Nordisk Samorganisation för Ungdomsarbete

Recommendations on digital youth work

Background

This document is completed by the Nordic umbrella organisation in the field of youth, Nordisk Samorganisation för Ungdomsarbete, together with its Nordic and Baltic members and partners. The recommendations are developed as part of NSU´s project "Ung Intelligens", carried out in 2018-2019.

Aim

The aim of this document is to give Nordic and Baltic youth NGO:s practical guidance regarding use of digital tools, as well as its opportunities and risks.

Sources

We have during our work got familiar with already existing material about digital youth work and other relevant sources. We do not have the intention to produce another guide of the same kind, but rather make a short and practical guide which is based on information from the externals sources and our own experience, and is useful for our members, partnership and other similar NGOs. For further information about the topic we recommend to study the sources we have used:

1. The EU publication "Developing digital youth work". It was set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018, the expert group on 'Risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy' provides policy recommendations, training needs and good practice examples in developing digital youth work across the EU. It can be found at: https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fbc18822-07cb-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1.
2. The tool kits for youth organisations developed commonly by Council of Europe and European Union do not directly address digital youth work, but many other areas of youth work which are also related to digital youth work. They can be found at: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kits.
3. A guide to digitalisation of youth work: https://www.verke.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Digitalisation-and-youth-work.pdf
4. Information from the NSU members and partners via direct contact with us.

Opportunities

It is relevant for youth organisations to investigate the potentials of digital youth work because:

- Digital tools are a big part of young people´s lives -so it is natural that young people use digital youth also in youth work.
- Digital youth work has the potential to reach out to a wider range of young people and gives (in most cases) more equal opportunities to for young people to participate regardless where they live and what their financial situation is.

- Digital tools can lower the barrier for participation in the democracy and finding out information about the society.
- Many digital tools suitable for youth work are available, and more are all de time developing. They can make traditional work in youth NGOs more efficient and improve the quality. It is for example by digital tools easier to gather information, spread and analyse a survey, disseminate results and do instant communication.
- Digital tools support smooth communication, and digital meetings can be a complementary for to physical meetings. It both saves money and the environment.

Risks

There are also many risks with digital youth work, from data security to lack of actual human interaction. Special attention should be put handling personal data (text, photos, video) according to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and common sense. Passwords should at all circumstances be complex and be kept safe.

More detailed information about risks of digital youth work is available in the resource material.

Our recommendations for digital youth work

Here follows NSU´s and the member/partners recommendation for use of specific digital tools in youth work. We are aware of that programmes and communication formats develop all the time, so we want to emphasise that these recommendations apply to the situation in 2019.

Internal communication

Many digital communication formats exist, but for efficient internal communication in Nordic youth work it is important to find communication programmes that are already used by most of the target group. Based on a study among our target group (Nordic and European youth and youth workers) youth we recommend to use:

- Messenger within Nordic groups
- WhatsApp within European groups
- Skype for group calls

Visibility and external communication

NSU uses Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/nordiskeunge/) and Instagram (youthofthenorth) for social media visibility. Twitter is a good channel especially for organisations with a more political agenda, but is

used widely also by NGOs (however not so much by Nordic NGOs as by for example British). Snapchat is useful for organisations that need strong presents among young grassroot members.

Social media communication (except for Twitter) is to a high degree based on pictures and videos. It is therefore important to get at least good quality photos of the activities. In NSU we use videos regularly for visibility, spreading of information and Nordic/Baltic views. Some partners are also using videos for very practical communication, for example explaining for participants how to travel to an activity venue or describing a preparation task. NSU spreads its videos normally on Facebook and Instagram, and can reach a wider audience on YouTube. Videos can also be used for example as introduction to sessions. Standard videos can be done with smartphones, which most young people have. A microphone compatible with smartphones is the most relevant small investment if wanting to improve the video quality. Challenges with videos is that they take some time to prepare, film and edit.

Sharing material

NSU uses mainly Dropbox for storing and sharing documents. We appreciate the easy offline access format and that users can move folders in a way that individual structure is possible. Space limit (16 GB in 2019) of the free version is quickly reached by regular youth work files. In NSU´s case the secretariat host has one upgraded account and share only relevant folders with board members for them to not exceed limit of the free space. Among our partners, organisations with more staff and board members needing extensive access have good experiences of Dropbox professional licences with multiple users.

We also use Google Docs for common drafting of documents, but according to our experience, the offline use, folder structure building and final editing of documents are less practical. An advantage is though that the space used for free is larger, 30 GB (in 2019).

Surveys and evaluation form

Many programmes are available, but at NSU we have with good experience used Google Form and Survey Monkey for digital surveys and evaluation forms.

Voting

Electronic voting can be relevant both when a group sits physical together to make voting smoother, and is essential for enabling online meetings including voting. If planning to use voting in an NGO for board meetings

and general assembly, the organisation need to first ensure electronic voting is allowed in the organisation according to its statues. NSU is in the process of changing the statues so electronic voting and there by digital statutory meetings would be allowed. Our partners have used for example Mentimeter for electronic voting.

Quizzes and games

In NSU and several partners we have used Kahoot for quiz games on various topics. It can be used in educational context as an interactive tool for raising participants´ awareness about any preferred topic. It can also be used as a social tool for getting to know each other better.

There is a large variety of educational games online, but at least the more complex ones require powerful computer (which can be expensive) and some experience of using them.

Layout and design

Organisations need to do layout and design for activity material, invitations, magazines etc. Many free digital tools are available online, like for example Canva, as well as those that cost some to use, like Photoshop.

Passwords

Online tools can be helpful for creating safe passwords and easily access the own accounts by one single password. A provider of this kind of service is for exampleor example Lastpass.

NSU´s future digital plans

NSU is currently (2019) producing short educational videos about how to facilitate sessions by non-formal methods. This is worked on as an outcome of an physical training course on this topic and the aim of the videos is to summarise the course learning outcomes and spreading it to a larger audience.

We are also planning an online course for increased inter-generational dialogue and stronger youth leadership in NGOs.