

NOTES ON YOUTH TASKFORCE

Marilena, chairperson, announces the agenda, including a presentation for the virtual word center, sector updates, and a proposal for future work methods. She invites suggestions for additional topics.

This is followed by individual member introductions.

Anca Doczi presents the Duke of Edinburgh International Award as a global non-formal education program with over 60 years of tradition, operating in 140 countries worldwide and starting in Romania in 2013. She explains that the Duke of Edinburgh is the patron of the program in Romania. Anca highlights a recent ceremony at the Elizabeta Palace and mentions Florina will provide more details.

She describes the program's structure, which involves sections like volunteering, physical activities, skills, adventure, and a residential project for the gold award. Anca explains the individual and mentor-supported nature of the program, with minimum time requirements for each level.

She introduces the Online Record Book, an online platform for participants and mentors to track activities. Anca then discusses the Virtual Award Centre, which provides access to the program in areas without physical centers, with mentors coordinating through Florina.

Anca emphasizes the program's benefits, including skill development, resilience, civic participation, employability, and social inclusion. She traces the program's origin to address a gap in youth development during the transition to adulthood. Anca explains the three levels (bronze, silver, gold) and the role of award leaders as mentors.

She concludes by highlighting the international recognition of the program and its patronage by Her Majesty Margareta in Romania. Marilena thanks Anca for the presentation, and Anca invites questions.

Questions from the audience focus on the implementation of the Virtual Award Centre. Mariana Cristina Matei inquires about its initiation and the recruitment of leaders. Anca Doczi explains that the implementation began in September of the previous year, with participants mainly from areas near Bucharest and Kluge. She mentions reaching out to companies for potential leaders and tailoring mentorship to participants' interests.

Florina Caldare adds that they encourage physical meetings between participants and leaders for better relationships. Anca shares that they currently have around 50 leaders and 160 participants, with an even balance. She highlights an instance where a high school with many interested students transitioned into becoming an award centre themselves.

Overall, the questions demonstrate interest in the program's practical aspects and its potential for expansion and impact.

Mariana Cristina Matei updates the group on the challenges faced by adolescents in accessing opportunities, particularly regarding transportation. She highlights the isolation and vulnerability of adolescents living in neighborhoods with limited access to city centers, where many NGOs are based. Mariana shares examples from Constanta where many adolescents lack transportation to access activities in the city center.

On a positive note, Mariana mentions a recent meeting with JRS in Constanta, where they offer English classes for adolescents and are open to hosting guest speakers like Andre to engage with the youth. Mariana emphasizes the importance of collaboration among organizations to address the needs of adolescents and suggests more frequent meetings to identify challenges and seek support from public authorities.

Anca Doczi reflects on the similarities in transportation challenges faced by both local teenagers and international communities, pointing out that rural youth also encounter difficulties accessing opportunities in urban areas. Marilena Ene agrees, emphasizing that youth from rural areas and small cities often lack opportunities for personal development due to transportation barriers.

The discussion revolves around the need to manage the size of the task force effectively while ensuring impactful coordination. There's agreement on the importance of not letting the group become too large, which could hinder efficiency. Mariana Cristina Matei and Anca Doczi both emphasize the necessity of focused coordination and effective participation.

Matey Nikolov suggests caution in expanding the group too much, highlighting the need for effective coordination to maintain impact. Marilena Ene agrees, stressing the importance of not letting the task force become too large and unwieldy.

The conversation then shifts to the need for updated documents, particularly the Terms of Reference (ToR) and the Work Plan for 2024. Marilena Ene proposes updating these documents to guide the task force's activities effectively. There's a suggestion to organize smaller working groups to finalize the materials.

Overall, the focus is on balancing the need for inclusivity with the necessity of maintaining efficiency and impact within the task force's operations.

The conversation delves into exploring opportunities for funding interventions targeting young Ukrainians and adolescents. Marilena Ene suggests shifting focus from solely targeting opportunities for young Ukrainians to finding grants that can be utilized for interventions involving both young Ukrainians and local NGOs. This broader approach aims to facilitate more comprehensive support for youth-focused projects.

Anca Doczi contributes valuable insights, suggesting the creation of an emergency fund to support young people in accessing activities, such as transportation to youth centers. She also highlights the potential for peer-to-peer initiatives, where young volunteers support their peers

from rural areas, emphasizing the importance of integrating digital technologies effectively in such efforts.

Matey Nikolov echoes the importance of strategic engagement, proposing collaboration with organizations like scouts to reach young people in rural areas. He also raises questions about the digital penetration in rural Romania and the effective utilization of technology by young people.

Anca Doczi shares practical observations from her experience, noting that many Romanian children have access to gadgets, but the challenge lies in their effective and safe usage. Marilena Ene acknowledges the importance of engaging organizations like scouts and suggests reaching out to entities like Code for Romania for support in digitalization efforts.

Overall, the discussion underscores the significance of strategic partnerships, effective utilization of digital technologies, and inclusive approaches to supporting young Ukrainians and adolescents.

The discussion revolves around enhancing visibility for the actions and interventions targeting young people and adolescents. Marilena Ene proposes creating a monthly newsletter to showcase activities conducted by task force members. This newsletter would feature descriptions and photos collected from social media posts or websites, making it easier for members to contribute without additional workload.

The conversation also addresses the need for synchronized actions and collaboration among task force members. Suggestions include coordinating joint activities and campaigns on specific dates or topics to amplify impact. The emphasis is on participatory decision-making and leveraging collective efforts to address youth-related issues effectively.

Additionally, the frequency of task force meetings is discussed, with options for either biweekly or monthly meetings proposed. A poll will be conducted to gauge members' preferences and ensure that meeting schedules accommodate everyone's availability.

The meeting concludes with Marilena Ene expressing gratitude to participants and emphasizing the openness to feedback and suggestions for future meetings. The meeting minutes will be circulated, and members are encouraged to reach out with any proposals or ideas for upcoming sessions.