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Strengthening

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young people's competences through activism

This toolkit empowers young people to develop key competences like resilience, entrepreneurship, and green skills through the lens of activism. Participants will explore the transformative potential of individual and collective action while gaining tools to support their personal and professional growth.

[Related Module: Module 5 - Competences →](#)

Toolkit Overview ▼

Topic or issues covered

- What competences can a young person develop through activism?
- How can a young person support and create green jobs?
- How can a young person maintain resilience in long-term activism?

Aim of activities



1. Developing core competences of young people.
2. Developing ideas and strategies for activism.
3. Gaining knowledge and developing ideas about green entrepreneurship.
4. Learning constructive strategies for coping with stress, anxiety and tension in activism.

Learning objectives

Young people will test and strengthen their competences, with a particular focus on:

- communication
- cooperation
- entrepreneurship
- innovativeness
- green competence
- resilience

Target group

15-30 years old

Brief summary of active and participatory methodologies used

- Group work
- Discussion
- Brainstorming
- Mind map
- Role playing
- Self-reflection and group reflection

Quality standard checklist

- ✓ **Inclusion and diversity:** the activity is open to all young people, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or socioeconomic background.
- ✓ **Respect:** this activity promotes an environment where young people respect others, their viewpoints and opinions, even if they differ from their own.
- ✓ **Sustainability:** this activity promotes behaviours and practices that respect the environment and are sustainable in the long term.
- ✓ **Personal growth:** offer opportunities for the personal and professional development of young people, helping them discover and cultivate their talents and passions.
- ✓ **Active citizenship:** this activity promotes the values of civic and social engagement by young people, encouraging them to actively participate in their community and make a difference in the world around them.
- ✓ **Green Values in career:** this activity promotes an idea of career orientation that considers ecological values and environmental sustainability, and encourages the adoption of eco-sustainable work practices.

Activity 1

ACTIVISM AS A METHOD OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT

 Estimated Time 30 Minutes

This activity encourages the participants to explore activism as a means of self-development, reflecting on the skills and competences it can foster.

Materials and equipment required:

- Board
- Large sheets of paper (min. A3, preferably flipchart)
- Marker pens
- Pens
- Printed worksheets [DOWNLOAD](#)



Description of the activity:

I. Introduction - Definition of activism and its different forms (social, environmental, political) - 5 min.

1. Ask participants to suggest words they associate with activism. Write them down on the board or on a big piece of paper.
2. Based on their associations, participants create their own definition of activism.
3. One of the participants or the facilitator summarises the collected statements at the end.

Hint: Activism is an effort to promote, obstruct, direct or intervene in social, political, economic or environmental reforms with the intention of bringing about change in society. It takes various forms, such as:

- social activism, which addresses issues such as civil rights;
- environmental activism, which focuses on environmental issues;
- political activism, which involves efforts to influence government policies and decisions.

Each form of activism aims to raise awareness, mobilise support and bring about positive change in an area.

II. Introduction - Activism as a method of soft skills development and youth empowerment - 5 min.

1. Introduce the topic of the workshop by saying, "Many analyses of activism focus on tactics and strategies, often overlooking the importance of skills, which are essential for effective campaigning. According to Amnesty International's research, the key skills for effective activist movements are:
 - strategic thinking
 - effective communication
 - structured conversations about campaigning
 - being authentic
 - being able to use digital skills."
2. Ask participants if they would like to add any other skills needed for effective activism to this list. Write down all the skills on a board or piece of paper so that they are visible to everyone. If the group does not identify skills, you can use the following prompts:
 - Group cooperation
 - Entrepreneurship

- Innovation
 - Critical thinking
 - Ability to formulate problems
 - Sense of agency.
3. Tell the group that in this workshop they are going to focus on the competences that young people can achieve through activism and on development of some of them through active working methods.

III. Examples of effective activists - 15 min.

1. Divide participants into groups of 3-4 people.
2. Distribute a handout with a brief description of the profiles of successful activist (handout – annex 1). Each group shall receive one profile.
3. If you have knowledge that participants can identify other examples of effective activists that are closer to them, you can ask them to name such people. You may then choose not to use the examples of people given above.
4. The task for each group is to review the information about the activist and reflect in groups on what competences and character traits they think these people needed to realise their actions (max 10 min.). In groups, they should also prepare a 1-minute speech on this topic.
5. Finally, ask each group to present the profile of the activist and the competences they needed.

IV. Wrap up – 5 min.

1. Ask the participants if (after finishing the previous exercise) they would like to add some important skills to the list created in part 1.2. Write them down or ask participants to do it.
2. Wrap up the activity and highlight the most important skills that can be developed through activism.



Tips for Youth Workers:

- If you are working with a new group, take time to create a safe space. You can do this by developing a list of rules with the participants that will apply during the class, e.g. we don't interrupt each other, we only use constructive criticism if needed, there are no right or wrong answers, everyone is entitled to their own opinion, etc.
- In the toolkit of Module 1, you can find some other ideas on how to create a safe space, have a look!

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

 Estimated Time 30 Minutes

This activity aims to develop and reinforce participants' communication skills, particularly active listening and understanding of different viewpoints.

Materials and equipment required:

- Computer and projector or printed worksheets [DOWNLOAD](#)

Description of the activity:

I. Introduction – 5 min.

Introduce the topic to the group:

1. In this workshop, the main idea is to test and develop one of the key skills of effective activists - communication.
2. In this exercise, participants try to impersonate characters and act out some short scenes. You can use the themes and characters given in the annex 2 or make up your own.
3. The outcome of this exercise is to reinforce the following communication skills:
 - active listening skills
 - ability to summarise information
 - asking clarifying questions for better understanding
 - being calm but confident

II. Communication. Working in pairs – 15 min.

1. Pair up the participants and designate one as person A and the other as B.
2. Display the topics to be discussed (annex 2) using the projector (you can also print it but we encourage you to use an electronic version of annex 2).
3. Each pair can choose any topic for discussion.
4. Person A discusses a particular topic or shares a short story with person B for a few minutes (e.g. 3-5 min).

5. The aim of person B is to listen actively, paraphrasing what person A has said and ask clarifying questions. Person B should also use counter-arguments.
6. After a few minutes, roles are swapped and person B becomes the speaker while person A practises active listening, asking clarifying questions and giving counter-arguments.
7. Change partners and repeat the process (if you have time for that).

Read out an example of conversation if workshop participants do not have much knowledge of sustainability. An example of conversation can be found in Tips for Youth Workers.

III. Wrap up – 10 min.

After completing the exercise, discuss insights, challenges, and overall impact on communication skills. Ask questions such as:

- Were there times when you found it difficult to express your thoughts or actively listen? If so, what strategies did you use to overcome these challenges?
- How might the experience of participating in these dialogues influence your approach to discussing environmental issues in the future?
- How did the provocative nature of the topics contribute to a more engaging and dynamic dialogue?



Tips for Youth Workers:

Example of conversation and skills used (read out example of conversation if participants do not have much knowledge of sustainability):

Person A (advocating sustainable practices in the workplace):

In today's rapidly changing work landscape, integrating sustainable practices is critical. Initiatives such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and promoting environmentally friendly commuting options can make a significant contribution to a greener workplace. Companies that embrace sustainability are aligned with the values of younger workers.

Person B (expressing concerns about feasibility):

I get your point of view. But while sustainability is important, we also need to consider the practicalities. Some companies may find it difficult to implement these initiatives due to budgetary constraints or operational complexity. How do you propose to find a

balance between encouraging sustainable practices and solving practical challenges that companies may face?

Person A (Problem-solving and promoting solutions):

Of course, I understand that there are challenges. One approach is to start with small, manageable changes. For example, introducing recycling programmes, encouraging remote working to reduce commuting, or using technology for more energy-efficient operations. Not only are these steps sustainable, but they can also be implemented gradually, minimising disruption.

Person B (acknowledging but emphasising the need for adaptation):

I appreciate the practical suggestions. However, it is important to ensure that these initiatives can be adapted to different industries and company sizes. What works for a tech startup may not be so feasible for a manufacturing company. How can we adapt these sustainable practices to different working environments?

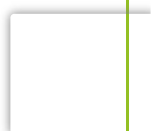
Person A (Promoting personalisation and collaboration):

Great point: sustainability should be flexible. Personalisation is key and this is where collaboration comes in. Young professionals can take the lead by researching industry best practices and collaborating with colleagues to adapt sustainable initiatives. In this way, strategies can be flexible enough to fit different workplace contexts.

(This kind of conversation allows for constructive dialogue, involving active listening, understanding different perspectives, and finding common ground to promote sustainable practices in the workplace).

Activity 3

SELF-EMPLOYMENT COMPETENCES. HOW CAN A YOUNG PERSON CREATE A SUSTAINABLE JOB OR A SUSTAINABLE SIDE-HUSTLE?



 **Estimated Time 45 Minutes**

This activity aims to enhance the participants' entrepreneurial skills, as well as their knowledge of green jobs and sustainable side-hustles.

 **Materials and equipment required:**

- Board
- Large sheets of paper (min. A3, preferably a flip chart)
- Marker pens
- Pens
- Sticky notes
- Computer and projector, or printed worksheets [DOWNLOAD](#)

 **Description of the activity:**

I. Introduction to the topic – 5 min.

1. The topics of the workshop are: sustainable jobs and how young people can influence their creation. This activity allows participants to develop their knowledge of green jobs, creativity and entrepreneurial skills.
2. Ask participants if they know of examples of people who have created green jobs or do extra work that contributes to sustainability (sustainable side-hustle).
3. Conduct a short discussion on this topic (5 min.).

II. Brainstorming on sustainable jobs – 25 min.

1. Divide participants into groups of 4-5 people. Give them big sheets of paper, markers, and descriptions of young activists who have created sustainable jobs (descriptions are provided in annex 3, each group should be given material with three examples of activists).
2. Let participants read the descriptions. This part of the exercise is to serve as an inspiration.
3. Working in groups, participants suggest ideas for businesses or organisations which could offer green jobs. They can also suggest changes that could be made to existing businesses (that they know from their surroundings or from the media) so that these businesses offer new sustainable jobs for young people.
4. Indicate that this is a brainstorming exercise, so none of the suggestions should be blocked, and all be written down on a large sheet of paper. Allocate at least 15 minutes for the brainstorming itself.

5. After the brainstorming, each participant will award three votes for the best ideas by marking them with a dot. It is also time for questions and explanation, if necessary.
6. At the end, the number of votes (dots) for each idea should be counted in the groups and a list of up to five ideas should be compiled, starting with those which have received the most support.

III. Presentation of the outcomes and evaluation – 15 min.

1. When the groups have finished the brainstorming part, one representative of each group presents the best ideas to the forum and explains them shortly (1-2 minutes for each presentation).
2. Finally, ask the participants which competences they have used or strengthened through this exercise? What was the overall impression of this activity?



Tips for Youth Workers:

Brainstorming is all about thinking outside the box.

Here are some tips for youth workers as well as young people:

- Set a time limit for the brainstorming.
- All ideas are good ideas.
- Do not judge an idea when presented to the group.
- Record all brainstorm ideas.
- Involve everyone.
- Take turns when presenting the ideas.
- Look for obvious as well as invite wild ideas.

Activity 4

COOPERATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

 Estimated Time 45 Minutes

This activity aims to enhance participants' cooperation and entrepreneurial skills as they design collaborative social campaigns to address environmental issues.



Materials and equipment required:

- Board
- Large sheets of paper (min. A3, preferably a flip chart)
- Marker pens
- Pens
- Worksheet [DOWNLOAD](#)



Description of the activity:

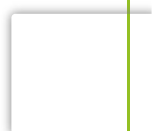
I. Introduction - 5 min.

1. In this exercise, the group's task will be to create a social campaign. Alternatively, instead of a campaign, you could suggest developing any of the ideas from the previous exercise on creating companies or organisations that could offer sustainable jobs (activity 3).
2. Divide participants into groups of 4-5 people. It will be ideal if participants come from different backgrounds and cultures.
3. Present the groups with a task. This is to design a collaborative community campaign to address a chosen issue.
4. To do this, participants will create a mind map which should consist of the areas listed in annex 4. Print it out for each group or display it on the screen.

II. Mind maps – 35 min.

1. In the middle of the mind map write 'collaborative social campaign' (or alternatively 'green business' or 'green organisation' if you are going to work on ideas from activity 3).
2. Each group, using the mind map, should identify a specific goal relating to sustainable development (e.g. to encourage the use of bicycles and increase the availability of bicycle paths), target group (e.g. campaign aimed at the city authorities and inhabitants), describe the action plan, the resources needed, the timetable, the evaluation, promotion/communication and dissemination methods. If necessary, they can add other important aspects. Allocate at least 20 minutes for this part of the exercise.
3. Next step is presentation of campaign ideas to the forum, highlighting how collaboration played a key role.

III. Wrap up and evaluation – 5 min.



At the end, you may ask the participants summary questions:

1. Was it easy to plan the campaign activities together? What difficulties did you encounter?
2. What do you think it takes to work together in a group? What is needed for effective group work?
3. In the course of your work, did you notice any competences in yourself or other group members? E.g. leadership, creativity and initiative, dealing with criticism, effective communication, etc.? Which of them are important for a successful campaign?



Tips for Youth Workers:

1. Here are some tips for creating a mind map:
 - Use a different color for each branch off your main point to make it easy to see different sections at a glance.
 - Don't be afraid to play around with drawings, icons, emojis, and other visuals.
 - Keep an open mind and a non-judgmental attitude.
2. If participants do not manage to work out all the areas indicated in Annex 4 in the allotted time, they can present what they have managed to do.
3. If possible, the time of this workshop could be extended to 60 minutes so that groups can present their campaigns in more detail and so that questions on the presentation can be asked by the other participants.

Activity 5

SELF-CARE IN ACTIVISM

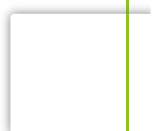
 Estimated Time 30 Minutes

This activity addresses the importance of self-care in activism and helps participants explore strategies for coping with stress, anxiety and tension.



Materials and equipment required:

- Sheets of paper (A4)
- Marker Pens



- Pens
- Board
- Worksheet [DOWNLOAD](#)



Description of the activity:

I. Introduction to the topic of self-care – 5 min.

1. Define self-care within the context of activism and its necessity for sustainable engagement.

Example: Self-care is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's health, particularly in high-stress environments such as activism.

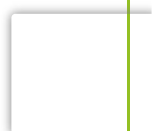
2. Ask the participants to point out the challenges activists face, such as burnout, mental fatigue, feeling overwhelmed, fear of failure, frustration, anxiety, tension, insecurity, problems arising from cooperation with other people.

II. The ladder of stress – 20 min.

1. The next step is self-reflection (5-10 min.). Give each participant a piece of paper. Ask them to create their own stress ladder. Their task is to draw a ladder with 10 rungs. On each rung they should write down one situation that causes stress or anxiety (where the first rung at the bottom means the least stressful situation and the tenth at the top means the most stressful).
2. Then ask the participants to get into pairs. In pairs, the participants exchange their papers and the next person tries to generate ideas on how to deal with the difficulties. Participants can write down solutions next to the problems indicated on the ladder or on the back of the sheet. Then they present the solutions to one another (10 min).
3. At the end, all participants return to group work (5-10 min.). The facilitator asks a volunteer or two to present their stress ladder and the solutions suggested by their partner. After that, the group tries to create a joint list of possible methods to cope with activists' stress and anxiety.

Examples of methods:

- *Setting clear boundaries*
- *Balancing activism with personal life*
- *Avoiding unrealistic expectations*
- *Prioritising self-care*
- *Stress reduction techniques such as relaxation*
- *Physical exercise*
- *Taking regular breaks and holidays*



- *Delegating tasks*
- *Dividing tasks into smaller parts*
- *Ensuring open communication, teamwork and shared responsibility to reduce pressure on individuals*
- *Regularly reviewing personal and professional goals*
- *Providing professional support (counselling, therapy, coaching) if necessary*

III. Conclusion – 5 min.

1. Summarise the key takeaways from this activity, emphasising the importance of self-care in sustaining long-term activism.
2. Encourage participants to actively incorporate self-care into their activism and daily routines to maintain their mental, emotional, and physical well-being.



Tips for Youth Workers:

- Self-care is an important skill for everyone, but especially for young people and activists who are under stress from the challenges they face. It is worth taking the time to do this exercise.
- In Annex 5, you'll find a visual representation of the 'stress ladder.' If it helps with group work, you may print a copy for each participant. However, this is optional, as participants can draw their own ladders during the workshop.

Activity 6

EVALUATION

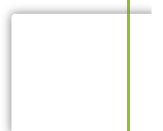
 Estimated Time 20 Minutes

This activity is designed for the evaluation of the toolkit and allows for the participants to reflect on their experience.



Materials and equipment required:

- Large sheets of paper (A3 or a flip chart) or board
- Marker pens
- Pens



- Sticky notes
- Worksheet [DOWNLOAD](#)



Description of the activity:

1. Prepare a tree template (you can draw a tree on the board or on a large sheet of paper).
2. Distribute three sticky notes to each participant. On one of them, participants are to write which competences they used and developed during the workshop, e.g. innovation, entrepreneurship, communication. On the second one, they should describe the impressions and emotions they experienced and on the third one - the results they achieved, e.g. the project idea, methods to unwind.
3. The notes with the descriptions of the competences are to be stuck to the trunk of the tree, the impressions and emotions - to the branches and the notes with the results as leaves.
4. Finally, you can read out the conclusions written on the sticky notes and/or ask participants to share their thoughts.



Tips for Youth Workers:

- By prioritising evaluation, youth workers can foster more impactful and engaging workshops while building trust with participants.
- If you don't feel confident drawing the tree, you can use the ready-to-use template provided in Annex 6. Ensure it is printed in at least A3 format. Alternatively, you can ask one of the participants to assist with this task.

Career Gardeners - Growing sustainable careers in times of crisis

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