



Innovation in the youth field

A case study of three strategic partnerships

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Foreword

This study is conducted by Proba research (Proba samfunnsanalyse), with funding from The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir). Mari Heglum has managed the project, and Susanne Rolandsen has contributed to data collection and writing of case-descriptions. Trude Thorbjørnsrud and Audun Gleinsvik have provided quality assurance, by commenting and approving interview-guides and the final report-draft.

We want to thank all interviewees who have contributed to this project by providing information about the strategic partnerships and valuable reflections on innovation.

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Summary and conclusions

Transnational strategic partnerships for innovation in the youth field can receive funding from the EU programme *Erasmus+: Youth in Action*. All funded partnerships consist of several organisations within the youth field, which together aim to develop and share innovative practices across organisations and borders.

This report contains a case study of three strategic partnerships for innovation in the youth field coordinated by Norwegian organisations. The study is funded by The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, which is the National Agency of Erasmus+: Youth in Action. The study is a part of the international research project RAY INNO, exploring the impact of Key Action 2, namely strategic partnerships in the youth field. The RAY INNO project explores the role, impact, and potential of strategic partnerships as instruments to foster innovation across 16 European countries. The case descriptions within this report make up the Norwegian contribution to RAY INNO, in addition to being followed by a country-specific cross-case analytical summary.

The partnerships studied have been selected by the Norwegian national agency of Erasmus+: Youth in Action (Bufdir), as cases of *best practice* for fostering innovation in the youth field. Therefore, the study does not aim to evaluate the projects' results, but rather to describe *how – and in what ways* – the three partnerships have fostered innovation, highlighting success factors and points of learning.

Specifically, this study explores how the partnerships understand the concept of innovation, how they seek to foster innovation, how results are shared, in what ways different organisations and networks benefit, and how the projects impact youth work and the youth sector.

Three strategic partnerships make up the selected cases for this study - *The 360 degrees participation model*, *Borderline Boardgames*, and *the European Network of Youth work research*. In the following, a summary of each case is given, as well as a summary of cross-case conclusions. Additional information about the projects can also be found in the online Erasmus+ Project Results Platform. Direct links to the projects' sites can be found in the table below.

Table 1: Erasmus+ Results Platform Links:

The 360 degrees participation model	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2015-3-NO02-KA205-000615
Borderline Boardgames	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/53d770f3-e74f-4f1d-9e64-4fb40f753f71
The European Network of Youth work research	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2014-2-NO02-KA205-000450

Case summaries

The 360 degrees participation model

The project *360 degrees participation model* aspired to enhance youth participation in local decision-making processes through the collection and development of participatory theory and tools, and dissemination to municipalities, local decision-makers, and NGOs.

The project produced two substantial participation manuals and an online platform containing participatory tools and methodology.

The partnership approached the concept of innovation as an output, as a method, and as a working process. They aspired to create a new *connection* between existing methods of participation and new beneficiaries. Furthermore, their central thematic concept – participation – was understood as a method of co-creation and innovation. Lastly, the innovation concept was an integral part of the working processes within the project consortium.

The project has provided beneficiaries with user-friendly participatory tools and contributed to increased understanding, knowledge, and awareness of the importance of youth participation. Also, it has led to the implementation of sustainable structures of innovation among key stakeholders. In particular, the partnership has contributed to the implementation of stable participatory structures within the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) – benefitting all NAV-users.¹

Borderline Boardgames

The project *Borderline Boardgames* developed two educational interactive boardgames about financial literacy (titled Real Ideal) and conflict resolution and war (titled Mission Z). The games function as tools for non-formal education for youth.

The project approached the innovation concept in three different ways. Firstly, by connecting *methods* of non-formal learning to new topics relevant to youth. Secondly, as a form of production – the games were produced in a small Portuguese village to create local employment. Thirdly, as a final *output* – the finished games.

The partnership has reached numerous local young people with the games, through arranging local game sessions. Furthermore, the project has created opportunities for cooperation with external stakeholders, such as local schools, universities, and financial institutions. Hence, the project impacts the youth sector by providing new tools for non-formal learning, and through facilitating new perspectives and ways of thinking among local youth.

The European network of youth work research

The European network of youth work research has created an academic journal, where academics and practitioners in the youth field co-write journal articles. Also, the project aimed to create an international network for knowledge transfer between actors and borders and to contribute to an increased political acknowledgment of youth work.

The partnership approached innovation as a method for creating cooperation between academics and practitioners in the youth field (co-writing) and increasing cross-sectoral cooperation, and as an innovative output - the journal.

Thus, the project has fostered innovation in the youth field by contributing to new connections between academics and practitioners, and increased knowledge transfer across borders. Furthermore, the project has provided an arena for publication of co-written research on youth work, that has the potential for fostering further knowledge-led innovation within youth work and the youth field.

¹ NAV administers Norwegian welfare benefits, a third of the Norwegian national budget, and works with users from a range of different groups through 456 local NAV offices.

Conclusions

Understanding of the concept of innovation

All the three partnerships have understood the innovation of their projects to be the novel intellectual outputs they have created through applying existing knowledge in new ways or realms. However, they have also approached innovation as cooperative working processes, and as enhancing methods for fostering innovation among beneficiaries. Furthermore, common to all the three partnerships is a *process-oriented* understanding of how to foster innovation, which entails fostering *cooperation*.

Hence, all three partnerships have approached innovation as creating something new from something existing. Furthermore, they have understood fostering of innovation as a process of connecting individuals, organisations and institutions with different pre-existing knowledge, perspectives, and experiences, and facilitating cooperative working methods and processes which utilise their knowledge, competencies, and differences to create something novel in the intersection between different perspectives and bases of knowledge. Therefore, a definition of innovation derived from the three partnerships combined can be stated as follows:

Innovation is the creation of something new– through combining differing perspectives, and applying existing knowledge in new ways or realms.

Methods and tools for fostering innovation

All three partnerships have sought to foster innovation also among actors external to the projects consortiums, by creating some intellectual output designed to change or enhance youth work practices (participatory tools, non-formal educational tools, co-written journal) among beneficiaries. Hence, they have sought to provide project participants, stakeholders, and other actors in the youth field with methods, tools, or knowledge they can use to facilitate change or improvements within their respective realms. In this way, the projects have aspired to create change from within, establishing new practices and structures of innovation among beneficiaries and recipients, so the outputs of the projects can live on and contribute to further innovation in the future.

Beneficiaries and sharing of results

Each partnership has chosen sharing approaches within the context of their project aims, designed to target the aimed project beneficiaries. Common for all partnerships is the importance of the partner organisations' networks within the youth field for sharing results. The organisations have utilised their existing networks, as well as networks created through the project. Furthermore, external beneficiaries and stakeholders have been included in the project developments, creating ownership of results. As a result, both partner organisations and a range of beneficiaries have gained new tools and knowledge to apply in their practical realities. Furthermore, all actors benefit from the strengthening and expansion of networks within the youth field resulting from the three projects networks reaching across sectors and from the local to the international level.

Impact on youth work and the youth sector

All three partnerships have provided something needed, and something different actors in the youth field can use to improve or change their work locally. Hence, all the projects have provided tools, methods, or knowledge which can improve the quality of youth work in different contexts. Furthermore, the three projects have contributed to the strengthening of local, national, and international networks, increasing ownership and pride among youth workers and other actors in the field. Stronger networks create new opportunities for future cooperation and partnerships, as well as the potential for

increased knowledge transfer between actors and across borders. Hence, all three projects have, in different ways, contributed to bringing the youth field forward.

Common success factors

In all three partnerships, the intellectual outputs have been co-created with representatives of potential users of project results. The co-creation of outputs has had several positive consequences.

- The projects functioned as learning arenas for everyone involved.
- Co-creation ensured relevant outputs, adapted to the beneficiaries' needs.
- Beneficiaries gained ownership of results early on.
- Co-creation processes created new and lasting partnerships with external stakeholders.

Jointly, these factors eased dissemination, ensured sustainable results in the projects' aftermath, and contributed to the strengthening of networks within the youth field, creating new connections and potential for future collaborations.

Hence, the most crucial success factor of these partnerships seems to be the successful inclusion of stakeholders and beneficiaries in project work and development. Importantly, this involvement has been spurred on by the partnerships process-oriented understanding of how to foster innovation. Namely creating arenas for connecting individuals across sectors and utilising their competencies and differences to create something new in the intersection between different bases of knowledge.

Norwegian summary – norsk sammendrag

Strategiske partnerskap for innovasjon på ungdomsfeltet er internasjonale samarbeidsprosjekter mellom organisasjoner fra ulike EU-land. Organisasjonene samarbeider om å utvikle og dele innovative praksiser på tvers av organisasjoner og landegrenser. Prosjektene får støtte gjennom EU-programmet Erasmus+: Aktiv Ungdom.

Denne rapporten er en case-studie av tre strategiske partnerskap for innovasjon på ungdomsfeltet koordinert av norske organisasjoner. Studien er finansiert av Barne-, Ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet (Bufdir), som også er nasjonalt kontor for ungdomsdelen av Erasmus+. Studien er en del av det internasjonale forskningsprosjektet RAY INNO, som utforsker strategiske partnerskaps rolle i og potensial for å støtte innovasjon på ungdomsfeltet på tvers av 16 europeiske land. Case-beskrivelsene i denne rapporten utgjør Norges bidrag til det internasjonale forskningsprosjektet. I tillegg inneholder denne rapporten en egen landspesifikk analyse, hvor de tre norsk-koordinerte prosjektene analyseres på tvers. Begrepet «ungdomsfeltet» er ikke klart avgrenset i støtteordningen, og derfor heller ikke i denne rapporten. Begrepet kan forstås som å benevne et felt bestående av et vidt omfang av aktiviteter og organisasjoner, men hvor målgruppa hovedsakelig er ungdom mellom 13 og 30 år, og hvor målet er å styrke ungdom på en eller annen måte.

De tre strategiske partnerskapene som studeres i denne rapporten er valgt ut av Bufdir som eksempler på av «beste praksis» for innovasjon på ungdomsfeltet. Dette er altså en studie av vellykkede prosjekter. Formålet er derfor ikke å evaluere prosjektene og resultatene, men å beskrive hvordan, og på hvilke måter, de tre partnerskapene har bidratt til å fremme innovasjon på ungdomsfeltet. Spesifikt utforskes det hvordan partnerskapene har forstått og definert begrepet «innovasjon», hvordan de støtter og fremmer innovasjon, hvordan resultatene fra prosjektene er delt med andre, på hvilke måter ulike organisasjoner og aktører drar nytte av prosjektene, og hvordan prosjektene har påvirket ungdomsarbeid og ungdomsfeltet.

De tre partnerskapene som studeres er *360-graders medvirkningsmodell*, *Borderline Brettspill*, og *Europeisk nettverk for forskning på ungdomsarbeid*. Under følger en kort oppsummering av hvert partnerskap, og deretter en oppsummering av konklusjoner på tvers av case. Mer informasjon om prosjektene er også tilgjengelig online, via Erasmus+ plattformen for prosjektresultater. Lenker til prosjektenes sider finnes i tabellen under.

Tabell 1: Lenker til prosjektene på Erasmus+ resultatplattform

360-graders medvirkningsmodell	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2015-3-NO02-KA205-000615
Borderline Brettspill	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/53d770f3-e74f-4f1d-9e64-4fb40f753f71
Europeisk nettverk for forskning på ungdomsarbeid	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2014-2-NO02-KA205-000450

Partnerskapene

360-graders medvirkningsmodell

360-graders medvirkningsmodell hadde som formål å styrke unges medvirkning i lokale beslutningsprosesser. For å realisere dette målet ville de tre partnerorganisasjonene samle inn og utvikle medvirkningsverktøy og metoder for medvirkning, og gjøre disse tilgjengelige for fylker, kommuner, lokale beslutningstakere og organisasjonslivet. Partnerskapet produserte to bøker om medvirkning og tverrsektorielt samarbeid, samt en nettløsning som inneholder verktøyene og metodene.

Partnerskapet tilnærmet seg innovasjonsbegrepet både som et prosjekt-resultat, som en metode, og som en arbeidsprosess. For det første så de på innovasjon som det å skape nye forbindelser mellom eksisterende metodikk for medvirkning og aktører som kan dra nytte av slike verktøy. For det andre betraktet partnerskapet medvirkning som en metode for å fremme innovasjon i seg selv. For det tredje var innovasjonsbegrepet sentralt for hvordan partnerorganisasjonene la opp sine egne arbeidsprosesser. I arbeidet med prosjektet benyttet organisasjonene altså den samme medvirknings- og samskapingmetodikken som også ble en del av prosjektets sluttresultat.

Prosjektet har resultert i en samling av brukervennlige medvirkningsverktøy, samt bidratt til økt bevissthet om, forståelse av, og kunnskap om ungdomsmedvirkning blant en rekke aktører som arbeider med unge i beslutningsprosesser. I tillegg har prosjektet ført til implementering av varige strukturer for medvirkning i organisasjoner som har vært tilknyttet prosjektet. Spesifikt har prosjektet bidratt til etablering av strukturer for medvirkning i NAV, noe som gagner NAV-brukere generelt, og unge bruker spesielt.

Borderline Brettspill

Det strategiske partnerskapet Borderline Brettspill utviklet verktøy for uformell læring i form av to interaktive brettspill for ungdom som omhandler temaene personlig økonomi (Real Ideal), og krig og konfliktløsning (Mission Z).

I prosjektets kontekst ble innovasjonsbegrepet forstått på flere måter. For det første ble innovasjon forstått som å knytte metoder for ikke-formell læring for ungdom til to nye tematiske områder (økonomi og konfliktløsning), og lik skape noe nytt. For det andre betraktet partnerskapet spillenes produksjonsmåte som innovativ. Spillene ble produsert i en liten portugisisk landsby, med formål om å skape lokal sysselsetting. For det tredje ble det ferdige produktet i seg selv (brettspillene) betraktet som en innovasjon.

Samlet har prosjektet nådd frem til en stor gruppe ungdommer med brettspillene, gjennom spill-sesjoner i regi av partnerorganisasjonene lokalt, som også har fortsatt i etterkant av prosjektperioden. I tillegg har prosjektet resultert i nye samarbeid mellom partnerorganisasjonene og andre aktører som arbeider med unge, slik som lokale skoler, universiteter, og også finansielle institusjoner. Prosjektet har altså påvirket ungdomsfeltet gjennom å tilby nye verktøy for ikke-formell læring, og gjennom å bidra til å fremme nye perspektiver og tankemåter hos lokal ungdom.

Europeisk nettverk for forskning på ungdomsarbeid

Europeisk nettverk for forskning på ungdomsarbeid skapte et nytt akademisk tidsskrift, hvor akademikere og ungdomsarbeidere samarbeider om å produsere tidsskriftsartikler. I tillegg ønsket partnerskapet å skape et internasjonalt nettverk for kunnskapsoverføring mellom aktører og landegrensene og å bidra til å styrke ungdomsarbeid politisk og som disiplin.

Partnerorganisasjonene betraktet innovasjon som å skape ett nytt akademisk tidsskrift, ved å anvende metoder (samskriving) for å skape samarbeid mellom akademikere og

praktikere på ungdomsfeltet. Slikt samarbeid ville skape en ny form for akademisk materiale, som i større grad formidler perspektiver fra praktisk ungdomsarbeid. Det nye akademiske tidsskriftet ble altså betraktet som innovasjonsresultatet av denne innovasjonsprosessen.

Partnerskapet har altså fremmet innovasjon ved å bidra til kontakt og samarbeid mellom akademikere og praktikere på ungdomsfeltet og ved å bidra til utveksling av kunnskap og erfaringer på tvers av sektorer og landegrenser. I tillegg har prosjektet skapt en arena for formidling av en ny type forskning og perspektiver på ungdomsarbeid, som potensielt kan fremme videre kunnskapsbasert innovasjon på ungdomsfeltet og styrke ungdomsarbeid som fagdisiplin.

Konklusjoner

Forståelse av innovasjonsbegrepet

Alle tre partnerskapene forsto innovasjon som det å skape og implementere noe nytt, ved å anvende eksisterende kunnskap på nye måter. Imidlertid tilnærmet de seg også innovasjonsbegrepet gjennom utvikling av metoder for å fremme innovasjon, og gjennom egne arbeidsprosesser. Felles for partnerskapene er at de hadde en prosessorientert forståelse av hvordan innovasjon kan fremmes, som på en eller annen måte innebærer å skape arenaer for samarbeid.

Partnerskapenes forståelse av hvordan innovasjon kan fremmes må sies å være en del av deres forståelse av innovasjonsbegrepet i seg selv. Partnerskapene tilnærmet seg derfor innovasjon som en prosess, hvor hvor individer, organisasjoner og institusjoner med ulike perspektiver, kunnskap og erfaringer bindes sammen ved hjelp av samarbeidsmetoder som utnytter deres kunnskap, kompetanse og forskjeller til å skape noe nytt i skjæringspunktet mellom ulike kunnskapsgrunnlag og perspektiver. En forståelse av innovasjon basert på de tre partnerskapene kan oppsummeres som følger:

Innovasjon er å skape noe nytt, ved å kombinere ulike perspektiver, og anvende eksisterende kunnskap på nye måter eller områder.

Metoder og verktøy for å fremme innovasjon

Partnerskapene har alle støttet innovasjon på ungdomsfeltet ved å utvikle nye metoder, verktøy eller kunnskap som aktører i ungdomssektoren kan bruke til å forbedre eller endre egen praksis lokalt. På denne måten har alle de tre partnerskapene ønsket å skape endring innenfra, ved å tilby redskaper andre aktører kan bruke på sin egen måte og i sin lokale kontekst. Gjennom å støtte etablering av nye praksiser og strukturer blant brukerne av prosjektenes resultater, kan resultatene også leve videre, og bidra til videre innovasjon i fremtiden.

Deling av-, og brukere av prosjektenes resultater

Partnerskapenes strategier og metoder for å dele prosjektenes resultater ble tilpasset prosjektenes respektive målgrupper. Imidlertid var partnerorganisasjonenes nettverk viktig for delingen av resultatene i alle prosjektene. Alle partnerskapene brukte organisasjonenes eksisterende nettverk, i tillegg til nettverk som ble bygde opp gjennom prosjektperioden, for å spre resultatene. I tillegg ble delingen av resultater delvis gjort underveis, ved at potensielle brukere av resultatene ble inkludert i arbeidsprosesser og prosjektaktiviteter, og slik fikk eierskap til resultatene.

Resultatet er at både partnerorganisasjonene og en rekke andre aktører har fått nye verktøy, metoder og kunnskap de kan anvende i sitt lokale arbeid med unge. I tillegg drar

alle aktørene på feltet nytte av styrkede nettverk som følge av prosjektene – nettverk som går på tvers av sektorer og fra lokalt til internasjonalt nivå.

Påvirkning på ungdomsarbeid og ungdomsfeltet

Alle de tre partnerskapene har utviklet noe nyttig som ulike aktører på ungdomsfeltet kan bruke til å forbedre eller endre ungdomsarbeid lokalt. Prosjektene har altså bidratt med verktøy, metoder eller kunnskap som kan øke kvaliteten på ungdomsarbeid i ulike kontekster. I tillegg har prosjektene bidratt til å styrke lokale, nasjonale og internasjonale nettverk, som øker eierskap og stolthet blant ungdomsarbeider og andre aktører på ungdomsfeltet. Styrkede nettverk skaper nye samarbeidsmuligheter og nye partnerskap, samt potensial for mer kunnskapsoverføring mellom aktører og på tvers av landegrenser. På denne måten har alle de tre prosjektene, på ulike måter, bidratt til å bringe ungdomsfeltet fremover.

Felles suksessfaktorer

I alle de tre prosjektene har prosjektresultatene blitt samskapt med representanter for potensielle brukere av resultatene. Denne samskapingen har hatt flere positive konsekvenser. For det første har prosjektene fungert som læringsarenaer for alle involverte. For det andre har samskaping ført til at resultatene har vært relevante og tilpasset de potensielle brukernes behov. For det tredje har eksterne aktører fått eierskap til prosjektene og resultatene. For det fjerde har samskaping av resultatene ført til etablering av nye og varige partnerskap mellom partnerorganisasjoner og eksterne aktører. Til sammen har dette lettet prosessen med å spre resultatene fra prosjektene til potensielle brukere, sikret at resultatene er i aktiv bruk også i etterkant av prosjektperioden, samt bidratt til styrkede nettverk og potensial for nye fremtidige samarbeid.

Den mest avgjørende suksessfaktoren på tvers av de tre prosjektene er altså inkluderingen av potensielle brukere av prosjektresultatene i selve utviklingen og gjennomføringen av prosjektene – altså samskaping av resultater med potensielle brukere. Innebygd i denne tilnærmingen til å skape resultater ligger partnerskapenes forståelse av innovasjon som å skape arenaer hvor individer med ulike perspektiver knyttes sammen på tvers av sektorer, og anvende metoder som drar nytte av deres kompetanse og forskjeller til å skape noe nytt i skjæringspunktet mellom dem.

1 Introduction

Strategic partnerships for innovation in the youth field are transnational projects aiming to develop and share innovative practices across organisations and borders. The projects are funded through the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme. The EU works with National Agencies to manage the programme across different countries. All funded partnerships have one coordinating organisation that is legally responsible for the project, as well as at least one partner organisation residing in a different EU/EEA country. The programme supports long-term projects – lasting from six months to three years. All funded partnerships deal with topics related to youth and shall contribute to something positive in the youth field. However, the programme is flexible, funding a variety of projects dealing with different parts of the youth field.

This report contains a case study of three strategic partnerships coordinated by Norwegian organisations. The study is a part of the international research project RAY INNO, exploring the impact of Key Action 2, namely strategic partnerships in the youth field. The RAY INNO project explores the role, impact, and potential of strategic partnerships as instruments to foster innovation across 16 European countries. The case descriptions within this report make up the Norwegian contribution to RAY INNO, in addition to being followed by a country-specific cross-case analytical summary.

The partnerships studied have been selected by the Norwegian national agency of Erasmus+: Youth in Action (Bufdir), as cases of *best practice* for fostering innovation in the youth field. Thus, this is a study of successful projects. The objective is not to evaluate the projects' results. Instead, this study aims to describe *how* these projects have fostered innovation in the youth field, and to highlight success factors and points of learning. The term “youth field” is not clearly defined, but can be understood as referring to activities and organisations where the target groups are mainly youth between the ages of thirteen and thirty, and where objectives are to strengthen youth in some way. Specifically, the following research questions are explored in this study:

- *How have participating organisations and key persons in the strategic partnerships defined and understood the concept of innovation in the context of their projects?*
- *What type of organisations and networks implement and benefit from the strategic partnerships, and in what way?*
- *How do Strategic partnerships seek to support the fostering of innovation in the youth field?*
- *How are the results from the strategic partnerships shared with others, and how adequate are these sharing approaches?*
- *How do the strategic partnerships have an impact beyond the participating organisations, on youth work in the context of the projects as well as the wider youth sector?*
- *Success factors: Which aspects contribute most to the high impact of successful strategic partnerships for innovation?*

The case studies have been conducted using several data sources. Firstly, review of project documentation, including project applications, final reports, and other available documentation. Secondly, fourteen exploratory interviews have been conducted for the three cases in total. Interviewees are actors who implemented the projects, as well as participants in project activities, external stakeholders, and beneficiaries who have utilised project results. Lastly, a review of available project outputs has been conducted – including produced documents and products, and online and social media platforms.

The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) has approved the collection and storage of data for this study. Some organisations and persons can be recognised in the report, directly or indirectly. Therefore, all interviewees have actively consented to participate, and have been given the chance to quote check and comment on relevant parts of the case descriptions.

2 The 360-degree participation model

2.1 Abstract

The 360 degrees participation model is a strategic partnership project carried out over an 18-month period by three NGOs residing in Norway, UK, and Lithuania. The partnership aspired to enhance youth participation in local decision-making processes through the collection and development of participatory theory and tools, and dissemination to municipalities, local decision-makers, and NGOs. The partnerships approach to innovation was threefold: as an output, as a method, and as a working process. Firstly, they aspired to create a new *connection* between existing methods of participation and new beneficiaries. Secondly, the partners understood their central thematic concept – participation – as a method of co-creation and innovation. Thirdly, the innovation concept was an integral part of the partnership's working processes.

The project has had a far-reaching impact. The participation manuals, online platform, and strong partnerships that formed with external stakeholders through the project have contributed to increased understanding and knowledge of participation among a range of beneficiaries. Also, it has led to the implementation of sustainable structures of innovation among key stakeholders – structures that will facilitate further innovation processes well into the future. In particular, the partnership has contributed to the implementation of stable participatory structures in NAV – benefitting all NAV users.

2.2 Context and objectives

The main goal of the 360 degrees participation-project was to increase the level and quality of youth participation in political decision-making processes in local contexts. To achieve this goal, the partners wanted to provide municipalities, local decision-making bodies, and organisations with new materials. They aspired to present theory, manuals, and practical tools to increase understanding of the participation concept, and knowledge of how to facilitate participation and translate results into policy proposals. The target group of the project was broad: *"from the youth to the decision-maker – the youth themselves, people working with youth, those who invite youth to participate, and those who make decisions"* (Project coordinator, Interview).

Although participation is not a new concept, the project partners agreed in their view that active youth participation is still a significant challenge across Europe:

"We saw two huge problems: Firstly, the understanding of the concept of "participation," and secondly regarding the outputs of participation processes – how are they to become a part of the decision-making process without it becoming "cherry-picking"?" (Project coordinator, Interview).

Hence, the first challenge the partners identified was the varying understanding of "participation" as a concept in itself. The partners viewed it as a mostly empty concept - hard to fill with meaning in specific contexts. According to the partners, this lack of theory in the field made it difficult even for municipalities and organisations wanting to facilitate participation to gain more than a minimal understanding of what the concept means. Also, there was a lack of developed guidelines and practical tools for youth participation at the local level.

Furthermore, the partners' view was that cross-sectoral cooperation in the youth field was weak in general. A further goal was therefore to increase the understanding of the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation. Collaboration between sectors was essential in this context because the partners viewed it as an integral part of the participation concept. The partnership's view was that what creates participation is also what creates good cross-sectoral cooperation: Creating an arena, meeting in person, sitting in circles, being open, working a lot in groups, and working on group dynamics (*Project coordinator, Interview*). Thus, the objective to increase cooperation can be understood as means to strengthen and enhance the quality of youth participation.

Lastly, a challenge the partners wished to tackle was the gap they identified between the participation process and the decision-making process:

"Today it is very unclear how the results from a participation process should be handled, and the youth councils have very unclear lines towards decision makes" (Project coordinator, Interview).

According to the partnership, the link between existing cooperation bodies for youth (e.g., Youth councils), and the political decision-making is weak, and often there is no clear understanding of how decision-makers can - and should - use products of a participation process when formulating policy. At the same time, "participation" has become a political buzzword, also used by decision-makers to legitimise processes and policies. With no guidelines or plans for how to analyse and use results, there could be a risk of, e.g., "cherry-picking" – picking out the input and ideas already in line with current plans or decision-makers' existing views. Without proper analysis and translation of the results into the policy process, participation can become symbolic, with no real effects. Youth participating in such processes can become discouraged and demotivated over time – a phenomenon denoted as participation fatigue. Thus, the partnership aspired to bridge this gap by creating an online analytical tool that municipalities and local decision-makers could use when sorting, analysing, and translating results into policy proposals. The goal was to contribute to a shift in youth participation - from the concept of tokenism to active participation in advocating youth needs (Project application, p. 14).

2.3 Understanding and approach to innovation

"We understand innovation as connecting two existing ideas and creating something new out of it. And we have a focus on co-creation. This is a buzzword that is used a lot now, but we have always worked in this way. This is what participation is all about, so for us; this is just a new term denoting the same old." (Project coordinator, Interview).

The project coordinator has a clear understanding of how the partnership approached innovation, and it implies that you cannot create something new out of nothing. The partnership wanted to build on existing methods of participation and create something new by linking different methods and tools with academic theory, and by connecting them to new potential beneficiaries. There were already many existing methods for involving young people in decision-making processes, but no way for a municipality to use this effectively. Also, there was a missing link between the participation process and the policymaking process. The partnerships approach to innovation was thus to connect existing participation methods with new potential beneficiaries, and to connect the participation process and the policy process through an analytical online tool. Hence, the partnership understood the innovation of their project to be these new connections: *"The connection is the innovation – this is how we understand creativity and innovation"* (Project coordinator, Interview).

Furthermore, the partnership's central thematic concept – participation – was understood as a *method* of co-creation and innovation. Collecting and further developing participation theories and tools was thus perceived as developing methods for fostering innovation. Disseminating these methods and tools to new beneficiaries would also contribute to further innovation-outputs among recipients.

Lastly, the innovation concept was integral to the way the partners worked within the project's consortium. They used co-creation methods when they were working and developing their project, and when working with the organisations and institutions who participated at different stages. The methods and processes they used during project work, were thus also a part of the partnership's final outputs.

The partners' understanding and approach to innovation seem to have been relatively clear and explicit. According to the project coordinator, this was due to partners knowing each other from previous work together. They had also talked with experts about innovation and had time together before the project onset to develop a unified understanding.

In summary, the partnership's understanding and approach to innovation were threefold:

- Innovation as an output – something new – the connection
- Innovation as a method – participation = co-creation = innovation
- Innovation as a process – using methods of co-creation and participation within the project consortium to create, adjust, cooperate, and produce the final results.

2.4 Outputs of the project

The partnership aimed to produce a collection of academic theories, methods and practical tools, as well as recommendations as to how municipalities and other institutions can involve young people into decision-making processes. One specific aim was to gather at least 30 different methods and techniques. The material and tools were to be made available through two different manuals, both on paper and online, in three languages (English, Norwegian and Lithuanian). The tools were also to be tailored to suit different realities in the partner countries, and should include recommendations on how to use the tools in different environments involving other social groups (e.g., senior citizens, young parents, migrant background, disabled, NEETs). Furthermore, the project aimed to produce an online tool that could be used for gathering and sorting input from participation processes.

Dissemination of results were to be done through several activities. They aimed to have over 50 youth workers, politicians, and management staff trained on how to use youth participation tools. They also sought to arrange an international conference on participation and cross-sectoral cooperation with academics, policymakers, youth workers and youth with at least 30 participants, and present the written manuals to at least 50 organisations (Project application, p. 22).

The partnership managed to achieve – and overachieve – on all of their initial output and dissemination aims, with one exception – the analytical function of the online tool. The partnership produced an online platform containing all the collected participatory tools, but the platform can not be used for analyzing results from participatory processes.

The initial goal to create an analytical function in the online-platform proved to be too ambitious due to a range of technical difficulties with the programming of the tool:

"After lengthy consultation with the programmers it was confirmed that the complexity of the original idea was too prohibitively costly to produce within the project budget" (Final beneficiary report, p. 9).

As a result of this development, the partners consulted with the Norwegian national agency for Erasmus+: Youth in Action, and it was decided to reduce the budget cost of the website significantly. Funds were reallocated to other project activities, and increased effort was put into collection of participatory tools, the written manuals, and dissemination activities.

In summary, the partnership produced two handbooks² and a website³ which presents a comprehensive overview of participatory theories and tools in three different languages using local examples. The web site is searchable and makes it possible to sort through different exercises by choosing preferred group size, topic, and duration of the activity. The finished manuals are more substantial, thoroughly made, and of higher quality than was the original plan - containing 55 different methods (final beneficiary report, p. 8). This overachievement was partly caused by reallocation of funds, but also by feedback from stakeholders on initial drafts, regarding the high value of the manuals and the need for increased user-friendliness. The project partners initially thought the tools would be most available online. They were therefore surprised to learn that stakeholders often wanted something tangible to flip through (Project coordinator, Interview). Lastly, the partnership produced general recommendations as to how municipalities (local government bodies and institutions) can involve young people into decision-making processes.

2.5 Results and impact

The 360 degrees participation project had – and still has - substantial impact in terms of fostering innovation in the wider youth sector.

Firstly, the partners managed to put more effort into dissemination activities than planned and overachieved on the original dissemination aims. They arranged a #ParticipationConference in Norway to formally launch the results of the project, where 63 different organisations participated – more than the double of the initial aim. They also arranged a UK national conference where over 40 organisations participated, including national organisations, academic institutions, youth-led organisations, and others. In 2017 the outputs of the project were also presented at the 3rd Eastern Partnership Youth Forum in Warsaw (300 participants), and in the Lithuanian National Youth Work Conference (600 participants). Furthermore, the partnership arranged a participation training of 30 individuals to further disseminate their knowledge in local realities. There were participants in the training from all partner countries. The training was successful in creating multiplier effects as participants have arranged many local participatory events and workshops in the aftermath (Final beneficiary report p.9-10).

Secondly, the project produced an unexpected positive outcome – strong and lasting partnerships with key external stakeholders. Importantly, these partnerships were formed by actively involving stakeholders in project activities and development from the onset. Essential stakeholders include especially the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), Trade Unions, and Vestfold county. NAV administers Norwegian

² *The Participation Handbook and Cross-Sectoral Cooperation Handbook.*

³ www.360participation.com

welfare benefits, a third of the Norwegian national budget, and works with users from a range of different groups through 456 local NAV offices (NAV.no, 10/7-19).⁴ NAV have later implemented the methodologies from the project throughout their entire organisational structure for working with users. In 2018 NAV implemented the novel *Strategy for user participations*:

«So, we went from groping around in the dark when encountering this project, to presenting a new strategy for user participation to the Minister of Labor. That is a lot in a short amount of time. And I want to give much of the credit for this to the 360-project» (Project contact in NAV, Interview).

The project contact in NAV describes the project as: *"an eye-opener for the entire NAV organisation"*, and furthermore that participation *"was inserted into the structures of NAV with a whole new awareness of what participation is."* According to the NAV-contact the project: *"have effects for all the users in NAV. It has become integral to the way one works with users now. There is a change of attitude"*. Thus, the outputs of the project have been crucial in NAVs work, and have increased awareness of participation in NAV more generally. Especially, the project has given weight to the work on youth participation:

"Inspiration and exchanges from the project have given self-confidence to both youth participators and NAV-employees when we now want youth to participate in the further development of NAV all over the country. The facilitator courses have been important in the development towards real participation" (Project contact in NAV, Interview).

The project's contact in Vestfold county similarly describes the project as important in their ongoing work on enhancing youth and user participation: *"In cooperation with all the municipalities, we have now developed a new participation manual, and the project was a good foundation in this work"*.

Thus, the project managed to reach all initial target groups (decision-makers/civil servants, politicians, youth workers and leaders, academics, NGO representatives, youth policy activists). Additionally, by involving NAV and other stakeholders into the process, they managed to engage a wide range of other groups: migrants, refugees, disabled people, senior citizens, drug addicts, and others (Final beneficiary report, p. 18-19). The partnerships that formed allowed the involvement of these target groups in the working processes of the project - testing and fine-tuning methodologies developed for specific target groups. Moreover, the methods developed became a part of the curriculum for NAV training programs, have been a part of the curriculum in two Norwegian universities since the fall of 2017, and have been distributed to all higher education institutions in the UK that teach youth and community work.

In summary, the project has successfully fostered innovation in several regards. Firstly, the partners themselves gained a more nuanced understanding of the participation concept, a lot more tools to use in their work, became more recognised as experts in the field, and made new strong partnerships that enables them to increase the scope of their work in the aftermath of the project (Project coordinator, Interview). Secondly, the project fostered innovation through collecting and further developing academic participatory

⁴ <https://www.nav.no/en/Home/About+NAV/What+is+NAV>

⁵ The strategy can be found at www.NAV.no: <https://www.nav.no/no/NAV+og+samfunn/Om+NAV/Brukermedvirkning/strategi-for-brukermedvirkning-i-nav--544610>

theories. In the context of this project, participation was viewed as a method of innovation. Thus, the project made an academic contribution to the understanding of the innovation concept by development of the participation concept. Lastly, the project fostered innovation through the creation of new strong links between existing theories of participation and many new beneficiaries. The outputs of the project are being implemented and used in a range of organisations, as well as large scale public bodies in Norway. Furthermore, the tools are still evolving, and being used for fostering further innovations by both the partner organisations themselves and by the pool of experts and organisations that have participated in the project in various ways.

2.6 Success factors

This final section highlights the main success factors of the 360 degrees of participation-project.

Firstly, the project successfully provided something beneficiaries needed. The project's relevance highlights the importance of partner organisations' previous experience in the youth work context, which led them to detect this need. Also, it highlights the importance of conducting a proper needs assessment in the planning stages of such a project.

Secondly, through participatory involvement of beneficiaries from the onset of the project, the partnership managed to hit many birds with one stone. Firstly, a way to test and fine-tune tools on many more target groups than initially planned. Also, it gave beneficiaries ownership of the results and created experts who have continued to disseminate results locally. Lastly, strong new partnerships formed with external stakeholders which increased project impact substantially - beyond the immediate youth work sector and into sectors such as public health, social security, culture, and education.

Thirdly, the partnership managed to change course on an unachievable objective. The partners encountered severe technical challenges with the online analytical tool, which turned out to be unsolvable. In this situation, the partnership managed to change its course successfully, and reallocate funds to other valuable activities in agreement with the national office on Erasmus+: Youth in Action. This change seems a vital success factor for ensuring the final outputs of the project.

Lastly, the partnership ensured high cooperation quality throughout the project period. According to the partners, the main challenge of the project was making sure everybody was on the same page when the partnership had to make changes to the original aim regarding the online tool (Project coordinator, Interview; Final beneficiary report, p. 15-16). Additionally, the project coordinator describes it as challenging to coordinate the collection of all the intellectual outputs between countries and actors. Thus, the partners highlight the importance of meeting face-to-face in cross-national projects - especially when encountering difficulties. Furthermore, having an explicit partner agreement from the start is described as making the process more comfortable when experiencing challenges. The agreement ensured a common understanding of the expectations of every partner and was rewritten in response to the changes in initial objectives.

Hence, success factors in terms of fostering innovation can be summarised as follows:

- Ensuring high relevance for potential beneficiaries by utilising partner organisations existing networks and conducting a needs assessment in the planning stages of such a project.

- Participatory involvement of beneficiaries as stakeholders from the onset ensured ownership of results, and expanded project impact substantially.
- Changing course on an unachievable objective in time secured the final results.
- Clear partner agreements and taking enough time to meet face-to-face ensured high cooperation quality, also in a situation with potential for conflict - when they had to make changes to the original objectives.

3 Borderline Boardgames

3.1 Abstract

Borderline Boardgames was a strategic partnership project carried out over an 18-month period by ten organisations from Norway, Belgium, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal and the UK. The partnership's objective was to develop two non-formal educational games to teach youth about financial literacy and conflict resolution.

The project approached the innovation concept in three different ways. Firstly, as a *method* of non-formal learning applied in the fields of private finance and conflict resolution. Secondly, as a new form of *production* – producing the games locally to create employment. Thirdly, as a final *output* – the finished games.

First and foremost, the project has fostered innovation by creating two educational, interactive board games that represents new tools for non-formal teaching. The games can foster new perspectives and ways of thinking among youth on important topics. Furthermore, the strategic partnership has created opportunities for cooperation with stakeholders not foreseen at the beginning of the project, expanding project impact. The project has managed to reach youth directly, but also the broader youth work sector, formal education system, and financial institutions.

3.2 Context and objectives

The strategic partnership and the idea of creating educational, interactive boardgames arose from two separate needs the partners identified as a result of economic difficulties and conflicts in Europe. Financial difficulties affected the youth of the continent through high youth unemployment. In particular, the southern European partners witnessed many young peoples' frustration and lack of possibilities. Thus, they saw a need to raise awareness on personal economy – and to create *financial literacy* – among young people. At the same time, Europe was witnessing political conflicts, such as the invasion of Ukraine. The partners, therefore, also saw a need to raise awareness on conflict management among youth.

The partners thus identified the need to teach youth about both private economy and conflict management and needed innovative instruments to enable this. The collaboration started between partners who knew each other through existing networks, and who identified the same needs and shared the same ideas.

The main goal was to create practical, enjoyable, and accessible non-formal education tools about financial literacy and conflict resolution for young people. These were to be designed as games - readily available for young people – also for youth with fewer opportunities. The games would provide skills and competence to help youth find jobs and increase employability. The goal was to produce ten exemplars for each partner to use in their local networks (such as youth associations, schools, informal groups, local authorities). Another important goal was to keep the production at a local level and create employment when producing the games. The games were to be produced in a Portuguese village and in order to enable this they were to be made by hand. It was also a goal to train the organisation staff to be able to develop and implement the pedagogical tools at a local, national and international level, as well as to disseminate the games to promote further recognition of non-formal education.

3.3 Understanding and approach to innovation

"The project itself has been innovative in that we have sought to use this new project type to produce something tangible to take the field of youth work forward in addition to building the capacity of a local community" (Final Beneficiary report, p. 14).

The project was regarded as innovative by the partners in several ways. Specifically, due to its *method, production* and *final output* – the games. Hence, the partners approached innovation as the creation of new educational, interactive tools (non-formal teaching) in the field of financial literacy and conflict management.

Practical educational tools did already exist but – as far as the partners knew – none existed in the two fields. Furthermore, the partners perceived the existing tools as neither accessible, attractive, or adequate for the target groups. Combining the method of educational interactive board games and the topics were seen as new and innovative. Practical educational tools would catch the youth's attention and enable them to reach a level of reflection which typical lecturing would not manage. The game would consist of a different and new way of learning. Thus, the method was, first and foremost, the innovative aspect of the project.

The other innovative aspect of the project was the production of the games. The desire was to take the production 'a step back,' to do it themselves and to create employment. The boardgames would create employment for people with fewer opportunities by local production in a small Portuguese village – which constituted an innovative step to overcome unemployment. Additionally, the fact that the games would consist of handmade bricks and pieces, could in today's digital world be regarded as something different and innovative, as well as that it would be accessible to youth with limited access to the internet.

The partners feel they had a shared understanding of the innovation concept throughout the project - the concept constituted the foundation of the project. However, the term 'innovation' has not been used explicitly among partners during the project. However, this could be caused by the shared understanding of the project goals among partners.

3.4 Outputs of the project

The project aimed at reaching several outputs. Firstly, to create two educational interactive boardgames about financial literacy (Real Ideal) and conflict resolution and war (Mission Z). The aim was to produce ten game sets for each partner in their language. The project also aimed to train a facilitator in each partner organisation to run the exercises and to create facilitators' manuals and handbooks (in various languages). Leaflets and game brochures were also to be created to promote the project and to be distributed during events and in the project aftermath.

Additionally, the partners aspired to create online visibility. They planned to create a website with content and information about the project and games, a Facebook page, and a short Youtube film. Further outputs included hosting an open conference in the partner countries to presenting the outputs. The partners explicitly aimed to disseminate the games to approximately 400 young people and get feedback from at least 100 to contribute to further development of the games.

Furthermore, it was desired to strengthen the partnership between the involved organisations at an overarching level, and to raise the knowledge and skills in the development of educational games. It was also desired to reach other stakeholders (in

education) and communities, to disseminate the tools and methods, and to promote recognition of non-formal education in general and the two educational games in specific.

The strategic partnership managed to produce most of their aimed outputs, and reach most of their goals. For instance, the goal to facilitate the game to around 400 young people has exceeded expectations - the total number of participants in game-sessions reached 653 (includes youth, trainers, and youth workers). Also, more have participated in sessions after the end of the project period. Participants have also provided valuable feedback for further improvement of the games - overwhelmingly positive feedback. Additionally, the project has managed to reach the aim to create employment among local people in the Portuguese village who were responsible for the production of the games. In addition, employment was provided for designers in Croatia and France.

However, some of the output aims were not reached. A Facebook page for the project was not created as the partners in the strategic partnership saw it more useful to utilise their already existing online visibility. Additionally, the partners did not reach the goal to produce ten sets of the games for each partner - because the project received less funding than they applied for. In the end, all partners have four complete Real Ideal sets and one complete Mission Z set (in addition to various prototypes).

3.5 Results and impact

The project aimed to foster innovation, targeting mainly young people, but also trainers/educators, local politicians, possible funding partners, youth organisations/workers and schools, universities, and other educational institutions.

First and foremost, the project has fostered innovation by creating and producing two new educational, interactive board games – providing new tools of non-formal learning to the field of education, and new ways of thinking and reflecting among youth. Innovation was also fostered through the method of production – namely to be locally produced and handmade.

Furthermore, the involved partners have gained more knowledge about creating educational tools in general and interactional boardgames in particular. They have also gained knowledge about facilitating informal education for youth and those working with youth. The project has also brought the partners closer together - some of the partners are collaborating on new projects today. Furthermore, the partners have gained new tools to use in their youth work - and are continuously using the games to foster non-formal learning among young people in several countries. Moreover, the games can contribute to new ways of thinking and increased competencies among youth, contributing to further innovation in the future.

The partners disseminated results to young people, trainers, and youth workers through local workshops. However, the workshops also had other positive consequences, namely that the partners have received more attention locally and nationally, and formed new partnerships with external stakeholders. The Croatian, Italian, and Lithuanian partners have received attention from schools, scouts, and youth offices (Final Beneficiary Report, p.38). The Norwegian partner has had a significant number of young people to test the games and made teachers and schools in the local area more aware of what they can provide to the local community. Thus, they reached out to the broader public, which led to new partnerships forming with a Norwegian university and high school. The high school frequently sends pupils to play the game, seeing it as an excellent opportunity to make youth understand why war happens and inequalities persist. A perception among teachers is that topics raised in the boardgame Mission Z

are challenging to teach in regular lectures in a classroom. By playing the game, the youth achieve different and more profound learning outcomes and new perspectives.

Notably, the partnership between the Norwegian partner and the Norwegian university has created new opportunities. The university annually sends students to use the boardgame Mission Z. The game facilitator in the Norwegian partner organisation has also held lectures at the university and written a book chapter with a university research group.

Other partners of the strategic partnership have similar experiences. The Lithuanian partner has received interest from institutions such as banks, Lithuanian Institute of Free Market, the Eurodesk network and Lithuanian Association of non-formal education for the game Real Ideal. Some of the institutions have shown interest in utilising the tools in educating young people in financial literacy. The Portuguese partner has formalised cooperation with local public bodies and the Municipality of Beja. The project results were also presented at the SALTO International Tool Fairs in Budapest, to Erasmus+ beneficiaries, and in other conferences – reaching both the wider youth sector and beyond. Finally, as several of the partners involved in the strategic partnership continue to collaborate through new projects, results from this specific partnership continue to spread. The strategic partnership has thus *"opened doors for collaborations, both present, and future, with stakeholders on a local, national and also international level"* (Final Beneficiary Reports, p.41).

Thus, the strategic partnership has created opportunities for cooperation with stakeholders not foreseen at the beginning of the project, expanding project impact. The project has managed to reach youth directly, but also the broader youth work sector, formal education system, and financial institutions. Furthermore, the partner organisations have achieved greater visibility both at regional, national, and international level.

3.6 Success factors

The Borderline Boardgames project has fostered innovation through creating a new tool for youth learning, as well as through the establishment of new partnerships with external stakeholders in the youth field as well as other sectors. This final section highlights the success factors of the project.

According to the partners, the essential success factor of the project was the high cooperation quality between partners - ensuring quality in results. A collective understanding of project objectives and a mutual feeling of project ownership fostered cooperation and smooth teamwork. All partners participated equally, and the partnership strived to implement a democratic and participatory working process within the consortium.

Furthermore, the project benefited from the partners' previous experience working in the youth field. The partners had valuable networks when entering the project, which they utilised in project implementation. According to the partners, this profoundly impacted the collaboration between the partners and the quality of the results.

Thus, success factors for fostering of innovation is summarised as follows:

- Ensuring high cooperation quality will enhance outputs and impact. A common understanding of objectives and responsibilities and democratic, participatory

working processes fosters cooperation quality by ensuring a shared sense of project ownership.

- Strategically utilising the existing networks of experienced partners in project work and dissemination can increase impact.

4 European network of youth work research

4.1 Abstract

The youth work research strategic partnership project was carried out over a 24-month period by six organisations and academic institutions from the UK, Lithuania, Sweden, Iceland, Austria, and Norway. The aim was to create an academic journal for youth work research, where academics and practitioners collaborated on production. Also, they aimed to create an international network for knowledge transfer and increased acknowledgment of youth work. Participants in the project were youth workers, researchers, educators and decision makers. The partnership approached innovation in several ways: as a method - co-writing, as cross-sectoral cooperation, and as an output - the journal.

Thus, the project fostered innovation in several respects. Firstly, by contributing to new connections between academics and practitioners in the youth field. Secondly, by contributing to increased knowledge transfer across borders. Thirdly, by providing an arena for publication of research on youth work that has the potential for fostering further knowledge-led innovation in the wider youth sector.

4.2 Context and objectives

The project was initiated in response to the lack of an international community within the youth work sector. The partners identified a need for interaction and collaboration within the field. Also, the partner organisations saw a need to create a platform for the development and sharing of experiences – among academics and practitioners. The goal was to improve and strengthen youth work and the relationships between those working within the field.

The target groups were researchers, academics and educational institutions, youth workers, and decision-makers. Especially, the project would provide youth workers (practitioners) with an arena for knowledge. The academic field was small (and in some countries barely recognised), thus, it was regarded as important to create an international network and to create possibilities to learn from each other. The partners' viewed the quality of youth work as being very different between countries. In some countries, it was being neglected, and there was a lack of overarching policies making the field static. However, in other countries, education is offered within youth work, and political guidelines exist. Thus, the partners saw a need for an international network where academics and practitioners could learn from each other across borders, and for providing practitioners within youth work new knowledge which could increase the recognition of the field. The project also aimed to decrease the gap between academics and practitioners - bringing them closer together, and to influence policy by using the journal to convey constructive and accurate new proposals for policy development.

To achieve these goals, the partners aspired to create a journal that would be relevant to both decision makers and youth workers in their daily practice by providing a more practical research-based perspective. Youth workers (practitioners) and researchers would write articles together – *co-writing* – and conduct peer-reviewing to ensure that the articles were understandable and relevant. The fact that it would be an international journal would enable the formation of international networks.

The strategic partnership consisted of academic partners who conduct research and provide education within youth work such as universities in the UK, Iceland, and Sweden, as well as partners who work with youth, youth projects, and counseling. As some of the partners had practical experience and insight, while others had the academic experience, they would contribute in various ways. The needs within the different partner countries varied as both the youth work and the youth work's status varied within the countries. Some of the partner countries had education in youth work (up to PhD-level), while others had no education at all. However, they all saw a need for creating a better sense of an international community and collaboration.

The goal was "to create more knowledge about open youth work, about youth, to disseminate this knowledge and to provide new knowledge to decision-makers" (Application Form, p. 21). Hence, they aspired to enhance systems for education – policy – best practice triangle. The specific goal was to create an academic journal on open youth work, which would provide an arena for peer reviewing and development of research, offer a channel for implementation of methods and models for youth work, and give voice to youth workers on political issues. Hence, at an overarching level, it was desired to strengthen youth workers and youth work as a discipline, and to achieve political impact.

4.3 Understanding and approach to innovation

"The project is innovative because it has a goal to create a completely new academic journal on open youth work, where also practitioners will contribute to the content. This has not been carried out in the field of open youth work in the Nordic countries before, and the approach is different from the existing European research arenas" (Application Form, p.21-22).

One of the project coordinators explains that the starting idea was to enhance systems for the triangle education/policy/best practice. The triangle implies mutual dependence between three elements. Hence, to foster innovation and development within a field, one needs the educational perspective to supply new and up to date knowledge. At the same time, policy influences which – and how - knowledge is used. Being open to differing experiences and practices builds trust both in policymaking and knowledge. By basing their work on this mutually dependent relationship, they aspired to create coherent processes which contribute to development, innovation and interaction.

The method – *co-writing* – was regarded as the most innovative aspect of the project. Academics and youth workers/practitioners wrote articles together, and youth workers were also involved in peer reviewing to ensure that the articles would be understandable and relevant for practitioners. It was regarded as innovative to take the idea from youth work – the bottom-up approach – the idea that one cannot create an academic journal on youth work without involving those working in the field. Thus, ensuring the participation of practitioners in academic writing was regarded as an innovation – necessitating cross-sectoral cooperation between the practitioner and the academic fields.

The end product – the journal itself – was also regarded as innovative, as an international journal on youth work did not exist and would constitute a unique addition to the field with voices and perspectives from both academics and practitioners. Hence, the partnerships approached innovation both as a method of co-writing and as the end product - the journal.

However, the partners did not relate directly to the innovation concept in their project work. Innovation was not clearly defined within the project consortium, nor was the term used much throughout the project. Some partners state that all partners were aware of what innovation is – both in general and in light of this specific project, making a definition superfluous. Therefore, they had no need to discuss it further. Additionally, all partners wanted to achieve the same goals, although they did not speak explicitly about innovation as a concept.

Consequently, the partners perceive that even without an explicit definition, an inherent understanding of innovation did exist and was maintained throughout the project. Furthermore, the goals and purpose of the project were clear and shared among the partners. Some of the partners involved also notes that innovation was seen as something which is created by utilising existing ideas and using them in new settings. Additionally, innovation demands experimentation, testing, and failing.

4.4 Outputs of the project

The outputs that the project aimed for were first and foremost the academic journal on open youth work. This journal would represent a new resource in the field and would be the main product of the project. Another planned output was arranging three study trips for youth workers/practitioners and researchers. The study trips would provide knowledge about academic writing, peer reviewing and co-writing, as well as ideas and contacts for new research projects, and were to be held in the UK, Iceland, and Lithuania. Additionally, the partners aspired to arrange a dissemination conference to launch the journal. The conference was planned as a four-day event in Lithuania with approximately 200 participants. The conference would include presentations, workshops, and discussions, and ensure the dissemination of project results.

Furthermore, the partnership aimed to build an international network, which would enable cooperation between youth researchers and youth workers. Also, new knowledge of specific methods and good practices for adaption and implementation in youth work was an expected output. At an overarching level, desired impacts were to achieve the adjustment of services and increased attention from decision-makers, to make cooperation easier, provide a more holistic youth policy and be a source of knowledge for various organisations (Application Form, p.32).

The project partners feel they have managed to produce the aimed outputs. Three study trips were arranged, where youth workers learned and experienced how youth work is practiced in different countries. The trips also inspired participants to find new writing topics. In addition, the partners applied for external funding to train all participants in co-writing and peer reviewing. An international conference on open youth work was held in Vilnius for the launching of the journal; however, lasting for two days and not four as planned. The program consisted of presentations of papers and discussions, which also differed slightly from the original plan. The conference had 168 participants from different European countries.

The main output of the project – the international journal on open youth work – has been published (launched January 2017) according to the initial plan, and new issues of the journal are still being published. The journal consists of academic articles on different topics, including articles about policy and service-design. All articles are written in the context of youth work, privileging the narrative of youth work practice, methodology, and reality. The journal has been printed in a thousand copies and published online (homepages of Newman University and the other partner's webpages). Importantly, the aim to include practitioners/youth workers in the creation of the journal is achieved, as

practitioners and academics have collaborated through co-writing. The journal provides a "huge amount of knowledge about different approaches to youth work, the political settings where youth workers find themselves and the history of youth work" (Final beneficiary report, p. 8). The partners have also put effort into reaching decision-makers with the journal.

4.5 Results and impact

A new journal of peer reviewed, co-written articles about youth work has been created, and a new international network has been established. Both the partners in the strategic partnership and the participants in study trips have learned about new methods of youth work, and sources for knowledge and new collaborations are built. Hence, a new cross-sectional community is created, as well as a political space for organisations working for the professional recognition of youth work.

Also, the partners have strived to foster innovation by creating room for practical exercises such as sitting in a circle to improve group dynamics, focusing on power balance and reduce the unequal power distribution between professors and youth workers. Additionally, the partners have worked with aspects such as acknowledging the value of others' contributions, and the perception of innovation as a process of trying and failing.

The project has also had other positive consequences for the partner organisations. For instance, the Norwegian partner Ungdom og Fritid has been given a chance to communicate what they do internationally to their local members. Their work is more available as the journal is online (open access) and distributed at events. The organisation has thus gained increased recognition nationally and internationally.

Furthermore, the project has fostered innovation by including practitioners and academics within the field – who in different ways and by different means can influence the youth field. The project provided a voice for youth workers as they participated in creating the journal. The journal can also be used by youth workers and provide new knowledge and tools for them to utilise in their work. Participants in the study trips have attained an increased understanding of the academic field, which can enable them to implement new research in their work. This could have further positive effects on the youth work field and might contribute to supporting research-based innovation in practical youth work.

Practitioners feel that they have been profoundly affected by participation in the project. Several participants report being introduced to a new mindset – for instance by expanding their networks and being exposed to how other countries organise their youth work and education. Thus, they see their work from a different perspective – with more awareness and pride, and are using the journal and the knowledge they attained in their work. Some practitioners have established contacts with academics, which has led to valuable feedback in various projects. One practitioner has also written a book, which has been discussed with academics within the projects network, and which one academic aimed to use as curriculum for teaching youth work. Also, practitioners have attained better contact with the partner organisations. This includes participating in events/conferences after the launch of the journal and co-writing a book with one of the partners.

The project has also impacted academic partners - some using the journal in their educational programs. The journal is available at libraries at universities, and articles are frequently quoted. Thus, the journal is influencing these partners work in the youth

context, as well as the wider youth sector, and are potentially creating further synergy and innovation within the field. Also, researchers are continuously contacting the associates of the new editions, wishing to contribute to the next issue.

Lastly, the ongoing existence of the journal in the same co-written and peer reviewed format as intended must be considered an important lasting result of the project. The 2nd edition of the journal has been launched, and a 3rd is in the making. Hence, the academic journal is available as a source of knowledge for everyone in the wider youth sector as well as in other circles. The journal has been disseminated at all universities and institutions involved in the project. It is published on the webpage of Newman University and other partner's homepages (open access) and distributed to Bulgaria and Romania. The project has also managed to reach decision-makers, municipalities, governments, and ministries around Europe. For example, documentation of participatory methods and methods for fighting radicalization provided through the journal have been used in suggestions for policy development targeting the Norwegian government and parliament.

In summary, the project has fostered innovation in several respects. Firstly, by applying an innovative method - *co-writing* - contributing to new connections between academics and practitioners as well as increased knowledge transfer between the academic and practitioner fields. Secondly, by creating an international network that will continue to contribute to knowledge transfer across borders and improving the recognition of youth work both academically and politically. Thirdly - by providing an arena for publication of research on youth work - the journal - that has the potential for fostering further knowledge-based innovation both in policymaking and practical youth work.

4.6 Success factors

The project has successfully fostered innovation in the youth field in many ways. However, the partners also experienced some concerns, and in retrospect have thoughts on what they could have done differently. Therefore, this final section highlights what can be learned from the project - both success factors and learning points.

Partners highlight several factors contributing to the overall success of the project. Firstly, the robust relationship between partners contributed to honest discussions and dependable collaboration. Secondly, the shared understanding of project goals is highlighted as crucial. However, the most crucial success factor in terms of fostering innovation was the collaboration that was fostered between different professional fields - academics and practitioners - and the inclusion of practitioners into academic work.

Despite the overall success of the project, the partners encountered several challenges - noted here as points of learning. Firstly, they faced challenges with being 'accepted' within academia and experienced skepticism towards the level of quality of the journal. Furthermore, there was some concern on the practitioners/youth workers' side - about not being qualified enough when collaborating with academics. Thus, an important learning point is implementing working processes that can remove power imbalance when collaborating between sectors - e.g., through the use of co-creation or participatory methods.

Secondly, the partners wish they had been better at distributing tasks and resources between partner organisations. The project demanded more time and resources than planned, and much work was done on a volunteer basis. Therefore, another learning point is the importance of task planning and clarifying expectations between partners at an early stage.

Lastly, the partners are not entirely content with the spreading of results. In retrospect, they wish they had been better at finding innovative methods for dissemination and a better plan for follow-up activities after the end of the project. Some participants highlighted that the real potential for innovation lies in the distribution of the journal to youth workers in the field. At the same time, they have some concerns regarding the reach. Hence, a learning point is to make sure to put enough resources into the spreading of results - as much of the innovation potential of the project may reside in successful dissemination.

In summary, success factors and specific lessons to learn from this project is as follows:

- A robust relationship and mutual trust between partners are important to ensure cooperation quality across borders.
- The establishment of shared project goals is essential to ensure partner collaboration and secure final results.
- Applying working methods that contribute to active participation and removal of power imbalances between participants is important in cross-sectoral cooperation.
- Clarifying expectations and task distribution between partners at an early stage is crucial to ensure the results in international project collaborations.
- Significant innovation potential may reside in the successful spreading of results. Therefore, strategically planning and prioritising dissemination activities will enhance innovation impact.

5 Analytical summary: Innovation in the youth field

5.1 Understanding of the concept of innovation

All three strategic partnerships have approached the concept of innovation in several ways through their projects. First and foremost, they have understood the innovation-results of their projects to be the novel intellectual outputs they have created. However, they have also approached innovation as cooperative working processes, and as enhancing methods for fostering innovation among beneficiaries.

In the project '360-degree participation', the partners understood their central thematic concept – participation – as a method of co-creation and innovation. The innovation-output was creating new *connections* between existing methods of participation and new beneficiaries by providing tools and theories for youth participation in a user-friendly way (participation manuals and website). Hence, innovation was understood as utilizing existing knowledge in new ways, and connecting it to new beneficiaries. Furthermore, the innovation concept was an integral part of the partnerships' working processes – applying participatory methods, which were also a part of the project's final outputs.

Similarly, the project *Borderline Boardgames* understood innovation as a final *output*–the games, and as connecting a *method* of non-formal learning to new topics relevant for youth. In the European network of youth work research, the innovation-output was understood to be the academic journal of youth work research and the created international network. However, innovation was also here approached as a method of - *co-writing*– to foster *cross-sectoral cooperation between academics and practitioners* in the youth field.

Hence, there are several shared elements in the three partnerships' approach to innovation. Firstly, they all understand the innovation of their projects to be the creation of new intellectual outputs to be applied in the youth field. Secondly, they all have a *process-oriented* understanding of how innovation is fostered. Thirdly, in all three partnerships, *cooperation* is, in some way, integral to fostering innovation. Thus, in all three projects, innovation is what happens when applying existing knowledge and experience in new ways to create new perspectives and outputs.

The partnerships' understanding of innovation consists of several vital elements – *the individual, the method, and the output*. Firstly, the individual possesses knowledge and perspectives formed by their previous experiences. Secondly, to utilise personal knowledge to create something new, the knowledge must be connected, combined – and brought up against – knowledge and perspectives from other individuals with differing backgrounds and experiences. Hence, fresh perspectives and outputs will arise in the intersection between different bases of knowledge.

However, also common to all partnerships is an understanding of the potential challenges related to creating cooperation between individuals with differing perspectives. In a group of individuals, a range of factors can contribute to power imbalance which hampers communication and active and equal participation from all participants (e.g., social norms, professional roles, socioeconomic backgrounds, age, gender, attitudes, and perspectives formed by previous experiences). Therefore, *methods* for fostering genuine cooperation between individuals from different

backgrounds, sectors, and fields where understood as essential to achieving innovation in all three partnerships.

Importantly, the partnerships also understood that surmounting power imbalances may be especially important for fostering innovation in the youth field. While they all view it as crucial to involve and empower youth to achieve real change, they also understand that the potential for power imbalances may be comparatively large, when adult professionals are working with – and trying to engage - youth. Hence, all three partnerships had an extensive focus on facilitating real and active cooperation as a means to foster innovation.

In summary, all three partnerships have approached innovation as creating something new from something existing. Furthermore, they have understood fostering of innovation as a process of connecting individuals, organisations and institutions with different pre-existing knowledge, perspectives, and experiences, and facilitating cooperative working methods and processes which utilise their knowledge, competencies, and differences to create something novel in the intersection between different perspectives and bases of knowledge. Therefore, a definition of innovation derived from the three partnerships combined can be stated as follows:

Innovation is the creation of something new– through combining differing perspectives, and applying existing knowledge in new ways or realms.

5.2 Methods and tools for fostering innovation

All three partnerships have in different ways aspired to foster innovation also among external actors in the youth field, as their intellectual outputs have all been designed to create change in, or improve the quality of, youth work in different contexts external to the projects.

The 360-degree participation-project provided a user-friendly collection of *participatory tools* and theory – available online as well as through two written manuals in three languages. The project aimed to enhance youth involvement and participation in local decision making by reaching out to the stakeholders of policymaking, and providing them tools to change policy processes from within. Consequentially, increasing youth participation in decision making and policy formulation can change the nature of these processes in many places, and foster both youth empowerment and policy-innovation in areas both directly and indirectly related to the local lives of youth.

Similarly, the project *Borderline Boardgames* provided new non-formal *educational tools* to be used in local youth work and education. Hence, they sought to foster innovation in how youth can be taught the topics of personal economy and conflict resolution and, thus, also foster new ways of thinking and reflection among youth.

The European network of youth work research sought to foster innovation by contributing to increased cooperation and knowledge transfer between academics and practitioners in the youth field and across borders. Creating a co-written academic journal and an international network was seen as crucial for bringing the youth field forward. Inherent to this approach to innovation is the belief that creating *arenas for cross-sectoral and international cooperation* will foster new ways of thinking and new practices. Also, the academic journal could provide a co-created base of new knowledge which can foster change, improvement, and new ideas in local youth work.

Hence, all three partnerships have sought to foster innovation also among external actors through the innovation outputs of their projects – creating some intellectual output designed to change or enhance youth work practices. At the same time, the actual application of these outputs requires increased awareness and ownership among actors in the youth field, and hence, establishing conceptions necessary for change. Thus, the projects have sought to increase awareness and ownership, while at the same time providing participants, stakeholders, and beneficiaries with methods, tools or knowledge they can use to facilitate change or improvements within their realms. In this way, the projects have aspired to create change from within, establishing new practices and structures of innovation among beneficiaries and recipients, so the outputs of the projects can live on and contribute to further innovation in the future.

5.3 Beneficiaries and sharing of results

The strategic partnerships studied have targeted different beneficiaries within the youth field and shared results with others using approaches appropriate within the context of their projects. However, the importance of the partner organisations' networks within the field for successful sharing of results is common to all three partnerships.

The 360-degrees partnership used several approaches to spread of results successfully. Firstly, they utilised traditional dissemination activities such as arranging conferences in partner countries, sharing results in other youth-related international conferences, and through social media (Facebook, Twitter). Secondly, they organised multiplier events such as participation trainings and the extensive participation conference. In the trainings, actors in the broader youth field (youth workers, politicians/civil servants, NGO-representatives, youth policy activists) could learn how to use the participation tools. In the #participation conference, participants from different sectors and fields actively participated in group sessions utilising the methodology. Hence, results were widely spread by the training of local actors who then went home to use these methods in their work.

Lastly, but most importantly, the 360-degrees partnership shared their project results with others through actively involving key recipients in project development and activities from the project onset. Active involvement increased awareness of the importance of youth participation and ownership of project results among key stakeholders such as NAV, Vestfold county, trade unions, and others. Stakeholders were involved through using participatory methods in project work and development, necessitating continuous contact and cooperation. For example, feedback from recipients led the partners to put more weight on the written participation manuals, as stakeholders often preferred the manuals over the online format. The involvement of stakeholders also created lasting partnerships between these stakeholders and the partner organisations, facilitating further development and sharing of the project results in the aftermath of the project period.

The Borderline boardgames project mainly aimed to reach young people directly, but also targeted trainers/educators, local politicians, youth organisations/workers, schools, universities, and other educational institutions with information about the board games. Local game sessions with youth participants were arranged to disseminate results directly to young people. Game sessions were arranged in the test-stages of game development to receive feedback on the games. Although the project has been completed, new game sessions are carried out, creating a continuous spread of results to numerous local young people.

In addition, the partners reached out to local politicians, public bodies, youth workers, teachers, schools, universities, and other actors (e.g., banks and financial institutions) with information about the games. This was done through contacting these actors directly, through the use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, website), utilising the Erasmus+ and Eurodesk networks for spreading information internationally, and through arranging local workshops with young people, trainers, youth workers, and other interested actors. The local workshops were crucial for creating cooperation with local stakeholders, allowing e.g., schools, local teachers, scouts, and youth offices to test the games and later send more local youth to participate in sessions facilitated by the partner organisations.

The European network of youth work research's primary approach to dissemination is making the journal open access and widely available to anyone interested in its content, as well as sharing the journal in the networks of the partner organisations. The academic partners have made the journal available through the websites of their institutions, university libraries, and at conferences. Some academic partners are also using the journal in their educational programs – reaching future youth workers directly. The partners who work with youth, youth projects and counseling are continuously sharing the journal in social media and through their web pages. Also, they are presenting it at a range of events and arenas during their daily work and handing out hard copies to youth workers and other actors in the field. The partners have also written summaries of the articles, making them more available for youth workers with limited time to read the journal cover-to-cover. The journal is being shared in similar ways by participants in the project. Furthermore, the partnership shared the journal with 168 participants through the international conference in Vilnius, launching the first edition of the journal.

Also, the European network of youth work reached out directly to decision-makers both on the national and the European level. They have contacted politicians and initiated meetings with state ministries and directorates to convey the importance of the journals approach in general, and to lobby for specific suggestions for policy development resulting from journal articles.

Jointly, a range of different actors, networks, organisations, and institutions within the youth field have benefitted from these three strategic partnerships. All the partnerships have chosen sharing approaches within the context of their project aims, designed to target the aimed project beneficiaries. Common for all partnerships is the importance of the partner organisations' networks within the youth field for sharing results. The organisations have utilised their existing networks, as well as networks created through the project. Perhaps most importantly, the partnerships have effectively shared results through connecting external beneficiaries and stakeholders to their projects through activities and workshops, creating ownership of results also among external actors. As a result, both partner organisations and a range of beneficiaries have gained new tools and knowledge to apply in their practical realities. Furthermore, these actors all benefit from the strengthening and expansion of networks within the youth field resulting from the three projects - networks reaching across sectors and from the local to the international level.

5.4 Impact on youth work and the youth sector

All the three partnerships have impacted youth work and the youth sector in different ways through the provision of new tools and knowledge and the strengthening of networks.

The project 360 degrees participation has impacted the youth sector by raising awareness of the importance of youth participation among a range of beneficiaries. At the same time, the project has provided municipalities, NGOs, unions and other actors (e.g., NAV) with user-friendly participatory tools that are being utilised both locally and nationally to improve participation in decision-making in general, and youth-participation in particular. Hence, the project has potentially contributed to the empowerment of local youth in decision-making processes, which can facilitate policy-innovation and influence the development of local services. Furthermore, the project results have become part of the curriculum in universities and NAV-training programs, impacting the education of future youth workers and the training of NAV-employees. Perhaps most notably, the project has made a lasting impact on the way NAV-users can influence the development of public health services in Norway. Hence, the implementation of stable participatory structures in NAV resulting from the project *360 degrees participation* empowers youth in particular, as well as all other NAV users, and can contribute to adaptation and enhancement of services from a youth perspective, in accordance with the real needs of youth.

The project Borderline boardgames has provided new tools for non-formal learning in the field of youth work and education. The games can foster new perspectives and ways of thinking among youth on important topics, and hence impact youth directly. Furthermore, the strategic partnership has created opportunities for cooperation with schools, universities, financial institutions, youth offices, a municipality, and NGOs, raising awareness of the potential of non-formal educational tools in the youth field. Finally, several of the partners involved continue to collaborate through new projects. The project has thus opened doors for new collaborations with stakeholders on local, national and also international level.

The European network of youth work research has impacted the youth field by creating an arena for knowledge transfer across borders and between academics and practitioners in the field. The co-written journal function as a cooperative arena where each article provides knowledge or a fresh perspective to the field. Hence, the journal has the potential to foster further knowledge-led innovation in practical youth work. The journal and the international network resulting from the project have brought academics and practitioners in the youth field closer together and potentially contribute to increased recognition of youth work both academically and politically.

In summary, all three partnerships have impacted the youth sector. They have all provided something needed in the field, and something different actors in the field actively can use to improve their work locally. Furthermore, the three projects have impacted the youth field by contributing to the strengthening of local, national, and international networks, increasing ownership and pride among youth workers and other actors. Stronger networks create new opportunities for future cooperation and partnerships, as well as the potential for increased knowledge transfer between actors and across borders. Hence, all three projects have, in different ways, contributed to bringing the youth field forward.

5.5 Common success factors

The strategic partnerships described in this report have all been chosen, and studied, as cases of "best practice" for fostering innovation in the youth field. Thus, this is a study of successful projects. This final section highlights the common aspect which seems to have contributed most to the high impact of these successful strategic partnerships in terms of fostering innovation.

Jointly, the most crucial success factor of these partnerships seems to be the successful inclusion of stakeholders and beneficiaries in project development and activities. In all three partnerships, the intellectual outputs have been co-created with representatives of potential users of project results. In the 360-degree project, municipalities, decision-makers, NGOs, and various groups of individuals were included through participatory working processes, and results were adapted following their needs and inputs. In the Borderline Boardgames project, youth, youth workers, teachers, and educators were included in the testing stages of game creation through workshops and game sessions. In the European network of youth work research, academics and practitioners were included in the creation of the journal through co-writing. Thus, all three partnerships have, in different ways, utilised existing competencies and knowledge in the field in their creative processes. The partnerships have understood that their intellectual output is not created in a vacuum, but through joining forces with beneficiaries, and letting creation happen in the intersection between differing perspectives and bases of knowledge.

Furthermore, the partnerships have understood that smooth cooperation between partner organisations as well as successful co-creation with external beneficiaries does not happen by itself. Ensuring real cooperative processes and active participation from project participants demands awareness of potential pitfalls and the application of tools and methods to ensure open and democratic working processes. The partnerships have to various degree applied methods designed to reduce power-imbalances and create mutual trust between participants. In this way, they have aspired to create productive arenas for cross-sectoral cooperation.

The co-creation of outputs has had several positive consequences that were common across partnerships. Firstly, co-creation ensured that both participants and partner organisations had learning benefits from the projects. Rather than just producing the final results, the projects functioned as learning arenas for everyone involved. Secondly, co-creation has ensured that outputs are relevant for, needed amongst, and adapted to project beneficiaries. Thirdly, potential beneficiaries have gained ownership of results before the ending of the project period. Fourth, co-creation has ensured contact and cooperation with external stakeholders, creating new and lasting partnerships.

Jointly, these factors have eased dissemination substantially for the partner organisations and ensured lasting results which in many ways are "standing on their own" in the projects' aftermath. Also, these factors have contributed to the strengthening of networks within the youth field, creating new connections and potential for future collaborations.

Hence, the most critical success factor across partnerships is the active involvement and participation of potential beneficiaries in project work and development. Importantly, this involvement has been spurred on by the partnerships process-oriented understanding of how to foster innovation. Namely creating arenas for connecting individuals across sectors, and utilising their competencies and differences to create something new in the intersection.

