration.

Competences and skills developed

- Self-reflection
- Critical thinking
- Decision-making
- Career exploration
- Digital literacy

Materials needed

- Computer or tablet with AI access
- Journaling worksheet or digital document
- Optional: career interest survey

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the topic of uncertainty

The facilitator leads a short discussion about common doubts and questions young people have about their future.

02

Individual reflection

Participants privately write short notes about what they enjoy, what they are good at, and what feels difficult or stressful in school or daily life.

03

AI-supported exploration

Participants use AI to generate 3–5 possible career fields or study paths based on their reflections.

04

Deepening the exploration

Participants ask follow-up questions to better understand suggested options (e.g., tasks, required skills, learning paths).

05

Personal evaluation

Participants reflect on which options feel interesting or motivating and consider why.

06

Reflection and next step

Participants write a short reflection on what they learned about themselves and identify one small step they could take to explore a chosen direction.

AI prompt example:



Here is some information about me: I enjoy [activities], I feel confident in [subjects/skills], I prefer [type of environment], and I find [situations/tasks] challenging. Based on this information, what possible study paths or job areas could be explored? List several options and briefly describe what they involve.

Facilitator notes

- Emphasise that AI is a brainstorming tool, not a decision-maker.
- Encourage participants to question and personalise the suggestions.
- Support a safe environment where uncertainty is normal and acceptable.
- Focus on exploration rather than final decisions.

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain clearer understanding of their interests and possible directions.
- Participants feel more in control of their next steps.
- Participants reduce anxiety by identifying realistic options.
- Participants begin connecting school experiences with future possibilities.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Ensure accessibility in language, technology, and reading level.
- Provide support in writing prompts if needed.
- Normalise uncertainty and validate all responses.
- Allow additional time and space for individual reflection or follow-up.

Reflection questions for participants

- What surprised me in the suggestions?
- Did any option feel like a good fit?
- What would I like to explore further?
- What small step could I take this week?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants engage with curiosity and openness?
- Were there common themes in their questions or interests?
- How can this activity be followed up in future sessions?
- Can this be connected with career guidance or external opportunities?



DIGITAL TIP NO. 2

Turning Big Goals into Small Steps

This digital activity supports young people in transforming long-term goals into smaller, manageable actions. Many young people experience uncertainty or overwhelm when thinking about future plans because goals appear too distant or complex. The activity introduces a structured way to break down these goals into realistic steps that can be understood, evaluated, and gradually implemented.

Artificial intelligence is used as a support tool to generate possible step-by-step pathways based on a participant's goal. The focus is not on finding the "correct" path, but on exploring different ways a goal could be approached. Through critical review and reflection, participants learn to assess which steps are realistic in their own context and which require adaptation.

Target group: ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To support participants in breaking down long-term goals into manageable steps.
- To strengthen planning and decision-making skills.
- To reduce anxiety related to complex or unclear future plans.

Competences and skills developed

- Goal-setting
- Decision-making
- Adaptability
- Planning skills
- Self-management
- Digital literacy

Materials needed

- Computer, tablet, or smartphone with AI access
- Planning worksheet or digital document
- Optional: calendar or task planning tool

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce the challenge of big goals

The facilitator leads a short discussion on why long-term goals can feel motivating but also overwhelming.

02

Define a personal goal

Participants write down one goal related to their future (education, work, project, or skill development).

03

Identify barriers

Participants reflect on what makes this goal unclear or difficult to start.

04

AI-supported structuring

Participants use AI to generate possible smaller steps related to their goal.

05

Critical review

Participants review the AI-generated steps and identify which feel realistic, unrealistic, or missing.

06

Selecting next actions

Each participant chooses three realistic steps that could be taken within the next month.

07

Reflection and closing

Participants reflect on how breaking the goal into smaller steps influenced their clarity and motivation.

AI prompt example



I have a goal related to my future: [describe the goal]. What smaller steps could be explored to move towards this goal in the short term and longer term? List possible steps in a structured way without assuming one correct path.

Facilitator notes

- Emphasise that AI is a support tool for structuring ideas, not a decision-maker.
- Encourage participants to question and adapt suggestions based on their own context.
- Highlight that progress often happens through small, consistent steps rather than one major decision.

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain clearer understanding of how to approach their goals.
- Participants feel less overwhelmed when thinking about future plans.
- Participants improve their ability to structure and plan actions.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Be aware of structural barriers such as financial limitations or limited access to opportunities.
- Support participants in identifying steps that are realistic within their context.
- Emphasise that different pathways can lead to meaningful outcomes.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which part of my goal felt most difficult before?
- Which step now feels achievable?
- Did any suggested step feel unrealistic for me?
- What action could I realistically take this week?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants manage to transform abstract goals into concrete actions?
- Which obstacles appeared most frequently (e.g., fear, lack of information, uncertainty)?
- Who may benefit from additional support or follow-up mentoring?



DIGITAL TIP NO. 3

Exploring My Values and Career Fit

This digital activity supports young people in identifying their personal values and exploring how these values relate to possible study paths, work environments, and career directions. Instead of focusing on specific professions, the activity helps participants understand what kind of conditions, environments, and experiences are important for them in the long term.

Artificial intelligence is used as an exploration tool to generate a range of possible career areas and environments connected to selected values. The process encourages participants to reflect, compare, and question the suggestions rather than accept them as final answers. This helps young people recognise that values do not lead to one fixed path but can be expressed in different ways across multiple career options.

Target group: ☒ Under 16 ☒ 16+

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Learning objectives

- To support participants in identifying their personal values.
- To explore how values relate to study choices and work environments.
- To strengthen decision-making through value-based reflection.

Competences and skills developed

- Self-awareness
- Reflection
- Decision-making
- Career exploration
- Critical thinking
- Digital literacy

Materials needed

- Computer or tablet with AI access
- Value cards or list of value words
- Reflection worksheet or digital notebook

Step-by-step instructions

01

Introduce personal values

The facilitator explains that values influence what feels meaningful, motivating, and satisfying in life and work.

02

Select key values

Participants choose five values that are most important to them (e.g., creativity, stability, helping others, independence, teamwork, balance, income, learning).

03

Individual reflection

Participants briefly reflect on why these values are important and where they appear in their current life.

04

AI-supported exploration

Participants use AI to explore possible study paths, work environments, or career areas related to their selected values.

05

Deepening understanding

Participants ask follow-up questions about tasks, conditions, required skills, and challenges in suggested areas.

06

Identifying options

Participants select two career areas that seem interesting and formulate one question they would like to explore further.

07

Reflection and closing

Participants reflect on how their values can guide decisions without requiring immediate commitment to one path.

AI prompt example:



My key values are: [list values]. What study paths, work environments, or job areas could be related to these values? Provide several options with short, neutral descriptions of what they involve.

Facilitator notes

- Emphasise that values do not determine one "correct" career choice.
- Encourage participants to critically evaluate AI suggestions and adapt them to their context.
- Support discussion about how the same value can appear in different fields.

Expected outcomes

- Participants gain stronger awareness of their personal values.
- Participants begin connecting internal motivations with external opportunities.
- Participants develop a more flexible and realistic understanding of career fit.

Points of attention when working with youth with fewer opportunities

- Recognise that some participants may prioritise values such as stability or financial security.
- Validate all value choices without judgement.
- Support participants in balancing personal meaning with practical realities.

Reflection questions for participants

- Which value feels most important to me right now?
- Did any option match my values well?
- What trade-offs did I notice?
- What would I like to explore further?

Reflection questions for facilitators / youth workers

- Did participants connect their values with possible environments or paths?
- Which values appeared most frequently in the group?
- Did any conflicts between personal values and external expectations emerge?
- How can this activity be followed up in future sessions?

Disclaimer:

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About the project „Open Yourself for Career Skills“

The project „Open Yourself for Career Skills“ aims to strengthen non-formal career counselling for young people by integrating digital tools and innovative non-formal education methods. It focuses on making career guidance more accessible, relevant, and tailored to the needs of youth. The project also seeks to improve digital literacy, equip youth workers with modern tools, and increase the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, thereby supporting young people's employability and active participation in society.

Objectives:

1. **Strengthen non-formal career counselling for youth.** Improve the quality and innovation of career services by applying non-formal methods adapted to the digital era and accessible to young people.
2. **Enhance digital inclusion.** Expand access to career counselling through a multilingual mobile application and online platform, increasing digital literacy and supporting inclusion and diversity.
3. **Promote innovation in youth work.** Introduce new career guidance approaches, including a methodological tool and training for youth workers, while strengthening the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes.
4. **Build youth worker capacity.** Deliver targeted training to improve competences in non-formal education and digital tools, enhancing the quality and recognition of youth work.
5. **Promote inclusion in career guidance.** Apply universal design principles to ensure accessibility of all project resources, supporting inclusion and diversity across learning contexts.
6. **Strengthen youth employability.** Improve understanding of skills and labour market dynamics, and develop soft skills through tailored career guidance, facilitating transition into employment.

Duration: 24 months (October 2024 – September 2026)

Partners and countries involved:

- Society and Enterprise Development Institute (Lithuania)
- Youth association “Time for Youth” (Latvia)
- Secondary school Haaleitisskoli, Reykjanesbaer (Iceland)
- Regional youth association “Amigos de Europa” (Spain)