



CARE4YOUTH
Inclusion for Youth in the Care System
through Non-Formal Learning and Outdoor Sports

CARE4YOUTH METHODOLOGY



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About CARE4YOUTH	
Action type	<i>Erasmus+ KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth</i>
Priorities	<p><i>HORIZONTAL: Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth and sport</i></p> <p><i>YOUTH: Promoting active citizenship, young people's sense of initiative and youth entrepreneurship including social entrepreneurship; Strengthening the employability of young people</i></p>
<p>The CARE4YOUTH project is strategically designed to achieve multifaceted objectives, aiming to transform the lives of young individuals within the care system and care leavers. The primary goals encompass upskilling these young people, fostering their social inclusion and well-being, and augmenting their employability through the development of essential skills like entrepreneurship and digital literacy. Additionally, the project seeks to illuminate the challenges faced by young individuals in care, thereby reshaping societal perceptions to foster a more positive image of this demographic.</p> <p>Anticipated results include the implementation of a robust training and sporting activity programme within the project's case studies. These efforts will not only enhance the skills of the target group but also contribute to the development of innovative approaches for professionals working with this demographic. The project foresees a heightened societal awareness of the challenges faced by young individuals within the care system, leading to enhanced cooperation between essential entities like social services, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the creation of the e-Toolkit ensures the project's legacy, allowing its outcomes to permeate and positively impact organizations and individuals far beyond the project's immediate scope. Through these objectives and activities, CARE4YOUTH emerges as a transformative initiative, poised to make a lasting difference in the lives of young individuals in care and care leavers.</p> <p>With a firm foundation rooted in deep needs analysis, CARE4YOUTH aspires not only to enrich the lives of its direct beneficiaries but also to influence policy, advocate for systemic change, and create a more inclusive society for all young people. Through structured methodologies, careful planning, and a dedication to addressing the unique challenges faced by care leavers, CARE4YOUTH is poised to make a meaningful, lasting impact on the lives of vulnerable youth in Europe.</p>	

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Executive summary

Europe's care system faces significant challenges, with over 600,000 young individuals in public care across the European Union (source: Eurostat). These individuals frequently lack essential support, leading to a range of disadvantages, from higher school dropout rates to increased vulnerability to mental health issues and involvement in criminal activities. Moreover, transitioning from care to independent living poses immense challenges at bureaucratic and socio-economic level.

In response to these pressing issues, the CARE4YOUTH project emerges as a beacon of hope, designed to empower young individuals within the care system. Through a multifaceted approach encompassing soft skills training, employability competencies, and engaging outdoor sports and leisure activities, CARE4YOUTH strives to equip these youths with tools to shape their destinies positively. Furthermore, the project aims to challenge societal perceptions, nurturing a more empathetic understanding of care leavers.

Aligned with the EU Youth Strategy for 2019-2027 and the 11 European Youth Goals, CARE4YOUTH prioritizes the vital Youth Goal of integrating all young individuals into society. By ensuring equal access to both formal and non-formal learning environments for vulnerable youth, the project creates a secure environment filled with leisure and training opportunities. This inclusive approach ultimately equips young people at risk of social exclusion with essential competencies and skills, enhancing their employability and prospects for career development.

The development of the CARE4YOUTH methodology begins with the identification of research objectives, target groups, and specific approaches to establish the key stakeholders' network.

The comparative analysis has enabled a nuanced understanding of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each country's approach to supporting young individuals in care. This understanding serves as a foundation for identifying the common methodology aimed at nurturing employability competencies among young people transitioning from care systems.

The context analysis of nuanced landscapes of participating countries—Spain, Italy, and Serbia—entailed a thorough examination of demographic patterns, educational accessibility, employment prospects, and associated obstacles as part of our needs analysis. Additionally, our fieldwork analysis, conducted through extensive participatory activities within the CARE4YOUTH project, allowed us to gather insights from our local stakeholders.

Furthermore, our efforts led to the selection of best practices that demonstrated significant impact and effectiveness in promoting the holistic development and well-being of young people in care. This extensive work allowed us to identify proactive measures taken to foster the inclusion of young individuals in care through dedicated sport and leisure programs. Finally, the CARE4YOUTH capacity building workshop, in which partner organizations and stakeholders met face-to-face, has been the base for our co-create CARE4YOUTH Methodology for Training and Sports programme.

Introduction

The transition from care systems to adulthood poses significant challenges for young individuals across Europe, particularly those exiting the Protection System. This journey is often fraught with obstacles, including limited employment opportunities and socio-economic integration barriers. Administrative hurdles, such as temporary residence status restrictions, coupled with a scarcity of entry-level positions, compound the difficulties faced by care leavers in achieving economic independence. Moreover, the transition to adult life is marked by complexities, with varying perspectives on personal success and inadequate support for vocational training and career guidance.

Additionally, social stigma based on background can further hinder the employability of care leavers, perpetuating socio-economic disparities.

Furthermore, it is imperative to actively engage in fostering their holistic welfare, encompassing both their physical vitality and emotional equilibrium. Ensuring equitable access to sports and leisure facilities for young people is paramount, necessitating universality in availability, especially for those in vulnerable circumstances, and suitability across all weather conditions for an inclusive and accommodating environment.

CARE4YOUTH focuses on addressing specific needs:

- **Social Exclusion:** By fostering a sense of belonging and community, CARE4YOUTH counters social exclusion, promoting inclusivity and acceptance.
- **Employability and Career Development:** The project provides vital skills and career development opportunities, enhancing employability prospects and self-sufficiency.
- **Educational and Leisure Opportunities:** CARE4YOUTH fills the void by offering learning opportunities and leisure experiences, vital for personal growth and community integration.

To address these challenges, the CARE4YOUTH project is dedicated to create a target methodology that integrates sports, leisure activities, and non-formal education to foster social inclusion and employability among young people in the care system and care leavers.

The co-designed methodology leads to the creation implementation of a comprehensive training and sports program. These efforts are intended not only to enhance the competencies of the target group but also to inspire the development of innovative approaches for professionals working with this demographic.

Methodology

The CARE4YOUTH project focuses on developing an innovative methodology that integrates sports, leisure activities, and non-formal education to foster social inclusion and employability among young people in the care system and care leavers.

One of the defining features of CARE4YOUTH is its participatory approach. The methodology is co-created through collaborative efforts involving young people, social workers, educators, and project partners. Central to the CARE4YOUTH methodology is the integration of sporting and leisure activities. These activities are carefully curated to promote physical well-being, teamwork, leadership skills, and personal development. Each activity is designed not only for enjoyment but also to impart essential life skills, fostering resilience, confidence, and a sense of belonging among participants.

Specific Objectives:

1. **Comprehensive Collection and Analysis:** Evaluate best practices and educational initiatives globally and in participating countries, identifying relevant local and national stakeholders working with the target group.
2. **Co-development of CARE4YOUTH Methodology:** Collaboratively design the methodology with input from target group representatives, associated partners, and local organisations. Conduct workshops and engage stakeholders for feedback and refinement.

Target group

CARE4YOUTH direct target groups are young people who are - or have been - in the care system, including those in foster care, alternative care or under the vigilance of social services. Youngsters, who have left care, are usually known as “care leavers”. Partners expect to work with youngsters between 16 and 25 years old.

Beyond Direct Impact:

- **Project Partners’ Staff:** Partners’ personnel receive valuable training and experience, enriching their ability to support vulnerable youths effectively.
- **Care System and Youth Organisations:** Tutors, educators, social workers, and youth workers outside the partnership benefit from CARE4YOUTH's activities and results, enhancing their capacity to serve vulnerable youth.
- **Citizens and Communities:** By promoting understanding and empathy, CARE4YOUTH creates ripples of positive change within society, fostering a more compassionate and inclusive community.

Methodology and Approaches

In a robust and inclusive process, a minimum of 20 stakeholder representatives, comprising both youth beneficiaries and workers, from each project country actively participate in co-creating the methodology. This engagement is not merely a consultation; it's a collaborative effort where these co-experts significantly contribute to shaping the methodology's content and structure.

There is flexibility to choose the preferred mode of engaging the 20 stakeholder representatives:

1. **Focus Groups:** Engaging in face-to-face discussions, allowing nuanced conversations and in-depth exploration of ideas. Focus groups provide a rich environment for interactive brainstorming. Group size and number of meetings is up to partners’ decisions.

2. Online via e-survey: Participating in structured online surveys, providing thoughtful responses at their convenience. This method ensures inclusivity, allowing individuals who might face time or location constraints to contribute effectively.
3. Combined Approach: Partners have the flexibility to blend both methods. For instance, organising a day activity in sports and leisure environments where youth can engage in discussions (similar to focus groups) and also respond to specific e-survey questions during the session.



Spain

Context analysis

The demographic landscape of young individuals within Spain's care system reflects a concerning trend marked by increased vulnerability, especially regarding poverty and social marginalisation. In 2022, the number of children and adolescents served by the public protection system saw a notable rise, reaching 51,203 registrations, with more males than females, particularly evident in residential foster care. Additionally, the total number of unaccompanied foreign minors in Spain reached 5,868 in the same year, with residential foster care comprising over 70% of measures, indicating a significant need for support. The Canary Islands led in hosting unaccompanied migrant minors, followed by Andalusia, Catalonia, and the Valencian Community. However, monitoring the progress of children within the care system remains inadequate after they leave, emphasising the necessity for improved post-care support and oversight.

In Spain, education and employment challenges persist among young people, with a high percentage not studying or working, surpassing OECD averages. The Second Chance Schools (E2O) provide innovative training for those without qualifications or jobs. While data on school dropout rates for those in or exiting the protection system is lacking, early school leaving is a significant concern, particularly for men. Family placements benefit minors' educational continuity and emotional stability. Initiatives like Catalonia's mentoring program and reserved university placements aim to support care system alumni. However, the lack of post-system monitoring leaves many vulnerable to exclusion, highlighting the need for systemic reform. Efforts to enhance employability, outlined in the Spanish National Reform Programme 2023, target accessibility and relevance of training opportunities. Overcoming barriers to employment, especially for foreign youth, requires addressing administrative hurdles and improving vocational training systems.

In Spain, diverse employment opportunities exist for young individuals across sectors like agriculture, tourism, and social education. Strategies such as the "Youth Guarantee Plus of decent work for young people" aim to enhance youth employment, with private organisations and training programs supporting social inclusion. Challenges include a scarcity of entry-level positions despite growing awareness of dual training benefits. Success stories highlight individuals who have overcome obstacles to pursue careers, contributing positively to their communities.

Exiting the protection system often subjects children and adolescents to societal stigmatisation, pushing them towards immediate employment due to limited educational options.

Young migrants face unfair stereotypes and workplace inequality, impacting their mental health and increasing their vulnerability to poverty or crime. Overcoming barriers requires more vocational education opportunities and allows part-time work from age 16. Discrimination in accommodation further hampers employment prospects for foreign individuals.

Effective social inclusion for minors involves providing access to free-time activities and extracurricular opportunities, while community engagement plays a crucial role in fostering inclusion.

CARE4YOUTH field work activities

In Spain, a blended method has been developed to gather insights from target groups, engaging a diverse range of stakeholders including social/youth workers, psychologists, young people, and field NGOs.

- **Focus groups and diving baptism**

The diving baptism activities proved highly attractive to participants, suggesting potential for engaging activities to foster interest and participation among the target groups. This innovative method sought to combine traditional qualitative research with an experiential activity to gain deeper insights. Depending on the topic the focus group focused more on the aspirations of youths in care or on initiatives and approaches to be used for better inclusion.

Here are the main findings:

participants expressed concerns about the lack of job offers and financial difficulties hindering their training opportunities. They emphasised the importance of conflict resolution and teamwork skills for employability. While participants showed interest in sports like soccer, they faced barriers such as financial constraints and lack of motivation. Engaging in nature-based activities was uncommon among local youth, who preferred shopping centres over outdoor leisure. Participants highlighted the need for diverse mentorship and instruction in activities. They also recommended starting with small groups or providing some level of privacy to overcome social barriers. Challenges included the changing personal situations of participants and budget constraints for leisure activities. Lack of transportation to access activities also posed a significant barrier, particularly for care leavers. The findings underscored the importance of sports and leisure activities in developing essential skills for young people's future. Integration efforts should consider the participation of other community members and enhance the role of volunteers to promote diversity and tolerance.

- **Survey for Young people: Your Aspirations and Challenges**

The survey findings present a snapshot of the aspirations, challenges, and preferences of young people aged 18-25 in Gran Canaria, Spain, with diverse backgrounds encompassing both locals and migrants. While the majority are actively seeking employment, they face various hurdles such as bureaucratic procedures for work authorization, particularly pronounced among migrant respondents. Professional aspirations vary, with migrants emphasising securing any full-time job while a minority of Spanish participants consider higher education. Language training and financial support are crucial for Spanish participants, whereas migrants prioritise job assistance and networking opportunities. Despite facing obstacles, there is a shared recognition of the importance of sports and leisure activities in skill development and well-being, although financial constraints and lack of motivation present challenges to sports participation for some. These insights underscore the multifaceted support needed to empower young people in navigating their career paths and leisure pursuits amidst diverse socio-economic contexts.

- **Survey for youth workers: youth in care aspiration and Challenges**

The findings derived from the survey responses paint a comprehensive picture of the circumstances and aspirations of young individuals in Gran Canaria, as observed by the participating youth workers. These individuals, primarily engaged in basic short-term courses or actively seeking employment, often face formidable obstacles, including financial constraints and, notably, a pervasive lack of motivation. Despite sporadic involvement in sports, such as football, the overarching challenge remains in igniting enthusiasm and commitment among the youth. Moreover, participants recognize the pivotal role of sports and leisure activities in fostering essential skills crucial for the youths' future endeavours. With a diverse demographic comprising youth workers from various backgrounds, including educators, psychologists, and social workers, the responses underscore the multifaceted support required to address the complex needs of the youth population. Efforts are focused on providing vocational training, job placement assistance,

and cultivating positive familial and community relationships to empower the youth in navigating their paths to personal and professional success.

Best practices

1. [Ruta propia](#)

The project conducted by ASOCIACIÓN MOJO DE CAÑA in Gran Canaria and Tenerife, focuses on promoting social inclusion among at-risk youth aged 16 to 21 through intensive hiking experiences in the mountains. By providing technical and human logistics, the project enables participants from various backgrounds, including those in judicial measures or socio-educational programs, to develop essential life skills while exploring the natural environment. Through hiking, group cohesion activities, and mentorship from volunteers, the project fosters personal development, social inclusion, and employability skills, aligning with the EU Youth Strategy's objectives. The use of digital tools is limited during activities to encourage connection with nature, while non-formal learning methods facilitate experiential learning and emotional growth. The project's impact is measured through interviews with stakeholders, highlighting its potential for integration into broader youth development initiatives like CARE4YOUTH by emphasizing continuity of participation, volunteer mentorship, and tailored route experiences.

2. [Urban Colonies and Adsis Summer Camps” \(“Colonias Urbanas y Campamentos de verano Adsis CPI”\)](#)

The initiative provides socioeconomically vulnerable children and young people aged 3 to 18 with enriching summer activities aimed at promoting their integral development. These activities, conducted in both urban and natural environments, facilitate social inclusion, employability, sports inclusion, and leisure engagement. By offering workshops, sports activities, and relaxation exercises, the project fosters personal growth, social cohesion, and the acquisition of valuable skills. Stakeholders report significant positive impacts on participants' development and well-being, with measurable outcomes including improved social skills, increased self-confidence, and enhanced relationships. The project's integration into CARE4YOUTH is feasible through its emphasis on community-building, socio-emotional skill development, and collaboration with families and social workers. Challenges such as resource constraints and emotional complexities are addressed through strengthened support networks and adaptive strategies.

3. [Jugando por la Integración Social y Deportiva](#)

The initiative, organised by the Adsis Foundation and ACTRADE Association, hosts a charity soccer tournament aimed at promoting intercultural interaction and social inclusion among various groups, including migrants, people with disabilities, and women underrepresented in sports. By fostering bonds between participants and providing opportunities for teamwork and perseverance, the tournament contributes to personal development and social cohesion. Stakeholders report positive outcomes, including improved relationships and increased confidence among participants. Despite challenges such as fluctuating participation and limited resources, the initiative highlights the effectiveness of sports and leisure activities in fostering inclusion and community bonding. Integration into CARE4YOUTH could involve enhancing volunteer involvement and addressing logistical barriers to participation, such as transportation issues.

To learn more>> [Download the full National Report: Spain](#)

Italy

Context analysis

The Italian demographic overview presented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies unveils a complex landscape of minors in care Italy, encompassing those in family foster care, residential services, and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (UFMs). Notably, UFMs have seen a staggering increase, particularly attributed to the repercussions of the war in Ukraine. According to recent data, as of December 2019, there were 13,555 minors in family foster care, alongside an estimated 14,000 minors housed in residential services.

The administrative framework delineates avenues for support, including the possibility of extending care until the age of 21 and facilitating residence permits for study or work upon reaching adulthood. However, challenges persist, such as the irregular utilisation of long-lasting aid and the lack of structured pathways to autonomy. In response, local initiatives strive to enhance employability and provide opportunities for young adults transitioning from care systems.

Moving to needs analysis, Italy emphasises the right to education and healthcare for all minors, irrespective of their background. Initiatives like the "Care Leavers program" aim to support young adults as they navigate independence, complemented by broader measures like citizenship income and youth agency support. However, barriers to employment integration remain, exacerbated by perceptions of migration and legal complexities surrounding work permits.

Italy's industrial diversity offers various employment opportunities, with emerging sectors like renewable energy and information technology showcasing potential avenues for growth. Nonetheless, disparities persist, as evidenced by the predominance of low-skilled jobs among immigrants and challenges in accessing public employment. Recent statistics reveal that immigrants in Italy predominantly hold low-skilled jobs, with only 13% occupying higher-skilled roles.

Amidst these complexities, sports and leisure initiatives emerge as vehicles for social inclusion and empowerment. Projects like "Sport and Integration" seek to ensure equitable access to sports for disadvantaged youth, including migrants, showcasing success stories of individuals who have thrived in sports despite their challenging backgrounds. Italy's multifaceted approach underscores its ongoing evolution as a dynamic participant in the global economy, grappling with complexities while striving for inclusivity and opportunity.

CARE4YOUTH field work activities

In Italy through a one-day offline event developed by using a combined approach the Care4youth project involved 24 stakeholders. The event aimed at gathering information on real needs, experience and ambitions of youth beneficiaries and workers, while giving the opportunity for networking among field organisations.

During the one-day event collaborated in the activities: 18 youth participants, primarily from Tunisia and Gambia, with some from Ghana and Egypt.; 6 social workers; 2 Reception and Integration Systems.

- **Focus group: the benefits of sports on the person and for work**

Amidst the discussions, insights into their leisure activities and sports preferences emerged. From music to Formula One, each participant shared glimpses of their interests. Football stood out as the favoured sport, with dreams of pursuing professional careers resonating throughout. Yet, amidst the enthusiasm for football, other passions surfaced—boxing, basketball, trekking—each reflecting individuality and diverse experiences.

Their testimonies conveyed a sense of appreciation for the positive impact of sports. For some, it was a refuge, offering comfort and freedom. Others spoke of newfound strengths and self-esteem nurtured through sports. Yet, beyond personal growth, sports served as a means of social connection—a pathway to peer relationships and a healthier lifestyle.

- **Survey: your aspiration and challenges**

The survey conducted during the offline event aimed to gather insights into the aspirations and challenges of participants related to employability, career development, and personal growth. Despite language difficulties, support was provided to ensure participation, including group responses.

Participants expressed a diverse range of career dreams and aspirations, including roles such as driver, carpenter, football player, mediator, engineer, nurse, basketball player, painter, businessman, social worker, electrician, and truck driver.

The majority of participants (10) identified as students, while the rest were actively seeking employment.

Participants expressed interest in various career opportunities, with university education being the most sought-after path. Key employability skills identified to develop their dream career included teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial spirit. Challenges encountered by participants included a lack of educational resources, limited job opportunities, financial difficulties, inadequate mentoring, and experiences of discrimination. Preferred leisure activities included sports, cooking, music, and reading.

Best practices

1. [Mediterraneo Antirazzista](#)

An initiative born in 2008 and hosted annually for 16 editions until 2023 in Palermo, Italy, stands as a beacon of inclusivity and community empowerment. Spearheaded by the Associazione di Volontariato Handala, this project emerged from Palermo's most marginalised neighbourhoods, driven by the belief that sports should transcend social barriers. Initially focused on soccer tournaments, the initiative swiftly evolved to encompass a diverse range of sporting activities, including basketball, volleyball, capoeira, cricket, and rugby. What sets Mediterraneo Antirazzista apart is its unwavering commitment to inclusivity, welcoming participants from all walks of life, regardless of gender, social background, or skin colour. Over the years, the initiative expanded its reach across Italy, engaging cities like Rome, Naples, Milan, Genoa, Catania, and Lampedusa. Notably, it has become a platform for boys and girls from the SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors) to actively participate in Palermo's events, fostering integration and solidarity. Supported by collaboration with the Palermo Municipality, Mediterraneo Antirazzista ensures accessibility by providing transportation logistics for participants and investing in the creation or redevelopment of sports facilities in various neighbourhoods. However, Mediterraneo Antirazzista is more than just a sports event; it serves as an artistic and cultural hub, promoting community engagement and solidarity through workshops, concerts, and performances.

2. [Modello Harraga](#)

A pioneering initiative spearheaded by CIAI (Centro Italiano Aiuti all'Infanzia) in Palermo, Italy, represents an innovative system designed to support unaccompanied minor migrants as they transition into adulthood. Spanning from 2017 to 2019 with Ragazzi Harraga and from 2021 to 2023 with Ragazzi Harraga2, this project encompasses a comprehensive approach integrating social inclusion, vocational training, guidance, and job placement. The initiative establishes a network of local organisations, providing participants with 30 extra-curricular and 50 curricular traineeships to facilitate their integration into the workforce. Notably, the project offers housing to participants and creates individualised social portfolios to guide them through their journey in Italy. Through vocational traineeships and orientation activities, participants develop tangible skills relevant to their desired fields, alongside communication proficiency and intangible skills like self-organisation and teamwork. The initiative actively engages vulnerable youth, providing housing and social integration opportunities, with approximately 80 participants securing traineeship opportunities and around 400 youths with migrant backgrounds benefiting from the project overall.

3. [GIOVANI 2030](#)

An initiative led by the Dipartimento per le Politiche Giovanili e il Servizio Civile Universale in Italy, operates as a digital platform aimed at informing and connecting young people aged 14-35, with a particular focus on those not in education, employment, or training (NEETs). Launched in May 2021 and slated to run until 2030, this platform serves as a comprehensive resource hub, offering a plethora of educational, job, and training opportunities, along with public events to bolster skills and pursue professional careers.

To learn more>> [Download the full National Report: Italy](#)

Serbia

Context analysis

In Serbia, the demographic landscape concerning young individuals within or transitioning out of the care system is marked by a notable lack of official statistics, necessitating the reliance on consolidated data drawn from a multitude of sources. This includes reports and research conducted by various institutions such as the Republic Institute for Social Protection, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Tourism and Youth, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration Republic of Serbia, the National Employment Service, and numerous civil society organisations (CSOs). In 2022, residential care for children saw a notable decrease, with 574 children under the age of 18 residing in such facilities and 4,869 in foster care. However, it's important to recognize that these figures do not encompass the entirety of the situation, as the number of children in shelters is not fully represented due to data limitations.

Moreover, amidst the refugee and migrant crisis, Serbia continues to serve as a transit point, with over 1.5 million individuals passing through since 2015, a significant portion being children, including unaccompanied minors. Despite efforts to close the Balkan route, arrivals persist, albeit with more limited legal avenues for onward migration. The challenges faced by unaccompanied children, often older males from their families of origin, underscore the complexities of the migration situation and the need for targeted support.

In terms of educational opportunities, there have been positive developments, with an increasing number of children in mainstream primary schools and a marginal dropout rate. However, there remains a gap in preparing youth for independence, with deficiencies noted in vocational and life skills training. Civil Society Organizations play a crucial role in filling these gaps, offering programs like the Solidarity Program and the Youth Support Center, which provide psychological assistance, career guidance, and social skill development.

On the employment front, while there are opportunities available, unemployment rates among young people remain high, exacerbated by discrimination and legal barriers for care leavers. Initiatives like the My First Salary program aim to address these issues by providing subsidies for young people entering the job market. However, participation rates in such programs remain low, indicating a need for greater awareness and outreach efforts.

Sports and leisure opportunities vary across regions, with larger cities offering more resources compared to smaller towns. For children without parental care, structured sports programs are often lacking within institutions, highlighting the need for CSOs to step in and provide such activities. Success stories like that of Džavid Jašari serve as inspiring examples of how individuals from care backgrounds can excel in sports, offering hope and inspiration for others facing similar circumstances.

Overall, while progress has been made in various areas, challenges persist in adequately supporting young individuals within or transitioning out of the care system in Serbia. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving government agencies, NGOs, employers, and the wider community to ensure the holistic well-being and empowerment of these vulnerable populations.

CARE4YOUTH field work activities

In Serbia, ensuring inclusivity and active participation in research endeavours, we opted for an online survey method. Through the online survey, it has been provided a platform for individuals to share their insights, enabling us to tailor our strategies to better meet their needs and aspirations.

- **Online Survey: your aspiration and challenges**

The survey findings present insights from nine participants in Belgrade, Serbia, shedding light on their career aspirations, current circumstances, and challenges. Participants express a range of career interests, including the film industry, IT, piloting, and managerial roles, with some aspiring to work in governmental agencies or pursue veterinary medicine. Employment situations vary, with some participants studying while seeking employment, and others employed either full-time or part-time. Education and training backgrounds also differ, with some having received vocational training or job-related education. Living situations range from social care facilities to independent living. As for employability skills, participants express interest in leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and digital communication, along with expectations for job placement assistance, vocational training, and career counselling. Challenges include limited job opportunities, financial constraints, and lack of mentorship, with varying confidence levels in finding stable employment or pursuing higher education. Leisure activities such as sports, reading, art, music, cooking, and outdoor activities are popular among participants, with many believing in the developmental benefits of engaging in sports and leisure activities.

Best practices

- [House of Opportunity](#)

The program, operational in Belgrade, Kragujevac, and Nis since 2014, provides essential support and training for young adults transitioning from foster care and institutional care to independent living. With a focus on practical life skills, such as cooking, household management, and employment readiness, the program equips participants aged 18 to 26 with the tools they need to succeed in adulthood. Through initiatives like the Center Zvezda Souvenirs workshop, participants gain hands-on experience and entrepreneurial skills, enhancing their prospects for long-term success. Since its inception, the program has supported nearly 100 young people, offering them a lifeline as they navigate the challenges of post-care life.

- **Career centre Strong Youngster**

It has been established by SOS Children's Villages Serbia in Belgrade since 2017, addresses the challenges faced by vulnerable youth in Serbia, particularly those without parental care or from at-risk families, in securing employment and achieving economic independence. Through comprehensive services tailored to their needs, including individual counselling, professional training programs, language courses, and entrepreneurial support, the Center empowers young individuals aged 16 to 30 to enter the workforce and thrive independently. With a focus on fostering social inclusion and enhancing employability, the Center has positively impacted over 700 young people, providing them with the skills and support necessary for sustainable livelihoods. Through its innovative approach and emphasis on personalised development, the centre contributes to the holistic development and social inclusion of young people across Serbia.

- [To Align Life and Law: Enhancing Support Systems for Youth Aging Out of Care](#)

The project carried out in Belgrade, Serbia, has been conducted by an informal network called The Circle of Support, the main aim is to improve procedures for supporting youth transitioning out of residential or foster care. Through activities like staging a play created with care leavers, producing a documentary, and proposing amendments to social welfare policies, the project sought to raise awareness, increase transparency, and enhance support mechanisms for youth ageing out of care. By providing platforms for self-expression, facilitating access to information, and advocating for policy changes, the project aimed to improve the well-being and prospects of care leavers, contributing to greater social inclusion and support for vulnerable youth in Belgrade.

To learn more>> [Download the full National Report: Serbia](#)

Comparative analysis

The realm of youth care and inclusion is a nuanced landscape shaped by a myriad of experiences and obstacles. In our quest for effective solutions to nurture the welfare and integration of minors and youth in care, we undertook a significant effort facilitated by the Care4Youth project. This endeavour brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including:

- 37 minors and youth in care
- 6 NGOs
- 2 Reception and Integration Systems

Utilising innovative engagement methods, we established a network spanning both local and international levels. This network was further enriched by the participation of 22 youth workers, educators, and social workers, each equipped with a range of practical approaches.

In this comparative analysis, we delve into the strengths and weaknesses of Italy, Spain, and Serbia in their approaches to addressing barriers to well-being, education, employment, and social inclusion for unaccompanied minors. Through an in-depth examination of each country's policies, initiatives, and challenges, our aim is to provide insights for stakeholders interested in overcoming these obstacles and enhancing opportunities for young individuals across Europe.

Through the collective efforts of this diverse cohort, we delved into the intricacies of youth care, meticulously analysing national contexts to discern strengths and weaknesses.

	STRENGTHS:	WEAKNESSES
ITALY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Comprehensive Support Systems:</i> Italy has established a comprehensive system, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and regional authorities, to monitor and provide assistance to minors placed outside their families • <i>Inclusive Education and Healthcare:</i> Italy prioritises access to education and healthcare for all foreign minors, irrespective of their background. • <i>Rich Sports and Leisure Culture:</i> Italy boasts numerous sports facilities and initiatives promoting sports for all citizens, including disadvantaged youth, showcasing the potential for integration and personal development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Legal Barriers:</i> Legal barriers, such as the loss of support upon reaching adulthood and complexities in work permits for asylum seekers, hinder the full integration and participation of migrant youth in the workforce. • <i>Integration Challenges:</i> Despite efforts, young immigrants face integration challenges, including limited career pathways and disparities in employment opportunities and income, exacerbated by media perceptions. • <i>Skill Mismatch:</i> While Italy offers diverse employment opportunities, there may be a mismatch between the skills demanded by emerging sectors and those possessed by the youth.

SERBIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Decline in Children in Care:</i> Serbia has shown a reduction in the number of children in care, indicating improvements in family support systems or alternative care arrangements. • <i>Education Access:</i> Efforts to improve education access for children in care are evident, with a low dropout rate and a notable percentage pursuing higher education. • <i>Civil Society Support:</i> Civil society organisations like the Psychosocial Innovation Network and the Center for Positive Youth Development play a vital role in providing support programs, including counselling, career guidance, and skill-building, augmenting government efforts in social welfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lack of Official Data:</i> Serbia faces challenges in collecting comprehensive data on young individuals within or leaving the care system, which hampers accurate assessment and policymaking efforts. • <i>Lack of governmental support:</i> young people exiting the care system in Serbia lack systematic, long-term support coming from governmental institutions to ensure their holistic well-being and empowerment. • <i>Limited Awareness of Programs:</i> Despite government initiatives aimed at addressing youth unemployment, awareness and participation in such programs remain low among young people
SPAIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regional Autonomy:</i> Spain's approach to child protection allows for tailored strategies and interventions at the regional level, acknowledging the diverse needs and circumstances across different autonomous communities. • <i>Increased Foster Care:</i> The rise in the number of foster carers compared to those in residential care suggests a growing emphasis on family-based care, which can provide a more nurturing and stable environment for children in need of protection. • <i>Collaboration with Private Sector:</i> Partnerships with private entities, exemplified by programs like Joves Futur+ by FC Barcelona Foundation and Boscoverano by Fundación Main, showcase collaboration between public and private sectors to address youth unemployment and social exclusion, leveraging resources and expertise for greater impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Growing number of Unaccompanied Minors:</i> The increasing number of unaccompanied foreign minors, particularly in regions like the Canary Islands, presents a pressing challenge, requiring enhanced support and resources to ensure their well-being and integration into society. • <i>Need for Long-term Support:</i> Many vulnerable youths require ongoing support beyond initial interventions to achieve sustained positive outcomes, highlighting the importance of ensuring continuity of care and services throughout their transition to adulthood. • <i>Limited Coordination:</i> Despite regional autonomy, there may be challenges in coordinating efforts and sharing best practices across autonomous communities, leading to potential inefficiencies and disparities in service delivery.

Based on the information gathered from Italy, Serbia, and Spain regarding the contexts of young people within and exiting the care system, the Care4youth project identified common needs across these countries in crucial areas.

Common needs

1. Social Inclusion

- Anti-Discrimination Measures: Implement awareness campaigns and policies to tackle social stigma and include marginalised groups, such as young people in care.
- Peer Support Networks: Create structured peer support systems and group activities to offer emotional assistance for transitioning care system youth.

2. Employability and Career Development

- Mentorship and Networking: Facilitate mentorship programs and networking events to directly connect young people with professionals in their fields of interest.
- Employability Skills Development: Offer targeted training sessions and workshops to equip care system youth with essential employability skills like teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving.

3. Educational and Leisure Opportunities

- Holistic Initiatives for Wellness: Develop holistic programs that blend sports and leisure activities with life skills training to enhance overall well-being and social integration.
- Equitable Education and Recognition: Address language barriers and resource constraints while ensuring recognition of foreign qualifications to promote equal educational opportunities for all.

Capacity building workshop

The Capacity Building Workshop stands as a pivotal endeavour within the framework of the CARE4YOUTH project, embodying its commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and collaborative synergy. Anchored in a comprehensive analysis conducted at both national and international levels, the workshop marks the advancement of the innovative CARE4YOUTH methodology. Through a participatory approach involving the target group's representatives, associated partners, and local organisations, this methodology is meticulously co-developed to address the authentic needs and aspirations of its end-users.

Scheduled to coincide with the inaugural transnational project meeting in Italy, the workshop serves as a focal point for cross-cultural exchange and knowledge enrichment.

The project's value is amplified at the international level through:

- Best Practice Exchange: Facilitating the exchange of best practices on an international level among diverse nations enriches the project's methodologies and outcomes, ensuring a comprehensive approach.
- Knowledge Enrichment: Cross-cultural insights enhance the project methodology and the diverse practices and methodologies enrich the training and sporting programmes.
- Fostering International Identity: By fostering a sense of belonging beyond national boundaries, CARE4YOUTH strengthens the international identity among participants, encouraging active participation and shared responsibility.
- Cross-Border Networks: Vital cross-border networks unite young individuals, social/youth workers, and sports experts, fostering collaboration and shared expertise at an international level.
- Raising Awareness: CARE4YOUTH elevates awareness about the significance of sports and outdoor activities for social inclusion and active citizenship on an international scale, inspiring communities and policymakers alike.

Local stakeholders' engagement proved crucial for grounding the methodology in practical, community-based experiences. The event highlighted the necessity of flexible, non-formal learning activities, which effectively facilitated participant engagement and knowledge exchange. Insights from best practice actors emphasised the importance of organising cultural, art, and music events to ensure sustainability for initiatives.

The collaborative approach not only enhances the workshop's effectiveness but also strengthens the project's overall impact by ensuring alignment with real-world needs and priorities. Attendees include a diverse range of stakeholder groups from each project country, ensuring representation of various perspectives and experiences. Each partner sends a delegation comprising four people:

- a. Two stakeholders (one youngster and one social/youth worker/ educator), to foster inclusivity and grassroots engagement.
- b. Two staff members who contributed to the context analysis at the national level to enrich discussions with valuable insights and expertise, as well as facilitating the activities.
- c. Furthermore, partners have the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge by visiting youth and social integration organisations in Italy, showcasing exemplary best practices in the field.

Palermo meeting participants profile: 3 sports experts (diving and hiking), 1 psychologist, 4 young people with diverse backgrounds, and 8 youth workers.

Local organisations engaged:

- [Molti Volti](#): A community project intimately connected with the Ballarò neighbourhood in Palermo, which grows in balance with a laboratory of modern society within which 15 different communities live and as many as 25 languages are spoken. Molti Volti was founded on 24 April 2014 by a group of 14 people from 8 different countries - Senegal, Zambia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, France, Spain, Gambia and Italy - who from that date animate a project designed and structured to offer dignity, citizenship and value starting from diversity.
- Associazione Handala - [Mediterraneo antirazzista](#): founded in 2008 and is based on a fundamental idea: to break down the barriers of racism, exclusion and marginality through sport and cultural production, understood as a social vehicle for confrontation and socialisation. Mediterraneo Antirazzista wants to question the dichotomies centre/periphery and inclusion/exclusion, it wants to shorten distances and promote relations between all those who inhabit the metropolitan city.

The transnational capacity building workshop unfolds across three intensive days, meticulously curated to facilitate learning, co-creation, and networking opportunities. The workshop, led by facilitators, emphasised understanding the unique needs of young people in care and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Participants engaged in interactive activities, group discussions, and action planning exercises to co-create tailored training and sports programs.

▪ *Day One: Transnational Partnership Meeting*

The first day commences with a warm welcome at the venue, initiating fruitful discussions among project coordinators. The topics include various aspects of activities implementation, including management, methodology, pilot case studies, dissemination, and stakeholder engagement. The day ended with an introduction to stakeholders from Serbia, Spain, and Italy, showcasing their roles and contributions to the project. In the evening, a social dinner at Locale provided a relaxed environment for informal networking and relationship-building among the participants.

▪ *Day Two: Study Visit*

Participants explore local organisations and initiatives focused on intercultural integration and best practices in youth empowerment. Participants visited MoltiVolti, renowned for its innovative intercultural integration model, and Associazione Handala explaining the best practice “Mediterraneo Antirazzista”. Then they immersed themselves in the Ballarò district, the heart of Palermo's multiculturalism, being the oldest market as well as a key landing place for African people.

Day three: Capacity Building Workshop

The final day of the workshop took place at the European Palermo Youth Center (EPYC), where participants engaged in an immersive capacity-building session dedicated to fine-tune the methodology and co-creating the sport and leisure program.

The day commenced with an ice-breaking storytelling activity using Dixit cards. This exercise was designed to explore various storytelling methods to better engage vulnerable youngsters, fostering creativity and empathy among participants.



Following the storytelling activity, participants engaged in a brainstorming session known as Crazy 8. This dynamic activity encouraged the rapid generation of innovative ideas related to the sport and leisure program, transcending the boundaries of traditional thinking.

The day concluded with a structured mind mapping session. During this collaborative exercise, participants developed the program's framework, drawing on best practices, national reports, and fieldwork methodologies.



The workshop concluded with reflections, surveys, and the distribution of the certificate of participation.

Training and sport programme

The comprehensive research and capacity-building activities of the CARE4YOUTH project have culminated in the development of a structured training and sports programme designed to address the needs of minors and youth in care.

The CARE4YOUTH programme aims to test the co-created methodology and develop specific training materials and sports activities.

The training and sport programme results in three main modules to be tested, one in each partner country. The Development and implementation of outdoor sporting & leisure activities in the project countries is an essential phase for making the methodology respond to community needs, while enhancing the sustainability and replication potential of the project results.

CARE4YOUTH training and sport programme overview:

Module 1: Emotional Intelligence and Digital Communication	
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Promotion of leisure and sport activities, to engage youngsters in sports and healthy habits and increase their well-being.2. Use of digital communication and tools for youngsters' social inclusion: Creation of social media awareness to boost youth motivation for professional growth.3. Promotion of best practices among young sport trainers to communicate with peers through storytelling.
Training actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Understanding Emotional Intelligence: problem-solving, teamwork, self-esteem, self-control, and motivation for personal and labour enhancement.▪ Digital Communication Skills: Utilising digital tools such as LinkedIn and Europass and short video presentations for professional growth and job hunting.
Delivery Method:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Activities in open and free spaces for leisure (beach, countryside, natural spaces...) and in public facilities (outdoor athletics tracks, municipal facilities...).▪ Activities on digital communication for job research (e.g. short interview videos). Group activities by the sea and the mountains with the partners' staff and trainers.

Sports & Leisure Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hiking and Outdoor Games: Building emotional resilience through nature activities. ▪ Diving Baptism Experience: Boosting confidence and courage through scuba diving. ▪ Other leisure/sport activity by the sea (e.g. snorkelling, kayak...) or the countryside.
Possible Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Associations or NGOs ▪ Sport centres/sport experts ▪ Local/public initiatives
Module 2: Social Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment	
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotion of employability and outdoor activities to build a small business. 2. Enhancement of communication and teamwork skills through education. 3. Introduction of the basics of life skills.
Training actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Models and Elements of Social Entrepreneurship: Fostering entrepreneurial spirit among participants. ▪ Social and Soft Skills for Job Upskilling: Enhancing communication and teamwork skills. ▪ Development of Essential Life Skills through Community Building: Building connections and support networks.
Delivery Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online and hybrid training sessions. ▪ Study visit to observe successful best practices. ▪ Gamification elements to enhance learning and engagement. ▪ Mentorship programs to provide guidance and support.
Sports & Leisure Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hiking in surrounding forests: Encouraging entrepreneurial thinking in natural settings. ▪ Volleyball games: Promoting team building and collaboration skills.
Possible Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volleyball club ▪ Youth centres ▪ Local NGOs ▪ Scouts
Module 3: Mentoring Models for Labour Market Integration and Social Cohesion	

Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotion of safe and open spaces for social cohesion. 2. Inspiration of young people through best practices and connection with fieldwork. 3. Facilitation of the understanding of interculturality as a value. 4. Promotion of synergies among stakeholders during the project cycle.
Training actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emotional competencies and basic skills for effective mentoring. ▪ Exchange of practices and creation of a favourable environment for social entrepreneurship pursuits. ▪ Social cohesion, equity, and equality: Building inclusive communities.
Delivery Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peer learning and non-formal training activities. ▪ Study visits to best practice environments.
Sports & Leisure Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outdoor games (e.g. beach soccer, beach tennis and/or beach volley). ▪ Beach cleaning activities. ▪ Blended one-day activity in the beach (e.g. volleyball tournaments, music fest, and beach cleaning).
Possible partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth centres ▪ Water sport clubs ▪ Activists' groups

Conclusions

The comparative analysis conducted across Spain, Italy, and Serbia provided valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of different national approaches to supporting young individuals in care.

The insights gathered from focus group discussions, surveys, and desk research in Italy, Spain and Serbia underscore the diverse needs, aspirations, and challenges faced by young people, particularly those at risk of social exclusion and transitioning out of the care system.

The diverse cultural contexts notwithstanding, common themes emerge, underscoring the universal need for tailored support and opportunities for this vulnerable demographic.

Key Findings:

- Sports and leisure activities emerge as universally valued pursuits, offering not only physical and mental benefits but also serving as avenues for social integration and skill development.
- Systemic barriers such as financial constraints, lack of motivation, and unequal access to resources persist, hindering the full participation of vulnerable youth in these activities. Moreover, the lack of comprehensive support, both within the care system and post-care, exacerbates the challenges faced by care leavers, leaving many feeling ill-prepared for independent living and employment.
- A holistic approach to youth empowerment is paramount. This encompasses access to education and employment opportunities, as well as psychosocial support, mentorship, and recreational activities.
- Collaboration and Community Engagement enhance the reach and effectiveness of interventions aimed at supporting vulnerable youth.

This analysis informed the development of a unified methodology aimed at nurturing employability competencies among young people transitioning from care systems. Additionally, the fieldwork and participatory activities gathered crucial insights from local stakeholders, further refining the methodology and ensuring its effectiveness.

Key components of the CARE4YOUTH methodology include the integration of sporting and leisure activities designed to promote physical well-being, teamwork, leadership skills, and personal development. These activities are structured to be enjoyable while also imparting essential life skills, thereby fostering resilience, confidence, and a sense of belonging among participants.

The project's capacity-building workshops played a crucial role in co-creating and refining the training and sports programs. These workshops facilitated cross-cultural exchanges and knowledge enrichment, enhancing the project's methodologies and outcomes. The collaborative efforts of stakeholders during these workshops ensured that the final methodology was grounded in practical, community-based experiences and aligned with the real-world needs of young people in care.

The sport and leisure program specifically designed within the CARE4YOUTH framework is an effective tool for youth and community engagement. By promoting active participation in sports and leisure activities, the program not only improves physical health but also strengthens social bonds, teaches teamwork, and builds leadership skills. These structured yet enjoyable activities play a crucial role in the overall development and empowerment of young people, preparing them for the challenges of independent living and employment.

In conclusion, the CARE4YOUTH methodology effectively addresses the social, employability, and educational needs of young people in care. Its emphasis on participatory design, cross-cultural exchange, and practical application ensures that it remains a robust framework for enhancing the lives of vulnerable youth.

The collaboratively developed methodology and sport program, created through the combined efforts of partner organizations from different countries, social workers, youth workers, young people, and other stakeholders, is designed to be both internationally applicable and multisectoral. This underscores the importance of holistic approaches to youth empowerment, encompassing not only access to education and employment opportunities but also the provision of psychosocial support, mentorship, and recreational.





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