MOVE IT
26 May – 17 June 2020

Youth mobility in the digital era

www.jugendfuereuropa.de/veranstaltungen/MOVE-IT

online event

Photo: Sebastian Voortman

JUGEND für Europa
National Agency (Germany)
Erasmus + Youth in Action
European Solidarity Corps

IJAB International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany

Estonian Youth Work Centre
20 years empowering youth

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Documentation (article)

Event report:
MOVE IT - Youth mobility in the digital era (online event)

Seven MOVE IT sessions have taken place between 26 May and 17 June 2020. Hundreds of participants among which youth workers, trainers and policymakers from all over Europe seized a unique opportunity to discuss and elaborate on various aspects related to digital youth work and digital youth mobility.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisers decided to transform MOVE IT from an originally offline event into an entirely online event. They experimented with a modular online learning approach, used new methodologies for online engagement and opted for shorter sessions.

Participants, speakers and the organisers went through a learning curve by using a wide range of tools, such as Zoom, Facebook Live, Vmix, QiqoChat, Mural, Mentimeter, etc., during the seven MOVE IT sessions. Dozens of experts in the digital youth work and digital youth mobility field provided valuable insights and opened questions on a multitude of aspects regarding the youth work field and its future development.

In this article, we present some of the MOVE IT highlights and takeaways.

Hybrid spaces: the new reality of youth mobility

Over 150 attendees made for an enthusiastic virtual crowd during the MOVE IT launch via Facebook Live on 26 May 2020. The livestream emerged as a fresh venture for youth work professionals to discuss digital youth work and mobility. It was also a welcome opportunity to take a break from the permanent COVID-19 news stream and to move on.

MOVE IT - Youth mobility in the digital era (online event) opened with a welcome by the organisers. Manfred von Hebel, Deputy Director at JUGEND für Europa, the National Agency for the EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps in Germany, briefly noted that virtual activities of any kind do not replace experiences in real life. "Youth mobility, first and foremost, is a physical experience" but as many other speakers would remark later on digital experiences can certainly enrich physical ones. This definitely set the tone for the discussions of all seven MOVE IT sessions.
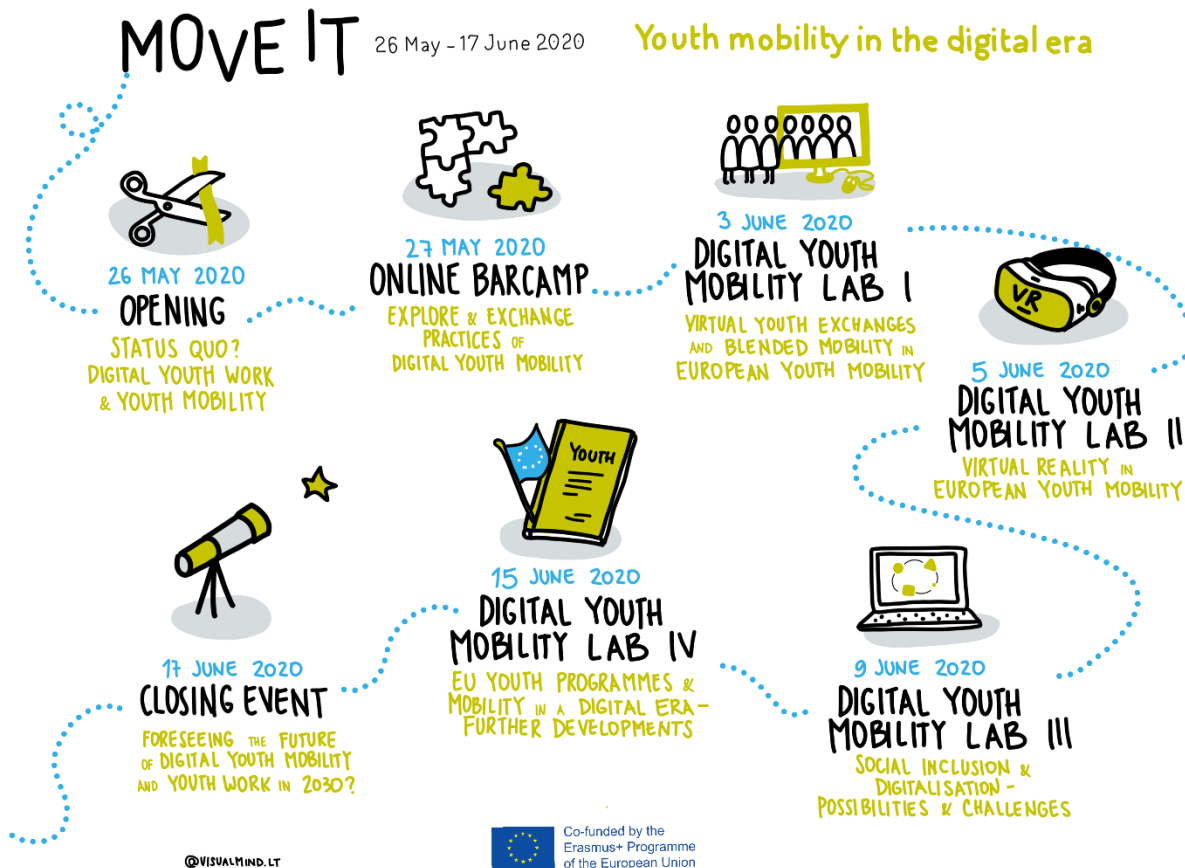
MOVE IT Online BarCamp: 14 self-organised sessions

The MOVE IT Online BarCamp was one of the most anticipated sessions and took place on 27 May, one after the launch. If you are interested in direct insights from six of the 14 MOVE IT Online BarCamp session organisers and the full list of sessions, please click here to read an additional interview.

Participants moved to Zoom and QiQuoChat where the facilitators Sabrina Apitz and Evaldas Rupkus gave instructions on the rules of communication and explained technicalities of the MOVE IT Online BarCamp spaces. A main room was used to crowd-source the topics participants would like to discuss during the

day. Afterwards, participants joined smaller rooms, in three consecutive rounds, for discussion of one single topic and hosted by the participant who had suggested the topic for exploration. Additional coffee and comfort break rooms were permanently open for participants to debrief, for informal chats and networking. It was striking to see how well this worked out.

Session organisers and participants addressed a great variety of topics during the MOVE IT Online BarCamp, from how to be a host of online events, to how to connect with the different stories of people who are part of the event or how to find out about the real needs of young people. Some sessions focussed on the EU youth programmes (Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps) and saw participants sharing their experiences with virtual exchanges, i. e. Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange, whereas other sessions explored how to bridge language barriers and boost inclusiveness during online activities. Moreover, participants exchanged on how to connect digital, physical solutions and onsite activities in international projects, i. e. how to create and facilitate hybrid spaces.

Hybrid spaces was one of the most up-voted topics on the participants' side. The huge interest in this topic placed it first in line and ready for exploration during the MOVE IT Online BarCamp session "Hybrid spaces-Connecting online and onsite participants", hosted by participant Anne Kleinbauer. Her group stirred discussions on interesting aspects on event hybridity, such as how to include participants who are not physically present in youth projects.

Inclusion was another popular topic, at the centre of debate during the MOVE IT Online BarCamp session called "Reaching and supporting vulnerable young people". Moreover, a full MOVE IT session dedicated to this topic was going to take place on 9 June ("Digital Youth Mobility Lab - Social Inclusion and Digitalisation. Possibilities and challenges in the frame of the European mobility programmes and European youth work", feat. Adina Marina ȘERBAN, Ph.D., Centrul pentru Dezvoltare Comunitară Durabilă / Center for Sustainable Community Development (Romania) as well as Dan MOXON, from People, Dialogue and Change (UK).

Back at the MOVE IT Online BarCamp session "Hybrid spaces-Connecting online and onsite participants", German participant Markus Krajc shared his experience in doing an online virtual course, emphasising that technical support is needed in order to make sure participants are able to engage and guided during digital events. Other participants in this session expressed their concerns about online events and the unprecedented challenges people face when hosting them, i. e. the difficulty of detecting the mood of the group and assessing how participants are feeling about the event in general. Proactive participant engagement being a possible solution, the MOVE IT facilitators proactively involved participants throughout all MOVE IT sessions by asking them regularly for detailed feedback via survey tools such as Mentimeter.
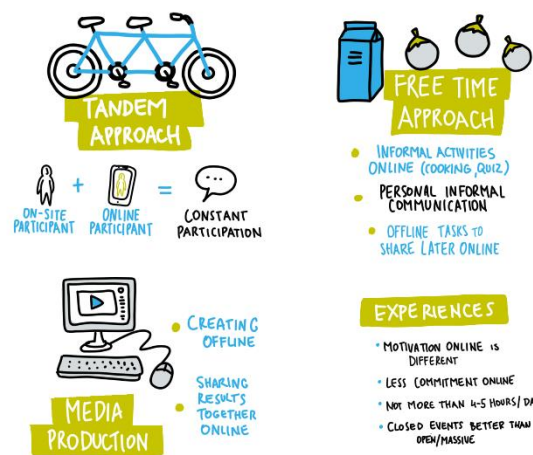
Participant Navina Envelage asked an intriguing question about the motivation of young people. She mentioned an international exchange launched in Greece, scheduled to move to another project country afterwards, but changed due to COVID-19. She emphasised that people are motivated to go abroad, meet people, tap into the new cultural experiences and immerse in a physical experience but it is less motivating for young people to resume the exchange in virtual realms.

Open questions remained on how physical experiences can be transformed into something semi-digital. In this context, another participant suggested it was time to open up to immersive digital experiences, such as online cooking classes where everyone is cooking a traditional dish in their home kitchens.

All MOVE IT Online BarCamp rooms were permanently teeming with intense debates. Some groups were excited to discuss data protection and safety, others shared ideas on how youth centres resumed activity by working remotely during the lockdown.

The number of participants per session room did not really matter. For example, some excellent points were addressed in room six (round one) where few participants elaborated on questions ranging from how to help the vulnerable to how to help young people in general. How to communicate with them under extraordinary circumstances when "physical distancing is okay but social distancing is wrong," in the words of Mark Taylor from Strasbourg (France).

"It's really strange being here, in a way, because we are not doing any of the normal youth work we usually do," said Taylor. "Be silly sometimes, it helps a lot. If you should say 'Hello' to the two persons next to you in the gallery, [it] would help in building some connection," he said.

According to Taylor, when youth workers experience difficulties communicating with young people, they ought to find ways how to surpass any communication barriers. It helps when you know the young people you work with. Approach and ask those people about their needs, ask them what they find exciting and take it from there, he said.

"If it is devising a TikTok competition, then do that," he said. "I think it's important to remember our human-to-human values. As a youth worker, you are not going to be voyager seeing what they are doing. I think that's very important, to respect the people who you work with, and find out what they need from you, find out what they need [...] The main thing is [to] show that you are there for them. Perhaps I would be giving them a call over the phone. Perhaps going to their block of apartments, and waving hello," concluded Taylor.

Another takeaway from the MOVE IT Online BarCamp was that participants generally agreed that online events require strategies on how they should be prepared and organised. That each online event should be adapted to the target groups and organisers should be mindful whether young people really have the technical equipment to access an online event they may benefit from.

After three rounds of MOVE IT Online BarCamp sessions, a successful second MOVE IT day ended.

Next stop: blended mobility

Discussions continued during the third MOVE IT session, on 3 June, called "MOVE IT Digital Youth Mobility Lab: Trends and inspiration. Virtual exchanges and blended mobility in European youth mobility", featuring the speakers Jan Lai (Italy), member of the International Youth Work Trainers Guild, Aurélien

Durbec, from IKAB Institute for Applied Communication Research in Non-Formal Education (Germany) and Aurélie Durand, project assistant with Search for Common Ground (Belgium).

An interested crowd of 112 participants joined in via Zoom for a highly productive talk and Q&A. The stable number of participants in each of the seven MOVE IT sessions started to become a trend and it remained stable until the last MOVE IT session. Securing interest and participation is one of the biggest challenges when organising online events on several dates.
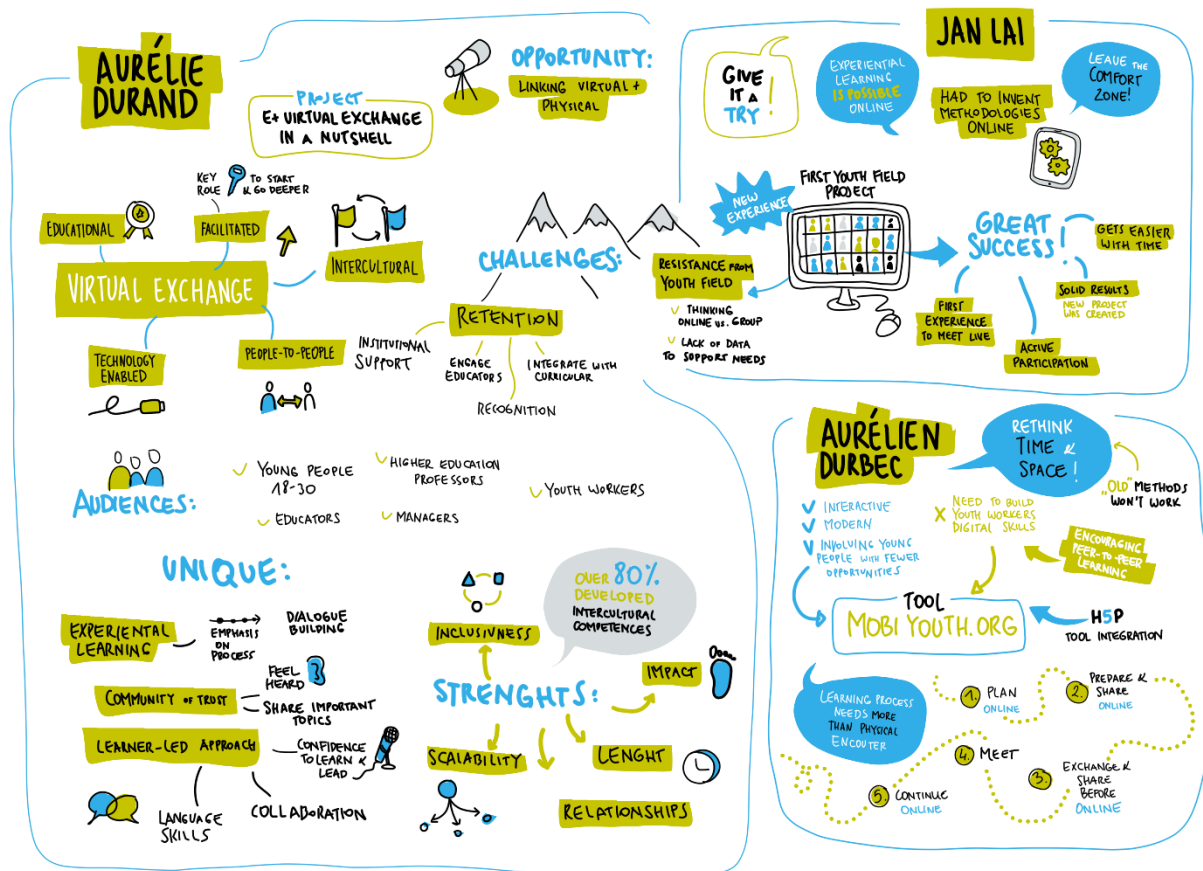
Speaker Aurélie Durand presented Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange, a new initiative which is becoming increasingly popular among young people across Europe and some neighbouring countries. She defined what a virtual exchange is, not merely "a series of unmoderated" sessions but "a truly designed, pedagogical process" boosted by technology.

Moreover, Durand explained that Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange is designed to offer experiential learning opportunities where people can learn how to collaborate, build empathy and intercultural skills. It targets both young people from over 40 Erasmus+ countries and higher education professors, university managers and administrators. Durand also highlighted a key characteristic of Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange, young people can engage in dialogue and share their problems, opinions and insights in an environment of trust.

Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange (available in English, French and Arabic) blends digital environments with physical mobility after the digital (virtual) part is conducted, thus enabling participants to apply their new skills in real life.

Durand's presentation hit a nerve and met with keen interest from the participants' side. She was happy to answer the many questions during the Q&A and in the brimming group chat that added to the liveliness of each of the MOVE IT Digital Youth Mobility Lab sessions that were to follow (four sessions on four different days).

"VE [Virtual Exchange] is and is meant to be a different experience from physical exchange, it's a complementary approach. We have seen benefits for both young people who have not previously taken part in [a] physical exchange, and young people who previously engaged in physical mobility. Virtual Exchange is valuable as a standalone but can also enrich and support physical mobility," she wrote in in the group chat. Durand shared a link to "Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange. Intercultural Learning Experiences. Handbook for Youth Organisations" which features interesting examples of good practice. You can find more publications and links to good practice examples recommended during MOVE IT sessions in the MOVE IT Reading List.

Speaker Jan Lai, a non-formal education trainer, facilitator and member of the International Youth Trainers Guild (IWTG) as well as the Associazione Interculturale NUR (Italy), enriched the discussion by presenting a project that had embedded Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange in its pilot phase. Referring to the blending of virtual experiences and physical mobility, Lai said: "I think it's a win-win opportunity. I don't think virtual experiences are going to substitute travel."

Next: Youth work meets Virtual Reality (VR)

On 5 June it was time for seeing youth work through new, VR glasses! The MOVE IT session number four was called "MOVE IT Digital Youth Mobility Lab: Trends and inspiration", featuring the speakers Felix Gaedtke, Immersive Storyteller and Creative Producer from NowHere Media (Germany), as well as Andrew Hadley and Paul Oxborough from Momentum World (UK).

The speakers took everybody on a fascinating discovery tour of Virtual Reality (VR), a valuable tool many are still unfamiliar with. The power of storytelling to envision the future, equipment costs and the different types of virtual reality that can be used for digital youth work (non-immersive: computer games and screens; semi-immersive: mix of controls, Playstation; fully-immersive: feelings) were presented. Did you know the future of Virtual reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) combined is Cross Reality (XR)? The speakers also raised the question of inclusivity because Virtual Reality (VR) can be both inclusive / accessible and exclusive at the same time. You can find a visual summary of this session (3 graphics) via this direct to the MOVE IT Facebook photo album.
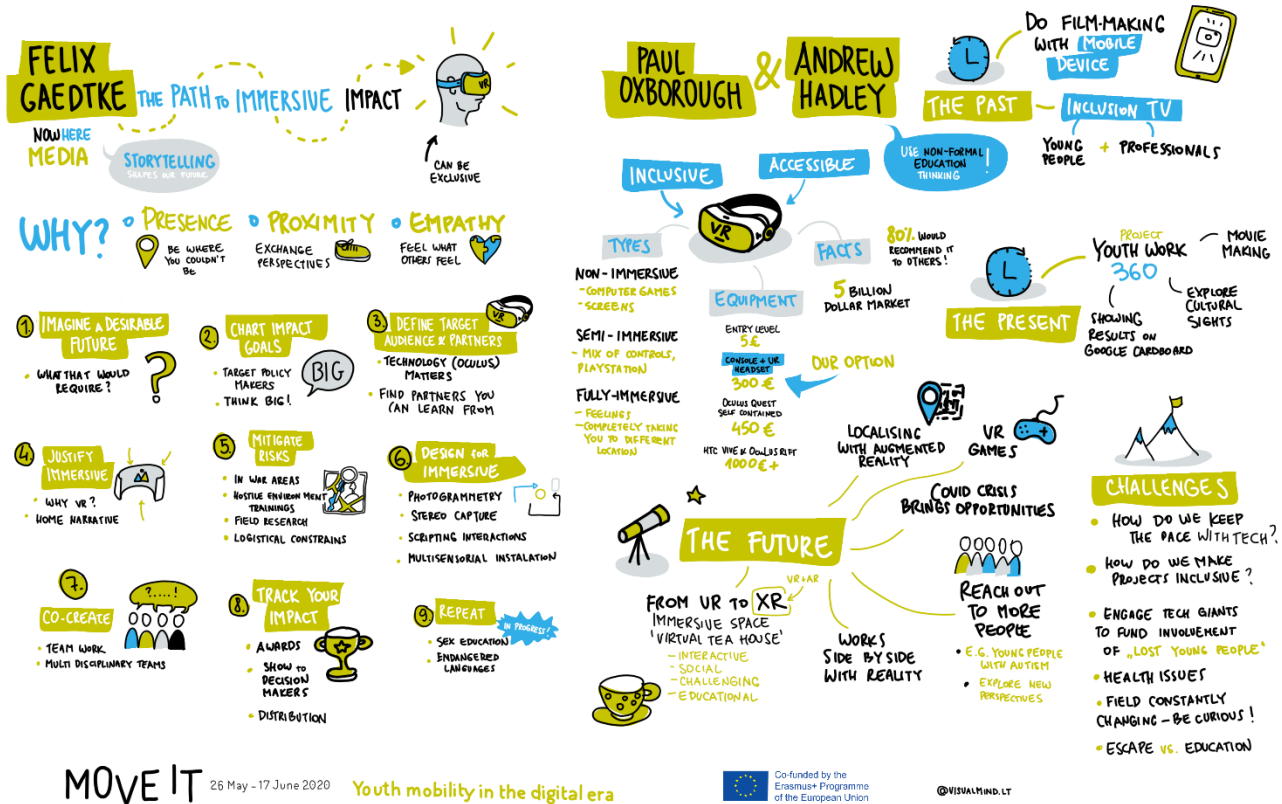
Next: In-depth insight into inclusivity in the digital era

A week later, on 9 June, session five out of seven MOVE IT sessions took place: "MOVE IT Digital Youth Mobility Lab: Trends and inspiration - Social Inclusion and Digitalisation. Possibilities and challenges in the frame of the European mobility programmes and European youth work", featuring the speakers Adina Marina Șerban, Ph.D., Centrul pentru Dezvoltare Comunitară Durabilă / Center for Sustainable Community Development (Romania), and Dan Moxon, from People, Dialogue and Change (UK).

Similar to the previous MOVE IT sessions, the warm-up for the day started with a quick participant survey via Mentimeter. The majority of the attendees answered 'No' to a question exploring whether anyone had any example of a digital youth inclusive project they could share with the group. This was somewhat of an indicator of the status quo of inclusivity in digital youth events, later confirmed by the speakers.

According to Șerban, digital youth work has advanced only recently, albeit she questioned if 'digital' is the new safety net. The speaker addressed an important challenge, namely, not all young people have access to the internet.

"I am looking back at what happened with youth mobility in practice. Are we really inclusive? Then moving to digital life, is that accessible to everyone as well?" she asked. She went on to present her research focussed on whether everyone is online for learning opportunities, both digital and physical.

"Even now, I am asking this question to this session, is it really inclusive to everyone? I am launching the question in the chat. When I was drafting my presentation, I tried to think of my friends and to think if my presentation is going to be accessible to everyone. I still have the feeling that it's not accessible entirely to everyone, that it has too much text in it or that part of the interested participants are not going to have the needed technical gear to access it," she said.

Speaker Dan Moxon, from People, Dialogue and Change, continued the session with an analysis on the online presence of youth sectors. "This is accessibility to me but it's only one part of inclusivity," he remarked. He raised concern that not everyone in the youth sector is ready and participating in the digital sphere, noting that some youth actors do not even know how to join in via Zoom.

Content is another issue on online platforms, "completely independent of technology usage." According to Moxon, content should be about meaningful information to help people navigate around a platform or inform how activities are facilitated online and offline. "The virtual community is a little bit different than the offline community and may need a little work in inclusivity," he added.
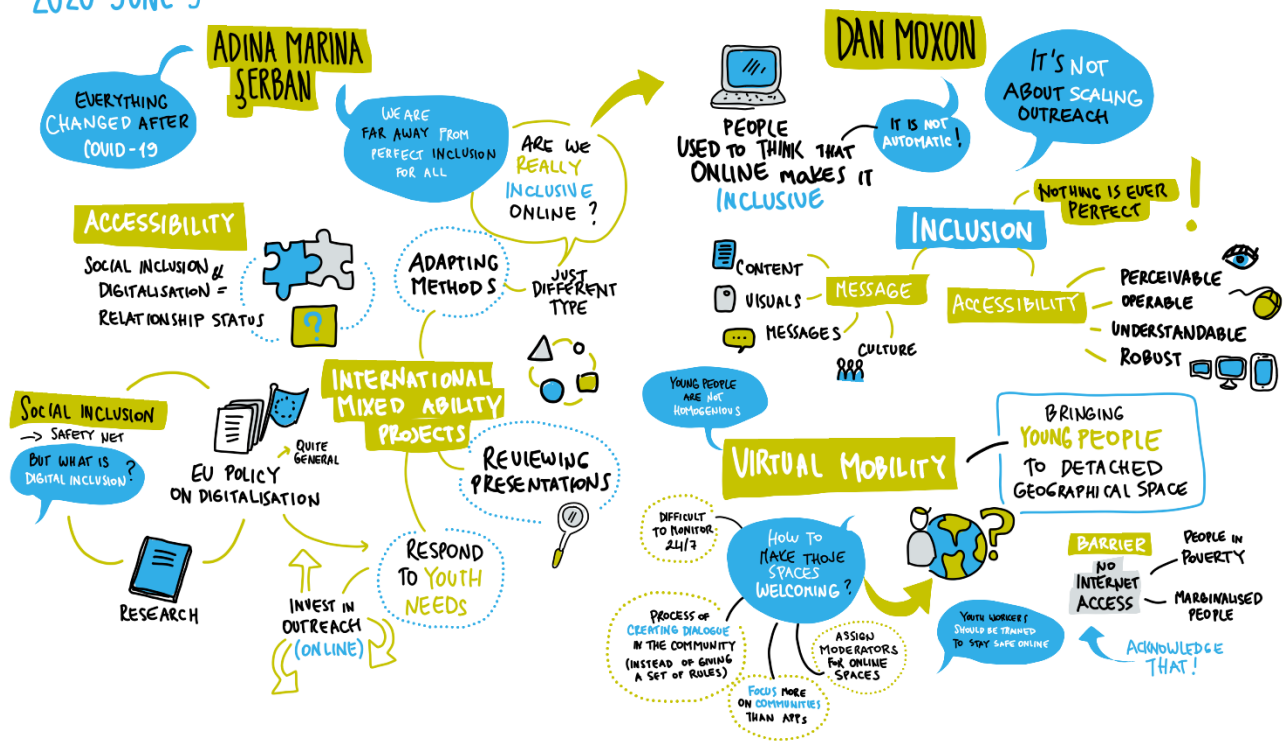
Answering on the importance of outreach in order to engage young people, Moxon went on to say "you can't reach youths who do not have digital access. With good information campaigns, you can really reach out to young people for consulting, inviting young people to tell you what they want as youth provisions and get information who they are and who they have access to," he said.

And finally, in context of promoting safe online spaces and environments for the future, Moxon commented that "human rights are a brilliant starting point" that should help us frame the rules of how

digital world, safe space would exist in the same way safe spaces exist in the physical world," added Șerban.

After the two speakers shared their insights, facilitator Evaldas Rupkus invited the 92 participants to an energiser featuring a karaoke dance to the "I like to move it move it" song, a nod to the organisers' mission to move on in the debate about digital youth work and digital youth mobility in all its aspects.

Erasmus+ National Agencies debate about digital and experts foresee the future

On 15 June 2020, MOVE IT session number six focussed on the European youth programmes Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps. A broad line-up of National Agency and European Commission representatives provided in-depth insights during the

"MOVE IT Digital Youth Mobility Lab: Trends and Inspiration. EU youth programmes and mobility in a digital era – Status quo and what could be developed further", featuring the speakers Manfred von Hebel, Deputy Director, JUGEND für Europa (Germany); Uroš Skrinar, Director of Zavod MOVIT NA MLADINA (Slovenia); Guoda Lomanaitė, Head of JTBA Jaunimo tarptautinio bendradarbiavimo agentūra (Lithuania), Reet Kost, Director of Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency (Estonia) and Floor VAN HOUDT, Head of Unit Youth, Volunteer Solidarity and Traineeships Office, DG EAC, European Commission.

If you are interested in a visual summary of this MOVE IT session, please check the visual recording summaries by Visualmind.lt via this direct link to the graphics we uploaded to the MOVE IT Facebook photo album. You can access visual summaries of all other sessions, too, by browsing the full album.

The Grand Final

After a public and live-streamed MOVE IT launch (26 May), private MOVE IT Online BarCamp (27 May) and four private MOVE IT Digital Youth Mobility Lab sessions (3 June -15 June) for registered participants only, it was time to open the debate to a bigger audience one last time.

On 17 June, MOVE IT-Youth mobility in the digital era (online event) concluded with session number seven "How to further develop youth mobility in the digital era? Foreseeing the future of digital youth mobility and youth work in 2030? Has the outlook changed due to the current situation?" featuring the speakers Tomi Kiilakoski Ph.D., senior researcher with the Finnish Youth Research Society (Finland); Suvi Tuominen, manager at Verke-Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work (Finland), Marta Mędlińska, coordinator at EU-CoE youth partnership (FR), Anne Kivimäe, Estonian Youth Work Centre (ENTK) and Tartu University Narva College Estonia (Estonia).

In light of the challenges of the current context, it is vital to anticipate and foresee the future in 2030. Each detail is relevant and that is why it highly recommend you to watch the MOVE IT closing session in full length via this link. The final session was organised in form of a public debate (livestream via Vmix / Facebook Live and back-up stream via YouTube) and breakout groups (Zoom).

MOVE IT - Youth mobility in the digital era (online event) was brought to life and transformed from a residential conference into a fully-digital online event five partners: JUGEND für Europa, the National

Agency for the EU youth programmes Erasmus+, Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps in Germany, IJAB International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Estonian Youth Work Centre (ENTK), Verke - Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work (Finland) and the Finnish National Agency for Education, National Agency for the EU youth programmes.

Final thoughts

The European youth work community still strives to understand many things in relation to the digital era, be it how to build safe spaces or how to optimise the blending of physical and digital spaces.

Nobody can predict the future but everybody can anticipate and prepare for future scenarios. Experimenting with technology and digital opportunities is a reality in the current, uncertain context. Exploring new ways by testing new methodologies in a trial and error fashion advances our knowledge base. We should share this knowledge with as many young people and youth work professionals in Europe as possible.

The MOVE IT online event was a steep learning curve for participants, speakers and organisers alike. It put many relevant aspects into the spotlight, enabled many to gain theoretical and hands-on knowledge. All MOVE IT organisers hope the online event inspired at least a few to to move on and to take relevant debates to a next level.

Speaking of sharing knowledge, please feel free to share the long list of MOVE IT takeaways published on the event website at www.jugendfuereuropa.de/veranstaltungen/MOVE-IT.

For example, the MOVE IT Reading List represents the June 2020 state of play of digital youth work and digital youth mobility, featuring links to the latest publications, best practice, tools for newcomers and advanced digital youth works, high-level European strategies, etc. This reading list was co-created together with MOVE IT participants, speakers and organisers throughout the seven MOVE IT sessions by adding interesting links mentioned in chats and talks to this common list.

As mentioned above, each session was summarised in the form of a visual recording graphic (by Visualmind.lt) which is a practical click-through option for all those with great interest and little time.

Two public livestream debates (launch and closing) are available to watch in full length online. For GDPR reasons, the link to the MOVE IT YouTube Playlist (recordings of the private sessions) is only available to the registered participants and speakers.

Stefan Alijevikj on behalf of MOVE IT / JUGEND für Europa