

Effective Engagement of Young People in Social Projects

service **in culture** learning



Co-funded by
the European Union



SERVICE LEARNING
IN CULTURE

"Service Learning in Culture – Effective Engagement
of Young People in Social Projects"
(2023-1-PL01-KA210-YOU-000156000)



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Page 5: Introduction

Page 8: Beginnings and historical background

Page 12: Service Learning - stages

Page 17: Practical guide for teachers and students

Page 30: Practical guide for cultural institutions

Page 41: Motivating young people to get involved

Contents

Introduction

This brochure was created as part of the Erasmus+ project "Service Learning in Culture – Effective Youth Engagement in Social Projects." It examines how service learning can be effectively implemented in cultural institutions and secondary schools.

At a time when youth engagement and civic participation are especially needed, service learning offers a structured and impactful way to connect formal and informal education with real societal needs.

The service learning educational method draws inspiration from the thoughts of John Dewey and Jane Addams, who emphasized the importance of learning through practice and social engagement.

Based on the belief that the most effective learning comes through experience, service learning puts young people at the center of meaningful community projects.

Our brochure, presenting conclusions, good practices and specific implementation recommendations, is the result of cooperation between teachers, cultural workers and young people.



Objectives of the brochure

The aim of this publication is to present solutions that support the implementation of service learning with young people in educational and cultural settings. The brochure also aims to inspire and provide proven tools to help institutions and organizations engage local communities in their educational missions.

Specific objectives

Specific objectives include:

- Explaining the benefits of service learning in youth education and cultural participation.
- Presentation of proven examples and successful pilot initiatives implemented as part of the project.
- Developing guidelines for adapting service learning to different institutional contexts.
- Strengthening the competences of educators and cultural institutions in the field of cooperation with youth.
- Promoting creative youth activities that respond to local social and cultural needs.

Target group

This brochure is aimed at professionals and institutions operating at the intersection of education, culture, and youth development. It is particularly useful for:

- secondary school teachers looking for innovative, experiential service learning methods;
- school principals striving to increase student engagement and social responsibility;
- cultural institutions (e.g. museums, cultural centers, galleries) interested in involving young people in their programs;
- youth workers and facilitators supporting civic education and activities for local communities;
- policymakers and officials looking for tools to involve young people in social projects, support their civic participation and lifelong learning.

Whether you're just discovering service learning or looking for ways to further improve your work methods, this guide will guide you along the way.

About the project and partnership

The project "Service Learning in Culture – Effective Youth Engagement in Social Projects" was implemented as part of the Erasmus+ Small-Scale Partnerships program by a consortium of four organizations from Poland, Greece, Portugal, and Spain. The partners joined forces to explore how service learning can enhance the civic and cultural engagement of secondary school students.

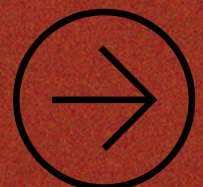
The partnership includes:

- Municipal Cultural Zone in Łódź (Poland) – cultural center in Łódź and project coordinator;
- Action for the Civil Society (Greece) – a social enterprise specializing in non-formal education and civic participation;
- ARTE.M (Portugal) – an artistic and cultural association from the island of Madeira, with experience in youth creativity and cultural education;
- IES Vía de la Plata (Spain) – a secondary school deeply committed to integration and social cooperation.

The partners brought diverse perspectives and experiences to a shared vision: promoting service learning as an educational tool, building youth empowerment, and developing their participation in culture. Throughout the project, they participated in joint training sessions, local workshops, and international exchanges, which resulted in the findings and recommendations presented in this publication.



BEGINNINGS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



What is service learning

Service learning is a teaching and learning method that combines community engagement with the acquisition of formal knowledge, skills, and reflection. It is not a separate activity from education, but rather intentionally integrated into curricula and educational programs to enhance personal development, improve academic achievement, and make a positive contribution to the community.

This method is used in both formal education (e.g., schools and universities) and informal education (e.g., youth centers, cultural institutions, and non-governmental organizations). It allows young people to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, actively participate in community life, and reflect on their role as responsible citizens.

Beginnings and historical background

The roots of service learning lie in the tradition of experiential education, the foundations of which were laid by thinkers at the turn of the 20th century. John Dewey ("Democracy and Education," 1916; "Experience and Education," 1938) emphasized that learning should be active, reflective, and embedded in a social context. Jane Addams, co-founder of Hull House in Chicago (1889), emphasized the value of social engagement as an element of education, involving students in initiatives for the local community. Earlier pioneers also included Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, who promoted a holistic, practical approach to education. The term "service learning" did not become widespread until the 1960s.

In the 20th century, various civic and educational movements began to connect community service activities with youth education. Programs such as the Peace Corps (1961), VISTA (1965), and Campus Compact (1985) reinforced this idea. In the 1990s, national policies (e.g., the National and Community Service Act of 1990) began to formally support service learning in schools and universities.

In recent decades, service learning has become widespread worldwide, often aligning with the goals of citizenship education and the UN's sustainable development agenda. It continues to evolve as an approach that fosters both academic achievement and social engagement.

Basic principles and values

Service learning is based on a set of key principles that guide its implementation and purpose:

- civic responsibility – encouraging students to actively and responsibly participate in the life of a democratic society.
- empathy and sensitivity – promoting understanding, sensitivity and connection with others, especially marginalized or disadvantaged communities.
- Collaboration and mutual benefit – ensuring that both the community and learners benefit from activities by creating partnerships rather than unilateral interventions.
- critical thinking – stimulating students to analyze social problems, reflect on their own assumptions and take thoughtful actions.
- Social engagement – motivating students by involving them in socially relevant projects to address real challenges, from environmental issues to inequality, by making a meaningful contribution.

These values ensure that service learning is not just about “helping,” but about learning in a way that respects communities, builds understanding, and fosters long-term commitment to social change.

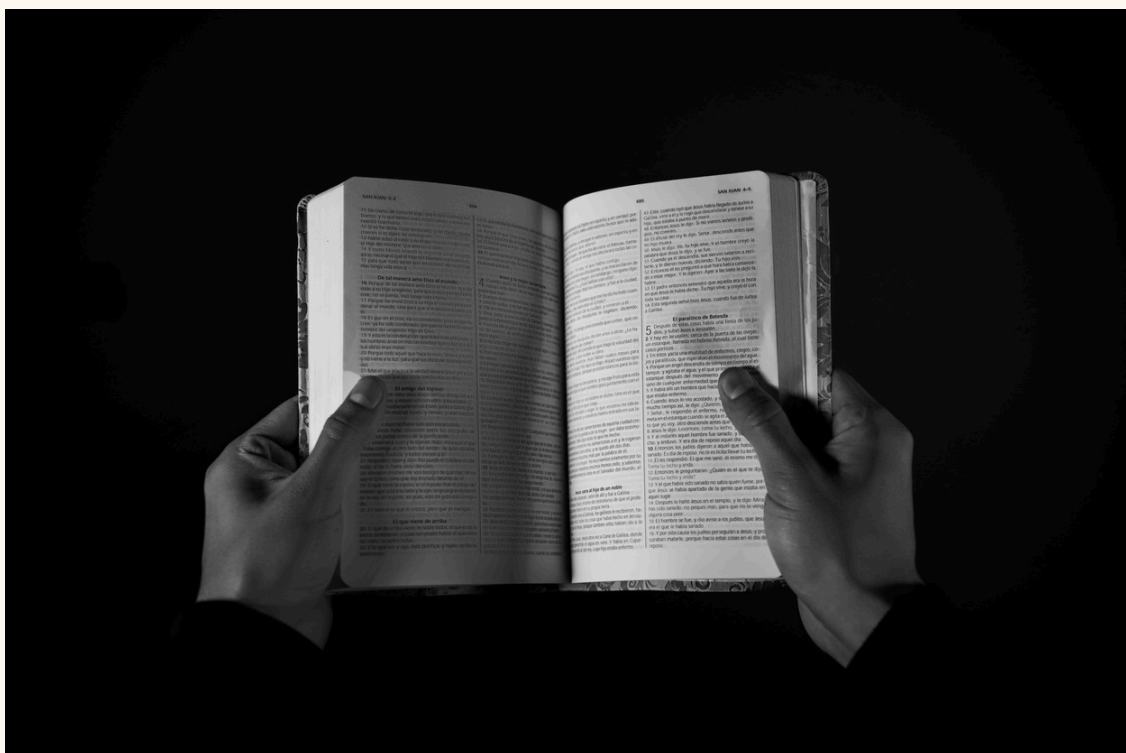


The educational philosophy underlying the method

Service learning is based on solid pedagogical foundations, rooted in several key educational philosophies:

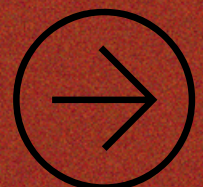
- Constructivism – Learning is viewed as an active process in which knowledge is built through experience and reflection. Service learning allows students to engage with real-world problems, give their actions social meaning, and reflect on their impact.
- democratic education – inspired by Dewey's vision, service learning promotes student activity, participation, and co-creation of knowledge. Students are not passive recipients, but active participants.
- Learning by doing – According to Kolb's experiential learning cycle, service learning involves direct action, reflection, conceptualization, and reapplication. Through this cycle, students gain deeper understanding.
- critical pedagogy – some service learning models incorporate the ideas of Paulo Freire and others who emphasize reflection on power, inequality and the role of education in promoting social justice.

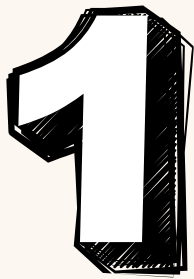
All these fundamentals make service learning a powerful educational tool that combines intellectual, emotional, and social development. It's not just about academic achievement, but about developing thoughtful, capable, and empathetic citizens prepared to address complex local and global challenges.



SERVICE LEARNING STAGES

IMPLEMENTING A SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT IS A PROCESS THAT COMBINES EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE. TO BE EFFECTIVE, IT'S IMPORTANT TO DIVIDE THE ENTIRE PROCESS INTO STAGES—FROM PLANNING TO EVALUATION—WITH CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS/TUTORS, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS.





1. Preparatory phase – needs diagnosis and planning

a) Identification of social needs

- Conduct conversations, surveys or interviews with the local community, cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations, seniors, youth, people with disabilities, etc.
- The goal is to identify real social problems that can be solved through youth actions.

b) Resource Analysis

- Determine what competencies, skills and talents students or participants possess.
- See how they can be connected to the needs of the community.
- Consider what role partner institutions (e.g. library, community center, school, NGO) can play.

c) Choosing the project topic

- The topic must result from a diagnosis of needs and be possible to implement within a specified time.
- Examples:
 - art workshops for seniors,
 - ecological campaign in a local park,
 - recording a film about the forgotten heroes of the district,
 - modernization of common spaces (e.g. community garden, mural).

d) Establishing educational goals

- Every project must have educational goals (what young people will learn) and social goals (who they will help and how).
- Example:
 - Educational goal – developing communication and civic competences.
 - Social goal – improving the ecological awareness of residents.

2

2. Action phase – project implementation

a) Division of roles and responsibilities

- Create a student team with a leader and people responsible for specific tasks.
- Introduce a mentoring system – a tutor from a cultural institution or a teacher supports, but does not replace, the young people.

b) Practical activities

- Youth plan, organize and implement activities for the community.
- The supporting institution (school, cultural center) provides space, resources, knowledge and contacts.
- Activities may include:
 - workshops, campaigns, artistic events,
 - film, photography and research projects,
 - activities in public space.

c) Integration with the educational process

- Teachers and tutors link project activities to curriculum content (e.g. history, social studies, art, biology, foreign language).
- Thanks to this, Service Learning becomes a method of learning through experience, not just volunteering.



3. Reflection Phase – Learning from Experience

This is a key element of the method – it distinguishes it from ordinary social work.

- After each stage (planning, action, meeting with beneficiaries), participants discuss what they have learned.
- The following reflection methods are used:
 - reflection journals,
 - group conversations,
 - collages, films, mind maps,
 - „What? So what? Now what?“.

Reflection connects practice with theory and allows participants to understand the meaning of their actions.

4. Presentation and recognition of results phase

a) Dissemination of results

- Participants present the project results publicly – in the form of an exhibition, film, presentation, or local event.
- It is important that the local community and beneficiaries see the value of this work.

b) Recognition of learning outcomes

- Teachers and tutors document the competences acquired (e.g. communication, planning, teamwork, empathy, creativity).





5. Evaluation and follow-up phase

a) Project evaluation

- Analysis of what worked, what could be improved, and what the outcomes were for the community and participants.
- It is worth considering:
 - surveys for participants and beneficiaries,
 - debriefing interviews,
 - joint development of proposals.

b) Continuity and sustainability of results

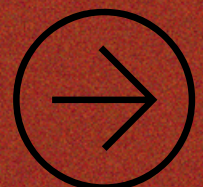
- Consider how the project could be developed further – for example, creating a series of activities, workshops or a youth group.
- Encourage students to initiate further Service Learning projects, this time as mentors of new groups.

Key Principles for Implementing Service Learning

- 1. Learning and community service are equal – the project is intended to benefit both parties.**
- 2. Authenticity – problems and needs must be real and felt by the community.**
- 3. Active role of participants – young people are change makers, not just performers.**
- 4. Reflection and analysis of experiences – learning through action and self-reflection.**
- 5. Cross-sectoral cooperation – schools, cultural institutions, NGOs, local government.**
- 6. Recognition of outcomes – formal and informal documentation of educational outcomes.**

SERVICE LEARNING AT SCHOOL

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS



1. Introduction

By using the Service Learning method, the school becomes a place where students learn through practical experience and collaboration. The teacher, in turn, becomes a mentor and companion in the learning process, not just a knowledge imparter.

2. Why is it worth using Service Learning at school?

Service Learning is a method that connects the meaning of learning with the realities of social life. Students see that academic knowledge can be a tool for change.

Benefits for students:

- they learn cooperation, planning and responsibility,
- develop empathy, creativity and problem-solving skills,
- they gain a sense of agency – they see that their actions have a real impact,
- learn reflection and self-assessment,
- experience the joy of helping and working in a group.

Benefits for the school:

- the image of the school as an open and modern place is strengthened,
- teachers learn cross-curricular cooperation,
- the school builds relationships with local institutions and the community, and naturally implements educational priorities (citizenship, social activity, intergenerational cooperation).



3. Project implementation stages – step by step

Service Learning is based on several stages that together create a logical and repeatable process.

I. Needs diagnosis and planning

This is the stage in which students and teachers discover the real needs of the school or local community and consider how they can be integrated with the teaching content.

How to do it:

1. Classroom Conversation or Starter Workshop:

- Ask questions:
 - “What needs to change in our school or community?”
 - “Who could we help by using what we learn in class?”
- Use simple tools: brainstorming, voting, problem mapping.

2. Environmental diagnosis:

- Conduct a mini-research – survey, interview, observation.
- You can visit your local library, community center, or senior center to learn about others' perspectives.

3. Topic selection:

- Students formulate the problem themselves, e.g.:
 - “How to improve relationships between students from different classes?”
 - “How to encourage residents to take care of greenery?”
 - “How to support older people in our neighborhood?”

4. Setting goals:

- Educational goal: e.g. developing communication skills, environmental knowledge, writing persuasive texts.
- Social goal: e.g. creating a campaign, video, ecological campaign, meeting with seniors.

5. Creating an action plan:

- Schedule with dates and tasks.
- Defining roles (leader, coordinator, promotion person, contact with partners).
- Preliminary division of responsibilities and necessary materials.

Teacher Tips:

- Let students choose their own topic – engagement increases when the topic is “theirs.”
- Remember that diagnosis is not just a formal step, but a moment of building social awareness.
- Make sure students see the connection between learning and action from the beginning.

II. Project implementation

This is the moment where theory turns into action. Students implement their plan, and the teacher acts as a guide and mentor.

How to work in this stage? Start with practical preparation:

- discuss the principles of cooperation and safety,
- remind you that every role in the project is important.

Divide the class into task teams:

e.g. organizational, media, artistic, research, evaluation group.

Implement planned activities: school campaigns, workshops, mini-exhibitions, presentations, online activities. Collaborate with institutions (community centers, libraries, NGOs).

Support student independence:

let them decide on the form of communication, the style of the event and the method of promotion.

Document the process:

photos, short notes, project journal, recordings – they will be useful for reflection and presentation.

Teacher Tips:

Be a guide, not a manager – give students space for their own ideas.

Don't be afraid of mistakes - consider them part of learning.

Try to make the project visible in the school space – project board, posts, posters, messages on the website.



III. Reflection

Reflection is the heart of service learning. It allows students to understand what they have learned and how their actions have impacted others.

How to introduce reflection:

1. Regularly – after each activity:

- Spend a few minutes of the lesson talking or doing a quick summary.
- write down the questions on the board:
- What happened today?
- What surprised us?
- What have we learned?

2. Individually and in groups:

- students can complete reflection cards,
- the group creates a joint poster or collage "our conclusions".

3. Creatively:

- use photography, theatre, drawing or short reflective films.
- allow students to express emotions and discoveries through different means of expression.

Tips:

- Reflection should not be graded like a test—it is a development tool, not a test.
- For many students, this is the first moment when they consciously connect knowledge with emotions and values.
- Reflect with empathy and openness, even if students say difficult things.



IV. Presentation of results

It is a time of celebration, but also a moment of recognition of effort and learning.

Students have the opportunity to show the world what they have achieved and share what they have learned.

How to prepare a presentation:

1. The form depends on the project:

- exhibition of photos or posters,
- multimedia presentation, film, performance, school newspaper, podcast,
- an event with the participation of the local community.

2. Students as hosts:

- they lead the meeting, talk about the project, present materials, and invite guests.

3. Emphasize the process, not just the outcome:

- Tell us how the project was created, what the emotions and difficulties were.

4. Appreciation:

- hand out diplomas, awards, certificates,
- invite local media or partners – this builds faith in the sense of action.

Tips:

- The presentation should be authentic, not perfect – it is about showing commitment, not a “success scenario”.
- It is worth involving the community in the event – parents, neighbors, other classes.



V. Evaluation and follow-up

Evaluation is a moment of final reflection that allows us to organize our experiences and plan our next steps.

How to do it:

1. Common conversation:

- What was our greatest achievement?
- What worked and what needs improvement?
- What have we learned about ourselves and cooperation?

2. Student survey or evaluation form:

- allows you to collect opinions about the course of the project and the emotions of the participants.

3. Assessment of social effects:

- Have our actions actually helped anyone?
- How has our school or surroundings changed?

4. Documentation and report:

- prepare a joint project portfolio – photos, descriptions, quotes from participants, conclusions.

5. Continuation plan:

- How can we maintain the results? Perhaps another project, campaign, or mentoring younger students?
-

Tips:

- Evaluation does not end the process – it is the beginning of a new learning cycle.
- It's good to sum everything up with a joint meeting, an exhibition or a "behind the scenes" film.
- Record the results – let them remain in the school space (board, page, album).

Teacher Summary

- Give students authentic agency, even if the results are not perfect.
- Maintain a balance between education and action – a project is a form of learning, not just helping others.
- Make sure to reflect regularly, even briefly – this is the key to the success of the method.
- Support, inspire, listen – and young people will surprise you with their maturity and creativity.

4. How to combine Service Learning with school studies?

The method is not an addition to the lesson – it is a way of implementing the curriculum content.

Connection examples:

Biology – ecological activities, community garden, biodiversity research.

History – discovering local history, creating an exhibition about former residents.

Social welfare – analysis of social problems, development of school well-being principles.

Polish language – writing articles, reports, social campaign scenarios.

Visual arts/art – mural, photography exhibition, artistic activities in public space.

IT – project website, application or documentary.

Foreign languages – project presentations in partner languages, international contact.

The role of the teacher and student in the project:

Teacher:

- acts as a mentor and tutor,
- supports planning and reflection,
- helps with organization, but does not replace it,
- ensures the safety and inclusion of every student.

Student:

- plans and implements activities,
- communicates with partners,
- learns cooperation, responsibility and reflection,
- is a co-author of the project and its results.

Collaboration based on trust and dialogue makes the learning process a shared adventure.

How to embed service learning in your school

- Include the method in your educational and preventive program.
- Organize annual class or inter-class projects.
- Collaborate with cultural institutions, NGOs and local governments.
- Create an “idea bank” for future projects.
- Encourage alumni to become mentors.

Summary

Service Learning is a method that teaches responsibility, empathy, and action. It combines learning with experience, develops a sense of agency, and builds community.

Every project, even the smallest, is important – it teaches cooperation, respect and reflection.

This guide aims to help you plan and implement your project step by step. All you need is willingness, openness, and a team of people who believe that schools can change the world—starting with their own communities.

Project title:
School / class:
Supervisor (teacher/tutor):
Student team:
Implementation period:

1. Needs diagnosis

What needs or problems do we see in our local community?

.....
.....

2. Project goal

Educational Objective (what we will learn):

.....

Social goal (who and how will we help):

.....

3. Action Plan Stage Task Responsible Deadline Resources Needed

4. Project partners

(e.g. community center, library, NGO, seniors, office, local company)

.....

5. Expected results

.....

6. Documentation

(photos, film, journal, portfolio, posts, publication)

.....

 APPENDIX 2

STUDENT REFLECTION CARD

NAME AND SURNAME:

PROJECT NAME:

DATA:

1. WHAT DID WE DO TODAY?

.....

2. WHAT DID I LEARN DURING THIS ACTIVITY?

.....

3. WHAT WAS THE MOST INTERESTING OR DIFFICULT THING FOR ME?

.....

4. WHAT SURPRISED OR MOVED ME?

.....

5. HOW DID OUR PROJECT IMPACT OTHER PEOPLE OR THE ENVIRONMENT?

.....

6. WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO TRY NEXT TIME?

.....

 APPENDIX 3 PARTNERSHIP CARD (SCHOOL – PARTNER)

NAME OF THE SCHOOL:

NAME OF PARTNER INSTITUTION:

TOPIC OF COOPERATION:

DURATION:

1. SCOPE OF COOPERATION

DESCRIPTION OF PLANNED JOINT ACTIVITIES:

.....

**2. OBLIGATIONS OF THE PARTIES PAGE SCOPE OF SUPPORT /
RESPONSIBILITY**

SCHOOL

CULTURAL INSTITUTION

3. EXPECTED RESULTS OF COOPERATION

.....

4. METHOD OF DOCUMENTATION AND SUMMARY

(E.G. PRESENTATION, EXHIBITION, FILM, EVALUATION MEETING)

.....

SIGNATURES:

SCHOOL:

CULTURAL INSTITUTION:

DATA:

PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE:

TEAM / CLASS:

END DATE:

1. WHAT DO WE CONSIDER TO BE THE GREATEST SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT?

.....

2. WHAT WAS DIFFICULT OR NEEDED IMPROVEMENT?

.....

3. WHAT SKILLS HAVE WE DEVELOPED?

☐ **COLLABORATION** ☐ **COMMUNICATION** ☐ **CREATIVITY** ☐
RESPONSIBILITY ☐ **EMPATHY** ☐ **TIME MANAGEMENT** ☐ **SUBJECT**
KNOWLEDGE

4. HOW DO WE EVALUATE OUR COOPERATION IN THE GROUP?

(1 – VERY POOR, 5 – VERY GOOD) ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. WHAT BENEFITS DID THE LOCAL COMMUNITY GAIN?

.....

6. HOW CAN WE CONTINUE THE PROJECT OR ITS EFFECTS?

.....

LIST OF DOCUMENTATION AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

PROJECT TITLE:

1. VISUAL MATERIALS ☐ PHOTOS ☐ FILM / REPORTAGE ☐ GRAPHICS / POSTERS ☐ MURAL / ART INSTALLATION

2. TEXT MATERIALS ☐ ARTICLE/PROJECT DESCRIPTION ☐ SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS ☐ PRESENTATION/BROCHURE

3. EVENTS AND PROMOTION ☐ PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT ☐ EXHIBITION / SHOW / MEETING WITH RESIDENTS ☐ PUBLICATION IN LOCAL MEDIA

4. ARCHIVING ☐ SHARED FOLDER IN THE CLOUD ☐ FLASH DRIVE / DISC ☐ WEBSITE / BLOG

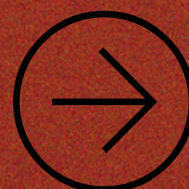
5. PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR DOCUMENTATION

NAME AND SURNAME:

CONTACT:

SERVICE LEARNING IN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR ANIMATORS AND EDUCATORS



1. Introduction – What is Service Learning in the Context of Culture?

Service Learning (learning through social engagement) is a method that allows you to combine cultural activities with civic and social education.

In cultural institutions, this means that young people, adults and seniors learn through real artistic and social activities that respond to the needs of the local community.

A cultural institution – a library, a community center, a museum, a gallery, a theater – becomes a space where creativity meets social responsibility, and participants learn through experience, reflection, and collaboration.

Service Learning isn't about a one-time event, but rather a learning process. Participants analyze a problem, plan actions, implement a project, and then discuss its results.

2. Why is it worth implementing Service Learning in cultural institutions?

The method brings benefits to both the participants and the institution itself.

Thanks to her:

- the institution becomes more open to residents and their needs,
- participants develop social, creative and civic competences,
- animators gain new tools for working with the group,
- intercultural and intergenerational dialogue is being built,
- culture becomes a space of activation and community.

Service Learning allows us to combine artistic activities with social reflection – theatre with activism, photography with education, handicraft with ecology, etc.



3. Stages of implementing a Service Learning project in a cultural institution

I. Needs diagnosis and planning

This is a key stage – the moment when understanding the local context becomes the foundation of the entire project.

How to do it step by step:

Meet the community:

Do some mini-reconnaissance – talk to class participants, residents, and local leaders. Ask questions:

What is missing in our environment? What hurts us most? What could be improved through cultural activities?

Use simple research tools:

a research walk around the district, a map of resources and needs, brainstorming with participants, interviews with local groups (seniors, youth, migrants, families).

Define the main problem and the idea for action.

E.g. "There is a lack of places for intergenerational meetings" → idea: theatre workshops connecting seniors and young people.

"Residents do not feel connected to the place" → Idea: a joint mural or photography exhibition "My Street".

The whole project was founded by:

Educational: what participants will learn (e.g., collaboration, event organization, equipment operation, creative thinking).

Social: who will the project help and how (e.g. improving neighbourly relations, activating seniors, promoting ecology).

Plan your activities:

develop a simple schedule, assign responsibilities, take into account possible risks (e.g. lack of attendance, technical difficulties).

Practical tip:

At this stage, don't be afraid of simple ideas. Activities don't have to be large—the important thing is that they stem from a real need and give participants a sense of agency.

II. Project Implementation This is the phase of action in which experience and active participation are most important.

An animator does not conduct classes like a lecturer, but creates a safe and inspiring environment in which participants can implement their own ideas.

How to act in practice:

Begin with a joint team-building workshop. This helps build trust and a sense of community. Drama, movement games, photography, or music can be used. Ensure a variety of activities. Service Learning projects in cultural institutions can include: artistic workshops (visual arts, theater, photography), social events (picnic, urban space event), environmental activities (recycling, community garden), and documentary projects (film, podcast, exhibition).

Give participants responsibility.

Let the young people themselves propose the title of the exhibition, the method of promotion, and the layout of the scenography.

Allow them to make small mistakes—it's part of the learning process. Collaborate across sectors. Invite schools, libraries, local NGOs, and local governments. Such collaboration strengthens the project's impact and broadens the audience.

Document everything.

Create a project chronicle: photos, recordings, and quotes from participants. After each meeting, jot down a few sentences about the mood and progress.

Treat each step of the process as a "lesson in action." Participants not only create but also learn to plan, collaborate, and reflect.

III. Reflection

Reflection is a moment of pause – a time to consider the meaning and significance of actions taken. In cultural projects, it can be conducted creatively and informally. How to implement it:

After each meeting, spend 10–15 minutes talking:

What happened today? What was important to us? What did we learn?

Use various forms of reflection: a collage or emotion map, a project journal, a board with participant quotes, or a short video summary. Encourage self-reflection: Each participant can complete a short reflection card after a workshop or project phase. Connect reflection with cultural values:

What do our actions say about community? How can art build connections? What do concepts like solidarity, responsibility, and community mean in our project?

Reflection doesn't have to be lengthy. It's important that it be regular and authentic—it helps us understand that we learn not only by creating but also by analyzing our experiences.

IV. Presenting Results This stage is crucial for participants – it's the moment when the outside world sees their efforts and development. How to prepare a presentation? Consider the context and format: exhibition, film screening, concert, performative reading, school presentation, online publication. Include the process, not just the result: show photos from rehearsals, short recordings, quotes from participants, tell the story of the project: where the idea came from, what changed, what surprised us.

Involve participants in event preparation:
let them lead the meeting, guide the guests, and moderate the discussion.

Community Invitation:
parents, residents, local partners, local government – let them see that the project had a real impact.
Thank all participants: hand out certificates, praise, awards; show that every contribution is important.

The presentation isn't the end – it's a celebration of community. Participants feel proud, and the institution strengthens its image as a place that inspires and connects people.

V. Evaluation and follow-up

The final stage is not only a summary but also the beginning of new activities. How to conduct an evaluation? Evaluation interview:

What did we achieve?
What was most important?
What emotions did the participants experience?
What do we want to continue?

Collect opinions:
short surveys, individual interviews, entries in the "project book".

Develop conclusions:
Write down 3–5 recommendations that will help improve subsequent activities.

Consolidate results:
prepare a post-project exhibition, a PDF publication or an entry on the institution's website, keep the documentation in the archive – it can be used as educational material.

Continuation:
plan how to maintain the results: e.g. a series of workshops, a group of volunteers, a yearly Service Learning program.

After the project concludes, invite participants to co-create a new initiative. Maintaining relationships and energy after the project is key to the sustainable development of the social dimension of culture.

4. Role of the cultural animator

A cultural animator in a Service Learning project is a facilitator of the educational process, not just an event organizer. Their responsibilities include supporting the group in planning and decision-making, fostering relationships, safety, and a collaborative atmosphere, initiating reflection and helping participants discover the meaning of their actions, connecting creativity with social and educational values, and encouraging dialogue with the local community.

The tutor does not judge, but accompanies, listens, asks questions and strengthens the participants' sense of agency.

5. How to build partnerships with formal education

Service Learning works best where cultural institutions and schools work together.

Examples of forms of cooperation:

- joint artistic and social projects (e.g. social theatre, documentary photography),
- field trips and workshops held outside the school,
- mentoring – animators as tutors supporting students in reflection and creativity,
- exchange of experiences and joint evaluations.

Thanks to the partnership:

- the school gains space to operate,
- the cultural institution gains fresh energy and new ideas,
- the local community benefits from the effects of cooperation.

6. How to implement and sustain Service Learning in a cultural institution

- Place the method in the educational strategy or social action program of the institution.
- Conduct short training sessions for the animation team.
- Start with a small pilot project.
- Invite schools and youth groups to co-create.
- Document experiences and share them with other facilities.

Summary

Service learning in cultural institutions is a tool for combining art, education, and social responsibility. It allows for the creation of activities that not only develop participants' competencies but also have a real impact on the environment. An institution that implements service learning becomes a place where culture has the power to transform—it teaches, connects, inspires, and strengthens the community.



APPENDIX 1 SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT CARD (FOR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS)

Project title:

Institution:

Coordinator / animator:

Team of participants:

Implementation period:

1. Needs diagnosis

What social or cultural needs have been identified in the local environment?

.....
.....

2. The projects

Educational Objective (what participants will learn):

.....

Social goal (who and how we will help / what we will change):

.....

3. Actions Stage Description of the action Responsible Deadline Partners / resources

4. Creative forms

☐ Art workshops ☐ Exhibition / show ☐ Film / photography ☐ Social action / performance ☐ Other:

5. Results

6. Documentation

(photos, notes, promotional materials, interviews with participants)

.....

PARTICIPANT/TUTOR REFLECTION CARD

Name and surname:

Project name:

Data:

1. What did we do today?

.....

2. What moved or inspired me most?

.....

3. What did I learn from this activity?

.....

4. What was difficult or surprising?

.....

5. How did our project impact other participants or the community?

.....

6. How can this experience be useful to me in the future?

.....

 APPENDIX 3 PARTNERSHIP CHARTER (CULTURAL INSTITUTION – SCHOOL / NGO / SOCIAL GROUP)

Name of the cultural institution:

Project partner:

Topic of cooperation:

Duration:

1. Common goals

2. Scope of activities PageTasks / obligations Cultural institution

.....

Partner

3. Support and resources (e.g. space, equipment, promotion, mentors, educational materials)

4. Documentation and Summary

.....

Signatures:

Cultural institution:

Partner:

Data:

 APPENDIX 4 SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

Project title:

Institution:

End date:

1. The most important results of the project

.....

2. What was your greatest success?

.....

3. What was difficult or needed improvement?

.....

4. What competences did the participants develop?

☐ **Collaboration** ☐ **Communication** ☐ **Creativity** ☐ **Social Responsibility** ☐ **Empathy** ☐
Organization and Planning ☐ **Reflection and Analysis**

5. How did the project impact the local community or the image of the institution?

.....

6. What do we want to continue or develop in the future?

.....

APPENDIX 5 LIST OF DOCUMENTATION AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Project title:

Coordinator:

1. Visual materials ☐ **Photos from activities** ☐ **Film / reportage** ☐ **Graphics / posters** ☐
Documentation of the exhibition or performance

2. Text materials ☐ **Project description** ☐ **Report/press article** ☐ **Social media posts** ☐
Interviews with participants

3. Promotion and presentation ☐ **Public event** ☐ **Exhibition / show / film** ☐ **Website publication** ☐ **Printed materials**

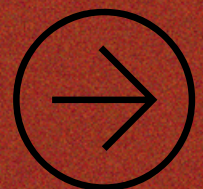
4. Archiving ☐ **Digital folder (cloud/flash drive)** ☐ **PDF publication** ☐ **Collection of photos and videos**

5. Person responsible for documentation

Name and surname:

Contact:

MOTIVATING YOUNG PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED



Motivating young people to act

Motivating young people to act is a multidimensional process that requires understanding their needs, perceptions of the world, and individual differences. Today's youth are growing up in an environment of intense social, digital, and climate change, which shapes their values, goals, and lifestyles. Traditional mobilization methods based on authority or compulsory schooling are losing their effectiveness. Instead, methods based on a partnership approach, autonomy, meaningful action, and community are gaining in importance.



1. Authenticity and meaning of action

Young people get involved when they feel their actions have meaning and align with their values. They're motivated not by the mere act of "doing a project," but by an awareness of why they're doing it and who it matters to.

An adult who can explain why a given action is important, demonstrating its real impact on the world (even on a small scale), inspires genuine engagement. It's worth engaging young people in conversations about meaning – instead of saying "do it because you have to," it's better to ask, "Who do you think this will help?"

Practical tip:

Instead of starting the project with a presentation of the teacher's or coordinator's goals, start it with a conversation with the participants: "What issues are important to you?", "What would you like to change in your school, in your district, in the world?"

2. Autonomy and co-decision

Young people need influence. Activities in which young people are merely "recipients" or "executors" of orders quickly lose their meaning. Participation based on autonomy and shared decision-making leads to a sense of agency – and this is one of the strongest internal motivators.

It is therefore worth inviting students or project participants to jointly establish goals, activity topics, forms of promotion, and even the budget.

Practical tip:

Organize a mind-mapping planning workshop. Let everyone propose an idea, and together choose two or three that align most closely with the group's values.

3. Community and Relationships

Young people motivate each other. Collaboration with peers, forming groups, and a sense of community and trust are the foundations of lasting engagement. Contemporary psychological research shows that social connection, not reward alone, is the most enduring source of motivation.

It's worth focusing on teamwork, where each participant has a role and can contribute something. A team with an atmosphere of openness and respect naturally strengthens engagement.

Practical tip:

At the beginning of the project, organize a team-building event—for example, a short field game, a cooking class, or a photography workshop. Getting to know each other and discussing values builds trust and commitment.

4. Appreciation and feedback

Young people need to know that their efforts matter. Recognition, praise, and feedback aren't trivial, but crucial tools for building motivation.

It's important that praise be specific and sincere. Instead of a general "great job," it's better to say, "I appreciate you taking the initiative and inviting new participants to the project."

Practical tip:

After each project stage, hold a short feedback meeting. Let each participant share what went well and what could be improved. This format teaches responsibility and self-assessment.

5. The role of tutors, mentors and facilitators

An adult doesn't have to be the project leader—they can be a companion in the process. In the Service Learning method, as in cultural animation, the adult's role is to support reflection, ask questions, and inspire, not to judge.

Practical tip:

Use reflective questions:

- What was important to you today?
- What have you learned?
- How did your actions affect others?

This allows young people to discover the meaning of their actions on their own.



6. Balance between learning and action

For young people, it's important that the project isn't just a "helping initiative," but also a process in which they gain something—knowledge, experience, skills, and emotions. When a project has an educational and social component, it becomes a platform for development.

In Service Learning, this balance is key: we learn by helping, and we help by learning.

Practical tip:

Encourage students to keep a project journal—recording not only what they did but also what they learned. This develops reflection and self-reflection skills.

7. Emotions and safety

It's impossible to engage young people without emotion. Activities that evoke joy, emotion, a sense of community, or pride are memorable and build motivation.

At the same time, participants must feel safe—mentally, emotionally, and socially. Criticism, pressure, or lack of trust destroy the will to act.

Practical tip:

Introduce the principle of "safe space"—everyone has the right to their own opinion, mistakes, and emotions. Together, create rules of cooperation, such as: "We listen to each other," "We don't ridicule ideas," and "We help each other."

8. Digital Expression and Social Media

The world of young people is a world of digital media. Therefore, projects that give them the opportunity to create content—videos, photos, posts, podcasts, vlogs—are more engaging.

The media can be a tool for self-expression, promoting ideas and building community.

Practical tip:

Suggest that participants manage the project's social media themselves. Establish shared rules for publishing and responsibility for content. For many young people, this is an important element of identity and a space for development.

9. Gamification and the element of fun

Gamification elements work well in youth projects. Points, badges, missions, and levels motivate engagement, especially early on.

It is best when the game is not competitive, but cooperative and humorous.

Practical tip:

Create a "challenge map" together - for each completed task, the team earns points or symbols, which can later be exchanged for a joint celebration, e.g., pizza, a trip to the cinema, or a day off school.

10. Visibility of results and celebration of successes

Motivation increases when young people see the results of their work. A project's grand conclusion, an exhibition, a publication, a film, or even a poster summarizing the work—all of these provide a sense of purpose.

The celebration should include not only the "best" but all participants – because everyone contributed something important.

Practical tip:

Organize a project-summing event. Let the youth organize it themselves—choosing the location, format, and invited guests. This will increase their sense of pride and responsibility.



11. Mentoring and intergenerational relationships

Young people draw inspiration from adults who know how to listen rather than lecture. The master-disciple relationship is now being replaced by a partnership.

A mentor (teacher, artist, animator) does not say: "Do it like this", but asks: "What do you want to achieve?", "How can I help you?"

Practical tip:

Invite local adults – seniors, entrepreneurs, artists – to join the project, as they can serve as inspiration and a source of knowledge for young people. Cross-generational learning strengthens both sides.

12. Reflection and Recognition of Learning Outcomes

Reflection is one of the most important elements of service learning. It helps young people become aware of what they have learned—not only in terms of knowledge, but also in terms of attitudes and emotions.

Practical tip:

After each activity, ask participants three questions:

- What happened today?
- What does this mean to me?
- What do I do with it next?

Thanks to this, the project becomes a process of conscious development.

13. Evaluation and follow-up

Evaluation isn't just about checking what went well, but also about discussing emotions, experiences, and change. Encourage participants to collectively evaluate the project: what they liked, what was challenging, and what they'd like to continue. This way, they'll feel their voices matter—and that's more motivating than any reward.

Practical tip:

At the end of the project, create a "memory map" together—a collage of photos, quotes, and conclusions. Let this be a visual summary of the journey they've taken.

14. Psychological aspects of youth motivation

Effective motivation requires an understanding of basic psychological mechanisms. Contemporary theories of motivation—especially self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan)—identify three key needs that determine intrinsic commitment:

- Autonomy – the need for independence and self-determination.
- Competence – the need to feel that I can do something and that I am developing.
- Relationship (bond) – the need to be part of a group and to be noticed.

When these three elements are met, young people act of their own free will, not out of coercion.

Practical tip:

When planning a project, ask yourself three questions:

- Do young people have a real influence on decisions (autonomy)?
- Do they learn new things and see progress (competence)?
- Do they feel part of the group (relationship)?

If you answer yes to all of them, the project has great motivational potential.

15. Failure as part of the process

In educational culture, mistakes are often avoided, yet young people learn through experimentation. Failure isn't the end, but a moment of reflection and growth. It's worth discussing this openly—showing that every difficulty is a step in development. This helps young people learn courage and mental resilience.

Practical tip:

Introduce the group rule: "There are no mistakes – only lessons."

After a failed action, ask, "What did we learn from this?" instead of "Why did it fail?"



16. Incorporating Emotions and Passions

Young people respond to the authenticity and enthusiasm of the leaders.

The best way to motivate is to show your own passion – if a teacher or animator believes in what they do, they inspire others to act.

Artistic, creative, movement-based, and emotionally engaging activities—such as theater, photography, film, and music—have a unique power. They allow for self-expression while simultaneously building bonds with a group. For example, a music enthusiast might lead rhythm workshops with children, or a photography enthusiast might curate an exhibition about neighborhood stories.

Practical tip:

Encourage young people to discover their interests and translate them into social activities.

17. Long-term and Continuity

Motivation is reinforced when the activity doesn't end with the project. When young people see their initiatives remain in the public sphere—e.g., a mural, a website, a podcast—they feel a sense of pride and purpose.

Practical tip:

Help young people plan what to do next:

- How can you continue the project after it ends?
- What next steps follow from this experience?
- Who can be involved in the future?

Questions like these foster long-term thinking and a sense of influence.

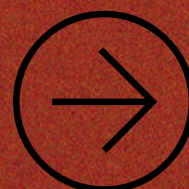
18. Summary

Young people's motivation isn't born from obligation, but from a sense of meaning, influence, and community. Adults' role is to create the conditions in which these three elements can emerge. An effective facilitator, teacher, or mentor:

- listens before he suggests,
- co-creates instead of imposing,
- appreciates instead of judging,
- gives space instead of restricting.

Young people don't need to be motivated—they need to be noticed. True motivation grows where young people feel important, needed, and free to act.

END





**Co-funded by
the European Union**



SERVICE LEARNING
IN CULTURE

This publication was conducted under the Erasmus+ project "Service Learning in Culture - Effective Engagement of Young People in Social Projects" (2023-1-PL01-KA210-YOU-000156000).